Rivers of London

the Roleplaying Game



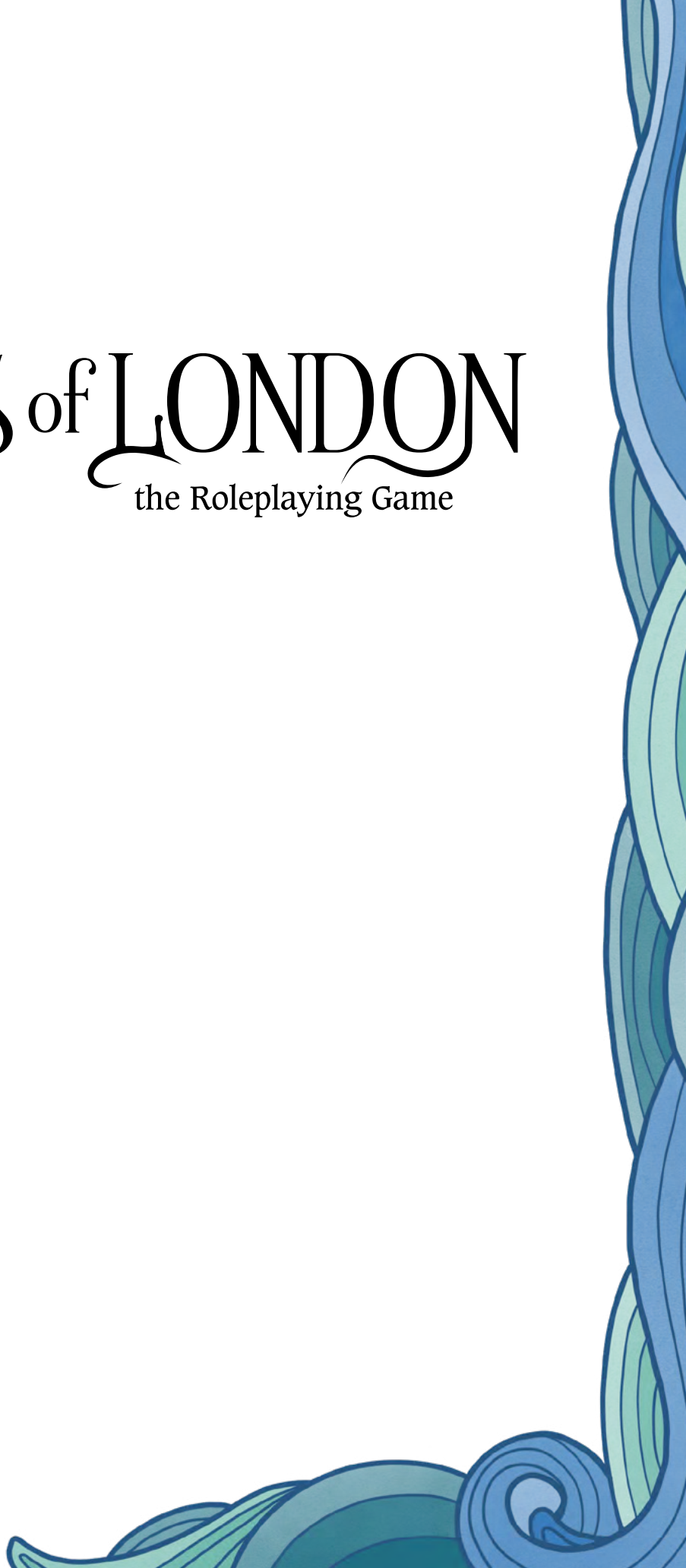
Based on the novels
by Ben Aaronovitch

Paul Fricker, Lynne Hardy, and Friends

Chaosium Inc.

RIVERS of LONDON

the Roleplaying Game



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Clear Credit

Paul Fricker devised the rules system for *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* based on the *Call of Cthulhu* 7th Edition rules, with development and additional material from Lynne Hardy and Mike Mason. The "An Introduction to Collaborative Storytelling" short story, "On the Naming of, Well … Everything," the "Ben Says" boxes on pages 170 and 219, Peter Grant, Abigail Kamara, and Asterid Bivalacqua's *signare*, and Peter's comments on cold iron (page 242) were written by Ben Aaronovitch. Lynne Hardy wrote the Introduction, with additional material by Mike Mason. Paul Fricker was lead writer on chapters 1–4, 6, and 9, except where otherwise stated, with additional writing by Lynne Hardy and Mike Mason. "The Domestic" was written by Gavin Inglis, based on the short story of the same name by Ben Aaronovitch. The original spells *Candano*, *Natchaduri*, *Aqua in nebula oborire*, and *Serra obscura* were written by Ben Aaronovitch and adapted by Lynne Hardy and Paul Fricker. The sections on British law enforcement, criminal investigations, and police powers in Chapter 5 were written by Lloyd Gyan and Lynne Hardy. The GM advice section in Chapters 5 was written by Keris McDonald, as was the advice on writing case files in Chapter 9. Chapter 7 was written by Lucya Szachnowski with Lynne Hardy. "The Bookshop" was written by Lynne Hardy, based on the short story "The Cockpit" by Ben Aaronovitch.

The plans of the Folly were developed and realised by Matt Ryan from originals provided by Ben Aaronovitch. Alyssa Faden designed and developed the map of London in Chapter 7, while Anna Urbanek developed and realised the scenario maps and handouts based on the author's originals. Filler art was designed by Nicholas Nacario with Lynne Hardy, and realised by Nicholas Nacario and Irene Cano. The *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* layout template was designed by Simeon Cogswell. The *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* character sheets were designed by Matt Ryan and programmed by Max Harrison.



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Foreword

Ever since I can remember, I've wanted my own roleplaying game. I lie—it's actually ever since I was given the three original beige *Dungeons & Dragons* books in a box all the way back in the late seventies. Either way, it's a long time. Other authors dream of film and television, radio and comic adaptations, and, even more recently, a computer game. But what I wanted was a pen and paper roleplaying game with maps, player handouts, and funny shaped dice. Why? It's all about the worldbuilding.

I was a terrible gamemaster, and, to be fair, I was never particularly brilliant as a player—I was always more interested in the scenarios than the gaming. To this day, I have an insane number of RPG supplements, including a large number of campaign and setting books whose original systems I've never even heard of. I read voraciously of intricately thought-out fantasy worlds; Glorantha was a favourite, but I've always had a soft spot for *City State of the Invincible Overlord* (Judges Guild) and *Pendragon's* Albion that never was.

I wanted to create one of those worlds, to make something so detailed, so credible that people would sit around a table and lose themselves in the experience. But worldbuilding isn't just confined to secondary world fantasies or the far-flung planets of space opera. You can build a world in the past or present that is just as fantastical as anything in Greyhawk or the Imperium. The impulse to world build can encompass the 17th-century France of *En Garde* (GDW) or the nightmare-haunted Jazz Age world of *Call of Cthulhu*.

So, when I started *Rivers of London,* there was always a seductive voice in the back of my head that said, "*One day, this might be an RPG, too.*" Then that one day came when Lynne Hardy approached me at Waterstones in Newcastle and said she represented Chaosium, legendary creators of *Call of Cthulhu*, *Pendragon*, and *Elric*, amongst others, and would I like to talk about doing a *Rivers of London* RPG…

And here is that RPG! I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

—Ben Aaronovitch, 2022





It took me far longer to get round to reading *Rivers of London* than I care to admit, despite the repeated recommendations of friends. But, once I did, I was hooked, and I rapidly devoured everything that was in print. It was immediately obvious to me that the world created by Ben Aaronovitch was ideal for a roleplaying game—a rich backstory, intriguing characters, and the scope to carry out exciting investigations into the magical world of London's demi-monde!

So, *Rivers of London* became a property that I was keen to develop into a game at some point. After I joined Chaosium, it became clear that the investigative nature of *Call of Cthulhu* could provide the solid foundation needed to bring a *Rivers of London* roleplaying game to life. With Mike Mason's encouragement, I approached Ben at a book signing in Newcastle and, fortunately, Ben agreed! If memory serves, Ben said he'd always hoped *Rivers* would be a BRP-based, Chaosium game, so the stars were *definitely* right that day!

It was at this point that I reached out to Paul Fricker, who, with Mike, had created *Call of Cthulhu's* 7th Edition. I'd worked with Paul before on the new edition of the *Call of Cthulhu* campaign *Masks of Nyarlathotep,* and I knew he'd be a safe pair of hands to take what was best of the 7th edition *Cthulhu* rules and adapt them to support storytelling in the *Rivers of London* world. Alongside Paul, I was lucky enough to assemble a team of great creative talent—writers, artists, graphic designers, and cartographers—who it has been my pleasure to work with to bring together the book you are now reading.

I hope you enjoy your adventures in the world of the Folly. And remember, *scientia potestas est* —"knowledge is power"!

—Lynne Hardy, 2022

My introduction to the world of Peter Grant, Beverley Brook, Nightingale, et al., came through Marc Higgins, one of my oldest friends, who recommended the book to my wife, Lucy—my thanks to them both. It's true what they say, books can change your life. Having worked on the *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game, I should know this better than most!

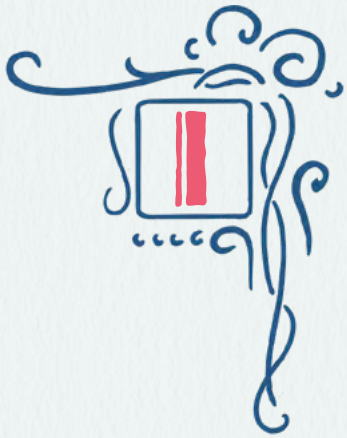
I was very pleased when, sometime later, Chaosium invited me to develop these rules. If you're familiar with roleplaying games, you'll know that a major part of the appeal is the freedom they offer to be anyone, go anywhere, do anything. The project kicked off with the team gathering at Mike Mason's place, just prior to the pandemic in early 2020, when Lynne Hardy led us through the first ever session of the *Rivers of London* roleplaying game. Our job was to find everything that was fun about the books and the setting, and focus all that potential to create the best game possible.

Working with Lynne has been a pleasure, and I'd like to thank the playtesters, whose feedback was invaluable when developing the rules. Also, thanks to Mike for his advice and guidance throughout the project. And, of course, Ben, without whose creative mind none of this would ever have happened.

Throughout the novels, Peter Grant and his friends show compassion and humour, but above all, they demonstrate optimism—and that's something we each need in this world right now. I hope this book inspires you to undertake wonderful adventures with your friends, and if I've played some small part in that, that's all the magic I need.

—Paul Fricker, 2022


CALL OF CTHULHU



An Introduction to Collaborative Storytelling

A short *Rivers of London* tale by Ben Aaronovitch

LOOKING BACK, I think it might have been a mistake, when introducing Nightingale to roleplaying games, to start with *Call of Cthulhu*. My thinking was that, since it was a setting about investigating the supernatural, he might be able to relate to it.

The whole thing was Abigail's fault because she'd "investigated" a box of my things that had been left at the Folly when I moved in with Bev. In it had been the remnants of my once extensive RPG collection; she then insisted that I gamesmaster a session on pain of extensive nagging. That's how I ended up one evening in the Folly's kitchen, where there was a big table and proximity to snacks, trying to explain the concept of collaborative storytelling to Nightingale, Molly, Abigail, and a talking fox called Indigo.

"*So, the aim of this game is to go insane?*" Nightingale asked after I explained the Sanity rules.

"*No,*" I said. "*The aim of this game is to defeat cosmic evil* before *you go insane.*"

"*I think I understand,*" he said. "*To remain effective, one must learn to spend one's sanity judiciously.*" He glanced over at the other players. "*Or know when to sacrifice a colleague.*"

Since his "colleagues" were Molly, Abigail, and a talking fox, I wasn't sure that was a viable strategy.

"*And his name is Ted Lewis,*" said Nightingale, with some satisfaction.

Not every player was that easy to please.

"*You can't play a fox,*" I told Indigo, who was sitting on Abigail's lap and peering over the top of the table.

"*Why not?*" asked Indigo.

"*Because I don't have rules for foxes,*" I said.

"*Can I play as a dog then?*"

"*No,*" I said. "*Humans only.*"

"*Not fair.*"

"*If you're good,*" I said. "*I'll make up some house rules for the next session.*"

Indigo squirmed around and whispered something to Abigail, who said she didn't see why not and wrote something at the top of Indigo's character sheet.

I glanced over at Molly who was giving me an intent stare.

"*Yes?*" I asked cautiously.

She handed over a character sheet—immaculately filled in with red ink. She'd chosen to play a dilettante by the name of Gloria Fotherington-Smythe. As I checked the sheet, it became obvious that, unlike everybody else, Molly had at least read the character creation rules.

I considered pointing out that this was going to be mostly an investigative game and she maybe didn't want to invest quite so heavily in her pistol and rifle skills, but you don't argue with Molly. Not more than once, anyway. She'd taken Pilot (Aircraft), which would definitely be useful given where I planned to set the adventure.

I looked over to where Abigail was still scribbling away on both her and Indigo's character sheets.

"*We need an investigator,*" I said.

"*Got you covered,*" said Abigail, without looking up.

"*I'm a spy,*" said Indigo and clumsily pushed her character sheet towards me with her paw.

Who, according to that character sheet, travelled the world in the guise of a lounge singer called Lucinda Songthrush. There was quite a lot of technical detail about how Lucinda stayed in contact with her MI6 handler—I wondered how accurate it was. Lucinda's skills leant heavily on stealth and charm and, of course, singing.

"*Here you go,*" said Abigail, passing me her character sheet. "*Simon Merioneth, proper archaeologist with a trowel and everything.*" With most of her skill points in Library Use and Archaeology, she was definitely going to be the research brains of the outfit.

Molly fetched tea and biscuits—I handed back the character sheets, adjusted my gamesmaster screen, and waited for everyone to settle down. Which they did, amazingly quickly.

Given the characters they'd rolled, I didn't hold out much hope for their survival. I considered asking them to knock up a set of alternative backup characters but then we'd probably never get to play at all.

I took a deep breath and let it out slowly.

"*Okay,*" I said. "*You all meet onboard a steamer sailing for Australia.*"

There was a suspicious pause.

"*Why are we going to Australia?*" asked Abigail.

Because my second-hand copy of *Terror Australis* was the only one of my supplements to survive the various book purges caused by moving home and my Mum's continuous attempts to ship anything of value of mine, not nailed down, back to Sierra Leone.

Although what my cousins made of my *Vampire: The Masquerade* collection, I dread to think.

I really didn't think that was going to work as an explanation—not with this lot. Still, the first rule of both coppering and gamesmastering is to never look like you don't know what you're doing.

And another trick I've learnt from my day job is answering a question with a question.

"*I don't know,*" I said. "*Why do* you *think your characters are heading for Australia?*"

Abigail frowned and opened her mouth to say something along the lines of: "*I thought you were supposed to be telling us what the story is,*" when Nightingale spoke.

"*I owe money to a particularly loathsome group of loan sharks,*" he said. "*And have used the last of the money I borrowed from them to flee the country. Australia should be far enough.*"

"*In that case,*" said Abigail, who never liked to be outdone, "*I am travelling to Australia to track down rumours of mysterious artefacts found in the outback.*"

"*And I,*" said Indigo, "*have been sent by the government to investigate strange goings on and I have papers that urge co-operation from the local authorities.*"

"*That's sly,*" said Abigail and scratched the top of Indigo's head.

I looked at Molly who was carefully writing something on her notepad. She ripped off the top sheet and handed it to me.

"*And I,*" I read aloud off the paper, "*have always dreamt of the wide-open skies of the desert.*"

Everybody nodded thoughtfully.

Damn, I thought, this might actually work.

Introduction

It started at one thirty on a cold Tuesday morning in January…
—Rivers of London

Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game (*RoL:RPG*) is a game of mystery and magic, set in the world of Ben Aaronovitch's *Rivers of London* urban fantasy novels and comics—also known as the "Peter Grant series" after their main character. In the game, you play newly-recruited members of the Folly—the Metropolitan Police Service's "magic branch," more formally known as the Special Assessment Unit (SAU). Working with Detective Chief Inspector Thomas Nightingale, you uncover mysteries, solve crimes, and learn more about the strange world bubbling just below the surface of everyday life: the world of magic and the demi-monde.

An Overview of the Game

Don't worry if you're new to roleplaying games—*RoL:RPG* is designed to introduce new players to the hobby while also providing plenty of storytelling opportunities for those who've done this sort of thing before!

The aim of this game is to have fun with your friends. There are no winners or losers in the way you have with boardgames. The idea is for the players to work together to achieve a common goal while telling the most dramatic and interesting stories you can. One player takes on the role of Game Moderator, or GM, and their role is to run the game for the rest of the players. Everyone else plays intrepid investigators, whose job it is to figure out the mysteries the GM presents them, while learning more about the *Rivers of London* world and their place in it.

But how does the GM run the game? Well, they provide the stories the group tells together, what we call "case files"—though you'll also see them referred to as "scenarios" and "adventures." There's a solo case file, **The Domestic**, on page 17 for you to play through on your own that introduces you to some of the rules concepts you'll need to play the game. There is another case file to play through with your friends in **Chapter 8**.

Think of the GM like a film director, and a case file like an unfinished script—there's a framework there to build on, but not all the details have been finalised by the time the cameras roll. Together, the GM and players collaborate to improvise the complete story—the finished film—by talking to each other and occasionally rolling some dice (**Roleplaying Dice**, page 13) to determine if something important happens as expected. The GM sets the scene by describing the surroundings and any other people who are present—known as non-player characters (NPCs)—as well as what's happening in the scene. The players then describe how their investigators react to what they've just learned. Depending on what they're trying to do, the investigators may succeed or fail, just as Peter Grant does in the novels, which all adds to the tension and excitement!

RoL:RPG, like all games, has its own rules. When a player describes what their investigator is trying to do, the GM may call for a dice roll to see if the player is successful. Such dice rolls are usually made because there will be a dramatic effect or a twist in the story's direction if the action succeeds or

fails—for example, does the investigator catch the criminal they're chasing or does the felon get away? The rules, supported by the dice rolls, help the GM make that decision in a fair and unbiased way.

PC, or not PC?

In some roleplaying games, investigators are known as "player characters," abbreviated to "PC." We don't use that abbreviation in *RoL:RPG* because it's also used for the most junior rank in the British police service: Police Constable. So, if you see "PC," we're talking about a serving police officer, not an investigator.

What's In This Book?

Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game contains everything you need to tell stories in Ben Aaronovitch's rich world. All you need to add is some roleplaying dice, pencils, paper, and your imagination! If you are the GM, you should familiarise yourself with this book's core rules chapters before you run the game for your friends. The most important chapters to read are as follows—but, before you start on these, play through the solo adventure **The Domestic**, on page 17, which introduces things through a short game you play on your own.

- **Chapters 1–4** contain the game's rules. They include details about creating investigators, how to use skills and Newtonian magic, when to roll dice, and what the results of those rolls mean.
- **Chapter 5** looks at the structure of the Metropolitan Police Service and how criminal investigations are conducted in the real world; it also contains advice on being a GM.

With **Chapters 1–5** you have the core of the game and can start running the game for your friends—move on to the introductory case file in **Chapter 8**. This adventure aims to help familiarise your players with the London setting and takes you, as the GM, step by step through your first case file. The adventure is based on one of Ben's short stories called "The Cockpit." Also, you may find **Table 1: Glossary of Terms** (page 15) useful.

However, you might want to get a better idea of the game's setting before you start playing, especially if you are not familiar with the *Rivers of London* novels and comics.

- **Chapter 6** describes many of the protagonists from Ben's novels, along with their game "statistics"—what we call a profile. These are ready for the GM to use in the course of their game as non-player characters. This chapter also looks at how the magic of the demi-monde differs from that used by the Folly.
- **Chapter 7** is all about the setting of *Rivers of London* and so details modern-day London, along with a useful history of British magic and the Folly.

Don't worry! The game's rules are actually pretty simple and easy to learn, and you don't have to know them all by heart before you play. Everything in this book is designed to help you become familiar with the rules and setting of the game. There are even some rules cheat sheets at the back of the book.

For those who are more confident or who like a little more "crunch" in their games, **Chapter 9** contains optional rules for the GM to pick and mix from, along with advice on creating your own case files. You don't need to read this chapter straight away—it can wait until later, once you have run a game or two. In the **Appendices**, you'll find six pre-generated investigators for your players to pick up and play, handy rules summaries (cheat sheets) for use during a game, collected maps and handouts for the case file in **Chapter 8**, and a list of other helpful GM resources, along with blank copies of the character sheets.

What Can My Players Read?

There's plenty of material in this book that your players can read as well. Getting your players to play through the solo adventure **The Domestic** (page 17) is an ideal way to introduce them to the game. Then, **Chapters 1–5** would be the most useful. Or, you just ask them to look over **Chapter 5** (and possibly parts of **Chapter 7**) to get a picture of the setting, and then show and talk them through the rules' summaries (cheat sheets) found at the back of the book.

Of course, allowing your players to read **Chapters 6** and **8** is likely to spoil their fun, as these contain secrets that should only become apparent through playing the game—especially the case file (**Chapter 8**). Thus, only the GM should read these chapters for now.

The Rivers of London Setting

You don't have to have read any of Ben Aaronovitch's novels or comics to enjoy this game—everything you need to know about the game's world is contained within this book. Of course, reading Ben's stories is the perfect way to expand your knowledge of the characters and setting, once you have started playing the game.

Note that we have tried to avoid the various novels' major plot spoilers as much as possible, but be warned: there are still some little spoilers here and there. One way to spot them is to look for footnotes[1] at the bottom of a page that tell you which book a particular piece of information comes from. If it isn't a book you've read yet, you may want to skip to the next section; although, as you will see from the next two footnotes, they don't always mark important plot reveals.

When and Where Is the Game Set?

Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game takes place in London in 2016, shortly after the events of the novel, *False Value*. While for many years, DCI Thomas Nightingale was the Folly's only active policeman-cum-Newtonian practitioner—i.e., magician, he recruited PC Peter Grant as his apprentice in January 2012 to help deal with the threat posed by London's spirit of riot and rebellion[2]. Thanks to the increase in magic in the world, in 2015, Nightingale and Grant realised they needed more help to tackle supernatural mysteries and began drafting the Folly Expansion document[3], which described how the Special Assessment Unit planned on expanding its ranks—and that's where the investigators come in!

What Sort of Investigators Do People Play?

Players take on the roles of newly-recruited members of the Folly. That could be as a police officer or it could be a civilian consultant of some sort—the choice is up to the player, although they should talk to their GM to make sure their character concept fits with the type of stories the group wants to tell together—for more on this, see **Chapter 1: Creating Characters**.

The investigators are a team, who work together to solve the case file. Investigators who are police officers bring their knowledge of law enforcement and criminal proceedings, while civilian consultants contribute through their own unique areas of expertise, such as history, languages, or science, and so on. And, like Peter Grant, investigators can also be Newtonian apprentices, i.e., they know how to cast spells and detect magic. Or, they can come from a less formal magical tradition, and be what is known as a "hedge wizard." An investigator can be a police officer or a civilian consultant and be able to cast spells (if that's what the player decides when designing their character). Likewise, some players may prefer not to have spell-casting characters, and that's fine too, as every investigator brings their own unique expertise and capabilities to bear when conducting a case file.

The British Class System

The world of the *Rivers of London* is firmly rooted in the British class system, and its threads can be seen running throughout the novels. This system may not be familiar to those living outside the UK. While there are official grades and classifications, fundamentally, it consists of three levels: the working class, the middle class, and the upper class. The lines can sometimes get a little blurry, though, and it is possible to move between classes; but it isn't always easy, and the newcomer may not always be welcome.

The class a person belongs to is defined by several factors, including their social background (i.e., where they were raised and who their parents were), their level of education, and their profession. Peter Grant grew up on the Peckwater Estate; his mum is a cleaner and his father a jazz musician; he doesn't have a university degree and speaks with a London accent, so he's working class. DCI Nightingale, on the other hand, is firmly upper-middle class; he comes from an affluent family, was privately educated at Casterbrook (a now-defunct practitioner school), and speaks with Received Pronunciation, also known as "the Queen's English."

Which class you're from can have an effect on the way people from other social classes treat you, above and beyond gender and ethnicity. Even today, social elites form networks to support and promote each other at the expense of those from other, lower classes—the so-called "Old Boy Networks," named after the fact that many of their members attended the same public (i.e., private) schools together, such as Eton or Harrow.

Footnotes: [1]Like this one, [2]*Rivers of London* (formerly *Midnight Riot* in the US)

Footnote: [3]*Lies Sleeping*

All civilian investigators seconded to the Special Assessment Unit are issued with a **Folly Consultant's Card** (page 60). While it doesn't grant them the exact same powers given by a police officer's **Warrant Card** (page 211), it does enable them to accompany their police colleagues into places they wouldn't normally be allowed, among other things.

We have to confess that this set-up isn't 100 percent accurate when it comes to how criminal investigations are dealt with in London in the real world. Normally, most civilians wouldn't be allowed open access to crime scenes, suspects, or evidence, even with a consultant's card. But in our world, most police officers can't cast magic spells, and London's rivers aren't home to powerful *genii locorum*! Thus, in the world of the game, civilian consultants work side-by-side with those police officers assigned to the Folly. The key point here is that having investigators from a variety of backgrounds makes for a more interesting and entertaining game, and that's what *RoL:RPG* is all about.

What You Need to Play

You only need a few things to begin playing *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*.

- This rulebook
- **Roleplaying Dice** (see following) or a dice-rolling app
- Paper, some pencils, and an eraser
- **Character Sheets** (page 384)
- If playing in person: somewhere quiet to get together, ideally with a table large enough for rolling dice.
- If playing online: a video conferencing platform that everyone can access
- Two to four hours to play the game. We recommend around two hours for an online game, and up to three to four hours for an in-person game.

Roleplaying Dice

To play this game, the GM and players need a set of percentile dice (D100), and at least one six-sided die (D6). Optionally, they may also wish to have an additional ten-sided die (D10) of a different colour to use as a bonus/penalty die (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111). Such dice can be purchased separately or come in a set of "roleplaying" or polyhedral dice available from hobby, game, and online stores—probably including the place where you bought this book. Alternatively, dice-rolling apps and websites with a dice-rolling simulator can be used.

Ideally, to keep things moving along, players and GM should each have their own set of dice. People new to roleplaying games may never have seen dice with more than six sides. The letter D stands for the word "die" or "dice." The number after the D stands for the range of random numbers it produces when rolled: D10 generates the random numbers 1-10, for instance, while D100 generates the numbers 1-100.

Reading the D100 (Percentile Dice)

Percentile dice—or D100 for short—usually consist of two 10-sided dice that are rolled at the same time. These dice are a pair consisting of a "units" die and a "tens" die. The units die has a single digit on each face and is numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0; while the tens die has two numbers on each face and is numbered 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 00.

When rolled, you read the top numbers on both dice to get the result. For example, a roll of 00 on the tens die combined with a 0 on the units die indicates a result of 100—unfortunately, not a good roll (**Rolling the Dice: Levels of Success and Failure**, page 105). A roll of 00 on the tens die combined with any other roll on the units die indicates a roll of under 10; for example, a roll of 00 on the tens die and 3 on the units die is read as 3—a much, much better result. Likewise, a roll of 40 on the tens die combined with a roll of 7 on the units gives a result of 47.

Alternatively, you could use two units dice of different colours. Read the die of one colour consistently as the tens digit and the other as the units digit: thus, a result of 2 and 3 reads as 23, a result of 0 and 1 reads as 1, and a result of 1 and 0 reads as 10. A result of 0 and 0 reads as 100.

A Good Dice Roll



A Bad Dice Roll



The Character Sheet

Each player should record the details of their investigator on a character sheet. A physical copy of this sheet can be found at the back of this book, ready for photocopying or printing. It can also be downloaded as a PDF from the Chaosium website. The downloadable version is what we call an "autocalc" character sheet, meaning it automatically carries out some of the calculations for you as you fill it in. For more on this, see **About the Character Sheet** (page 75). You can also print out the autocalc sheet for use at the table, if you wish.

What Now?

Now that you've read this introduction and have more of an idea about the game, the next step is for you to play through **The Domestic** (page 17). This is what we call a solo adventure: a type of case file designed for one person to play through on their own without a Game Moderator (GM). This adventure contains all the instructions you need to complete it, and gives you the opportunity to learn some of the game's key concepts through play before you read the rest of the book.

Good luck!



Table 1: Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Case file	An adventure the investigators go on together; also known as a scenario or adventure
Character sheet	Where a player records information about their investigator
D6	A six-sided die
D10	A ten-sided die
D100	Percentile dice (comprised of a "units" die and a "tens" die)
Demi-monde, the	People and creatures who have been touched or changed in some way by magic
Folly, the	The Metropolitan Police Service's "magic branch," aka the Special Assessment Unit. Located on the corner of Russell Square and Bedford Place.
Game Moderator (GM)	The player who runs (referees) the game
Genii locorum	Spirits of place; sing. *genius loci*
Hedge Wizard	A term used by the Folly for non-Newtonian practitioners
Investigator	A player's character in the game
Newtonian Magic	A system of casting spells formulated by Sir Isaac Newton
Practitioner	Someone who uses magic; so a Newtonian practitioner is someone who uses Newtonian magic
Profile	A collection of numbers, also known as statistics, that describe what each character can do in the game
Roleplaying Game (RPG)	A collaborative storytelling game





The Domestic

Adapted from the short story by Ben Aaronovitch.

Start Here

This short introductory adventure aims to teach you the basics of *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*. You don't need to read the rules before you begin. And, if you've already read Ben's short story called "The Domestic," don't worry—we've added in some extra material, with Ben's permission, to give it a few new twists and turns.

One important note before you dive in: don't read the text from start to finish! In a solo adventure like this, you read one numbered section (an entry) at a time, and follow the instructions at its end to see what to read next. Sometimes you will have to roll dice to see if you succeed or fail—don't be tempted to cheat with these rolls. You won't necessarily have more fun if you always succeed. And, once you've finished, you can always go back to the beginning and try a different path to see what would have happened if you'd made different choices. At the end of each entry you will find a number in parentheses—these are "trace numbers" that show which entries may have led you there—meaning you can backtrack if you have to.

Gather the following: a blank character sheet (copy the one in this book or download one from chaosium.com), a pencil and eraser, and two ten-sided percentile dice (**Roleplaying Dice**, page 13), or you can also use a dice-rolling app, if you have one. You are now ready to play *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* (*RoL:RPG*). Go to entry **1**.

Does This Cover All the Rules?

No, but this solo case file does introduce you to almost all of the game's key concepts, such as characteristics, skill values, and Luck. We have simplified combat, damage, and magic to smooth the play experience for you, though. We decided that, if this is your first experience of a roleplaying game, we didn't want to throw everything at you all at once! Instead, this adventure gets you familiar with some of the game terms and basic mechanics, which are then developed with the full rules as you read through the rest of this book.

To support this, you'll also find a short appendix at the end of this adventure that tells you where to find more details on the various concepts we use in The Domestic.



1

The 20-mph (32 kph) speed limit makes it easy to read the doors as you drive your Ford Escort east on Prince of Wales Road. The house numbers count down along a mishmash of terraces, interrupted only by the pillared front of a former Methodist chapel, now a contemporary art centre with the obligatory café and gift shop. You find what you're looking for in the low hundreds and, by some miracle, there is a parking space opposite, just wide enough for your car.

Safely wedged into the parking space, you take a moment to review the report. Verbal disagreements in the basement flat, three nights in a row. Two voices heard, getting louder each time. Culminating on the third night in an almighty crash that prompted a 999 (emergency services) call from the couple upstairs, the Romanian students next door, and a cyclist delivering curry who was startled enough to drop his bag over the railing, ending up with an unholy amalgam of tikka masala, korma, and saag aloo. The responding officers found signs of a struggle, but no other persons on the premises.

You step from the car to see an unsympathetic-looking woman wearing a Hi-Viz safety jacket, a peaked cap, and an acid perm. She is a Civil Enforcement Officer, otherwise known as a parking warden. She notes down your car's registration number.

You begin with the following common skills: Athletics, Drive, Navigate, Observation, Read Person, Research, Social, and Stealth. You also have the combat skills: Fighting and Firearms. All these skills begin with a value of 30%. Write the number 30 on your character sheet in the first space beside each of these skill names.

Now, decide what your job is:
If you are a Police Officer, go to ***9****.*
If you are a Social Worker, go to ***42****.*
If you are a Nurse, go to ***72****.*

(Start)



2

The rush hour traffic begins to break as you chauffeur Ernie across Euston Road and back north. Somewhere near Mornington Crescent he starts snoring. You stop around the corner from Prince of Wales Road to pick up supplies. On your third circuit, a parking space opens up in front of Mrs Fellaman's flat and you cut up an aggrieved woman in a Chelsea tractor to secure the spot. It is seven o'clock.

Around eight, Ernie stirs. You watch him closely, but the way he whines and paws the door suggests no magic is involved. He lets you attach the lead and take him down a cul-de-sac for a comfort break. You capture the results in a latex glove and dispose of them lawfully. Ernie is willing to return to the car, which has remarkably not been ticketed during your three-minute absence. He shows no particular interest in Mrs Fellaman's flat and nods off again. You settle in to continue the stakeout.

Characters recover over time. If you were Hurt, you now return to normal; update your character sheet by erasing the "Hurt" mark.

Go to ***7****.*

(106)

3

You hear the scuff of feet behind the door. It then opens and a little old woman sticks her head around the doorjamb. "*Yes? Can I help you?*"

You ask if she is Mrs Eugenia Fellaman.

"*Yes.*" Her eyes narrow. "*Are you with those two boys from earlier?*"

You assure Mrs Fellaman you have come alone.

She opens the door and steps out, blinking. As she steps up and scans the street, you notice the faded purple of a bruise on her left cheek.

To ask her directly about the bruise, go to ***14****.*
To wait for her to return to the door, go to ***20****.*
To take the opportunity to look inside the house, go to ***31****.*
To ask about these "two boys," go to ***35****.*
To insist on coming in to talk, go to ***46****.*

(107)

4

Wild-eyed, Knuckles grits his teeth as he swings the heavy masonry hammer at you.

Knuckles is initiating an attack against you. His "action" is to try to hit you with his hammer. His Fighting skill is 40/20 (which means Regular 40/Hard 20).

As the target of his attack, you get to "respond." You may use a combat manoeuvre—a special type of attack—to break his grip on the hammer. Decide whether you want to disarm your opponent or flee.
Then carry out an opposed ***Fighting*** *roll: Knuckles makes a Fighting roll and gets a Regular success. Make your own Fighting roll and compare the result to Knuckle's Regular success. Remember, a dice result of triple zero (100) is a fumble, while a 01 is a Critical success.*
Compare the two results: Critical success beats Hard success; Hard success beats Regular success; Regular success beats fail; fail beats fumble.

If you win the opposed roll, go to ***8****.*
If you lose the opposed roll, go to ***12****.*
If it is a draw, go to ***28****.*

(6, 19, 56, 97)

5

You pull out of your precious parking space and turn south towards Russell Square, taking Camden Street to avoid the shuffling mass of tourists attracted to the Lock by overpriced hummus wraps, Doc Martens, and spicy noodles. On the edge of Somers Town you see a local butcher and pop out of the car for a necessary purchase.

The Folly occupies a Georgian terrace on the south side of Russell Square, a location it shares with the Council of British International Schools, the London Mathematical Society, and a birdshit-covered statue of the fifth Duke of Bedford. You pull into the garage around the back. DC Grant's Ford Focus ST, or "Asbo," is not there—a bad sign. But perhaps his dog Toby is still in residence.

Inside the Folly, Toby's basket is empty. A familiar ink-skirted figure glides past, her gaze moving across you like a duster on a long-neglected shelf. This is the housekeeper, Molly. You work up some courage and ask her if you can borrow the Folly's famed ghost-hunting dog. She stops and tilts her head to the side, the black almond-shaped eyes beneath her mob cap skewering you where you stand. After an awkward silence, you repeat the request, holding up your sausages.

For a moment the meaty packet sits in your hand like a terrible, inadvertent insult. Then Molly straightens her head and glides to the door. She points to the far corner of the yard in a manner reminiscent of Donald Sutherland at the end of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

Go to ***11****.*

(102)

6

A masonry hammer pushes the glass inwards. Spiky fragments fall to the floor among the crockery. The heavy metal head runs around the frame, clearing the remaining spikes before its wielder steps through. He is a square and yobbish twentysomething with a bent nose, tattooed knuckles, and cold eyes.

"*I told you there'd be consequences, Genie. You can't just borrow money and not pay it back.*" Knuckles notices the crockery on the floor. "*Strewth. Some other mob get here before us?*"

A second man steps through the window, with a flat cap, a bad goatee, and a missing incisor. He points at you. "*Who's this?*"

"*A witness,*" Knuckles says. He hefts the hammer and steps towards you. His body language says he is looking for a chance to use it. "*Beat it,*" he snarls.

If you are a Police Officer, you may identify yourself. Go to ***19****.*
Otherwise, you may cast a spell, if you know one. To cast Impello, *go to* ***26****. To cast* Scindere, *go to* ***69****.*
To tackle your attacker physically, go to ***4****.*

(101)

7

A little after nine o'clock the parking warden emerges from the darkness, light from the streetlamps glinting on her Hi-Viz jacket. She takes a momentary interest in the Escort, but seeing you behind the wheel, she rolls her eyes and moves on. Ernie growls from the back seat.

Although resentment of traffic wardens could be his natural inclination, you turn around to calm your borrowed dog. He is not reacting to the traffic warden. His ears are forward, his tail straight back. He stares at the building, his attention completely focused on the basement flat, and barks twice.

This is as good a confirmation of supernatural activity as you will get, and judging from the witness reports, indicates the presence of a ghost. You slip out of the Escort and shut Ernie inside. From the pavement, you can hear an argument. A raised voice, Mrs Fellaman's, and then a response—a younger, deeper, male voice. It is followed by the crash of breaking crockery.

To knock firmly on the door, go to ***13****.*
To slip around the back, go to ***33****.*
To draw Mrs Fellaman out by tapping on the window and hiding, go to ***70****.*

(2)

8

You step inside the hammer's swing, closing to an intimate distance and negating Knuckles' advantage.

If you decided to disarm your opponent, go to ***23****.*
If you decided to flee from the fight, go to ***109****.*

(4, 28, 34)

9

You show your warrant card to the parking warden. She grimaces. It's understandable, working as she does for the Parking Operations Operations Team (POOT), formerly the Parking Services Operations Team (before that, it was the Parking Services Enforcement Team). She eyes your plainclothes and the Ford Escort.

"*Are you on official business?*" she asks, stylus poised above her battered handheld computer, desperately holding onto the fraying threads of her authority.

You are a Police Officer attached to the Folly. Note down Police Officer as your Occupation. You have the expert skills of Law 60% and Magic 60%. Write these skills and their starting values of 60 down in the space for expert skills on your character sheet.
Now, choose four of your common skills and raise them from 30% to 60%. Your starting skills are ready.
Finally, roll your ten-sided "units" die twice (usually written as 2D10) and add the result to 50. This is your starting Luck. So, if you rolled 3 and 8, your result would be 3+8+50 = 61. Note down your starting and current Luck in the spaces provided. For the moment, these numbers are both the same, but that may change as this adventure continues.

Go to ***17****.*
(1)

10

Mrs Fellaman heads for the kitchen. You take a moment to survey the flat. Ignoring a chair with its legs broken and the fragments of crockery strewn across the floor, you can see the Victorian origins of the building—this flat was previously the servants' quarters, as well as the kitchen and coal bunker. Everything is crammed into a tight space with a low ceiling. The fireplace is bricked up.

You have a moment to consider how to handle the ghost in this place. A magical intervention will be required.

Spells in RoL:RPG *are cast by forming shapes in the mind (*forma*). First order spells use only a single* forma*. DCI Nightingale, the Folly's resident master of magic, has taught you* lux*, which you used to master the spell Werelight. You have not yet practised enough to learn a second order spell combining two* forma*. But you have learned a second* forma *and can use it for another first order spell.*

If you decided to learn Impello*, which moves an object, go to* ***21****.*
If you decided to learn Scindere*, which holds an object in place, go to* ***30****.*

(18, 22, 65, 83, 96, 100, 108)

11

From the corner of the yard, behind the bins, comes the sound of bestial rage and mortal combat. Something in the shadows tears through plastic and cardboard, snarling through its teeth. It does not sound much like Toby the Ghost-hunting Dog, who has a generally amiable personality, with a distinct affinity for anybody providing food.

To sneak up to the bins and look behind them, go to ***15****.*
To continue surveillance from a distance, go to ***24****.*

(5)

12

You try to step back from the swing, but the heavy hammer smashes into your shoulder and knocks you off-balance.

Mark down that you take 2 damage. If you have suffered 2 damage in total, you are Bloodied, and so mark the Hurt and Bloodied boxes on your character sheet and go to ***34****.*
If you have suffered a total of 3 or more damage, you are Down, and so mark the Down box on your character sheet and go to 78.

(4, 28, 34)

13

You descend the iron stairs. As you hear another plate shatter, you rap on the door. Immediately all noise ceases from inside. Nothing moves for 30 seconds.

You lift up the letterbox and yell to Mrs Fellaman that you know she's in there and you don't intend to leave. After a prolonged pause, you hear the scuff of reluctant feet and the door opens once more. Anger and guilt battle on Mrs Fellaman's face.

"*What do you want this time?*" she says.

If you are a Police Officer, go to ***18****.*

*If not, make a **Power (POW)** roll. If you succeed, go to **22**; if you fail, go to **27**.*

(7, 49)

14

Mrs Fellaman stops as you ask about the bruise. She very deliberately does not lift her hand to her cheek.

"*I walked into the door, didn't I?*" she says. "*You get like that when you're a bit older.*"

You find a gentle way to say that neither of you believes that. She screws up her nose and pushes past you, back into the doorway.

Look at the characteristics on your character sheet. You have Strength (STR) 80. Write it down in the first space beside the characteristic name. When you make a STR roll, you will attempt to roll equal to 80 or lower.
In the second space beside the characteristic name, write down half of that value. In this case, write down 40. When you make a Hard STR roll, you will attempt to roll equal to 40 or lower.

*To wait patiently for Mrs Fellaman to invite you inside, go to **61**.*
*To look for anything that might facilitate illicit entry, go to **71**.*
*To ask about the "two boys," go to **76**.*
*To insist on looking inside the house, go to **82**.*

(3)

15

The volume of the snarling and rending increases as you pad across the yard and press yourself against the wall to look behind the bins. Abruptly, the noise stops.

*Make a **Stealth** roll. Remember, roll 1D100 and attempt to get your Stealth skill value or less.*
Any time you make a skill or characteristic roll, you may spend Luck to improve that roll. So, if you needed 30, but rolled 39, you can choose to spend 9 points of Luck to improve the roll and succeed. Of course, later in the adventure, you may wish you still had those Luck points!
If you do spend Luck, don't forget to update your current Luck value on your character sheet.

*If you succeed at the Stealth roll, go to **29**.*
*If you fail at the Stealth roll, go to **40**.*

(11)

16

Knuckles begins to disengage from the fight. He edges his way towards the back window.

Continue the combat. If your opponent was the last person to take their combat action, it is now your turn and vice versa. His Fighting skill is 40/20.

*Carry out an opposed **Fighting** roll: make a Fighting roll for Knuckles and then one for yourself. Triple zero (100) is a fumble; 01 is a Critical success.*
Compare the two results: Critical success beats Hard success; Hard success beats Regular success; Regular success beats fail; fail beats fumble.
You can still spend Luck to resolve a tie.

*If you win the opposed roll, go to **64**.*
*If you lose the opposed roll, go to **103**.*

(43, 62, 89)

17

You tell the parking warden that you are on official business and ask if she is often in this area late in the evening. Disappointed, she jabs her stylus at a small notice on a pole across the road that says "*Permit holders only until 11 pm.*" She replies, "*So, yes.*"

You ask if she has noticed any recent disturbances.

*You are going to make a **Luck** roll. Roll two ten-sided dice again. This time, use both your "tens" and your "units" dice. This will give you a number between 01 and 100. So, if the tens die comes up 70, and the units die comes up 6, you have rolled 76. A triple zero means 100.*
This is known as rolling 1D100 and is the most common roll in RoL:RPG *play. Compare what you rolled to your current Luck value.*

*If you rolled the same as your current Luck value or less, you succeeded at the Luck roll. Go to **25**.*
*If you rolled higher than your current Luck value, you failed at the Luck roll. Go to **36**.*

(9)

18

You tell Mrs Fellaman that you overheard an argument and a violent exchange, and you intend to enter her residence to assess the situation.

"*No,*" she snaps. "*Bugger off.*"

You inform her that you have reason to believe she is consorting with a spirit, in contravention of the Act against Conjuration, Witchcraft, and Dealing with Evil and Wicked Spirits 1604. Hopefully, Mrs Fellaman is not up to date on the legislation, as the Act was superseded in 1735.

Her shoulders slump. "*You'd better come in,*" she says.

*Go to **10**.*

(13)

19

There is little room to back off. You raise your hand and issue a verbal warning with the authority they taught you at Hendon. Few villains are stupid enough to think that assaulting a police officer will in any way improve their situation.

Unfortunately, Knuckles is one of that rare breed. He swings the hammer.

*Go to **4**.*

(6)

20

It's another 30 seconds before Mrs Fellaman seems satisfied that you are not there to lure her into an ambush. She returns to the doorway and gives you a suspicious stare.

"*You're very quiet, aren't you?*" she says. "*What do you want?*"

Look at the characteristics on your character sheet. You have Constitution (CON) 80. Write it down in the first space beside the characteristic name. When you make a CON roll, you will attempt to roll equal to 80 or lower.
In the second space beside the characteristic name, write down half of that value. In this case, write down 40. When you make a Hard CON roll, you will attempt to roll equal to 40 or lower.

*To ask about the bruise on Mrs Fellaman's cheek, go to **50**.*
*To look for anything that might facilitate illicit entry, go to **71**.*
*To ask about the "two boys", go to **76**.*
*To insist on looking inside the house, go to **82**.*

(3)

21

After long nights attempting to push over empty cans of fizzy drink from a distance, you progressed to long nights successfully pushing over full cans of fizzy drink from



a distance. Molly was not pleased about the sticky floor, but you can achieve an effective cast of *Impello* every time, particularly if you are thirsty.

Note on your character sheet that you have Werelight and Impello *as mastered spells. You do this by marking the square next to the spell name.*
You begin with a number of magic points equal to one-fifth of your Power (POW). So, if you have a POW of 70, you begin with 14 magic points. Each spell you master adds an additional magic point, so add 2 magic points for mastering Werelight and Impello. *Thus, you have a total of 16 magic points. Note down your total starting and current magic points in the spaces provided. For the moment, these numbers are both the same, but this will change as the adventure continues.*
To cast a spell, you must spend magic points. It is exceptionally dangerous to spend more magic points than you have. Magic points regenerate on their own when you move from one scene to another.

Go to ***41****.*

(10)

22

You tell Mrs Fellaman that you are aware her flat is haunted, and you are a specialist who can help her to deal with the offending spectre.

She curls her lip. "*I don't want any help,*" she says.

You remind her that everybody is very concerned for her welfare and, if the disturbances continue, the neighbours will bring in the police; also, she has a finite supply of crockery.

This last point seems to strike home. "*I wouldn't want my Charles and Di wedding plate to get chipped,*" she says. "*All right. You'd better come in.*"

Go to ***10****.*

(13)

23

You step, pivot, and twist the hammer as far as you can. Knuckles gasps and drops it. You have the presence of mind to whip your foot out of the way as the hammer slams against the floorboards.

You have disarmed your opponent. Go to ***39****.*

(8)

24

You back up to the other side of the yard and try to see what is banging around behind the bins. Molly watches your heroics like a cat studies a mortally wounded pigeon.

The animal—if that is what it is—seems to have quietened down.

Make an ***Observation*** *roll. Remember, roll 1D100 and attempt to get your Observation skill value or less.*
Any time you make a skill or characteristic roll, you may spend Luck to improve that roll. So, if you needed 40, but rolled 52, you can choose to spend 12 points of Luck to improve the roll and succeed. Of course, later in the adventure, you may wish you still had those Luck points!
If you do spend Luck, don't forget to update your current Luck value on your character sheet.
If you succeed at the Observation roll, go to ***47****.*
If you fail at the Observation roll, go to ***53****.*

(11)

25

"*Funny you should ask,*" she says. "*I've seen a couple of shady characters hanging around over there.*" She points the stylus across the road again. "*Not unusual for dealers to nip down the basement stairs to make a sale. But these two were more like… what would you call them… enforcers? The guys who break your leg to persuade you to pay up.*"

Interesting. You cross the road.

Go to ***107****.*

(17)

26

You concentrate on pushing Knuckles in the chest. "Impello!"

Spend 1 magic point. Make a ***Magic*** *skill roll. Since you have mastered* Impello, *you may have a bonus die. This means you roll your tens die twice and take the best result. So, if you roll 92 and 22, you would use the 22.*
If you succeed, go to ***32****. If you fail, go to* ***56****.*

(6)

27

You tell Mrs Fellaman you are aware her flat is haunted, and that you are a specialist who can help her deal with the offending spectre.

"*It's none of your business,*" she says. "*Crock off, will you?*" The door slams in your face.

Ernie stares at you from the car window. He seems unimpressed.

If you have not already tried it, you may go around the back instead. Go to ***33****.*
If you are willing to risk upsetting Mrs Fellaman further, you may tap her window and conceal yourself in an attempt to draw her out. Go to ***70****.*
Otherwise, you must make a forced entry. Go to ***104****.*

(13)

28

You struggle to block the hammer. Knuckles grits his teeth and snarls.

You may spend Luck to reduce your roll enough to increase your level of success. So, if you needed 30 for a Hard success and you rolled 43, you would have to spend 13 points of Luck to succeed. If you do this, go to ***8****.*

If you do not wish to spend Luck, the character who is taking their action wins and the character who is responding loses.
So, if it is your action, you win. Go to ***8****.*
If it is Knuckles' action and you are responding, you lose. Go to ***12****.*

(4, 34)

29

You get a good look into the shadowy space behind the bins. It is a dark nest feathered with shredded packaging, and at its heart lurks a Yorkshire terrier. This is not Toby. This is some manner of grubby devil dog, with face markings not unlike the kind of cartoon masked burglars who used to walk around with huge sacks reading SWAG.

The dog notices you and emerges from its lair, growling deep in its throat.

Go to ***77****.*

(15)

30

Apple crumble has not tasted the same since you spent long nights with Nightingale, attempting to fix an apple atop a candlestick while he swung his cricket bat at it. You have developed some fluency with *Scindere*.

Note on your character sheet that you have Werelight and Scindere *as mastered spells. You do this by marking the square next to the spell name.*
You begin with a number of magic points equal to one-fifth of your Power (POW). So, if you have a POW of 60, you begin with 12 magic points. Each spell you master adds an additional magic point, so add 2 magic points for mastering Werelight and Scindere. *Thus, you have a total of 14 magic points. Note down your total starting and current magic points in the spaces provided. For the moment, these numbers are both the same, but this will change as the adventure continues.*
To cast a spell, you must spend magic points. It is exceptionally dangerous to spend more magic points than you have. Magic points regenerate on their own when you move from one scene to another.

Go to ***41****.*

(10)

31

While Mrs Fellaman's back is turned, you take the opportunity to pop your head inside the door. You glimpse a mean little corridor which opens into a mean little living room/kitchen combination. There are no obvious signs of a struggle.

You pull back just as Mrs Fellaman turns around. She gives you a suspicious look as she returns to the doorway.

Look at the characteristics on your character sheet. You have Dexterity (DEX) 80. Write it down in the first space beside the characteristic name. When you make a DEX roll, you will attempt to roll equal to 80 or lower.
In the second space beside the characteristic name, write down half of that value. In this case, write down 40. When you make a Hard DEX roll, you will attempt to roll equal to 40 or lower.

To ask about the bruise on Mrs Fellaman's cheek, go to ***50****.*
To wait patiently for her to invite you in, go to ***61****.*
To ask about the "two boys," go to ***76****.*
To insist on looking inside the house, go to ***82****.*

(3)

32

Knuckles opens his eyes wide in surprise as he is shoved by an invisible hand. The hammer drops from his grasp.

*Make a **Power (POW)** roll. If you succeed, go to **37**; if you fail, go to **45**.*

(26)

33

Accessing the rear of Mrs Fellaman's flat is not straightforward. It is one in a row of private gardens protected by a brick wall, a serious knot of shrubbery, and a locked wooden gate stained a pleasing cherry red. You could deal with the lock, but the simplest thing might be to go over the wall.

You wait for the street to clear of passers-by. A mother with a young child is the last straggler. As she bends to adjust something in her buggy, you swing your leg up and brace yourself on the wall.

*Make an **Athletics** roll. Remember, you achieve a Regular success if you roll equal to the skill value or less, and you achieve a Hard success if you roll equal to half its value or less.*

*If you achieve a Hard success, go to **38**.*
*If you achieve a Regular success, go to **44**.*
*If you fail the roll, go to **49**.*

(7, 27, 91)

34

Knuckles prowls the living room, watching your movements for any sign of weakness. He feints with the business end of his hammer.

Continue the combat. If Knuckles has just taken his action, it is now your action and vice versa. His Fighting skill is 40/20.
Decide whether you want to disarm your opponent or flee. If you have already refused an opportunity to flee, you must attempt to disarm. Whether it is his turn to act or respond, Knuckles tries to damage you.

*Carry out an opposed **Fighting** roll. Knuckles makes a Fighting roll and gets a fail. Make a Fighting roll for yourself. Triple zero (100) is a fumble; 01 is a Critical success.*
Compare the two results: Critical success beats Hard success; Hard success beats Regular success; Regular success beats fail; fail beats fumble.

*If you win the opposed roll, go to **8**.*
*If you lose the opposed roll, go to **12**.*
*If it is a draw, go to **28**.*

(12, 109)

35

You ask about the two boys Mrs Fellaman referred to. She gives the street one last look and then returns to the doorway.

"*Toerags,*" she says. "*Claimed I owe them money. I've never seen them before in my life. If they come back I'll give them something they won't like.*"

Door-to-door scams are still popular in the area, particularly those that target the elderly. But this particular lady does not seem taken in by them.

Look at the characteristics on your character sheet. You have Intelligence (INT) 80. Write it down in the first space beside the characteristic name. When you make an INT roll, you will attempt to roll equal to 80 or lower.
In the second space beside the characteristic name, write down half of that value. In this case, write down 40. When you make a Hard INT roll, you will attempt to roll equal to 40 or lower.

*To ask about the bruise on Mrs Fellaman's cheek, go to **50**.*
*To wait patiently for her to invite you in, go to **61**.*
*To look for anything that might facilitate illicit entry, go to **71**.*
*To insist on looking inside the house, go to **82**.*

(3)

36

"*Sure,*" she says. "*Guy on the second floor uses a super soaker on anybody playing grime with their car windows open. Passing beards get physical about sourdough recipes. Old geezer walks a chihuahua that feels threatened by railings and footwear. I see all life here.*"

You thank her for her diligence and cross the road.

*Go to **107**.*

(17)

37

Knuckles flies backwards through the air. His leg snags on an armchair and he flails, crashing to the ground head first. He stops moving. The hammer bumps on the carpet in front of you.

You turn to the second assailant.

*Your successful POW roll increased the spell's effect. Go to **99**.*

(32)

38

You vault the wall in a single, clean movement, avoiding the foliage and landing catlike on the other side of the gate. After this Olympic-level performance, it is a simple matter to thread your way from garden to garden, counting the fences until you are level with the rear of Mrs Fellaman's flat.

*Go to **65**.*

(33)

39

Irate at the loss of his hammer, Knuckles advances, fists raised. His boxing stance is informed more by trashy cinema than any commitment to the gym.

Knuckles jabs at your face. If he has already taken his action, it is now your action and vice versa. If the last thing you did was cast a spell, it is now Knuckles' action. His Fighting skill is 40/20.

*Decide whether you want to damage your opponent or restrain him. Now, carry out an opposed **Fighting** roll: make a Fighting roll for Knuckles, then one for yourself. Triple zero (100) is a fumble; 01 is a Critical success.*
Compare the two results: Critical success beats Hard success; Hard success beats Regular success; Regular success beats fail; fail beats fumble.

If the opposed roll is tied, you may spend Luck to reduce your roll enough to increase your level of success. So, if you needed 30 for a Regular success and you rolled 54, you would have to spend 24 points of Luck to succeed.
If you do not wish to spend Luck, the character who is taking their action wins and the character who is responding loses.

*If you win the opposed roll and decided to damage your opponent, go to **54**.*
*If you win the opposed roll and decided to restrain your opponent, go to **59**.*
*If you lose the opposed roll, go to **48**.*

(23, 45, 86)

40

A hairy missile with teeth launches from behind the bins. You throw yourself out of its path.

*Make a **Dexterity (DEX)** roll. As usual, you may spend Luck to improve your roll. If you succeed, go to **58**; if you fail, go to **68**.*

(15)

41

Mrs Fellaman emerges from the kitchen holding a white-enamel camping mug and the kind of plastic cup that comes from the top of a Thermos flask. You sit down at the table. China crunches beneath your feet. "*Sorry I'm out of real cups,*" she says.

Her teapot has somehow survived. As the tea brews she offers you a custard cream. You take one and ask about the ghost.

"*He's my husband,*" she says, the edge of her mouth curling. "*Victor. He first showed up three months ago. Always at night. Same as he ever was. Quieter maybe.*"

You lead the conversation slowly to the bruise on her cheek. She touches it as if she had forgotten it was there.

"*We always used to row, you know, some people you just row with—I suppose even him being passed on couldn't change that. He made me so cross. I, uh...*" She looks sheepish. "*I forgot he was a ghost. I ran right through him, hit the wall, and fell over. You know how it is, you grab the nearest thing. That was the cupboard. It fell over, and then I had the Old Bill knocking at my door.*"

Your custard cream is finished. You ask Mrs Fellaman to summon her husband for you.

"*You're joking,*" she says. "*He comes and goes when he wants—always did.*"

You push back your chair, stand up, and open your palm.

*You need a werelight to draw out the ghost. As there is no time pressure on you to cast the Werelight spell, there is no need to make a Magic roll to see if you are successful. Spend 1 magic point and write your new current magic point total in the space provided on your character sheet. Go to **51**.*

(21, 30)

42

You tell the traffic warden you are a social worker visiting a family across the road. Her expression does not change. "*So, not delivering primary healthcare?*" she asks, stylus poised above her battered handheld computer.

You are a Social Worker with links to the Folly. Note down Social Worker as your Occupation. Raise your Observation, Research, and Social skills from 30% to 60%. Write these numbers in the first space beside the skill names. You have the expert skill Magic at 60%. Write this in the space for expert skills. Choose one more common skill and raise it from 30% to 60%.

You are also good at Languages. Decide on three specialisations and assign those as expert skills at 60%, 30%, and 30%. So, for instance, you might have Languages (Gujerati) 60%, Languages (Arabic) 30%, and Languages (Cantonese) 30%. Write these on your character sheet, too. Your starting skills are ready.

Finally, roll your ten-sided "units" die twice (usually written as 2D10) and add the result to 50. This is your starting Luck. So, if you rolled 1 and 8, your result would be 1+8+50 = 59. Note down your starting and current Luck in the spaces provided. For the moment, these numbers are both the same, but that may change as this adventure continues.

*Go to **52**.*

(1)

43

Knuckles is a little too slow this time. You catch his forearm and immobilise it.

*If you already had Knuckles restrained, and you are a Police Officer, go to **105**.*
*If you already had Knuckles restrained, and you are a Nurse or Social Worker, go to **84**.*

Otherwise, continue the combat, but give Knuckles a penalty die for the remainder of the fight. This means that every time you roll for Knuckles, roll your tens die twice and take the worst result. So, if the tens dice come up 40 and 60 and the units die comes up 9, you have rolled 49 and 69. The worst result is 69, so that's the one you use to determine whether Knuckles succeeds or fails at his Fighting roll.
You may attempt a further combat manoeuvre to restrain Knuckles completely.

*Go to **16**.*

(67)

44

You vault the wall, but your foot snags on a shrub and you topple down the far side of the gate. Your wrist bends back at impact.

*If you are a Nurse, go to **55**. Otherwise, go to **60**.*

(33)

45

Knuckles stumbles back, collapsing into an armchair. His hammer hits the carpet. You can see him fail to process what just happened. He falls back on what he knows, getting back to his feet and closing for a fist fight. Still, you have successfully disarmed him.

*Although your POW roll was unsuccessful, the spell still had a minor effect. Go to **39**.*

(32)

46

You explain to Mrs Fellaman that you would like to come in to talk about the previous night's disturbance. She returns to the doorway.

"*I've already spoke to the other copper,*" she says. By this she means the sergeant whose perceptive report led to your involvement. You try again to invite yourself into the house. Mrs Fellaman plants her feet and folds her arms.

Look at the characteristics on your character sheet. You have Power (POW) 80. Write it down in the first space beside the characteristic name. When you make a POW roll, you will attempt to roll equal to 80 or lower.
In the second space beside the characteristic name, write down half of that value. In this case, write down 40. When you make a Hard POW roll, you will attempt to roll equal to 40 or lower.

*To ask about the bruise on Mrs Fellaman's cheek, go to **50**.*
*To wait patiently for her to invite you in, go to **61**.*
*To look for anything that might facilitate illicit entry, go to **71**.*
*To ask about the "two boys," go to **76**.*

(3)



47

From this distance you see little movement behind the bins. Something rustles quietly in the shadows, but it could easily be the wrapping from a Marks & Spencer vegetable biryani.

Then you glimpse it out of the corner of your eye, moving fast and low against the ground. It passes beneath a window and you recognise that the bin fiend is a dog. But not Toby. This is a scrappy Yorkshire terrier, with the kind of face that Cerberus might pull upon learning he has been resurrected in miniature with only one head.

*Go to **77**.*

(24)

48

Knuckles throws a torrent of punches. You are knocked back against the table.

*Mark down that you take 1 damage. If you have suffered 1 damage in total, you are Hurt. If you have suffered 2 damage in total, you are Bloodied. If either of these, go to **67**.*
*If you have suffered 3 damage in total, you are Down. Go to **95**.*

(39)

49

With a brave effort, you get up on the wall, but you misjudge the height of the gate. Your supporting foot snags on a branch and you tumble, landing on your back on the pavement.

A teenage boy in a Tottenham Hotspur strip (jersey) rounds the corner, dribbling a football (soccer ball). Seeing you sprawled there, he pauses. Then he bounces his ball off the gate and dodges around your head, beating an imaginary defender.

You get to your feet. A neighbour peers from their kitchen window to see what all the noise is.

*If you have not already tried it, you may return to the front door and knock firmly. Go to **13**.*
*Otherwise, you must make a forced entry. Go to **104**.*

(*33*)

50

Mrs Fellaman turns her head away as you ask about the bruise. She very deliberately does not lift her hand to her cheek.

"*I walked into the door, didn't I?*" she says. "*You get like that when you're a bit older.*"

You find a gentle way to say that neither of you believes that. She does not relent. But she doesn't argue with you either.



You have Strength (STR) 60. Write that, and its half value of 30, beside the characteristic name.
Your skills also use half values for Hard skill rolls. Fill those in now. So, if your Fighting skill has a value of 30%, then its half value is 15%, written in this adventure as 30/15.

*Go to **88**.*

(20, 31, 35, 46)

51

A small and very bright sphere appears in your hand, the size of a golf ball. From experience, you know its energy is irresistible to ghosts. You place the werelight on the table. Mrs Fellaman stares at it wide-eyed. "*What's that?*" she asks.

Before you can answer, the ball of light darkens to a dim crimson. A ghost is feeding on its energy. You look around.

A man stands against the side wall, looking at you with apparent amazement. He is young, early 20s, wearing a rather nice suit. He looks like he could feature on the Wikipedia page which defines the Mod subculture.

You raise an eyebrow at Mrs Fellaman.

"*What?*" she says. "*He looks just like he did when I met him.*"

You look ghost-Victor over from head to toe. Your gaze stops on his shoes. They're old, worn, brown; too big for his feet. Clumpy. No self-respecting Mod would wear those shoes.

*To ask the ghost about Mrs Fellaman, go to **63**.*
*To ask the ghost why he is here, go to **93**.*
*To shut down the werelight, go to **101**.*

(41)

52

You explain that this is a preliminary visit to a new client. The warden points her stylus at a small notice on a pole across the road. "*Permit holders only until 11 pm,*" she says. "*Do you have a permit for zone CA-F?*"

*You are going to make a **Luck** roll. Roll two ten-sided dice again. This time, use both your "tens" and your "units" dice. This will give you a number between 01 and 100. So, if the tens die comes up 50, and the units die comes up 3, you have rolled 53. A triple zero means 100.*
This is known as rolling 1D100 and is the most common roll in RoL:RPG *play. Compare what you rolled to your current Luck value.*

*If you rolled equal to your current Luck value or less, you succeeded at the Luck roll. Go to **57**.*
*If you rolled higher than your current Luck value, you failed at the Luck roll. Go to **66**.*

(42)

53

You keep your eye on the dark recess behind the bins. Things seem to have quietened down. A shadow flops, the torn remains of a box catching an air current. Where is the creature that was enacting such loud violence a few seconds ago?

A hairy missile with teeth erupts from the ground beside you. You throw yourself out of its path.

*Make a Hard **Dexterity (DEX)** roll. Remember, on a Hard challenge you need to roll equal to half of your DEX value or less. As usual, you may spend Luck to improve your roll.*

*If you succeed, go to **58**; if you fail, go to **68**.*

(24)

54

Your fist catches Knuckles on the ear. He yowls and cups a hand over it.

*Mark down on some scrap paper that you have inflicted 1 damage to Knuckles. If you have inflicted 3 or more damage in total, your opponent drops to the ground. Go to **99**.*
*Otherwise, go to **67**.*

(39)

55

You have seen this injury hundreds of times—a reflexive thrust of the hand to break a fall. At its worst, it results in a broken collarbone, but you have a simple wrist sprain. Only rest will fix it permanently, but you can make do for now with one of the bandages you keep about your person.

Nobody from the corner flat comes out to investigate while you sit in their garden applying the bandage for compression. You flex your fingers. This will be all right until you get home.

Favouring your other hand, you work from garden to garden, counting the fences until you are level with Mrs Fellaman's flat.

*Go to **65**.*

(44)

56

Under pressure, you sometimes find it hard to shape the *forma*. The hammer arcing towards your head represents a significant amount of pressure. This time, the spell eludes you.

*You must deal with your attacker, hand-to-hand. Go to **4**.*

(26)

57

You are forced to concede that you do not possess the appropriate permit. Yet the warden hesitates.

"*Wait a minute. Social worker? What's that like? My sister's looking for a job.*"

You explain that the role is one of support and problem-solving, rooted in social and interpersonal difficulties. It requires careful record-keeping and liaison with a wide range of other services and agencies, under pressure from shrinking budgets. At heart, the work aims for a more equal and just society.

"*Oh right. Forget it then. She's pretty social, but not much of a worker, if you know what I mean.*" The warden looks in both directions. "*I'll miss you this time, love, OK? Don't be here in an hour.*"

She walks off. You cross the road.

*Go to **107**.*

(52)

58

You duck and roll across the yard, while the snarling ball of grubby trouble soars through the space you recently occupied. As you rise, you recognise your assailant as a Yorkshire terrier—with a stare that would be at home in any post-apocalyptic thriller.

You face up to the beast.

*Go to **77**.*

(40, 53)

59

You sidestep Knuckles' punch and get a lock on his arm. You try to force him to the ground. He continues to lash out at your legs and stomach.

Continue the combat, but give Knuckles a penalty die for the remainder of the fight. This means that every time you roll for Knuckles, roll your tens die twice and take the worst result. So, if the tens dice come up 30 and 70 and the units die comes up 8, you have rolled 38 and 78. The worst result is 78, so that's the one you have to use to determine whether Knuckles succeeds or fails at his Fighting roll.
You may attempt a further combat manoeuvre to restrain Knuckles completely.

*Go to **67**.*

(39)

60

You flex your injured hand and grimace at the surge of pain. You should probably apply ice to stop it swelling, but none is available while you squat here on the paving of a stranger's back garden. The sooner you can deal with this situation, the sooner you can get the injury looked at.

You press on from garden to garden, counting the fences until you are level with Mrs Fellaman's flat.

Until you leave Prince of Wales Road, you must add a penalty die to your Fighting rolls. This means that every time you make a Fighting roll, roll your tens die twice and take the worst result. So, if the tens dice come up 40 and 60 and the units die comes up 1, you have rolled 41 and 61. The worst result is 61, so that's the one you have to use to determine whether you succeed or fail at your Fighting roll.

*Go to **65**.*

(44)

61

You glance at the neighbouring properties in the manner of one who is concerned about confidentiality. The silence stretches out.

Mrs Fellaman gives you the kind of stare perfected by those with a preference for marmalade sandwiches. She shows no inclination whatsoever to relocate the conversation.

You have Constitution (CON) 60. Write that, and its half value of 30, beside the characteristic name.
Your skills also use half values for Hard skill rolls. Fill those in now. So, if your Stealth skill has a value of 60%, then its half value is 30%, written in this adventure as 60/30.

*Go to **88**.*

(14, 31, 35, 46)

62

Knuckles is wary of you now. The two of you crash around the living room, trading punches while crockery crunches beneath your feet. His heel snags on the fireplace and you take the opportunity to seize Mrs Fellaman's carriage clock and smash him over the head.

Mark down on some scrap paper that you inflict 1 damage to Knuckles. If you have inflicted 3 or more damage in total, your opponent drops to the ground. Go to ***99****.*
Otherwise, go to ***16****.*

(67)

63

The man at the wall hesitates. He doesn't answer your questions about Mrs Fellaman. "*What do you want?*" he asks.

Something is wrong with his accent too. It is not the kind of '60s cockney twang that would fit with the suit and Eugenia Fellaman. You glance at the werelight. While the conversation continues, you are feeding magic to this ghost.

To ask the ghost why he is here, go to ***93****.*
To shut down the werelight, go to ***101****.*

(51)

64

Knuckles flees to the window and turns his back to clamber out. You vault over the settee and reach him in time to slam his head against the frame.

Mark down on some scrap paper that you inflict 1 damage to Knuckles. If you have inflicted 3 or more damage in total, your opponent drops to the ground. Go to ***99****.*
Otherwise, go to ***103****.*

(16)

65

The flat has a small rear garden which looks like it was tended with care until recently. You try the kitchen door. It is unlocked. You announce your presence and step inside the flat.

Mrs Fellaman appears in the doorway to the living room. She looks defeated.

"*Can't take a hint, can you?*" she says. "*Well, I suppose you better come in.*"

Go to ***10****.*

(38, 55, 60)

66

You are forced to concede that you do not possess the appropriate permit. The traffic warden taps her teeth with the council-issued stylus and checks her watch.

Defeated, you return to the car and ease it out of the space. After 20 minutes of circling, you find an incredibly tight space three streets away. Local kids sitting on a wall eye the Escort's removable components. Judging by their expressions of disgust, you have nothing to fear.

You make your way on foot back to the address on Prince of Wales Road.

Go to ***107****.*

(52)

67

Knuckles spits, breathing hard. You are not the easy victim he expected.

Continue the combat. If your opponent was the last person to take their action, it is now your turn and vice versa. Knuckles' Fighting skill is 40/20.
On your turn, decide whether you want to damage your opponent or restrain him.
On his turn, Knuckles tries to damage you.

Carry out an opposed ***Fighting*** *roll: make a Fighting roll for Knuckles, and then one for yourself. Triple zero (100) is a fumble; 01 is a Critical success.*
Compare the two results: Critical success beats Hard success; Hard success beats Regular success; Regular success beats fail; fail beats fumble.

Remember, if the opposed roll is tied, you may spend Luck to reduce your roll enough to increase your level of success. So, if you needed 45 for a Regular success and you rolled 56, you would have to spend 11 points of Luck to succeed.
If you do not wish to spend Luck, the character who is taking their action wins and the character who is responding loses.

If you win the opposed roll and decided to restrain your opponent, go to ***43****.*
If you win the opposed roll and decided to damage your opponent, go to ***62****.*
If you lose the opposed roll go to ***89****.*

(48, 54, 59)

68

You don't move fast enough. As its limbs splay in mid-air, you identify a Yorkshire terrier, with a face constructed from a shaggy nightmare. It clips your ribs and knocks you spinning.

Pain flares up your leg as you get to your feet.

You were knocked prone by the dog's attack. This leaves you particularly vulnerable to further attacks. However, when it is your turn to act, you may stand up as a free action.

Go to ***77****.*

(*40*, *53*)

69

You concentrate on fixing the hammer in space. "Scindere!"

Spend 1 magic point. If you want to boost the spell for greater effect, spend 1 additional magic point. Update your current magic points accordingly.
Make a ***Magic*** *skill roll. Since you have mastered* Scindere, *you may have a bonus die. This means you roll your tens die twice and take the best result. So, if you roll 36 and 16, you would use the 16. If you succeed, go to* ***75****; if you fail, go to* ***97****.*

(6)

70

This may not be the most professional move of your career. However, it might put some distance between the householder and whatever has manifested inside her residence. Looking around for a hiding place, you consider the steps above her door, which lead to the flats above. You would be in plain sight, but only if Mrs Fellaman looks directly up. Worth a try.

From inside, you hear another plate smash. You rap on the window then flee up the stairs. You have barely reached your refuge when Mrs Fellaman bursts from the door, moving faster than you expected. She appears to have a cricket bat.

Go to ***74****.*

(7, 27)

71

There is a hook on the wall behind Mrs Fellaman, upon which hangs a ring with two Yale keys. The letterbox has no brushes. An enterprising burglar with a long, hooked stick and a steady hand might enter with minimal force—or a magically-skilled investigator looking for a conventional solution.

She follows your gaze over her shoulder and down the back of the door. "*What?*" she asks.

You have Dexterity (DEX) 60. Write that, and its half value of 30, beside the characteristic name.
Your skills also use half values for Hard skill rolls. Fill those in now. So, if your Read Person skill has a value of 60%, then its half value is 30%, or 60/30.

Go to ***88****.*

(14, 20, 35, 46)

72

You tell the traffic warden you are a nurse attending a new patient across the road. The warden points her stylus at your rear-view mirror. "*You're not displaying the Health Emergency Badge,*" she says.

You are a Nurse with links to the Folly. Note down Nurse as your Occupation. You have the expert skills Medicine at 60% and Magic at 60%. Write these skills and their starting values down in the space for expert skills on your character sheet. Raise your Observation, Read Person, and Social skills from 30% to 60%. You may choose one more common skill and raise that from 30% to 60%. Your starting skills are ready.

Finally, roll your ten-sided "units" die twice (usually written as 2D10) and add the result to 50. This is your starting Luck. So, if you rolled 8 and 7, your result would be 8+7+50 = 65. Note down your starting and current Luck in the spaces provided. For the moment, these numbers are both the same, but that may change as this adventure continues.

Go to ***81****.*

(1)

73

You put an armchair between yourself and Knuckles, bolt for the door, and throw it open. You scramble out onto Prince of Wales Road, where the sounds of struggle have already attracted a few passers-by. One is on their phone, presumably to the emergency services.

You are still an apprentice in the ways of magic, and you have successfully escaped a dangerous situation. You can call in reinforcements. But this will not go down as a glorious day in your career with the Folly.

Mrs Fellaman's voice splits the air, screaming at the intruders. From the thump of wood against flesh and the whining of low-level toughs, she is giving as good as she gets.

You have failed to get to the bottom of what's happening at Prince of Wales Road. Don't worry if things didn't turn out for the best—you can always return to the beginning and try again, perhaps choosing a different occupation. Good luck! THE END.

(109)

74

Mrs Fellaman steps up to the pavement, brandishing her willow-and-linseed-oil weapon with serious intent. "*I told you boys I'm not paying!*" she yells, scanning in both directions. A passing cyclist swerves, narrowly missing the Escort.

She notices Ernie and steps closer to the car, eyeing the hairy terror. For a moment you visualise the paperwork that will result if the pensioner you were supposed to be protecting initiated an armed brawl with a stray dog you had acquired. Then she turns around and spots you on the stairs. Her jaw sets.

*If you are a Social Worker, go to **79**.*
*Otherwise, make a **Social** skill roll. Remember, you achieve a Regular success if you roll equal to the skill value or less, and you achieve a Hard success if you roll equal to its half value or less. If you achieve a Hard success, go to **83**. If you achieve a Regular success, go to **87**. If you fail the roll, go to **91**.*

(70)



75

Confusion breaks across Knuckles' face as the spell takes hold and the hammer locks into place in the air.

*If you boosted the spell, go to **80**. Otherwise, go to **86**.*

(69)

76

You ask about the two boys Mrs Fellaman referred to earlier. She wrinkles her nose.

"*Toerags,*" she says. "*Claimed I owe them money. I've never seen them before in my life. If they come back, I'll give them something they won't like.*"

Door-to-door scams are still popular in the area, particularly those that target the elderly. But this particular lady does not seem susceptible to social engineering.

You have Intelligence (INT) 60. Write that, and its half value of 30, beside the characteristic name.
Your skills also use half values for Hard skill rolls. Fill those in now. So, if your Social skill has a value of 60%, then its half value is 30%, or 60/30.

*Go to **88**.*

(14, 20, 31, 46)

77

As you confront the terrier, you experience three rapid insights. First, a nametag glints beneath the grimy leather of its collar. Second, a dog that is drawn to the Folly probably has some innate magic sensitivity. Third, it has noticed your packet of artisan sausages and its eyes are fixed on the gleaming plastic wrap. You pull open the packet and extract a sausage for the hungry dog.

*You could make an **Animal Handling** roll to subdue the Yorkshire terrier—but you do not possess this expert skill. You may instead Try Your Luck, by spending 10 Luck points to attempt an Animal Handling roll, but this will be a Hard roll on your Intelligence (INT) or Power (POW), whichever is highest. If you succeed, you can choose to spend a further 10 points of Luck to permanently acquire the Animal Handling skill.*

*If you want to Try Your Luck, go to **85**.*
*If you prefer not to spend your Luck in this situation, go to **98**.*

(29, 47, 58, 68)

78

Your legs buckle and you fall into nothingness.

When your vision returns, you are staring at the light in the centre of Mrs Fellaman's ceiling. Your head pounds. Her face looms into view, creating an impromptu eclipse.

"*When you got mashed by that hammer, I thought you were a goner,*" Mrs Fellaman says. "*Get off my carpet so I can sweep up.*" She offers you a wiry hand.

Your attackers appear to have left.

Because you were Down at the end of the fight, you remain Hurt for the rest of the day. Erase the marks from the Down and Bloodied boxes on your character sheet.

*Go to **110**.*

(12)

79

This is not the first time you have faced down an irate senior citizen wielding a cricket bat. You are able to push aside immediate worries about head injuries and concussion in order to take a professional approach.

*Go to **83**.*

(74)

80

Your onrushing attacker runs straight into the masonry hammer, literally hitting himself in the face. He goes down like a coyote in a cartoon.

You turn to the second assailant.

*Go to **99**.*

(75, 103)

81

The Ford Escort you are using on this occasion does not have the stock of blank badges you use on NHS (National Health Service) business. You go through your pockets for a spare.

The warden watches you search. "*It needs to display the address or it's not valid,*" she comments unnecessarily.

*You are going to make a **Luck** roll. Roll two ten-sided dice again. This time, use both your "tens" and your "units" dice. This will give you a number between 01 and 100. So, if the tens die comes up 00, and the units die comes up 4, you have rolled 4—this is known as rolling 1D100 and is the most common roll in* RoL:RPG *play. A triple zero means 100.*
Compare what you rolled to your current Luck value.

*If you rolled equal to your current Luck value or less, you succeeded at the Luck roll. Go to **90**.*
*If you rolled higher than your current Luck value, you failed at the Luck roll. Go to **94**.*

(72)

82

You insist to Mrs Fellaman that you would like to come in and talk about the previous night's disturbance. She remains in the doorway.

"*I've already spoke to the other copper,*" she says. By this she means the sergeant whose perceptive report led to your involvement. You try again to invite yourself into the house. Mrs Fellaman plants her feet and folds her arms.

You have Power (POW) 60. Write that, and its half value of 30, beside the characteristic name.
Your skills also use half values for Hard skill rolls. Fill those in now. So, if your Athletics skill has a value of 30%, then its half value is 15%, written in this adventure as 30/15.

*Go to **88**.*

(14, 20, 31, 35)

83

Using your conflict resolution training, you frame your actions as extracting Mrs Fellaman from a hazardous situation. You explain that your presence, however she might resent it, represents the support of her community, and that her nightly quarrels with a ghost are unsustainable both in terms of disturbing the neighbours and her personal health.

The fight seems to go out of Mrs Fellaman. She leans on the cricket bat and touches her bruised face.

"*I know that,*" she says. "*I just didn't want it to end yet.*" She gives a long sigh. "*I suppose you'd better come in.*"

*Go to **10**.*

(74, 79)

84

You kick Knuckles' ankles from beneath him, and his face hits the floor. He continues to wriggle like a fish out of water until Mrs Fellaman pushes past you and administers the coup de grace to his head with her cricket bat. The resulting "whack" would be familiar to any spectator at The Oval cricket ground.

*Knuckles is Down. The second intruder is long gone. Go to **110**.*

(43)

85

You display the sausage and hold up a finger to indicate the terrier should behave. Your finger looks uncomfortably like a second sausage.

Subtract 10 points from your current Luck.
*You will use your Intelligence (INT) or Power (POW) characteristic (whichever is highest) to attempt Animal Handling, even though you don't possess this expert skill. Try Your Luck by making a Hard roll against **INT** or **POW** (whichever is highest). As usual, you may spend additional Luck to improve your roll.*

*If you succeed at the roll, go to **92**.*
*If you fail at the roll, go to **98**.*

(77)

86

Knuckles hauls at the hammer, unable to comprehend the force holding it frozen in space. He gives it a few more pulls before turning to face you.

*You have successfully disarmed your opponent. Go to **39**.*

(75)



87

You try to reassure Mrs Fellaman that you have only her best interests at heart. She swings the bat at you, but you can see her rage—and the strength behind each blow—dissipating.

*To dodge the cricket bat, make a **Fighting** roll. As Mrs Fellaman is conflicted about the fight, you may apply a bonus die to your roll. This means you roll your tens die twice and take the best result. So, if you roll 71 and 41, you would use the 41.*

*If you succeed, go to **96**; if you fail, go to **100**.*

(74)

88

"*I've got a pot on the stove,*" Mrs Fellaman says.

You tell her that everybody is concerned about her safety.

"*That's nice,*" she says. "*But it's my patience you should be worried about. That other copper looked all over the house, and she found nothing. Haven't you got anything better to do than harass an old age pensioner?*"

You adopt a particularly patient tone while explaining you're there to help.

"*I'm sick of your help,*" she says. "*Have you got a warrant or council notice or something?*"

You admit that you have not.

"*Then you can piss off,*" she says and closes the door in your face.

Allocate the following numbers to your remaining three characteristics: 50, 50, 40.
Your movement rate (MOV) is 8.

*Go to **102**.*

(50, 61, 71, 76, 82)

89

Knuckles closes in, shrugging off your blows to land a heavy punch against your stomach. You feel the breath rush out of you.

*Mark down that you take 1 damage. If you have suffered 1 damage in total, you are Hurt. If you have suffered 2 damage in total, you are Bloodied. Mark the appropriate boxes on your character sheet and go to **16**.*
*If you have suffered 3 damage in total, you are Down. Mark the Down box on your character sheet and go to **95**.*

(67)

90

You find an old Health Emergency Badge in your jacket pocket. It is creased, dog-eared, and features a ring from a coffee mug across one corner, which is presumably why you never used it. You lean on the roof of the Escort to inscribe the address of your new client in painstakingly clear capital letters.

The warden makes a point of lingering until you hang the HEB from the mirror of the Escort. Clinging to this token victory, she moves off.

You cross the road.

*Go to **107.***

(81)

91

Your attempts to calm Mrs Fellaman down only seem to increase her fury, and she steps towards you with her cricket bat raised. You have no alternative but to get out of the way.

*If you have not already tried it, you may retreat and go around the back instead. Go to **33**.*
*Otherwise, you must make a forced entry. Go to **104**.*

(74)

92

The terrier's attitude improves significantly once it realises it can obtain a sausage for good behaviour. After a bit of initial skittering around and snarling, it sits up and waits, trembling as it eyes the meaty reward.

Three hard-earned sausages later, the dog is calm and compliant.

To permanently gain the Animal Handling expert skill at half the appropriate skill value (either INT or POW, depending on which one you used to make the skill roll), spend a further 10 points of Luck and then write the skill name, along with its full and half values, on your character sheet.

*Go to **106**.*

(85)

93

The man's eyes flicker to the werelight and then to Mrs Fellaman. He doesn't answer.

You have fed him enough magic. Time to wind this up.

*Go to **101**.*

(51, 63)

94

You complete your search and admit you do not have a Health Emergency Badge to display. You show the warden your NHS identification card instead and appeal to her good nature. She taps her teeth with the council-issued stylus and checks her watch.

Defeated, you return to the car and ease it out of the space. After 20 minutes of circling, you find a space behind a gardener's lorry three streets away. Before you can shut off the air conditioning, the car fills with the pungent stench of compost.

You make your way on foot back to the address on Prince of Wales Road.

*Go to **107**.*

(81)

95

Knuckles grabs your collar and, spittle flying, headbutts you in the face. Everything goes dark.

When you rise back to consciousness, something is lying on your face. You reach for it and find it to be the shaft of a standard lamp. The shade has been smashed. As you roll it aside, Mrs Fellaman drifts into view.

"*I liked that lamp,*" she says. "*Got it from Harrods.*"

She picks up the lamp without offering you any assistance. The attackers appear to have left.

Because you were Down at the end of the fight, you remain Hurt for the rest of the day. Erase the marks from the Down and Bloodied boxes on your character sheet.

*Go to **110**.*

(48, 89)

96

You duck under the last swing of the bat. Mrs Fellaman suddenly seems to feel its weight and lets it rest on the step beneath you. She slumps against the railing.

You relieve her of the weighty bat and insist that you should enter the flat to assess the situation.

"*I just got my blood up,*" she says. "*Sorry about trying to clobber you and all that.*"

You return to the flat together.

*Go to **10**.*

(87)

97

Under pressure, you sometimes find it hard to shape the *forma*. The hammer arcing towards your head represents a significant amount of pressure. This time, the spell eludes you.

*You must deal with your attacker, hand-to-hand. Go to **4**.*

(69)

98

The terrier's response is swift and overwhelming. As it charges, you whip the sausage out of reach—but it is not aiming for your paltry single sausage. Its jaws clamp around the entire bag of sausages and its weight drags you off balance. You stumble and your head crashes against the wall. As you thump to the ground, the bag gives way and artisan sausages spill across the yard.

After 30 seconds of deep breathing and cold personal reflection to a soundtrack of tearing plastic and meaty guzzling, you sit up. Most of the sausages are gone. The dog, however, is calmer. It sniffs and watches you mop blood from your temple.

You are Hurt: in pain, but able to carry on. Mark that you are Hurt on your character sheet. Your performance is not affected yet, but subsequent injuries could change that.

*You will recover (erasing the mark for Hurt) when you leave the Folly and move to the next scene in the story. Go to **106**.*

(77, 85)

99

You turn to see Mrs Fellaman swing a cricket bat into the face of the second invader. He drops like wet laundry. She studies him for a moment before delivering a single, considered kick to his groin.

"*Get out of it,*" she says. "*You'll get your money when I've got it.*"

He stumbles to the rear window and topples out into the night. You hear creaks and moans as he retraces his path through strangers' gardens.

Mrs Fellaman looks up at you. "*My fault,*" she says. "*I get a little frisky sometimes on the gee-gees. I'm none too particular who I take a loan from.*"

You'll have to decide what to do with Knuckles, who is currently groaning on the carpet. But that can wait for later.

*Go to **110**.*

(37, 54, 62, 64, 80, 105)

100

The cricket bat connects with your shoulder and slams you against the railing. Mrs Fellaman, at least, has the good manners to be appalled at what she has done. You take the bat from her hands and reassure her that no bones are broken.

"*I just got my blood up,*" she says. "*Sorry about that. It wasn't really you I was mad at. I suppose you had better come in.*"

You return to the flat together.

You have suffered 1 damage and are Hurt. There is a box to mark this on your character sheet. However, because the combat has ended, you immediately recover from your Hurt state. If Mrs Fellaman had hit you again, the consequences would have been more significant.

*Go to **10**.*

(87)

101

You ask the ghost what his mother's name is. He frowns and hesitates. "*What do you want to know for?*" he says.

The hesitation tells you enough. You extinguish the werelight and "Victor" instantly fades to transparency. A whisper tickles the air. "*Martha.*"

"*Bring him back,*" Mrs Fellaman says.

You ask her if Victor's mother was named Martha.

"*No.*" She looks sour. "*But he's dead. You're bound to forget—*"

The back window shatters.

*Go to **6**.*

(51, 63, 93)



102

You return to the Ford Escort and settle behind the wheel to consider your options. After a minute, you unfold the report for another look.

The Camden response team passed the details onto the local neighbourhood safety team, which is headed by a Sergeant Sutherland. You put a call into the local station and get her on the phone. Once you get past the initial wariness that most police have for agents of the Folly, she relaxes and opens up.

"*I talked to the neighbours, confirmed their stories, made a follow-up visit to Mrs Fellaman, and found precisely nothing. And, since all I had on that night was leftover pasta bake, I parked my own car outside and waited until I heard the argument for myself.*"

The sergeant's notes specify hearing two voices. But when Sutherland talked herself inside the flat, Mrs Fellaman was alone.

"*That's right,*" she says. "*And I'll tell you, something was off about that flat.*"

Members of the general public are regularly unsettled by inconsequential tosh. But Sergeant Sutherland's 30 years of experience in policing are as good a barometer for supernatural activity as you are likely to find.

"*Your kind of weird bollocks,*" she says.

Before you can take any further action on this case, such as an unauthorised entry to Mrs Fellaman's flat, you need to be sure that there is indeed some "weird bollocks" going on.

Go to ***5****.*

(88)

103

Knuckles dives through the open window. His compatriot seems long gone. You get to the window. Shrubs bend and fencing creaks. Groans punctuate his journey through the gardens of Prince of Wales Road.

Mrs Fellaman comes up behind you, leaning on her cricket bat. "*Let him go,*" she says. "*I already sent his friend packing. And I do owe them the money. A couple of sure things at the races that didn't come in.*"

Go to ***110****.*

(16)

104

Walking away from a ghostly manifestation in progress is not an option, and you seem to have exhausted all of your alternatives except one. You examine Mrs Fellaman's door and the Yale lock that secures it. A more experienced magician could simply carve out the cylinder, but you will have to do it the old-fashioned way.

You get a run-up as best you can and shoulder the door. It flies open with a crack, admitting you into the flat's narrow hallway.

As you turn to survey the interior, a strange disc tumbles through the air. By the time you recognise it as a dinner plate with decorative bird illustrations, it is dangerously close to your face. You duck.

Make a ***Fighting*** *roll. If you fail, suffer 1 damage and become Hurt. Mark this on your character sheet. Although painful, it does not otherwise affect your performance.*

Go to ***108****.*

(27, 49, 91)

105

You kick Knuckles' ankles from beneath him, and his face hits the floor. Before he can wriggle out of it, you put a knee on his back and sling one cuff around his right wrist. A twist of the forearm brings the other wrist close enough to fasten the second cuff.

Now to deal with the second assailant.

Go to ***99****.*

(43)



106

The dog does not resist as you crouch down and lift the brass tag on its collar. The tag is shaped like a cartoon bone and engraved with tight capital letters reading ERNIE. Satiated on sausages, Ernie seems more curious than aggressive.

You look up at the coach house window. Molly is unmoved by your struggle. She makes a flittering hand gesture towards the gate to the street.

Nobody around Russell Square appears to be looking for a lost dog. You can attempt to locate Ernie's owners once he has performed a quick service on the Folly's behalf.

In the back of the Escort, you find a beach towel and spread it over the back seat. Ernie is content to hop inside, spraying flakes of grime as he goes. You borrow Toby's spare lead and get back into the car.

*Go to **2**.*

(*92*, *98*)

107

The Victorian terrace carries a certain dignity as it faces off against the new builds across the road. Its sash windows and ironwork look recently painted. The disturbance you are here to investigate came from the half basement below.

You study the exterior. There are no external signs of a struggle. A door is crammed in below the steps to the main entrance—a familiar construction in this area. That door was probably the tradesman's entrance before the house was divided into flats.

The door has no bell, but it does have a large brass knocker mottled with verdigris. You lift it and knock.

*Go to **3**.*

(25, 36, 57, 66, 90, 94)

108

Mrs Fellaman approaches, another plate in hand. She looks at the cracked doorframe and sighs.

"*Don't know when to give up, do you? I thought you were one of them lads wanting money. I could have split your head open. Oh well, since you're here I'll make you a cup of tea. And then you can phone for a carpenter.*"

*Go to **10**.*

(104)

109

You shoulder Knuckles away and scramble out of range. In the process, you place a foot wrong and tumble to one knee among the fragments of crockery.

As you stand back up, Knuckles sneers and turns his attention to Mrs Fellaman. She confronts the two intruders alone, her gaze following the hammer.

Knuckles glances at you. "*You still here?*" he says. "*Beat it.*"

If you are still at full health, take 1 damage from your fall, and so mark the Hurt box on your character sheet. Otherwise, your injuries are minor.

*To make good your escape, go to **73**.*
*To jump back in to defend Mrs Fellaman, go to **34**.*

(8)

110

Mrs Fellaman is still holding a cricket bat spattered with fresh blood. She clicks her tongue and runs the bat's wooden surface under the cold tap. While she is distracted, you turn your attention back to her domestic ghost. Something bothers you about the wall where he appeared. You've been in flats built to the same plan, and they had a pantry alcove to the left of the bricked-up fireplace.

"*What about my husband?*" Mrs Fellaman asks.

Still eyeing the wall, you explain that you were briefed about her family history, and her husband left her 30 years ago. He is currently living in Prestatyn, Wales, with a woman named Blodwyn.

"*I knew that.*" She dries the cricket bat with a dishtowel. "*I just assumed he'd died recently, got over the Welsh bint, and come back where he belongs.*"

You report that, as of this morning, he was alive and well.

"*Pity,*" she says.

*Go to **111**.*

(78, 84, 95, 99, 103)

III

"*So, who have I been talking to?*" Mrs Fellaman asks.

As you advise her the ghost probably took the form of her husband to suit her, you knock on the wall in front of the missing alcove. Your third knock produces a hollow thud.

You cast your eyes around the room and spot Knuckles' discarded masonry hammer. You get a solid two-handed grip and inform Mrs Fellaman that you are about to make a mess.

"*Wait a minute,*" she says.

You swing the hammer. The iron head goes through on the first blow.

"*He did look like my Victor. How would he know?*"

You knock out the loose plaster around the edges of the hole and use your phone as a torch to peer inside. There is a strong flash of carbolic soap and fish guts, the smell of sweat, and a blast of cold that numbs your fingers. *Vestigia*! The torch beam casts shadows around a hollow that you quickly recognise as the eye socket of a skull. Squinting, you see what might be a pile of other bones beneath it—the rest of the skeleton.

"*What can you see?*"

You look at Mrs Fellaman. Perhaps the body was some mistreated domestic worker from the late 19th century. Then again, Eugenia Fellaman has quite a temper. Perhaps there was somebody after her beloved Victor who never made it out of the flat. Nine times out of ten, when the bones are removed, the ghost goes with them. You can always borrow Ernie again and take a stroll along Prince of Wales Road, just to check.

For now, though, you have a phone call to make. What happens afterwards will not be your problem.

Well done, you've completed your first case file. Welcome to Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game! *THE END.*

(*110*)

APPENDIX

Now you've finished playing through this adventure, you can find more information on the following rules topics on the pages indicated. Or just continue reading this book—the following sections explain the game's rules.

Bloodied	page 144
Bonus dice	page 111
Casting spells	page 172
Combat	page 123
Critical success	page 106
Damage	page 133
Down	page 144
Failure	page 106
Fumble	page 107
Hard success	page 106
Hurt	page 144
Impello	page 178
Luck	page 113
Opposed rolls	page 116
Penalty dice	page 111
Regular Success	page 106
Scindere	page 180
Werelight	page 182
Wounds and Healing	page 144




SCIENTIA POTESTAS E



Creating Characters

'Is this where you tell me that there's a secret branch of the Met whose task it is to tackle ghosts, ghouls, faeries, demons, witches and warlocks, elves and goblins…?'
—Rivers of London

IN *RIVERS OF LONDON: THE ROLEPLAYING GAME (ROL:RPG)*, players take the roles of either police officers attached to the Folly (**The Society of the Wise**, page 260) or civilian consultants of some sort. So, your characters may be like Peter Grant, Dr Walid, and Prof. Postmartin in the novels.

This chapter provides the rules for creating player characters—called "investigators" in the game. These investigators can come from disparate backgrounds and have a variety of occupations that determines their areas of knowledge. Each investigator brings a certain expertise to the group and, together, joined in comradeship and common purpose, they investigate cases involving curious crimes, otherworldly beings, and dangerous magic. As mentioned in the **Introduction** (page 13), while law enforcement agencies and civilians working cheek by jowl may not be what happens during criminal investigations in the real world—particularly when it comes to visiting crime scenes and interviewing witnesses—it gives you far more scope for telling interesting stories together.

The steps presented here are designed to make creating a character as fast and accessible as possible for new players and those who are unfamiliar with *Rivers of London*. It is assumed that starting investigators are relatively new recruits to the world of the demi-monde and are just coming to grips with the weirdness they've stumbled across. For the same reason, we also recommend that everyone plays a human investigator to begin with—at least until you've got the hang of things. At the end of this chapter, you'll find a two-page spread that provides a handy **Summary of Character Creation** for quick reference (page 76).



ADDITIONAL RULES

If you've roleplayed before and want to try something a little different, or want your starting investigators to have more experience, you'll find alternative character creation methods in the **Additional Rules** chapter (starting on page 309). These also contain rules for creating non-human characters (**Playing Fae Investigators**, page 318). Note that rules for creating *genii locorum* are beyond the scope of this book.

GM ADVICE

You can use all the following rules for creating non-player characters (NPCs), too. Alternatively, you could just assign most NPCs the characteristics and skills they need to fulfil the role you have in mind for them and only use these rules for creating the few really important NPCs who will make frequent guest appearances in your game.



Creating Your Character

Some people may arrive at the game with a clear idea about the type of investigator they wish to play, while others may have no firm ideas, either because they're new to roleplaying or they're not that familiar with the *Rivers of London* novels—and that's fine, too. The following sections aim to help you work out who your investigator is and what they can do.

We recommend that the Game Moderator (GM) and players devote their first *RoL:RPG* session to discussing the setting, establishing expectations and boundaries (**Considerate Gaming**, nearby), and character creation—this is sometimes known as "Session Zero." As well as allowing the group to talk about the types of investigators that are the best fit for the setting and giving each player the opportunity to describe the sort of character they might wish to play, a Session Zero makes sure that everyone is on the same page as far as tone (**Important: Tone**, page 123) and consent (**Important: Consent**, page 190) are concerned (see also **Considerate Gaming**, nearby).

During the first session, the GM should encourage each player to consider not only what type of investigator they're going to play, but also how that investigator fits into the group so that everyone has their own unique role (**Your Character Concept**, page 46). Once everyone has some ideas to work with, make sure each player has a blank character sheet, a pencil, an eraser, and some scrap paper, so they can build their investigators. A blank character sheet is provided after the **Index** for you to copy. Alternatively, an electronic version of the character sheet is available from chaosium.com if you're playing online or don't have access to a photocopier. See **About the Character Sheet** (page 75) for details on using the electronic character sheets.

Note that if you want to dive straight into a game, there are some pre-made investigators to use; you can find them in **Appendix A** (page 343). Get the players to choose who they would like to play, and then, later, once you have all had a taste of the game, everyone can begin creating their own unique characters using the rules in this chapter.

Considerate Gaming

While there is a sense of humour and, occasionally, whimsy in the *Rivers of London* novels, they also deal with some dark themes and adult situations, which not all players may be comfortable with. This is what we mean when we say the GM and their players should discuss "expectations and boundaries" before play begins. For example, the events that take place at Brandon Coopertown's home[1] are horrific, and not everyone may wish to deal with such situations in their game.

One of the first steps to making sure everyone will be comfortable is for the GM and the players to discuss any topics they would rather not see as part of the game, such as violence against children or animals. Even if the players don't raise any concerns during this initial discussion or during the game itself, it is the GM's duty of care throughout to make sure that the players continue to agree with the way the story is progressing. And this doesn't just apply to the players—the GM's comfort and safety should also be protected and respected as play proceeds.

Some players may not feel able to express their concerns in front of their peers, so we advise the GM to visually assess whether anyone in the group is struggling with a particular scene's content. At any point, the GM or a player could call for a timeout to check everyone is ok with the game. If someone is uncomfortable with the content or direction of a scene, it is up to the GM to maintain that player's comfort and engagement by drawing a veil over proceedings or moving swiftly on without dwelling on the details. A GM knows their group best and should aim to handle the situation with respect and sensitivity for everyone involved.

Groups may also want to discuss the use of safety tools, such as the "X-Card" by John Stavropoulos or "lines and veils." The TTRPG Safety Toolkit, co-curated by Lauren Bryant-Monk and Kienna Shaw, is available online and provides a quick-reference guide to many of the tools currently available—just search for "RPG Safety Tools" or "X-Card." (See also **Gaming Safety Tools**, page 362.)

Important: *no player should be coerced or pressured into roleplaying through situations that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe; that goes for the GM, too.*

Footnote: [1] *Rivers of London*

Character Creation Steps

Once everyone has gathered everything they need, it's time to work through the six steps of character creation.

- **One:** Determine Occupation (following).
- **Two:** Assign Characteristics (page 46).
- **Three:** Advantages (page 50).
- **Four:** Determine Skills (page 52).
- **Five:** Create a Backstory (page 56).
- **Six:** Equip the Character (page 59).

Step One: Determine Occupation

The first step in creating an investigator is to work out what they are good at—their occupation. The type of job someone chooses can tell you a lot about them and perhaps give you clues as to their personality. Of course, an occupation doesn't completely define who a person is. For example, taking the occupation of **Police Officer** (page 71) tells us something about that investigator but still leaves plenty of scope for variety—they could, for instance, be a fresh-faced new recruit bursting with enthusiasm or a level-headed veteran.

An occupation shows how a character makes their living, be it as a doctor, a police officer, or a lowlife fraudster. Each occupation reflects a particular investigator's field of expertise. In game terms, this translates to which of their skills have high scores (things they're good at) and which skills don't (things they aren't so good at).

Depending on where the story takes them, an investigator's occupation may have limited effect during the game—in terms of character creation, at least, it's simply a basis for their starting skills and helps to build their backstory.

A full list of occupations can be found in the **Investigator Occupations** box (nearby). Look over the list to see which occupation fits the ideas you've had for your investigator (**Your Character Concept**, page 46), then read through the occupation's description to make sure it's the right one for you (**Occupations**, page 62). Once you've chosen your investigator's occupation, write it down on your character sheet.

Each occupation provides a list of skills your investigator should possess. Most occupations have one or more required skills, and all occupations have a selection of recommended skills. For instance, the Doctor of Medicine occupation requires the investigator to take the Medicine skill, and has the following recommended skills: Observation, Research, Read Person, Science (Biology), and Social.

We'll come back to sorting out exactly which skills and how much expertise your character has with them later (**Step Four: Determine Skills**, page 52). For now, just make a note of the skills listed for the occupation on a piece of scrap paper for later reference.

Investigator Occupations

Each of the following occupations and their associated skills are described in the **Occupations** section (page 62).

- Architect*
- Artist*
- Athlete
- Author
- Chancer*
- Clergy, member of the
- Computer specialist*
- Criminal*
- Dilettante*
- Doctor of medicine*
- Driver
- Entertainer*
- Farmer*
- Firefighter*
- Influencer
- Journalist
- Lawyer*
- Lecturer
- Librarian*
- Nurse
- Paramedic*
- Parapsychologist
- Police officer/detective*
- Private investigator
- Service member*
- Social worker*
- Special agent*
- Tradesperson*

*Occupations held by characters in the *Rivers of London* novels.

Your Character Concept

There's a lot to think about when creating an investigator, so the easiest way to tackle it is to try to have a picture in your mind about who and what your investigator is—your character concept. Look for occupations that suit your concept. Remember, creating an investigator is all about building up the story of who you want to play in the game. Their characteristics, occupation, gender, and age all help to establish them as a fully-rounded and "breathing" character. The occupation is the first building block in this process.

Look through the skills associated with each occupation and see which of these you like the most (**Occupations**, page 62). If you aren't sure what some of the skills do, take a look at their descriptions in **Chapter 2**. Certain skills are likely to appeal to you more than others. Perhaps you want your investigator to be more action-orientated, leading you to choose an occupation that prioritises skills like Fighting and Athletics. Alternatively, you might decide to create a more studious character who focuses on Research, Observation, and academic specialisations.

Consider your character's occupation and skills in relation to the kind of characters the other players are creating. Having a balance of occupations means that the group has a good mix of skills that can benefit everyone and means the group is well set up to tackle most challenges. While it's expected that a game based around the Folly will have at least one investigator who is a police officer, not everyone in the group has to take that same occupation—the Folly has a wide range of civilian consultants who work closely with this special police unit on a day-to-day basis, even more so now they are expanding their operations.

As previously mentioned in **Creating Your Character** (page 44), Session Zero is the perfect place to discuss your ideas with the other players so you can all build the most appropriate group of investigators for your game. Think of your group of investigators as a team, with their varied occupations and skills all complementing one another. Depending on the style of game and adventure ("case file") you'll be playing, your GM might even have certain occupations in mind for you, which should form part of your discussion. After all, it would be somewhat strange for the investigators to turn up at a murder scene only to discover that everyone was playing a farmer! Whereas, if the case file is set in the countryside, having someone playing a farmer might be very handy!

Remember, it's not what your character can or can't do, it's how you decide to *play* your character that's really important. That, above all, helps to determine your enjoyment of the game.

GM ADVICE

The adventures investigators go on in roleplaying games have many different names, depending on what RPG you're playing. In *RoL:RPG*, the official name for them is a case file, but throughout the book, you'll also see them referred to as adventures and scenarios. A series of case files, or a complex case file consisting of many separate investigations—like the ones in the novels—are known as a "campaign."



Step Two: Assign Characteristics

Once you've decided on your investigator's occupation, the next step is to figure out their characteristics. In *RoL:RPG*, a characteristic is one of five numbers that form a character's foundations. Each characteristic represents one aspect of that character: Strength (STR), Constitution (CON), Dexterity (DEX), Intelligence (INT), and Power (POW). These values determine the character's relative capability in these areas and suggest ways for them to act and react during play.

Characteristics

- **STR (Strength):** represents muscle power. The higher the value, the more the character can lift or tightly cling to something.
- **CON (Constitution):** represents health, vigour, and vitality. A high value means the character is more able to shrug off wounds and other ailments. Poisons, diseases, injuries, and some spells may challenge a character's constitution.
- **DEX (Dexterity):** represents speed and manual manipulation. A high value means the character is quicker, nimbler, and more physically flexible. In combat, the character with the highest DEX may get to act first (**Who Goes First?**, page 124).
- **INT (Intelligence):** represents how quickly a character learns, remembers, analyses information, and solves complex puzzles. INT is also a measure of the character's factual knowledge, so a high value means they tend to know more stuff.
- **POW (Power):** represents force of will. A high value means a greater aptitude for—and resistance to—magic. POW dictates a character's number of "magic points." A character's starting magic points equal one-fifth of their POW (**Investigators with Magic**, page 54).

Assigning Characteristic Values

Characteristic values are generated by distributing a pool of 280 points among STR, CON, DEX, INT, and POW.

- Each characteristic should be assigned a value from 30 to 80.
- These are percentage values: the higher the value, the stronger the characteristic.

When creating characters, allocate characteristic values in blocks of 10 (so use values of 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, or 80). An average human characteristic value is 50, so with 280 points divided between five characteristics, a starting *RoL:RPG* investigator is a cut above the average.

To start with, just write your numbers on a piece of scrap paper as you may wish to alter them during the character creation process. If you're not sure where to assign your points, think about your investigator and what they're like. For example, are they strong but not very nimble (high STR, low DEX), or are they smart and strong-willed (high INT and POW)? Also, take a look at **What the Numbers Mean** (page 48) to see if that helps. The following example distributions may give you some ideas for where to put your points, depending on whether you want to have a good balance or veer to the extremes.

- A fairly average character: 50, 50, 60, 60, 60.
- Strengths and weaknesses: 30, 50, 60, 60, 80.
- Extremes: 30, 30, 60, 80, 80.

When allocating your characteristic values, bear this in mind: in the following step you get to select advantages for your investigator (**Step Three**, page 50), some of which require a minimum value in one or more characteristics:

- STR 60 or greater is required for the advantages of Damage Bonus and Natural Toughness.
- CON 60 or greater is required for the advantage of Natural Toughness.
- DEX 60 or greater is required for the advantages of Speedy and Fast Reactions.
- INT 60 or greater is required for the advantages of Magical and The Knowledge.
- POW 60 or greater is required for the advantages of Magical and Steadfast.



What the Numbers Mean

Strength

0: enfeebled and unable to get out of bed.
10: puny and frail.
30: weak.
50: average human strength.
90: one of the strongest people you've ever met.
99: world class (Olympic weightlifter); human maximum.
100+: beyond human strength (e.g., gorilla or horse).

Constitution

0: dead.
10: weak health, prone to bouts of ill health; great propensity for feeling pain.
30: always the first to catch a cold.
50: average healthy human.
90: shrugs off colds; hardy and hale.
99: iron constitution; able to withstand great amounts of pain; human maximum.
100+: beyond human constitution (e.g., elephant).

Dexterity

0: unable to perform physical tasks.
10: slow and uncoordinated, with poor motor skills for fine manipulation.
30: clumsy; always last to get picked in team sports.
50: average human dexterity.
90: fast; nimble; able to perform feats of fine manipulation (e.g., acrobat, great dancer).
99: world class athlete; human maximum.
100+: beyond human dexterity (e.g., tiger).

Intelligence

0: unable to comprehend the world around them or communicate.
10: slow learner; able to figure out only the most basic maths or read beginner-level books.
30: learning things takes time; books really aren't your thing.
50: average human intellect.
90: quick-witted; probably able to comprehend multiple languages or theorems.
99: genius (Isaac Newton, Nikola Tesla, Gertrude Elion, Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, etc.); human maximum.
100+: beyond human capacity to understand the world and universe.

Power

0: zombie-like, with no willpower and no magical potential.
10: weak-willed, easily dominated by those with a greater intellect or willpower.
30: credulous, easily swayed by what others say or what they've read on social media.
50: average human.
90: strong willed; driven; a high potential to connect with the unseen and magical.
100: iron will; strong connection to the spiritual "realm" or unseen world.
120+: beyond human (possibly demi-monde).

Note: human POW can exceed 100, but this is rare.





Introducing Nafeesa Jones

To help illustrate the various rules in RoL:RPG, *we are pleased to introduce you to Nafeesa Jones, a recent recruit to the London Metropolitan Police Service.*

*As we already know Nafeesa's occupation—Police Officer—it's time to decide Nafeesa's characteristics. The player takes up a sheet of scrap paper and a pencil, and then divides Nafeesa's 280 characteristic points up as follows. They decide Nafeesa is going to be pretty tough and strong, and put 70 points into Strength (STR). Nafeesa is also bright, with 60 points in Intelligence (INT). Realising these high values are going to have to be offset with at least one lower one, the player gives Nafeesa a Dexterity (DEX) of 40, deciding she's a little clumsy. This leaves 110 points, so these are divided between Constitution (CON) 50, and Power (POW) 60, which allows Nafeesa to take the Magical advantage in the next step (**Advantages**, page 50).*

Half Characteristic Values

Once you are happy with the values you've assigned to your investigator's STR, CON, DEX, INT, and POW, you can write them onto your character sheet in the spaces provided. The next step is to write in the half values for each characteristic.

- Divide the characteristic value by two, and then write that half value in the space beside the full characteristic value.
- When a "characteristic roll" is referred to in the text, e.g., a STR roll or a POW roll, this means you use the full value (highest number) as the target number.
- Where half values are required, this will be clearly stated; these are normally called Hard (half value) rolls, and this means you use the half value as the target number.

Half is the only fraction used in relation to characteristics and skills in *RoL:RPG* and all the numbers are calculated up front for ease of play.

Example: *with her characteristics decided, Nafeesa's player can now write in the half values for each of them. Nafeesa's STR 70 is divided by two, giving a half value of 35. Nafeesa's player writes this half score in the space provided on the sheet and repeats the exercise for all of her other characteristics.*

Rolling Luck

A character's five core characteristics aren't the only attributes you need to work out. Another attribute is Luck. Luck is important and very useful in the game and can be used to get you out of—and into—all sorts of trouble (**Luck**, page 113). When creating an investigator, roll 2D10 and add 50 to generate your starting Luck value. Luck can, and will, rise and fall during the course of the game (**Spending Luck**, page 113; **Recovering Luck Points**, page 115).

Example: *Nafeesa's player rolls a 4 and a 6 for a total of 10 to determine her Luck value, so Nafeesa begins the game with Luck 60 (10+50).*

GM ADVICE

Some non-player characters (NPCs) have a Luck value, e.g., *genii locorum* and the fae, but, on the whole—unless they're really important story-wise or have been granted a boon by a *genius loci* (**The Gift of Luck**, page 243)—human NPCs do not have a Luck value.



Movement Rate (MOV)

Another important attribute concerns how far a character can move in a limited amount of time: their movement rate (MOV) value. In *RoL:RPG*, under most circumstances, distances are judged based upon verbal descriptions of the environment, rather than any hard and fast measurements. But in combat situations, MOV is used to determine how far a character can move in terms of metres/yards.

- A character can move up to five times their MOV value in one combat round (**The Combat Round**, page 124).
- The default movement rate for starting investigators is 8 (MOV 8).

Example: *the player records a MOV value of 8 for Nafeesa. This means she can move up to 40 metres/yards in one combat round, should she so wish.*

Age

Each player chooses their investigator's age. Most investigators will be adults, but some may begin the game as a teenager, like Abigail Kamara (**A Rogues' Gallery**, page 237). The basic rules don't make any distinction based upon age, although certain occupations cannot be chosen if an

investigator is under the age of 18, such as Police Officer, Lawyer, Architect, and so on.

Example: *the player decides Nafeesa is 22 years old.*

Step Three: Advantages

The next stage of character creation is to decide what advantages your investigator possesses. An advantage is something exceptional about a character, and it usually grants them some sort of edge in the game. For example, the aptitude to learn how to cast spells (**Magical**, page 51) or the ability to keep calm and collected when under pressure (**Steadfast**, page 52).

- You can choose up to two advantages for your investigator.
- Not all advantages are equal in scope or effect, so some are tagged as "major advantages," and these count as two choices.

Advantage Prerequisites

Some advantages require the investigator to have a minimum value in one or more specified characteristics and/or skills. If the investigator does not meet the prerequisite requirements, they may not select that advantage.

GM ADVICE

NPCs can also have advantages. Minor NPCs may have only one, with more important NPCs—recurring characters, for instance—having up to two. Very experienced and/or major NPCs may have three, if appropriate to their character and their role in the story, e.g., **DCI Nightingale** (page 233).



Connected

Prerequisite: none.

Your character can pull strings with some powerful people. This could be a government official, a wealthy individual, or a criminal organisation. The connection provides privileged access to resources or information. Anything significant will come at a cost, and the connection may ask the investigator to do them a "favour" in return. The player can either define who their investigator is connected to during character creation or they can decide at an appropriate moment later during the game, i.e., when they need to call on someone for help.

In play, the GM is encouraged to be generous when a player seeks to make use of their connections, and generally they should be able to get what they want without the need for a Social skill roll (**Skills**, page 86). However, as



mentioned, the GM should be equally creative in what the connection demands in return. The investigator may be asked to copy confidential police files and deliver them to the connection, to pay someone a visit and put the frighteners on them, or whatever else the GM thinks might suit the connection's agenda.

Damage Bonus
Prerequisite: requires a minimum STR 60.

Your character really packs a punch! Your melee attacks inflict +1 damage.

Note: damage bonus is added to melee weapon damage only, not ranged, firearms, or spell damage.

Fast Reactions
Prerequisite: requires a minimum DEX 60.

Your reactions are fast in combat, allowing you to make two "fight back" responses using either melee, firearms, or magic in a single combat round (rather than the usual one). See **Response 3: Fight Back** (page 129) for further details on combat responses. Also, as a result of your fast reactions, your enemies gain no benefit for outnumbering you. See **Outnumbered** (page 135) for further details.

Magical (Major Advantage)
Prerequisites: requires a minimum INT 60 and POW 60.

This advantage counts as two choices. If you take the Magical advantage, it's the only one you can choose in this step. This grants your investigator the aptitude to be able to cast spells. You must select this advantage if you wish to select the Magic skill in the following step.

Example: *Nafeesa's player selects the Magical advantage, allowing her to take the Magic skill and cast spells. As this is a major advantage, she cannot choose another one.*

Natural Toughness
Prerequisites: requires a minimum STR 60 and CON 60.

Your character is naturally tough. Unarmed and blunt melee weapon attacks (batons, cricket bats, etc.) against a person with Natural Toughness inflict 1 less damage. The damage from bladed or impaling weapons (e.g., knives and bullets) or damage-causing spells (e.g., **Fireball**, page 183) is not affected. See **Armour** (page 135) for further details.

Rich (Major Advantage)
Prerequisite: none.

This advantage counts as two choices. If you take Rich, it's the only advantage you can choose in this step. Being Rich means your character acquires the **Rich Affluence Rating** (page 58). In order to select the **Dilettante** occupation (page 65), you must select the Rich advantage.

Scary
Prerequisite: none.

There's something about your character that unsettles people; perhaps it's your hard stare or the way you move. You gain a bonus die on Social skill rolls when you attempt to intimidate people (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111). All other Social skill rolls are made without the bonus die.

Signature Firearm
Prerequisites: requires a minimum DEX 60 and Firearms 60%.

Your character has one particular firearm with which they are extremely familiar and proficient. It is almost as if this weapon is a part of them. You gain a bonus die on ranged damage rolls when using this firearm. You do not gain the bonus die if you use any other firearm, even if it is the same type. If you lose the firearm, you may replace it, but it takes a month of game time to transfer the advantage to the new firearm.



GM ADVICE

Any investigator can choose to take the Magical advantage and, therefore, the Magic skill—not just police officers with ties to the Folly. In the novels, we initially see the *Rivers of London* world through Peter Grant's eyes as a result of his recruitment to the Folly, but it soon becomes apparent that he and Nightingale are not the only Newtonian practitioners in existence—let alone the only people who use magic in some form or another. Magic is increasing in the world, meaning those who use magic can—and do—come from all walks of life. The only difference it makes in game terms is whether or not a character is classed as a **Newtonian Practitioner** (page 15) or a **Hedge Wizard** (page 171), which in turn affects an investigator's choice of starting spells (**Investigators with Magic**, page 54).

Signature Weapon
Prerequisites: requires a minimum DEX 60 and Fighting 60%.

Your character has one particular melee weapon with which they are extremely familiar and proficient. It is almost as if this weapon is a part of them. You gain a bonus die on damage rolls when using this weapon. You do not gain the bonus die if you use any other weapon, even if it is the same type. If you lose the weapon, you may replace it, but it takes a month of game time to transfer the advantage to the new weapon.

Silver-Tongued
Prerequisite: none.

Your character has the gift of gab and could sell ashes to the devil. You gain a bonus die on Social skill rolls when attempting to win someone over with eloquence and persuasion. All other Social skill rolls are made without the bonus die.

Speedy
Prerequisite: requires a minimum DEX 60.

Your character is quick on their feet. A speedy character has a movement rate of 9 (MOV 9).

Steadfast
Prerequisite: requires a minimum POW 60.

Your character is psychologically resilient. You are able to keep a level head under pressure, even in stressful situations that would cause most people to panic or recoil; this includes being fired upon or when witnessing something gruesome or supernatural. A steadfast character does not suffer **Impairment** (page 118) as a result of these things. However, they may still experience impairment as an outcome of personally suffering damage (**Wounds and Healing**, page 144, and **Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation**, page 177).

The Knowledge
Prerequisites: requires a minimum INT 60 and Navigate 60%.

London taxi "cabbies" are renowned for their ability to navigate around the labyrinthine streets of England's capital city. They must even take a test to prove they can do so: the so-called Knowledge. Your character might not be a taxi driver, but you know how to find your way around. Nominate a city or area: you gain a bonus die on Navigate skill rolls whenever you are in that location.

Wealthy
Prerequisite: none.

Being Wealthy means your character acquires the **Wealthy Affluence Rating** (page 58).

Step Four: Determine Skills
Now that characteristics and advantages have been taken care of, it's time to go back to the list of skills that are associated with your investigator's occupation and decide which ones your investigator is good at (**Choosing Your Skills**, page 53).

Skills in *RoL:RPG* are divided into three categories: common, combat, and expert (**Chapter 2: Skills** for further details). There are nine skills that are commonly used in the game, called **Common Skills** (page 82). Everyone can perform these common skills at a basic level, so all common skills have a base value of 30%.

- If you choose a common skill for your character during character creation, boost its starting value of 30% to 60%.

Likewise, everyone has the two **Combat skills** (Fighting and Firearms) at a base value of 30%. This represents a person's innate ability to fight or pick up and fire a gun with no training.

- If you choose a combat skill during character creation, boost its starting value of 30% to 60%.

Expert skills are, by their nature, more specialist. Only those with appropriate training can perform expert skills, so a character who lacks that training has a base value of zero in that skill.

- If you choose an expert skill during character creation, boost its starting value of 00% to 60%.

During character creation you get to choose a total of six skills to boost for your investigator, i.e., to begin at 60%. The six you choose should include:

- All skills that are listed as **required** by your occupation.
- Any skills you choose from those listed as **recommended** by your occupation.
- Any other skills you wish, whether common, combat, or expert.

Everyone automatically gets their own language as a free skill, with a starting percentage value equal to their INT or 60% (whichever is higher). If a character was raised in a bilingual household, they receive both relevant languages at the same value if they are equally fluent in them; if they aren't

as fluent in one of those languages, they receive it at half their INT value or 30% (whichever is higher).

Example: *Nafeesa's INT is 60, so she receives Language (English) as a free starting skill at 60%. Her friend and colleague, Mina Patel, also has INT 60; she was raised in a bilingual household, so receives both English and Urdu as free starting skills at 60% as she is equally fluent in both. Nafeesa and Mina's other friend, Jules (INT 60 as well), was also raised in a bilingual household, but is not as fluent in her second language, so her free starting Language skills are English 60% and Filipino 30%.*

Note: it is assumed most investigators will have up to two free starting languages based on their upbringing. If you wish for your character to know more languages beyond these starting ones, you must select the Language skill when determining your character's skill choices.

Skills

Common Skills

- Athletics
- Drive
- Navigate
- Observation
- Read Person
- Research
- Sense Vestigia
- Social
- Stealth

Combat Skills

- Fighting
- Firearms



Choosing Your Skills

Take a look at the list of occupational skills you noted down earlier (**Step One: Determine Occupation,** page 45). If the occupation has one or more skills in the "required" category, your character must take those skills. Remember, you get to boost six skills.

- Write a value of 60 next to any required common or combat skill on your character sheet in the space provided and then write in the half value (30) beside it.
- Write any required expert skills on your character sheet in the space provided and assign them a starting value of 60 and then write in the half value (30) beside it.

Note: for convenience, you may sometimes see skill values written as 60/30, which indicates the full value/half value.

Next, look at the recommended skills for your occupation. These are a guideline as to which skills are most commonly associated with that occupation. Your character should certainly have some of them, but there may be other skills you want to have instead. The list of recommended skills for each occupation is like a restaurant menu: there may be more options than you require. For this reason, you might want to use a piece of scrap paper to note things down until you are satisfied with your choices.

- Select the recommended skills you think fit with **Your Character Concept** (page 46). They may be common, combat, or expert skills.
- Write down any recommended common, combat, or expert skills you choose and assign them a starting value of 60%.
- Once you are satisfied with your skill selection, write them onto your character sheet in the spaces provided, along with their half skill values (30%).

If you still have some of your six starting skills left to choose, look at the list of skills on page 81 and decide which ones to boost. Once you are happy with your choices, write them on your character sheet in the spaces provided and assign them a starting value of 60/30. If you took the **Magical** advantage (page 51) during Step Three, check over **Investigators with Magic** (following).

Once you have selected your character's starting six skills to boost, any other common or combat skills start at 30% and have a half value of 15%. As noted, your character only gains expert skills if they were chosen in your starting six. For more about expert skills, see **Chapter 2**.

The Firearms Skill

Gun control laws and access to firearms varies from country to country and this may affect how easy it is for players to choose the Firearms skill for their investigator. For example, in the US, firearms are more common and the laws governing them depend on the state you are in. However, in the UK, firearms are rare and most people have never touched one. Legal possession of a firearm requires a tightly regulated licence and the weapon must be stored in a locked cabinet when not in use. Thus, in the UK, people likely to have a firearm might be the following:

- Farmers are likely to own a shotgun.
- Wealthy people may use a shotgun or rifle when grouse, pheasant, or clay-pigeon shooting.
- Some criminals may have a firearm.
- Armed-response police and the military have access to a wider variety of firearms, including handguns and assault weapons. Most British police officers, though, do not carry firearms and receive no firearms training.

When choosing the Firearms skill for your character, consider whether it's appropriate. For example, would a doctor choose the firearms skill over a more useful skill they would use nearly every day? They might, but if you choose that option, try to come up with a rationale for how and why. Did they grow up on a farm and have been around shotguns since they were a child? Or are they a member of a registered gun club and target shooting is their hobby, etc.?

Investigators with Magic

If you took the **Magical** advantage (page 51) in Step Three, you should choose the **Magic** skill (page 93) as one of your six starting skills to boost. Like other chosen skills, its starting value is 60%. If you didn't take the Magical advantage, then your character cannot choose the skill of Magic. Investigators with the Magic skill begin the game with:

- Three spells (one mastered, two unmastered)—see **Investigators and Spells**, page 170.
- Magic points equal to one-fifth of their POW, plus 1 magic point for their mastered spell.
- A **Signare** (page 164).

Investigators and the Sense Vestigia Skill

Sense Vestigia is a common skill, so characters who do not take the Magic skill have it at its base value of 30%. Everyone can sense the residual magical energy that's built up all around them, even if they don't realise that is what they're feeling—you know, that prickly sensation on the back of your neck or the cold shiver that runs down your spine whenever you enter a certain room...

- Those without the Magic skill can choose to take Sense Vestigia as one of their six starting skills, boosting it to 60%.
- However, selecting Magic as one of your six starting skills automatically boosts your Sense Vestigia skill to 60% for free. This is why the Magical advantage counts as two choices, as it gains you an additional starting skill at 60%, along with the aptitude to cast spells.

By My Troth

In a London-based campaign, practitioners who join the Folly are expected to swear an oath, like the one taken by Peter Grant[2]. The exact form of the attestation depends on whether the investigator is a police officer or a civilian consultant (**The Practitioner's Oath**, page 171).



Footnote: [2] *Rivers of London*

Nafeesa Jones (continued)

As we established, Nafeesa Jones is an officer in the London Metropolitan Police Service. The Police Officer occupation requires the expert skill, Law. Nafeesa's player writes "Law" in the space provided on her character sheet and writes down "60/30" next to it, as all chosen starting skills begin the game with a value of 60% and a half value of 30%.

Next, Nafeesa's player looks at the recommended skills for Police Officers: Athletics, Drive, Fighting, Firearms, Navigate, Observation, Read Person, Research, Social, and Stealth. As Nafeesa hasn't been in the service for long, her player decides she's not been on any firearms or driving training courses, so they take Fighting, Observation, Read Person, and Social as Nafeesa's next four chosen skills, and boosts their starting values up to 60%.

In Step Three, Nafeesa's player chose the Magical advantage, allowing her to take Magic as her sixth starting skill, also at 60%; this has the added effect of boosting her Sense Vestigia skill to 60% for free. Nafeesa's player writes all of her six chosen skills, plus the bonus skill Sense Vestigia, and their values down on her character sheet in the relevant sections, along with their half values.

With these skills, Nafesesa has the makings of a good officer—she has a competent knowledge of the law, can diffuse difficult situations with her Read Person and Social skills, and if anyone resists arrest, her Fighting skill should stand her in good stead. Her other common skills remain at their base value, so Nafeesa has:

- ***Law (60%):** she has a good understanding of British law.*
- ***Magic (60%):** she is a **Newtonian Apprentice** (page 170).*
- ***Fighting (60%):** she can restrain a belligerent criminal.*
- ***Observation (60%):** she has her wits about her.*
- ***Read Person (60%):** she's a reasonable judge of character.*
- ***Sense Vestigia (60%):** she's pretty good at identifying* vestigia.
- ***Social (60%):** she knows what to say to diffuse a difficult situation.*

Alongside these, Nafeesa has 30% in each of the remaining common and combat skills (i.e., any common or combat skills she did not select in her starting six).

- ***Athletics (30%):** she can maybe catch an escaping shoplifter.*
- ***Drive (30%):** she can drive, but hasn't been on any advanced driving courses.*
- ***Navigate (30%):** she has a reasonable knowledge of London's backstreets.*
- ***Research (30%):** she can carry out background checks.*
- ***Stealth (30%):** she can maybe creep up on a burglar.*
- ***Firearms (30%):** she can fire a stun gun if needs be.*



Step Five: Create a Backstory

The next step is to flesh out your character's backstory. The term "backstory" is used to encompass everything in the investigator's background, both past and present: where they live, their family and friends, relationships, their social life, hobbies and interests, bad habits and complications, childhood, schooling, career history, and so on. You don't have to detail all this right from the off, though! Think of the novels—when we first meet Peter Grant, we know nothing about him. But as we read, we begin to learn more: who he is, where he lives, his upbringing, his parents, and so on. We don't get these at the start of the first novel—rather, these details slowly unfold either as they become relevant or when they serve to give Peter more depth and interest as a character.

You may wish to come up with a backstory for your investigator before you begin play. Some people find this helpful when it comes to getting a handle on who their investigator is. Other players prefer to create their investigator's backstory as they go—this can be considered as "discovering" or "revealing" their backstory through play. In practice, most players do a bit of both. Think of it like an artist creating a picture: they start with a rough sketch, and then alter or elaborate upon it. That way, we get to know the character better through the story that unfolds as we play the game.

When creating a backstory, you can start with the present and work backwards, start with early childhood and work forwards, or you can hop back and forth as much as you like. The questions presented below are meant to act as a springboard for your imagination, and are split into two main sections: childhood and present. There is also an optional step where you can describe your investigator's first interaction with magic and the demi-monde (**Brush with the Supernatural**, page 57).

Note: if you want to skip creating a backstory altogether and go straight to playing the game, that's absolutely fine. Come back here later if you wish.

Childhood

Our childhood plays a strong role in making each of us the person we are today. Think about your investigator's childhood and consider these questions.

What did "family" mean to your investigator as a child?

- **Large family:** you have an extended family made up of siblings, cousins, uncles, aunts, and so on. You attend regular family gatherings. Does this make your life better or more complicated?
- **Nuclear family:** one or two parents, and one or two siblings. This may appear unremarkable, but most families have their secrets—what's yours?
- **Not much:** you're estranged from your family or perhaps you never knew them. Did something terrible happen to them? Did you fall out with your family and leave, or did they leave you? Perhaps you're still in contact with one family member, most likely a sibling or a parent. Or were you brought up in care, or in a string of foster homes?

What did "home" mean to your investigator as a child?

- **Comfort:** a place where there was always a hot meal, affection, and peace. Fond memories of celebrations, family holidays, and shared dinners.
- **Uncertainty:** why was it good sometimes and bad at others? Was there a bad event that changed everything—such as a death, a fire, or an illness? Was one of your parents in and out of prison, or did they sometimes come home drunk?
- **Bad memories:** was it a cold, loveless place? A place of raised voices and closed doors? A place not of trust, but of betrayal and cold stares? You don't have to talk about it if you don't want to.

Where did your investigator live as a child?

- **City:** crowds, traffic, noise, street lights, strangers, anonymity. Did you live in a rundown tower block, a luxury townhouse, or a leafy street in the suburbs?
- **Small town:** local cinema and swimming pool, hanging out with friends in the town centre. A place where everyone knows everyone. Did you live in a modern housing estate, a Victorian terrace, or an upmarket detached house with its own pool?
- **Rural:** isolation, school bus, country lanes, mud, old barns, dark nights. Did you live in an old farmhouse, a cramped cottage, or on a country estate?
- **It's complicated:** there was no one stable place. Perhaps your family moved around; maybe because of their work, perhaps even overseas. Or you were sent off to boarding school—how was that? Or did you and your family flee your home country to escape war or repression?

What culture was your investigator brought up in?

The *Rivers of London* novels present us with a diversity of characters, from a variety of different cultural backgrounds. We learn very quickly that Peter Grant is of mixed heritage and that his mother is from Sierra Leone. We are shown how this shapes Peter's character, not least in his preference for spicy food!

The obvious thing for most of us is to play someone from our own culture. If you wish to play someone of a different gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or culture, it should go without saying that you should aim to do so sensitively and with respect, avoiding simple or offensive stereotypes.

The Present

This is obviously the recent part of your backstory: who you are now. Consider the same questions listed for childhood, but reframe them for today.

- What does family mean to your investigator now?
- What does home mean to your investigator now?
- Where does your investigator live? We don't need an exact address, but decide on an area, at least. What kind of place is it? Who else lives there?
- How does your investigator's cultural background—or their gender or sexuality—impact their present situation?

Brush with the Supernatural (Optional Step)

The players and GM should decide whether each starting character has experienced a brush with the supernatural or not. If the GM is running a case file designed to provide a first experience of the demi-monde in all its weird glory, they might decide that the investigators have not yet had a brush with the supernatural—as that's going to happen during this first game. However, this might have a knock-on effect as to the skills an investigator has, as well as their background. For instance, if your investigator begins the game working at the Folly or has the Magic skill, then a brush with the supernatural is pretty much a given.

Consider the following questions:

- What was your investigator's first brush with the supernatural? A ghost or fae, or some other member of the demi-monde? Did your investigator spontaneously perform some magic or witness someone casting a spell?
- How did it make your character feel? Excited, frightened, intrigued?
- Did that experience change the path of your character's life? In what way?
- Did your character seek out people who knew about the supernatural? Did they join any groups, such as an occult organisation, a church, or even just a social media group?

These may be difficult questions for anyone unfamiliar with the *Rivers of London* novels to answer; in which case, the GM and the other players can be invited to offer suggestions.

GM ADVICE

An alternative way of finding out how the investigators first came into contact with the supernatural is to run short flashback scenes for each investigator as part of Session Zero (**Creating Your Character**, page 44). Another suggestion for how to use flashbacks can be found in Chapter 5 (**Using Flashbacks**, page 224).

Affluence Rating

Another part of your investigator's backstory is their affluence rating, i.e., what is their financial situation? *RoL:RPG* abstracts personal finances into four brackets: poor, average, wealthy, and rich (**Table 2: Living Standards**, page 58). Most professions—such as police officer, lecturer, doctor, and tradesperson—require people to work for a living. There is a wide range of incomes across these jobs, but, for game purposes, they broadly fall into the affluence rating of "average," meaning that person lives from payday to payday. Some professions, such as artist, could fall into any bracket—they could be very poor or exceedingly rich, depending on whether or not they've been "discovered," for example.

For many people, ill health or continued absence from work could lead to a loss of employment and a fall in income, potentially causing them to drop down an affluence rating bracket, e.g., from average to poor. However, some professions—such as Dilettante—don't require that person to be actively employed to derive an income, and so they aren't prone to loss of employment. Of course, an economic recession could have a major effect on such an individual's finances, perhaps even involving a Luck roll to see if their income stream has weathered the storm (**Luck Rolls**, page 113). Conversely, if an investigator acquires a higher-paying job or receives an inheritance, their affluence rating might be raised.

The default affluence rating for investigators is average. If you wish to choose anything other than average, this might have an impact on the game, so you should discuss and agree upon it with your GM. You can choose the rating of poor if you wish, though this may have some drawbacks in play.

- If you wish to choose the wealthy rating, you must choose the **Wealthy** advantage (page 52).
- If you wish to choose the rich rating, you must choose the **Rich** advantage (page 51).

The only profession which demands a certain level of wealth is Dilettante, which always begins the game as Rich. If you wish to choose the Dilettante occupation, you must select the Rich advantage during **Step Three** (page 50).

Living Standards and Day-to-Day Expenses

There's no need to keep a careful track of an investigator's expenditure on food, accommodation, or incidental travel expenses during a game, so long as what they're spending falls within the bounds of their living standard (**Table 2: Living Standards**). This system is intended to minimise bookkeeping for both the GM and the players, and helps to keep the game flowing smoothly.

For instance, in play, accommodation and travel are likely to feature primarily as background details to the main story. The characters may live in a rundown tower block or a plush Knightsbridge apartment; they may have an old banger (beater/junker) or a brand-new Italian sports car—as determined by their affluence rating and living standard. In game terms, these things often just add flavour and colour. On the other hand, flavour and colour are important, and the story of a group staying in a seedy motel is going to have a different feel to one where the group is staying in a luxury hotel suite. Of course, starting investigators may live at the Folly, especially if they are working or training there.

Example: *Nafeesa begins the game with an affluence rating of average, affording her an average living standard. She may stay in moderately priced hotels, eat out (economically), and take the occasional taxi. None of this requires any bookkeeping on the player's part.*

Where living standards are likely to have an impact is in major purchases. For us, as real people, a major purchase might be a holiday/vacation, a large TV, or a car; the kind of things for which most of us have to save money. For investigators in the game, these spends might be a large bundle of cash with which to bribe someone, or to buy their way into an illegal gambling game, or to purchase a rare occult book or arcane artefact from a London dealer.

Table 2: Living Standards

Affluence Rating: Poor

Able to afford the bare minimum of a roof over their head and at least one meagre meal each day.

- **Accommodation:** restricted to the cheapest rental housing or fleabag hotel.
- **Travel:** public transport of the cheapest sort; any vehicle owned will be cheap and unreliable.
- **Major purchases:** no major purchases are possible.

Affluence Rating: Average

A reasonable level of comfort, three meals a day, and occasional treats.

- **Accommodation:** an average home or apartment, either rented or privately owned; able to stay in moderately priced hotels.
- **Travel:** standard forms of travel can be used, but not first class; likely to own a reliable car.
- **Major purchases:** one major purchase is possible each year.

Affluence Rating: Wealthy

This level of wealth affords luxury and comfort.

- **Accommodation:** a substantial residence, perhaps with some domestic help (cleaner, gardener, etc.); possibly a second home in the country or abroad; can afford to stay in expensive hotels.
- **Travel:** first class; this person would own an expensive car or its equivalent.
- **Major purchases:** one major purchase can be made every month.

Affluence Rating: Rich

This level of wealth affords great luxury and comfort.

- **Accommodation:** a plush residence or estate with abundant domestic help (personal assistant, financial manager, personal chef, etc.); second homes in the country and abroad; able to stay in the world's top hotels.
- **Travel:** first class or private jet; can own numerous luxury cars, probably chauffeur-driven.
- **Major purchases:** there are few limits to what this character can afford.

As we've already mentioned, careful tracking of money isn't a part of this game, so the GM should use **Table 2: Living Standards** as a guide to handwaving most spending. If it seems that an investigator is overreaching themselves financially, the GM may decide they've run out of credit. This can also be used to build story—perhaps the investigators have to beg a loan from a shady contact, pawn an item of value, or lean on a wealthy relative to get the funds they need. Any of these options can be used to introduce an NPC, with their own potential complications and demands, thereby enriching the story.

GM ADVICE



You are the arbiter of whether something is within the bounds of an investigator's living standard or if they've exceeded their spending capability/credit level. Having said that, one thing to note is that membership of the Folly can go a long way towards mitigating the problems of a Poor affluence rating. The Folly can provide food and rent-free lodging at the drop of a hat. It also has immense financial resources based on its vast property portfolio and 80 years of accumulated investments, and these are outside of official Met budgetary control. So, even those characters who are not being paid a salary by the Folly will be able to bill it for essential purchases—such as successive phones, when their old ones inevitably succumb to magical destruction.

Friends and Family

The final part of the backstory step is for each player to identify one or more individuals who hold a special place in their investigator's life. Each person should be someone the investigator knows personally. Someone they can call up whenever they want and who always has time for them. Chances are, the investigator has known these people for many years, through thick and thin. They could be a relative, a partner, a child, a friend, or a neighbour.

Each occupation has a short list of suggested contacts—if you are struggling to come up with people, we suggest you take a look at these for inspiration. Whoever these people are, you trust them and they trust you. Your friends and family are not the same people covered by the **Connected** advantage (page 50), whose assistance always comes with strings attached.

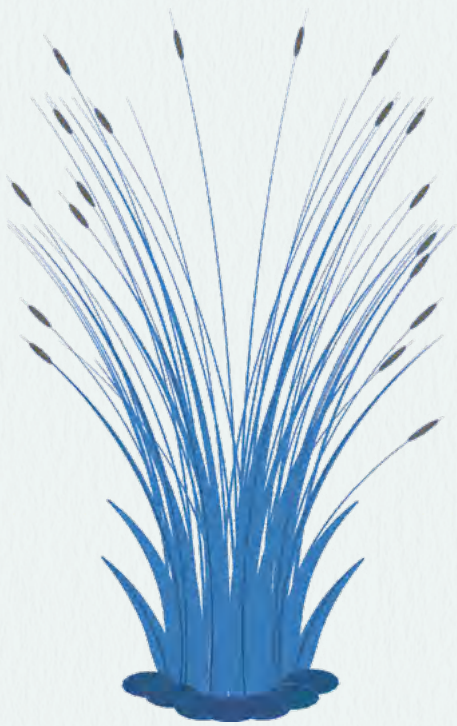
Step Six: Equip the Character

The final step—other than, potentially, coming up with your character's name—is to figure out what tools and equipment your investigator possesses. As a baseline, an investigator automatically begins the game with whatever equipment would be reasonable for their occupation.

Example: *a uniformed British police officer would start off with their warrant card (police ID) and, while on duty, would wear a stab vest and a utility belt holding their handcuffs, Airwave radio, PAVA spray, baton, and a PPE pouch (gloves, CPR mask). Other professions, such as a nurse or doctor, may have professional equipment on them (or in their vehicle) while on duty, but wouldn't necessarily have access to it when off duty.*

Some suggestions are provided in each occupation's description as to what equipment someone with that occupation might possess; these are not exhaustive by any means, and we encourage players to talk with their GM about what starting equipment they think is appropriate for that occupation, subject to the GM's approval.

An investigator may buy additional items during character creation, if they are available and if their cost falls within the bounds of an investigator's living standards (**Table 2: Living Standards**, page 58). The GM has final say as to whether or not specific tools and equipment are available to purchase in this way. They may also ask the player to explain why the investigator needs that specific item and ask them to include it as part of their investigator's backstory, particularly if the item, or its ownership, is unusual in any way.



The Folly Consultant's Card

Police officers seconded to the Folly already have their **Warrant Card** (page 211) as part of their equipment, which grants them their **Police Powers** (page 211). In order to gain access to crime scenes and sit in on interrogations, etc., the Folly's civilian consultants are expected to swear an oath similar to the constable's attestation (**Constable**, page 197), which grants them official Folly consultant's status, along with their consultant's card. While the card proves their official credentials, it does not grant them full police powers, nor does it gain them a bonus die on Social rolls with law-abiding citizens (**Police Officer/Detective (Rivers)**, page 71). Civilian consultants must also sign a lengthy—and comprehensive—non-disclosure agreement regarding the Folly's activities.

Equipment and Possessions

Once you've worked out your investigator's starting equipment, it's time to add it to your character sheet. There's no need to write a detailed list of absolutely everything your investigator owns—just list the most notable or useful items. In many cases, starting investigators don't really have anything exceptional or worth writing down beyond the equipment that comes with their occupation—that's fine, as you'll soon be uncovering all manner of strange and remarkable objects during the game.

Remember: items that fit the profile of your investigator's living standard do not need to be purchased—they simply own those, just as they automatically own—or have access to—the equipment that comes with their profession.



Weapons

Weapons are a specialised type of item that some investigators may own, either as part of their occupation or because they chose to purchase it as an additional item. Players should refer to **Table 3: Weapons** (page 61) for details on the main types of weapons available to their investigators. If a particular weapon type isn't there, use the following general rules as a guideline for what skill it uses and how much "base damage" it can inflict.

- Melee weapons use the Fighting skill.
- Most melee weapons have a base weapon damage of 1.
- Ranged weapons (e.g., bows, crossbows, etc.) and firearms use the Firearms skill.
- Projectiles fired from ranged weapons other than firearms have a base weapon damage of 1.
- Regular handguns (e.g., .38, 9 mm, etc.) have a base weapon damage of 1.
- Heavier handguns (e.g., .45, machine pistols, etc.), rifles (including assault rifles), shotguns, submachine guns, and machine guns have a base weapon damage of 2.

If an investigator has either the **Signature Firearm** (page 51) or **Signature Weapon** advantage (page 52), now is the time to specify what that weapon is, if they haven't done so already. Remember, the bonus die gained from these advantages only applies to one particular weapon, not every example of its type.

The **Combat** section (page 123) explains how weapons are used in combat and how damage is calculated following a successful attack. In brief: if your attack against your opponent is a success, you make a **Damage Roll** (page 132) to see how much additional damage you add to your weapon's base damage.

For fire, explosions, or other types of attacks that are not covered by **Table 3**, refer to **Table 7: Other Forms of Damage** (page 149).



Table 3: Weapons

Melee Weapons			
Type	**Skill**	**Base Weapon Damage**	**Base Range (metres/yards)**
Axe	Fighting or Athletics	1	Touch or STR/5*
Brass Knuckles	Fighting	1	Touch
Chainsaw	Fighting	2	Touch
Cricket/Baseball Bat	Fighting	1	Touch
Improvised (rock, scissors, etc.)	Fighting or Athletics	1	Touch or STR/5*
Knife	Fighting or Athletics	1	Touch or STR/5*
PAVA Spray/Mace	Fighting	Special**	Up to 3
Police Baton	Fighting	1	Touch
Spear	Fighting or Athletics	1	Touch or STR/5*
Unarmed (fists, kicks, etc.)	Fighting	0	Touch

Firearms			
Type	**Skill**	**Base Weapon Damage**	**Base Range (metres/yards)**
Bow	Firearms	1	30
Crossbow	Firearms	1	50
Heavy Handgun (.45)	Firearms	2	15
Machine Gun‡	Firearms	2	100
Regular Handgun (.38, 9mm)	Firearms	1	15
Rifle (.30-06, AK-47‡)	Firearms	2	100
Shotgun (12-gauge)	Firearms	2	50
Stun Gun	Firearms	Special†	Up to 3
Submachine Gun‡	Firearms	2	15

Key

*See the **Athletics** skill description for further details (page 82).

****PAVA Spray/Mace:** on a successful attack, the target must make a Hard CON roll; if failed, they are blinded and in pain for 1D6 rounds and, while blinded, all actions they attempt are made with a penalty die. PAVA Spray/Mace attacks do not get a bonus die for **Point-Blank Range** (page 138).

‡Capable of **Automatic Fire** (page 329).

†**Stun Gun:** on a successful attack, the target must make a Hard CON roll; if failed, they are stunned for 1D6 rounds and all actions are made with a penalty die. Stun gun attacks do not get a bonus die for **Point-Blank Range** (page 138).

Occupations

This section looks at **Investigator Occupations** in greater detail. Each entry contains a brief description about the occupation, along with suggested contacts, required and recommended skills, and suggested equipment. Individual skill definitions can be found in **Chapter 2: Skills**. Occupations held by characters in the *Rivers of London* novels and graphic novels are identified with "(Rivers)" after the occupation's name.



ADDITIONAL RULES

If a player has their heart set on an occupation for their investigator that isn't listed here, rules for creating new occupations can be found in the **Advanced Character Creation** section, page 309.

Architect (Rivers)

Peter Grant always wanted to be an architect but didn't get the right exam results—that's one of the reasons he ended up joining the Metropolitan Police Service. The rest, as they say, is history. Architects are trained to design and plan buildings, from a small conversion to a private house or a multimillion-pound construction project, such as Skygarden[3] or One Hyde Park[4]. The architect works closely with the project manager and oversees the construction. Architects must be aware of local planning laws, health and safety regulations, and general public safety. Some may be part of a large firm, or they may work freelance, depending on their reputation to get them commissions.

Architect is a broad category and may encompass more specialised occupations, such as naval architect or landscape architect, as may the associated Art/Craft skill.

Required skills: Art/Craft (Architecture).
Recommended skills: Observation, Research.
Suggested contacts: local planning and city engineering departments, construction firms.

Equipment: laptop, sketchbook, drawing pens and pencils, and possibly drawing board, tracing paper, scale ruler.

Artist (Rivers)

While the Folly now has its own artist in residence[5], someone who takes the Artist occupation could be a painter, a sculptor, a textile artist, and so on. Some may be self-absorbed and driven with a particular vision, while others are blessed with a great talent that is able to inspire passion and understanding. Talented or not, the artist's ego must be strong enough to withstand critical appraisal and whatever other obstacles are thrown in their way, and to keep them working if/when success arrives. Some artists care not for material enrichment, while others have a keen entrepreneurial streak.

Required skills: Art/Craft (choose a discipline).
Recommended skills: History, Languages, Observation, Read Person, Research.
Suggested contacts: art galleries, critics, wealthy patrons, the advertising industry.

Equipment: depends on the discipline, but usually a sketchbook and pencils, along with the basic tools and equipment they need to create a finished piece. For example, a textile artist may have a sewing machine and a studio full of threads and fabrics, while a potter would probably have a wheel and a kiln, as well as clay and glazes.

Athlete

An athlete probably plays in a professional football, cricket, or rugby team (baseball, basketball, or American football team in the US), or may compete at a national or international level in an individual sport. Those who are employed by well-financed, high-profile teams are likely to live very comfortably, whereas those playing for lesser teams or relying on personal sponsorship may not be quite so well off. Successful professional athletes enjoy a certain amount of celebrity within the arena of their expertise.

Required skills: Athletics.
Recommended skills: Fighting, Ride, Stealth.
Suggested contacts: sports personalities, sports writers, trainers, other media stars.

Equipment: depends on the discipline, but includes appropriate sports clothing, footwear, and equipment, along with access to training facilities if they cannot afford a gym/court/pool of their own. For example, a professional tennis player may have several tennis rackets, tennis shoes, and tennis balls, along with access to a private practice court and a personal trainer.

Author

Without an author, there would be no *Rivers of London* novels, nor would there be this book! Someone who takes the Author occupation uses words to define and explore the human condition, especially the range of human emotions, through a range of mediums, including short stories, novels, poetry, plays, screenplays, and comics. Their labours can often be solitary and the rewards solipsistic: only a relative handful make much money. The work habits of authors vary widely. Typically, an author might spend months or years researching in preparation for a book and then withdraw for periods of intense creation. And, as for the hours they keep…

Footnotes: [3]*Broken Homes*, [4]*The Hanging Tree*, [5]*Lies Sleeping*

Required skills: Art/Craft (Literature), Research.
Recommended skills: History, Languages, Observation, Occult, Read Person, Social.
Suggested contacts: agents, publishers, editors, bookshops, fans, specialist contacts (a crime author might seek to make police contacts, for example).

Equipment: notebook, pens, pencils, laptop, books on whatever topic it is they're currently researching.

Chancer (Rivers)

Zachary Palmer[6], one of the Folly's occasional consultants, is definitely something of a chancer (opportunist). As opposed to someone who is poverty-stricken through ill health or unemployment, the chancer's life is chosen, perhaps compensating for a social, philosophical, or economic need, or perhaps taken due to a desire to break free of societal constraints. The chancer takes jobs, sometimes for days or months, but a job for life is anathema to them, as is a fixed place of abode. As a result, someone who takes the Chancer occupation most likely has an affluence rating of poor. Chancers have their own code of ethics, which may allow for minor transgressions of the law. They may sometimes be pressured into outright criminality but usually avoid doing so wherever possible.

Required skills: Observation, Stealth.
Recommended skills: Athletics, Fighting, Navigate, Read Person, Sleight of Hand.
Suggested contacts: businesses who employ staff on a casual basis (manual labour, delivery drivers, etc.), criminals, police, homeless, gang members.

Equipment: potentially nothing more than the clothes on their back, though they may have the tools associated with their current job.

Clergy, Member of the

Members of the clergy are the priests or ministers of their faith, responsible for officiating rites and religious ceremonies, as well as seeing to the pastoral care of their congregation. In some faiths, they are ordained following a period of church-prescribed training (e.g., the Catholic and Anglican churches). Their consecration as clergy sets them above the members of their congregation. In other faiths, such as Islam, the individual may see to their own training and there is no official ordination—the member of the clergy is not seen as separate from or above the congregation they serve.

Where a member of the clergy serves is different between faiths. For example, the hierarchy of the Christian Church usually assigns clergy to their respective parishes or sends them on evangelical missions, most often to a foreign country as a missionary. Within Islam, the community seeks out a new imam if a vacancy arises, either from within their own congregation or by invitation.



Footnote: [6] *Whispers Under Ground*

Different faiths have different hierarchical structures with some having clearly defined management levels and routes of progression through the ranks, while others have a more informal internal structure. For example, in the Catholic Church a priest may rise through the ranks of bishop, archbishop, and cardinal, while a Methodist pastor may in turn rise to district superintendent and bishop. Many clergy (not just Catholic priests) bear witness to confessions and, though they are not at liberty to divulge such secrets, they are free to act upon them.

Some who work in the church are trained in professional skills, acting as doctors, lawyers, and scholars—use the occupation which best describes the nature of the investigator's work, as appropriate.

Required skills: Read Person, Research, Social.
Recommended skills: Accounting, History, Languages, Observation, Occult.
Suggested contacts: church hierarchy, local congregations, community leaders.

Equipment: clerical vestments, holy book, other religious paraphernalia (such as prayer beads, small prayer carpet, and so on).

Computer Specialist (Rivers)

Someone with the Computer Specialist occupation may focus on one of three main aspects of computing—programmer, technician, or hacker—or combine a little of all three!

The computer programmer's responsibilities usually include designing, writing, debugging, and/or maintaining the source code of computer programs and application platforms. They may work for a software or tech development house, like the Serious Cybernetics Corporation[7] or work freelance. May also be referred to as a software engineer.

The computer technician is responsible for the development and maintenance of computer systems and networks. They often work alongside other office staff to ensure the systems under their care maintain their functionality, security, and integrity. May also be referred to as a database administrator, IT systems manager, or network administrator, etc.

And then we have the computer hacker, who uses computers and computer networks either for criminal gain or to promote their political ends (sometimes referred to as "hacktivism"). Hacking requires illegally breaking into computers and user accounts, and may result in anything from defaced web pages, doxing, and swatting to denial-of-service attacks through email bombing and ransomware-based extortion.

Required skills: Computer Use, Tech.
Recommended skills: Research.



Footnote: [7]*False Value*

Suggested contacts: other IT workers, corporate workers and managers, specialised internet web communities.

Equipment: high-spec computer, probably with multiple large monitors, high-spec laptop or tablet for portable use.

Criminal (Rivers)

Criminals come in all shapes, sizes, and shades of grey. Some are merely opportunistic jacks of all trades, such as pickpockets and joyriders, while others are highly specialised, spending their time researching and planning specific types of crimes, such as bank robbers and cat burglars. As you might expect, there are many different specialisms on which someone with the Criminal occupation could focus.

A street-level criminal is pretty much at the bottom of the ladder, so to speak. They may work solo, perhaps as a mugger, pickpocket, shoplifter, or petty burglar—perhaps occasionally teaming up with others when the reward is worth the effort and risk. Alternatively, they may work for someone, such as an organised gang or crime family, and be involved in more serious crimes like drug dealing or armed robbery. If they do work for someone, their loyalty and devotion is expected, if not demanded, up to and including taking the fall for those above them if a crime goes wrong.

A confidence trickster is someone who specialises in defrauding people having first gained their trust. Often a smooth talker, they may work alone or as part of a team. Some schemes are elaborate, involving teams of scammers and rented buildings (e.g., telemarketing scams, which tend to target the vulnerable and less well off). Others are simple affairs, transactions requiring only one con artist and no more than a few minutes. The wealthier the mark, the bigger the potential score.

Forgers are the artists of the criminal world. They specialise in faking all kinds of official documents, such as passports and birth certificates, as well as falsifying signatures. Beginners may be employed to produce fake IDs for petty criminals, while the best work on counterfeiting currency.

Smugglers specialise in illegally transporting people, goods, or items—even information—to wherever they're wanted. It's a lucrative but high-risk business, and the smuggler usually has a public profession, such as boat captain, pilot, or businessman, to act as a cover for their illicit activities.

A fence is someone who trades in stolen property. They take in stolen goods and then sell them on to other criminals or unsuspecting legitimate customers. Principally a middleman between thieves and buyers, the fence either takes a cut of the profit or, more usually, buys the stolen goods at a very low price then pockets the mark up.

Enforcers are the muscle of the underworld. Hired to be guards or otherwise the strong arm of a criminal enterprise. Some follow strict codes of behaviour, and there's usually nothing personal in what they do—it's purely business.

Required skills: none.
Recommended skills: Athletics, Drive, Fighting, Firearms, Locksmith, Mechanical Repair, Navigate, Observation, Read Person, Social, Stealth.
Suggested contacts: fences, gang members, drug dealers and users, counterfeiters, money launderers, police, ex-cons.

Equipment: varies depending on the type of criminal. A burglar may carry a set of lockpicks, muggers are never without some sort of concealed weapon, and drug dealers usually have some of their product carefully secreted somewhere about their person.

GM ADVICE

Carefully consider whether or not to allow Criminal as an occupation in a game. If the other investigators are law-abiding, or, indeed, police officers, a clash is likely to occur at some point. However, some players—and thereby, their investigators—may be prepared to turn a blind eye to a degree of low-level criminality. For this reason, it's recommended that if anyone is thinking of playing a criminal, you discuss this during Session Zero before character creation begins. If people aren't happy with it, or there's a feeling that it may lead to an unwelcome clash, then you have two options:

- Don't include Criminal as a potential occupation.
- Allow players to choose Criminal as a former occupation. They get all the skills and contacts, but now they've gone straight. Perhaps their encounter with the supernatural convinced them that a life of crime really wasn't for them anymore!



Dilettante (Rivers)

Dilettantes are self-supporting, living off an inheritance, trust fund, or some other source of income that does not require them to work. Usually, the dilettante has enough money that specialist financial advisers are needed to help manage it. They are potentially well educated, though not necessarily accomplished in anything, depending on the source their wealth.

Money frees the dilettante to be eccentric and outspoken, occasionally in ways that could be detrimental to other people's well-being[8]. The dilettante has had plenty of time to learn how to be charming and sophisticated; what else has been done with that free time is likely to betray the dilettante's true character and interests. Covers trust fund babies, wealthy individuals (possibly retired), and dot com millionaires.

Footnote: [8] *Cry Fox*

Note: in order to take the Dilettante occupation, you must take the **Rich** advantage (page 51).

Required skills: none.
Recommended skills: Art/Craft (any), Drive, Firearms, Languages, Ride, Social.
Suggested contacts: variable, but usually people of a similar background and tastes, fraternal organisations, bohemian circles, high society at large.

Equipment: let's face it, pretty much anything they want—after all, money's no object to a dilettante; most likely linked in some way to how they made their money or, if they inherited their wealth, their personal passion.

Doctor of Medicine (Rivers)

Doctors study the workings of the human body, with a view to treating its various ailments and diseases. Many continue to work with living people after they qualify, like general practitioners, surgeons, or other specialists, such as psychiatrists, while others concentrate on medical research or dealing with the dead as a pathologist or medical examiner. Most doctors share the core aim of wanting to help patients; many also work to promote scientific and medical understanding, though some are more focused on the opportunity to gain money and prestige through their position.

If a general practitioner, the doctor will be based in a rural or neighbourhood practice in or near a small town or city. Many physicians are employed by large urban hospitals, allowing them to specialise in areas like pathology, toxicology, orthopaedics, and gastroenterology—even cryptopathology, if you know the right people. Doctors may also serve as part- or full-time medical examiners, conducting autopsies and signing death certificates for the city, county, or state.

Required skills: Medicine.
Recommended skills: Observation, Read Person, Research, Science (Biology), Social.
Suggested contacts: other physicians, medical workers, patients and ex-patients.

Equipment: if a general practitioner, a high visibility jacket or vest plus a doctor's bag of some sort, containing a photo ID, a small number of forms (including a prescription pad), safety



alarm, alcohol wipes, disposable gloves, alcohol gel, sharps bin, small torch (flashlight), specimen bottles, syringes, dressings and surgical tape, and diagnostic equipment (stethoscope, blood pressure monitor, thermometer, pulse oximeter, etc.), along with a small range of drugs (e.g., painkillers, antibiotics, and drugs to treat a variety of illnesses such as diabetes, heart problems, asthma, and anaphylaxis). Specialists will have access to the equipment appropriate to their specialism.

Driver

There are many types of professional driver: cabbie, delivery person, lorry driver, ambulance driver, bus driver, chauffeur, and so on. Some may work for a company or a private individual who provides the vehicle they drive as part of their job, while others may own their own work vehicle (most often a cab, van, or rig). With the rise of the gig-economy, many drivers acquire work through an app. Some drivers may even be professionals competing in the world of motor sports!

One of the most common types of professional driver encountered, particularly in London, is the taxi driver or cabbie. If they work for a company (large or small), the driver probably rents their cab from the company, giving them access to their employer's dispatcher service. Alternatively, they may have their own cab and licence. Those who drive the famous London black cabs are all members of the Worshipful Company of Hackney Carriage Drivers, having passed "The Knowledge." As with any other form of taxi service, some work for a company, others are fully self-employed. Regardless of who they work for, taxi drivers are usually required to obtain a special licence that includes a background check by the police. In London, this is handled by the Public Carriage Office.

Another type of professional driver is the chauffeur; as with taxi drivers, they may either be directly employed by an individual or firm, or work for an agency that hires both car and chauffeur out for single engagements or on a retainer basis.

Required skills: Drive.
Recommended skills: Navigate, Observation, Read Person, Social.
Suggested contacts: customers, businesses, law enforcement, and general street-level life.

Equipment: vehicle and appropriate licence, mobile phone, satellite navigation device, relevant A–Z Guide (if in the UK) or street maps (physical or virtual) as back up; potentially a credit card reader and/or cash box if receiving money directly from customers.

Entertainer (Rivers)

This occupation is a catch-all for those involved in the entertainment industry: actors, singers, dancers, clowns, comedians, DJs, musicians, radio or television personalities, or anyone else who earns a living in front of an audience. These people love to be seen, love to show what they do best, and love the consequent applause. They may perform solo or in a group.

Many entertainers struggle to get by, eking out a living by playing small venues as often as they can. A fortunate few get regular work, such as performing in a bar or hotel. For the minority, great success and wealth can be found by being in the right place at the right time—having a modicum of talent might also help, but in a world obsessed with celebrity, it's not always essential. A staggeringly small few make it, becoming mass-media celebrities and household names.

Note: if the desire is to be a famous film actor or media celebrity, you must take the **Rich** advantage (page 51).

Required skills: Art/Craft (Acting or instrument).
Recommended skills: Disguise, Observation, Read Person.
Suggested contacts: theatre, film industry, television industry, club owners, unions, entertainment critics, and maybe even organised crime.

Equipment: varies depending on the type of entertainer; for example, a British actor may have an Equity union card (and a box of stage makeup), while their US counterpart may have a SAG card; a musician will have their instrument, while a DJ will have their decks and records, or laptop.

Farmer (Rivers)

An agricultural worker and/or manager who might own the land on which they raise crops or livestock, or who is employed to do the same for a third party. The life of a farmer is hard work, suited to those who enjoy manual labour and outdoor activities, and always subject to the vagaries of the weather and consumer demand. Many farmers carry on the family tradition while others come into the profession after attending agricultural college.

Required skills: Art/Craft (Farming), Drive.
Recommended skills: Accounting, Athletics, Mechanical Repair, Observation, Read Person.
Suggested contacts: local bank, local politicians, local rural businesses.

Equipment: farm vehicle, shotgun (licenced), tools (hammer, axe, etc.); other equipment varies depending on whether the farm is arable, pastoral, or mixed—or, indeed, more highly-specialised, such as a fish farm.



Firefighter (Rivers)

Firefighters are trained to extinguish fires that threaten lives and property, or the environment (in the case of wildfires). Firefighters work closely with the police and medical services and are frequently called upon as a rescue service for such things as road traffic accidents and collapsed buildings. Firefighters are skilled in using a wide range of personal protective equipment and tools. They are trained to work quickly and safely, and to enter burning buildings to save the likes of you and me. They may be involved in fire safety education programmes and community outreach programmes aimed at fire prevention.

The fire service uses ranks, beginning in the UK with firefighter, rising through leading firefighter, to sub-officer and station officer. The service is overseen by a commissioner. In Britain, fire services are organised along regional lines, with London having its own dedicated service; in the US, fire services are organised at a municipal level. While most large fire services in the UK and the US employ full-time staff, there are still part-time volunteer firefighters in both countries. An investigator who is a volunteer firefighter should use the occupation which best describes their main form of employment.

Required skills: Athletics.
Recommended skills: Drive, Navigate, Observation.
Suggested contacts: police, ambulance drivers, and paramedics.

Equipment: high-visibility protective clothing, helmet, air supply, gloves, axe, first aid kit, rope.

Influencer

An influencer works through social media to affect the decisions made by their audience, usually in respect to purchasing. They use blogs, videos, and other social media tools to show off their knowledge or expertise and build a following, or otherwise use their celebrity to endorse and promote products. Some influencers have millions of followers, while others may be more niche (but may have a more powerful effect over a smaller number of people).

The original influencers were celebrities, such as those from the world of music, film, sport, or fashion. Companies have always sought out famous people for advertising and endorsements, and influencers are simply an extension of that desire in social media form.

Businesses (especially advertising agencies) seek out influencers in order to gain access to their followers, thereby creating and manipulating trends, and thus building markets. A successful influencer can become very rich—and work with an agent and a team—but lower-level influencers usually work solo and simply make a living wage.

Required skills: Social.
Recommended skills: Computer Use (though many influencers may have very limited skill with computers).
Suggested contacts: myriad followers, businesspeople, other influencers.

Equipment: tablet, mobile phone, webcam, mic, ring light, selfie stick.

Journalist

The journalist uses words to report and comment upon topics and newsworthy incidents, writing as many words in a day as an author may in a week. Journalists usually work for newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and internet news services, although many are freelance.

Investigative journalists research deep into and report on their specialist topic area, e.g., political affairs, corporate accountability, and serious crime. The best attempt to remain independent of the corruption and self-serving they all too frequently witness, but the grubby reality of the world sometimes overwhelms the worst, who eventually forfeit any sensibility except the power of their words.

Reporters work in the news and media industries, either freelance or for a newspaper, magazine, website, or news agency. Most work outside the office, interviewing witnesses, checking records, and gathering stories. Some are assigned to specific beats like crime, sports, or business, while others cover social events, celebrity gossip, and so on.

Reporters carry press passes, but these are of little value other than to identify an individual as employed by their respective employer (usually a newspaper). The real work is similar to that of a private detective, and some reporters may resort to subterfuge to gain the information they want.

Required skills: Research, Social.
Recommended skills: Art/Craft (Photography), History, Observation, Read Person.
Suggested contacts: news industry, politicians, street-level criminals, or law enforcement.

Equipment: press pass, notebook, mobile phone, potentially portable audio/video recording equipment (although mobile devices now have access to sufficiently high-quality recording apps that separate devices may be the preserve of the old guard).

Lawyer (Rivers)

Learned in the law of the country in which they serve, the lawyer acts as an attorney, counsel, or solicitor, able to relate abstract legal theories and knowledge to present solutions for their clients. May be hired or appointed by a court on an individual basis or may be privately retained by a wealthy client or business.

The term "lawyer" tends to mean an attorney in the US, while in England it loosely refers to a variety of professions including barristers, solicitors, and legal executives. In North America, the state or provincial bar of a particular state or province must sanction one's practise of law. In England and Wales, the lawyer must be sanctioned by the appropriate approved regulator (the Solicitors Regulation Authority for solicitors, the Bar Standards Board for barristers, or CILEx Regulation for chartered legal executives).

With the right client, a lawyer could become a celebrity in their own right, and a small number do enjoy the media attention for political or financial gain. Some acquire a degree of celebrity by championing a particular cause, such as racial equality, women's rights, or labour relations.

Required skills: Law, Research, Social.
Recommended skills: Accounting, Computer Use, History, Observation, Read Person.
Suggested contacts: depending on the area of law in which they choose to work, they may have contact with criminal organisations, businesspeople, campaigning organisations, government officials, etc.

Equipment: mobile phone, smart suit, legal manuals, legal pads, briefcase.

Lecturer

In *RoL:RPG*, the term "lecturer" encompasses educators of all sorts, including school teachers, tutors, college/university lecturers and professors.

School teachers must generally have a degree and either work as general teachers with lower ages or are subject-specific teachers with older children and teenagers. Those who teach in further and higher education frequently hold higher-level qualifications, such as master's degrees and PhDs.

In the UK, professors are academics who hold subject-specific PhDs, employed by universities to teach students alongside their ongoing academic research. As a result, they may have a discernible academic reputation in their area of expertise. In the US, there is no requirement to have a PhD before calling oneself a professor. They may be employed by both universities and colleges in either a purely teaching capacity or along similar lines to their UK colleagues.

Required skills: Research, plus a skill relating to their subject specialism.
Recommended skills: Languages, Read Person, Social.
Suggested contacts: fellow academics and teachers, universities, libraries.

Equipment: course syllabus, lecture notes and presentations, mark schemes, coloured pens, and access to the stationery cupboard; other tools and equipment will depend on the age range they teach and/or their subject specialism, e.g., a nursery school teacher is likely to have access to glue and crayons.

Librarian (Rivers)

Librarians are usually employed by public institutions or universities, responsible for cataloguing and maintaining stock, as well as dealing with lender enquiries. The librarian is also a keeper of electronic media and databases. Some large businesses employ librarians to manage a large collection or data. A few librarians are employed by wealthy collectors to provide custodial care of private libraries.

It's never wise to mess with librarians—something Peter Grant learns the hard way on more than one occasion[9]. They have a world of information at their fingertips and can prove to be invaluable allies when it comes to hunting down weird and obscure information.

Required skills: Research.
Recommended skills: Accounting, Computer Use.
Suggested contacts: booksellers, community groups, specialist researchers.

Equipment: library card (ID), stationery, and books—lots and lots of books.

Nurse

Nurses are trained healthcare professionals, usually working in hospitals, nursing homes, or alongside general practitioners. Generally, a nurse assists an individual, sick or well, with minor treatment and activities contributing to their health and/or recovery—or to a peaceful death—including those that the person might otherwise have performed unaided if they had the necessary strength, will, or knowledge.

Some nurses have undergone additional training to become nurse practitioners, able to assess patient needs, order and interpret diagnostic tests, diagnose disease, and formulate treatment plans—the exact parameters of the role vary by country.

Required skills: Medicine (starting at 60%, or Medicine at 40% along with an additional expert skill of the player's choice at 40%).
Recommended skills: Observation, Read Person, Social.
Suggested contacts: hospital workers, physicians, community workers.

Equipment: a nurse's bag containing syringes, dressings and surgical tape, saline, alcohol gel, alcohol wipes, disposable gloves, specimen bottles, bandage scissors, clinical waste bags, sharps bin, diagnostic equipment (stethoscope, blood pressure monitor, thermometer, etc.), and a small selection of drugs (mostly over-the-counter ones, such as painkillers and cold medication).

Footnote: [9] *False Value*

Paramedic (Rivers)

Trained in emergency health care, paramedics—along with emergency medical technicians (EMTs)—are usually on the front line of dealing with a medical emergency outside of a hospital situation. They may be part of an ambulance crew on the ground, up in a helicopter as part of an air ambulance service, or acting alone as a first responder.

Due to the nature of their work, they must be prepared to administer emergency medical care to patients in a wide variety of settings, often in difficult and/or hazardous environments. In the UK, specialist paramedics, known as HART (Hazardous Area Response Teams), are the only medical personnel allowed into a major incident's "hot zone" to treat victims on the spot—ordinary paramedics must wait for members of the other services, such as fire and rescue, to bring victims to them under such circumstances.

While there is a distinction between a paramedic and an EMT in terms of qualifications and professional registration, in the UK, the term is usually used by the general public to refer to both occupations. In the US, EMT is the more commonly encountered term.

Required skills: Medicine, Observation.
Recommended skills: Read Person, Science (Biology), Social.
Suggested contacts: other paramedics, hospital staff—particularly those in Accident and Emergency (the emergency room), police, firefighters.

Equipment: a paramedic's bag containing alcohol gel, disposable gloves, clinical waste bags, sharps bin, airways tubes (nasal and oral) and lubricating gel, tourniquets, dressings and surgical tape, bag valve mask, foil blanket, head torch, shears, diagnostic equipment (stethoscope, blood pressure monitor, pulse oximeter, thermometer, etc.), and syringes, along with emergency response drugs (painkillers, adrenaline, etc.).



Parapsychologist

Parapsychologists spend their time attempting to observe, record, and study the supernatural. Sometimes nicknamed "ghost hunters," they generally use technology to try to capture evidence of paranormal activity, be it centred on a person or a particular location. A major portion of their time is spent debunking mistaken phenomena or fake mediums rather than recording actual evidence. Having said that, in the *Rivers of London* world there is always the chance they *will* come across some genuinely "weird bollocks," as DCI Alexander Seawoll has been known to call anything associated with the demi-monde[10].

Some parapsychologists specialise in the study of a particular phenomenon, such as extra sensory perception, telekinesis, hauntings, etc. Prestigious universities offering courses on parapsychology are few and far between, and even where they do, such courses are often unaccredited. There are many online degrees available in the subject, though. Several universities do have parapsychology units, such as Edinburgh University, and there are independent research facilities, such as the Rhine Research Centre in Durham, North Carolina. Standards in the field are often based entirely upon personal reputation, and so the most acceptable representatives tend to hold degrees in related areas—e.g., physics, psychology, or medicine.

Those who choose this path are unusually sympathetic to the notion of invisible mystical powers, while also seeking to validate that belief to the satisfaction of physical scientists. This situation represents an unusual cohabitation of faith and doubt, and the parapsychologist may have difficulty separating their conflicting desires. A person uninterested in observation, experimentation, and proof is not a parapsychologist, though they may be an occultist.

Required skills: Occult, Read Person.
Recommended skills: Art/Craft (Photography), History, Languages, Science (Anthropology), Sense Vestigia.
Suggested contacts: universities, parapsychological publications.

Equipment: notebook, pens, flashlight, EMF magnetic field detector, dowsing rods, infrared thermal imager, hand-held recording equipment.

Footnote: [10] *Whispers Under Ground*

Police Officer/Detective (Rivers)

This occupation covers all walks of policing, from uniformed officers—like Detective Constables Judith Hua and Francis Austin[11]—to plainclothes detectives, like Peter Grant and DCI Thomas Nightingale.

Uniformed police officers are employed to maintain law and order—usually at street level if a member of the lower ranks—wherever there is human habitation, e.g., towns and cities, although rural officers do exist. The job may require them to be on foot, behind the wheel of a patrol car, or sitting at a desk (e.g., the Case Progression Unit[12]).

The plainclothes branches of police forces examine crime scenes, gather evidence, conduct interviews, and try to solve homicides, major burglaries, and other crimes. If a junior detective, they work the streets in search of information, often in cooperation with a uniformed patrol officer. The more senior the detective, the more likely they are to be a manager, coordinating a number of staff on important investigations, but rarely enjoying the luxury of concentrating on a single case.

Detectives sort truth from lies through evidence and reconstruction, and their crucial function is to marshal enough evidence to facilitate an arrest, in turn leading to a successful criminal prosecution and conviction.

The qualifications required to become a police officer, and subsequently a detective, vary by country. More information can be found in **Chapter 5** in the **Training** section for

The Four Es

British police officers are trained to de-escalate situations before resorting to physical intervention, using what is known as the "Four Es" model:

- **Engage:** the officer verbally establishes their awareness and understanding of the situation with the other person or persons.
- **Explain:** the officer explains the situation to the person or persons involved with dignity and respect.
- **Encourage:** the officer encourages reasonable behaviour/compliance, reinforced with further explanation, if required.
- **Enforce:** if the previous three steps fail to resolve the situation, the officer must then escalate to physical intervention, which may involve restraint and/or arrest.



Footnotes: [11]*Detective Stories*, [12]*Rivers of London*

London-based police officers (page 199). Once on the job, further training and qualifications lead to promotion in either the uniformed or detective branches.

UK police officers are trained to de-escalate situations verbally and use physical restraint as a last resort (**The Four Es**, nearby). To reinforce this, police officers in uniform, or any off-duty or plainclothes officer who shows their warrant card or police badge, should be granted a bonus die on Social skill rolls when dealing with law-abiding members of the public. **Note:** uniformed police officers who join the ranks of the Folly, even if only on a temporary basis, are expected to swap their uniforms for plainclothes.

Required skills: Law.
Recommended skills: Athletics, Drive, Fighting, Firearms, Navigate, Observation, Read Person, Research, Social, Stealth.
Suggested contacts: law enforcement, firefighters, community leaders, informers, reporters, the homeless, criminals (especially repeat offenders).

Equipment: off duty, warrant card (UK) or police badge (US); if in uniform on duty in the UK, stab vest and a utility belt holding handcuffs, Airwave radio, PAVA spray (incapacitant), baton, and a PPE pouch (gloves, CPR mask). Non-uniformed officers may forego the belt, but will usually have a hidden stab vest, radio, incapacitant, and PPE pouch somewhere on their person.

Private Investigator

The private investigator, often referred to in fiction as a "private eye," is a freelance detective who usually acts in non-police situations to gather information and evidence on behalf of private clients. Their work may be connected to impending civil cases, tracking down fleeing spouses or business partners, or acting as an agent for private defence attorneys in criminal cases. Like any professional, the private investigator separates their personal feelings from the job at hand and cheerfully works for the guilty and innocent alike, as long as their fee is paid.

Many private investigators were police officers earlier in their career and aren't afraid to make good use of old connections now they're no longer on the force; however, this is not always the case, and some private detectives have no previous police experience. In most locales, the private investigator must be licensed and, if later proven to be guilty of illegal activity, the licence may be revoked—effectively ending the private eye's career.

Required skills: Law, Research.
Recommended skills: Art/Craft (Photography), Computer Use, Disguise, Drive, Locksmith, Observation, Read Person, Social, Stealth.
Suggested contacts: law enforcement, clients.

Equipment: notebook, pens, camera, covert surveillance equipment, PI licence, laptop, mobile phone.



The National Crime Agency

Founded in 2013, the NCA heads the UK's fight against serious and organised crime. It is separate to the police but does employ attested constables, among a range of other personnel from a wide variety of specialisms and backgrounds. Not only does it investigate serious crime and offer victim support, but it also provides specialist advice, support services, and personnel to individual police forces—such as forensic specialist advisers, as well as hosting several important databases, including the **National Injuries Database** (page 210). Its personnel are referred to as "Officers."

Service Member (Rivers)

The term "service member" is used in *RoL:RPG* as a general term for anyone in the military, including the army, navy, and air force.

All members of the military undergo a similar basic training—"boot camp"—where new recruits are taught how to march, shoot, salute, and the beginnings of how to navigate military bureaucracy. On graduation from basic training they move on to trades training, which, in the case of the army, can be anything from the combat skills of the infantry to the explosive talents of engineers to highly technical skills as found in the signals. Some units or corps even have specific names for their members such as sapper (Royal Engineers), gunner (Royal Artillery), or trooper (Armoured Corps regiments).

The most recognised units are of course the frontline ones, and specifically the infantry, but they only make up about one in ten service members. Service members are a diverse and uniquely skilled group that is hard to pin down to a single set of commonalities, save that they all serve in the military.

Service members are commonly deployed for six months to a year to a variety of locations around the world, and thus may have experience and understanding of other cultures and languages. Depending on their specific role, an individual service member's expertise may focus upon combat, engineering, human resources, IT, logistics, or medicine.

It is assumed that investigators who take this occupation have recently left active military service, either because they have retired or their term of enlistment was complete; however, full active service personnel may be permitted, with the GM's approval. Alternatively, an investigator may be a reservist, in which case they should refer to the skills and equipment associated with their main occupation first.

Required skills: Athletics, Fighting, Firearms.
Recommended skills: Languages, Mechanical Repair, Navigate, Observation, Stealth, Survival, or any skill(s) appropriate to their previous military career.
Suggested contacts: ex-service members, such as those who have joined the police; members of the intelligence community; "*My mate who's in…*" ex-service members who are now involved in strange or unusual occupations and may be international; hometown friend(s).

Equipment: varies depending on the service and the investigator's role within that service, and what they brought away with them when they left it; for example, a serving military officer may have been able to carry a firearm while on active duty, but it is unlikely they'd have been allowed to take that weapon with them when they returned to civilian life (particularly in the UK).

Social Worker (Rivers)

Social workers assist individuals and families to ensure their personal and social welfare. Their goal is to improve people's lives and to safeguard the vulnerable. Their work may take them into schools, hospitals, and private homes or institutions. The occupation divides into a number of areas, working with either vulnerable adults or children and families.

Being a social worker can be a demanding and stressful occupation; they are often called upon to make tough decisions about people's lives. Their work deals directly with young offenders, drug abusers, the homeless, those with mental health issues, people with physical disabilities, the elderly, and so on. A day in the life of a social worker may include conducting interviews, writing assessments, liaising with community and government organisations, and giving evidence in court. No two days are likely to be the same.

Required skills: Social.
Recommended skills: Observation, Research.
Suggested contacts: families and individuals who have been involved with social services, police, doctors.

Equipment: photo ID card, mobile phone, case notes, notebook, pen.

Special Agent (Rivers)

Special agents are trained and employed by a government to investigate major crimes. They may work at a regional or national level. The complexities of their remit and authority are specific to each country and organisation, of which there are many. For example, in the US, a special agent may work for the FBI, the CIA, the FDA, the DHS, and so on. In the UK, they are most likely to work for the National Crime Agency (NCA), the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO), MI5, or MI6 (the Secret Intelligence Service).

Special agents have a good understanding of law and procedure, as well as being trained in combat and the use of technical equipment (surveillance equipment, etc.) if they're a "field agent" as opposed to an analyst or surveillance specialist. Agents are sometimes trained at special academies, such as Quantico for the FBI in the USA.

Required skills: Law.
Recommended skills: Athletics, Drive, Fighting, Firearms, Navigate, Observation, Read Person, Research, Social, Stealth.
Suggested contacts: law enforcement, government organisations.

Equipment: photo ID card; anything else depends on the agency they work for, but usually includes a registered firearm of some sort, along with access to some form of body armour.

Tradesperson (Rivers)

A tradesperson (craftsperson) is someone whose occupation requires particular training and experience. An apprenticeship is a common route into becoming a tradesperson. Some individuals may work for themselves, such as a plumber who undertakes household maintenance, while others work as part of a team or are employed by a company. The range of jobs is too many to list, but includes builder, plumber, electrician, metal worker, carpenter, decorator, and so on.

Required skills: Art/Craft specialism (or an alternative if one from the list of expert skills seems more appropriate).
Recommended skills: Observation.
Suggested contacts: other tradespeople in the same or related area of work, trade suppliers, customers.

Equipment: varies depending on the trade; for example, a carpenter would have access to saws, planes, screwdrivers, drills, etc., while a plumber would have wrenches, drain rods, chemicals, sealant, etc.



About the Character Sheet

The *RoL:RPG* character sheet has various boxes for the player to fill in during character creation, e.g., Portrait (**A**), Investigator Info (**B**), Characteristics (**C**), Advantages (**D**), Skills (**E**), and so on. Some are straightforward, while others require a little more explanation.

All the information the player needs to access during the course of a game is located on the character sheet's front page (**A—H**). Characteristics and skills have a space to fill in their full and half values. If you are using a downloaded "autocalc" sheet from www.chaosium.com, it will automatically calculate half values for you once you type in the full value in the space provided.

The spaces for Luck and magic points in the Supplemental Info box (**C**) are a little different—they are labelled "Starting" and "Current," rather than "Full" and "Half." The "Starting" space records the original value, while the "Current" space records how that changes during a game. When it comes to Luck, the "Starting" value should be updated after every session of play (**Recovering Luck Points**, page 115). The starting value for magic points should be updated every time an investigator masters a new spell (**Magic Points and Spells,** page 172).

The Damage box (**F**) contains check boxes for the different damage conditions: **Hurt** (page 144), **Bloodied** (page 144), and **Down** (page 144). It also contains an Impaired check box (**Impairment**, page 118). The GM will let a player know when they need to check these boxes during a game as a result of any damage their investigator suffers during combat.

The Weapons box (**G**) has space to write in the weapon's name and its associated full and half skill values, the damage it inflicts, and its range (if applicable). The Magic Spells box (**H**) has a space to write down a spell's order and its name. The check box next to a spell should be ticked if it has been mastered. There is also additional space for spells on the back of the character sheet.

The character sheet's back page contains boxes to record the investigator's name and occupation (**I**), contacts (**J**), *signare* (**K**), backstory (**L**), equipment (**M**), and case file notes (**N**). The Contacts box is the only one that needs a little more explanation. If the investigator's relationship with a particular contact is good, the player should tick the "Secure" check box. If, on the other hand, the investigator has done something to hurt their relationship (**Contacts, Connections, and the Social Skill**, page 86), they should tick the "Sour" check box.





THE CHARACTER SHEET: SUMMARY OF CHARACTER CREATION

STEP 1 DETERMINE OCCUPATION

Pick an occupation from the list on page 45 and write it in the space provided. Further details can be found in the **Occupations** section (page 62).

STEP 2 ASSIGN CHARACTERISTICS

Distribute 280 characteristic points among: STR, CON, DEX, INT, and POW.

- Assign each characteristic a value from 30 to 80. The higher the value, the stronger the characteristic.
- Allocate characteristic values in blocks of 10 (30, 40, 50, 60, 70, or 80) and write them on the character sheet. An average human characteristic value is 50.
- Calculate the half values for each characteristic and write these down (e.g., the half value of STR 40 is 20). The "autocalc" character sheet calculates these half values for you.

Roll 2D10, add the results together, then add this total to 50 to generate your Luck value. Write this in the space for "Starting Luck."

Your default MOV rating is 8 (unless you choose the Speedy advantage in **Step Three**).

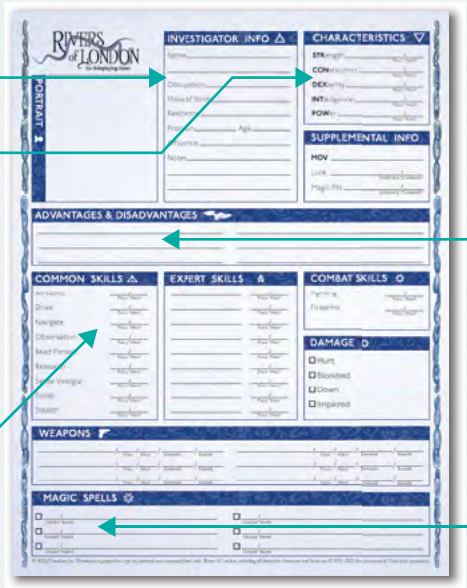
Finally: choose your investigator's age (page 49) and write it on the character sheet.

STEP 3 ADVANTAGES

Choose two minor or one major advantage for your investigator (page 50).

- Make sure that your investigator has the necessary prerequisites to take that advantage.
- If you choose the Speedy advantage, remember to adjust your MOV rating to 9.

Note: investigators who do not choose the Magical advantage cannot choose Magic as a skill in **Step Four**.



STEP 4 DETERMINE SKILLS

All **common** and **combat** skills begin at 30%. All **expert** skills begin at 00% (zero).

Choose a total of six skills; these should include:

- All the skills required by your occupation.
- Any skills you wish from your occupation's recommended skills.
- Any other skill you wish, whether common, expert, or combat (as long as you have no more than six skills).

Boost any chosen **common** or **combat** skills from their starting value of 30% to 60%.

Boost any chosen **expert** skills from their starting value of 00% to 60%.

If you chose the Magical advantage, boost your Sense Vestigia skill to 60%.

Write the skill values for chosen common and combat skills (60%) in the space provided, then write down their half values (30%). The "autocalc" character sheet calculates these half values for you.

Write the chosen **expert** skills in the space provided, along with their full value (60%) and their half value (30%).

An investigator's own language is a free skill (the same value as their INT or 60%, whichever is higher). If from a bilingual family, they also receive their second language at the same value (page 52). Write language skills in the space provided for **expert** skills, and add their full and half values.

MAGIC

If you chose the Magic skill during **Step Four: Determine Skills** (page 52) and your investigator is a Newtonian apprentice, you start the game with Werelight as one of your first order spells.

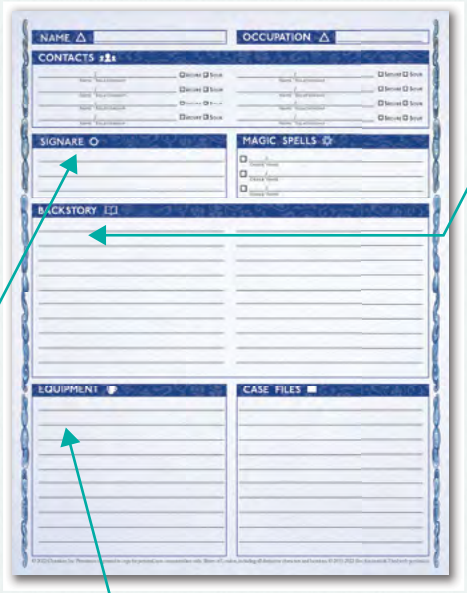
- Pick one other first order spell and one second order spell from the **Spell List** (page 179).
- Mark Werelight as your mastered spell by ticking the box next to the spell's name (**Mastering a Spell**, page 171).

If you chose the Magic skill and your investigator is a hedge wizard, choose two first order spells and one second order spell from the **Spell List** (page 179).

- Mark one of your first order spells as mastered by ticking the box next to the spell's name (**Mastering a Spell**, page 171).

Divide your POW characteristic by 5 to determine number of magic points, then add 1 for your mastered spell. Write this value in the space for "Starting Magic Points."

Now go to the **More Magic** box.



BACKSTORY

STEP 5

Answer the questions about your **Childhood** (page 56) and **The Present** (page 57), then write these answers in the space provided.

Determine if your investigator has had a supernatural encounter (**Brush with the Supernatural (Optional)**, page 57). If so, write down the details.

Next, determine their **Affluence Rating** (page 57) and write it in the space provided in the Investigator Info box.

Finally, write down the names of one or more friends or family members your investigator can rely on. This is the final step of creating your backstory.

- If you took the **Connected** advantage (page 50) during **Step Three: Advantages**, you can add names here, too—although you can wait until later if you haven't worked out who they are yet.

MORE MAGIC

Look at **Table 10: Signare** (page 165) and choose one element from each column. Alternatively, roll 1D100 three times (one for each column).

- Choose two *signare* to keep and discard the third. Or, just create your own *signare*.
- If your investigator is being trained by a character with a known *signare*, you should incorporate one aspect from that into your own as a third element.

EQUIP THE CHARACTER

STEP 6

Determine the equipment your investigator has as part of their occupation (page 59) and write it on the character sheet. Any weapons the investigator has should be written down in the Weapons box.

The investigator may purchase other equipment with the GM's permission, as long as it fits within their Living Standard (**Table 2: Living Standards**, page 58).



2

Skills

THIS CHAPTER LOOKS at skills in *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* and provides definitions of what each skill is and how they're used within the game.

Skills in the game are divided into three core types: common, expert, and combat. The skill descriptions in this chapter have been organised the same way, with all the common skills grouped together, as are the expert and combat skills. For an overview of the three groups and their respective skills, see the **Skill List** (page 81). In terms of describing skills mechanically, the entries detail what constitutes a "Regular" or "Hard" difficulty level for a skill, whether another skill can oppose its use, and what "pushing" that skill roll might look like—along with some suggested consequences for failing a pushed roll. See also **A Few Notes on Skills** (following) for further details.

The entries aren't meant to be an in-depth discussion of every possible thing someone with that skill could get up to, but rather act as guidelines for both the Game Moderator (GM) and players. There will be times in the game when specific—quite probably unusual—situations arise, requiring the GM to make a judgement call about how a certain skill can be used. Some suggestions on using each skill under such special circumstances are included in the skill descriptions to help the GM make a judgement call. As always, GMs and players should listen to each other's suggestions regarding anything not covered by a particular skill description, with the GM having final say on what a skill does and doesn't do in a particular situation.



ADDITIONAL RULES

As with character occupations, the list of skills for *RoL:RPG* isn't exhaustive. We think we've covered the bases pretty well, but if a player really wants a skill for their investigator that doesn't exist in this chapter, guidelines for how to create it can be found on page 321.

A Few Notes on Skills

As noted in character creation, all skills are given a numeric percentile value—the higher, the better. For example, a skill value of 50% means that the investigator has a 50/50 chance of succeeding with that skill every time they try to use it, while someone who has a 75% value in the same skill should succeed three times out of four, dice willing! Simply put, the higher a character's skill value, the more likely they are to achieve their goal when it comes to rolling the dice.

Skill Values

As well as determining your chance of success, what else does a skill's percentile value say about how well your character can perform a skill? Here's a rough guide to the general level of ability you get with certain skill values.

- **Below 50%**—Amateur: possesses some talent or rudimentary training (e.g., hobby level).
- **50%–69%**—Professional: enough knowledge and ability to eke out a living from the skill (equivalent to a bachelor's degree in a specific subject).
- **70%–89%**—Expert: advanced expertise (corresponds with a master's degree or PhD).
- **90%+**—Master: among the world's best in that particular skill.

Most skills are linked to a character's occupation in some way—they are either required or recommended skills (**Step Four: Determine Skills**, page 52). If an investigator increases their value in a skill unrelated to their occupation over time, their player and GM may wish to discuss switching the investigator to a new occupation that better reflects their areas of new expertise, but it's not a requirement and should really follow from the player wishing to develop their character as the game progresses. Developing a rationale for why the investigator has achieved a high percentile in an unrelated skill helps build more depth to the character and can make an interesting addition to their backstory.

Skill Specialisations

Certain skills—Art/Craft, Languages, and Science—encompass a number of different areas of knowledge, so these broad skills are divided into specialisations. This means that while you cannot select a generic "Science" skill, you can select Science (Astronomy) or Science (Chemistry), and so on.

In play, the player states their goal and may suggest the skill specialisation their character could use to achieve that goal, with the GM deciding how applicable a particular specialisation is to the situation in hand. Usually, this is straightforward; i.e., the player wants to analyse some powder found at a crime scene and suggests using their investigator's Science (Chemistry) skill, to which the GM agrees. But, sometimes, an investigator may not have the exact specialisation required, so the GM can allow them to use an alternate specialisation to achieve their goal. In this case, the alternative skill specialisation is rolled at an increased level of difficulty or a penalty die is imposed on the roll (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111)—but only if the GM agrees there is sufficient overlap with that specialisation.

Example: *the characters are trying to crack a numerical code. This calls for a Science (Cryptography) skill roll. An investigator lacking Science (Cryptography) asks if they can use their Science (Mathematics) skill instead. The GM allows the roll at an increased level of difficulty, as there is a sufficient overlap between the two skills. A Regular success was required when using Science (Cryptography), i.e., a roll equal to or below the full skill value. So, a Hard success—a roll equal to or below half of the skill's value—is required when using Science (Mathematics) in its place.*



Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

Each skill entry tells you which skill (if any) works in opposition to it, as well as giving suggestions as to what constitutes a Regular and Hard difficulty level. The Regular difficulty level (requiring a roll of equal to or below the skill's value) is the default roll. Where things are significantly more difficult, a Hard difficulty level (requiring a roll of equal to or below half of the skill's value) may be required. The GM should rarely call for a Hard difficulty roll—i.e., only in the most challenging situations. For other factors that may affect a skill roll, see **Determining the Difficulty Level** (page 105) and **Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice** (page 111).

Some examples of where a Hard difficulty might be called:

- **Demolitions:** attempting to defuse an explosive device of a radically different design to any seen before, perhaps of futuristic origin.
- **Tech:** working on weird or arcane technology that uses an unfamiliar form of electronics.
- **Observation:** eavesdropping on a whispered conversation.
- **Locksmith:** opening a security lock with only a piece of wire (i.e., no proper tools); cracking open a high-security lock.
- **Medicine:** diagnosis and treatment of strange, new medical ailments.
- **Read Person:** reading someone's intent or determining that a person is lying if their relevant opposing Social skill is 70% or above (or, you could use an opposed roll for this instead; **Opposed Skill Rolls**, page 116).

Pushing Skills

Examples are provided for each skill regarding what might constitute a pushed roll (**Pushing the Roll**, page 108), along with some of the possible consequences for failing a pushed roll. As with their respective skill descriptions, these suggestions are guidelines for the GM and do not cover every possible occasion where a roll could be pushed. The latitude for what could justify a pushed roll is wide and should be determined by the investigator's actions and motivations, as well as what's going on in the game at the time.

Likewise, the consequences of a failed pushed roll are best decided by taking inspiration from current game events, the environment, and non-player characters (NPCs). The examples merely provide ideas and it is intended that both players and GMs fashion their own justifications and consequences as appropriate to their games and playing styles.

Skill List

Common Skills

Athletics
Drive
Navigate
Observation
Read Person
Research
Sense Vestigia
Social
Stealth

Expert Skills

Accounting
Acting—*see Art/Craft*
Animal Handling
Appraise
Archaeology—*see Science*
Art/Craft (various specialisations)
Astronomy—*see Science*
Biology—*see Science*
Botany—*see Science*
Chemistry—*see Science*
Computer Use
Cryptography—*see Science*
Demolitions
Disguise
Diving
Engineering—*see Science*
Fine Art—*see Art/Craft*
Forensics—*see Science*
Forgery—*see Art/Craft*
Geology—*see Science*
History
Languages (various specialisations)
Law
Locksmith
Magic
Mathematics—*see Science*
Mechanical Repair
Medicine
Meteorology—*see Science*
Occult
Pharmacy—*see Science*
Photography—*see Art/Craft*
Physics—*see Science*
Pilot Aircraft
Pilot Boat
Read Lips
Ride
Science (various specialisations)
Sleight of Hand
Survival
Tech
Track
Zoology—see *Science*

Combat Skills

Fighting
Firearms



Common Skills

This section describes each of the nine common skills that all investigators can use. Where a common skill has been chosen as one of an investigator's six starting skills during character creation (**Step Four: Determine Skills**, page 52), its starting value is boosted to 60%. Otherwise, non-chosen common skills start at 30%.

Athletics

A general athletic ability encompassing climbing, jumping, swimming, and throwing, along with other field event and gymnastic skills. Simple feats of strength can be performed using the STR characteristic or the Athletics skill, whichever is higher. Simple sprints can be performed using the DEX characteristic or the Athletics skill, whichever is higher.

- **Using Athletics to climb:** allows a character to climb trees, walls, and other vertical surfaces with or without ropes and climbing gear, and also encompasses rappelling and abseiling. Conditions such as firmness of surface, available handholds, wind, visibility, rain, etc., may all affect the difficulty level. Failing this skill on the first roll indicates that the climb is perhaps beyond the character's capability. Failing a pushed roll is likely to indicate a fall with resultant damage or becoming stuck and unable to go up or down. One successful Athletics roll allows the character to complete the climb in almost all cases (rather than requiring repeated rolls), with a challenging or longer climb having an increased difficulty level (again, rather than needing repeated rolls).
- **Using Athletics to jump:** a character may leap up or down vertically, or jump horizontally from a standing or running start. It's up to the GM to decide what constitutes a Regular difficulty jump or a Hard one. As a guide, a Regular success is required for a character to safely leap down vertically a distance equal to their own height, jump horizontally from a standing start across a gap as wide as the jumper's own height, or run and then jump horizontally a distance of twice the jumper's own height. A character might achieve double these distances with a Hard success, although bear in mind the world record for the long jump is around 9 metres/yards.
- **Using Athletics to break a fall:** when falling, Athletics may be used to lessen the potential fall damage. If falling from a height, a successful roll prepares for the fall, reducing any damage incurred by half (round down).
- **Using Athletics to swim:** only roll Athletics in times of crisis or danger, or when the GM judges it appropriate. Failing a pushed Athletics roll when swimming may lead to the person being washed away downstream, or even partially or completely drowned (**Table 7: Other Forms of Damage**, page 149).
- **Using Athletics to throw:** use Athletics to hit a target with an object. A palm-sized object of reasonable balance can be hurled a distance of up to STR divided by 5 in metres/yards. The effective range can be extended up to STR divided by 2 in metres/yards, but only if a penalty die is applied to the Athletics roll (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111). If the object being thrown is heavy—over 2 kg (5 lbs)—the range given above should be halved. If the Athletics roll fails, the object lands at some random distance from the target. The GM should compare the result of the dice roll to the highest number which would have indicated success, then choose a distance between the target and the thrown object that feels comparable. The Athletics skill is used in combat when making thrown attacks, such as with knives, spears, grenades—or even a tin of baked beans!

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** a task that would challenge the average person, such as: climbing a drainpipe; running and then jumping horizontally to a distance of twice the jumper's own height; swimming in a fast-moving current; throwing a basketball through a hoop.
- **Hard difficulty:** a task that would challenge a professional sportsperson, such as: climbing surfaces slick with rain; attempting to jump from a rooftop and through the window of a neighbouring building; swimming against a rapid current while fully clothed; throwing a basketball through a hoop from centre court.

Pushing Examples

Reassessing the task; taking a longer route; putting every ounce of strength into the task and risking injury. In some instances, a pushed roll is not possible:

- If a character tries to leap an abyss and their first roll fails, they cannot have a second attempt—for obvious reasons! Although they do have the option of spending Luck to succeed instead (**Luck**, page 113). However, if a character is trapped in a pit and jumping or climbing up to escape, they could have any number of attempts, summarised with one pushed skill roll.
- Once an item has been thrown, it is quite literally out of the character's hands and therefore there's nothing the player can do to justify pushing the roll. If there are multiple missiles available and it's only a matter of time until the character succeeds, then there's no risk connected with failure, so there's no need to roll dice. If multiple missiles are available and there is a distinct risk connected with failure, then the GM might ask for a pushed roll if the character fails their first roll.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: physical harm, or you drop or break something of value; if swimming, the current pulls you under and you lose consciousness, awaking at an unknown location.

Drive

Anyone with this skill can drive a car or light truck, make ordinary manoeuvres, and cope with ordinary vehicle problems. If the character wants to lose a pursuer or tail someone, a Drive roll would be appropriate. This skill can also be used to operate other more unusual vehicles or machinery, such as tractors, 18-wheelers, and construction machinery (such as a crane or forklift). Note that such unusual vehicles are very different to cars and unless the use of the specific machine fits with the character's occupation, any attempts to operate such things is made with a penalty die (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** to successfully weave through light traffic at speed to avoid pursuit.
- **Hard difficulty:** to successfully weave through heavy traffic at speed to avoid pursuit.

Pushing Examples

Driving the vehicle to its limit; not slowing down, regardless of the risk.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: crashing; skidding to a halt, unable to proceed; being pursued by the police.

Navigate

Allows the user to find their way in clear weather or storms, at night or during the day. Those with a higher skill value are familiar with astronomical tables, charts, instruments, and satellite location gear. One could also use this skill to measure and map an area (cartography) or use the skill to read detailed topographical maps. If a character has **The Knowledge** advantage (page 52), a bonus die (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111) should be granted to the roll if they are in their specified area.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** keep on the right route and find your destination in your own city.



- **Hard difficulty:** head in the right direction when there is no clear route or landmarks; find your way in a totally unfamiliar city.

Pushing Examples
Getting a map out and delaying while you attempt to work out where you are; going back to where you started and trying again; asking a stranger for directions.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: you get lost and find yourself being watched or ambushed by a fox who wants your cheese puffs; you go around in circles and your companions stop following you—you're on your own now.

Observation

Covers what might be detected by a person's mundane senses: sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch. For example, finding a secret door or compartment, noticing a hidden intruder, spotting an inconspicuous clue, or becoming aware of ambushers; equally, they might taste that a drink has been spiked, eavesdrop on a whispered conversation, or smell the faint scent of yesterday's perfume upon someone.

If a character has only a fleeting chance to notice something, perhaps while running past it or otherwise distracted, the GM may raise the difficulty level. Where the character is conducting a thorough search, the GM could award an automatic success. The difficulty level might also be adapted to reflect the environment, it being harder to spot something small in a cluttered room.

A high Observation skill value can indicate a good level of general awareness. This skill can be rolled with a penalty die to read lips, if the character lacks the expert skill of **Read Lips** (page 96; **Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level
Observation can be opposed by Stealth when someone is creeping up on you. Observation can also be used to see through a deception if an opponent is using the Disguise skill, e.g., to notice some element of the disguise that isn't quite right.

- **Regular difficulty:** searching a cluttered room for clues; hearing something approaching you (when its Stealth skill is below 70%); eavesdropping on a nearby conversation.
- **Hard difficulty:** searching for something that has been purposefully well hidden; hearing something creep up on you (when its Stealth skill is 70% or over); eavesdropping on a whispered conversation.

Pushing examples
Taking more time to observe the area; pulling the place apart; dismantling the furniture and smashing the porcelain statuettes to find the hidden object; telling everyone to be quiet—or making a noise yourself—and then listening.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: inadvertently drop something of your own while searching, which makes it clear that you have been there (the character will not realise this at the time); the enemy has caught you unawares (you are surprised); you misheard the conversation and get the facts wrong; you are caught trying to eavesdrop and find yourself in a very embarrassing predicament.

Read Person

Read Person is a perception-based skill that allows the user to study an individual and so form an idea of their motives and character, e.g., is that person bluffing or are they really going to do what they've just threatened?

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level
Read Person can be used to oppose the Social skill, especially when Social is being used for deception. Read Person can also be used to penetrate someone's disguise, i.e., when an opponent is using the Disguise skill.

- **Regular difficulty:** read someone's intent or determine if the person is lying if their Social skill is below 70%.
- **Hard difficulty:** read someone's intent or determine if the person is lying if their Social skill is 70% or above.

Pushing Examples
Being very unsubtle and asking highly personal, intimate, or downright rude questions of the target; immersing yourself in data regarding a specific person (the target of your study) in order to think like them and understand their motivations.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: you somehow reveal your own motivations to the target; the target is offended by your prying questions and refuses to speak with you further, or takes action against you—perhaps violence or a call to the police; unknown to you, the target is connected with your adversaries and you unwittingly reveal your agenda to them; spending all week locked in your room in order to build the profile has left you a physical and mental wreck, inflicting a penalty die to all rolls until you rest and recover (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).

Research

Covers locating information using the internet, a library, or some other resource. The GM should consider the information sought and the resource used, and specify a reasonable

amount of time that the task will take. If the dice roll is equal to or below half the character's Research skill (i.e., a Hard success when only a Regular success was needed), they have found the information in half the time. This skill can locate locked case records or a rare-book special collection, but a Social skill roll or special credentials may have to be used to get access to the books or information in question. Note that to obtain information from other people uses the **Social** (page 86) skill, as the Research skill is concerned with non-verbal information gathering.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** locating a difficult to find book or piece of information in a library or on the internet.
- **Hard difficulty:** identifying a piece of information in a disorganised library, or if you are extremely pressed for time.

Pushing Examples
Pressing someone, like a librarian or IT contact, for assistance; taking longer to systematically work through the stacks or data.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: you fall asleep over your research; you waste a great deal of time; you find misleading or wrong information, which leads to danger.

Sense Vestigia

While the Observation skill deals with things that can be detected by a person's mundane senses, this skill detects the imprint magic leaves behind on the physical environment, what practitioners call **Vestigia** (page 161).

Most members of the demi-monde—well, the non-human ones, at least—have an increased innate sensitivity to *vestigia*; they're born with it and it's why they can "smell" practitioners, as *signare* and *vestigia* are closely related (**Signare**, page 164). As a result, all fae characters begin with this skill at 60%. Practitioners can also train their senses to detect and understand the *vestigia* around them. For human investigators, those who take the **Magic** skill (page 93) as one of their six starting skills automatically boost their Sense Vestigia skill to 60% (for free).

Vestigia are usually made up of several distinct elements, and detecting these may require a Sense Vestigia roll. Note that most *vestigia* encountered is assumed to be "strong," requiring a Regular success to detect all of the *vestigia's* elements. In some cases, the *vestigia* may be considered "weak," requiring a Hard success to detect all of the *vestigia's* elements. When "extremely strong *vestigia*" is encountered, usually no skill roll is necessary to detect it.

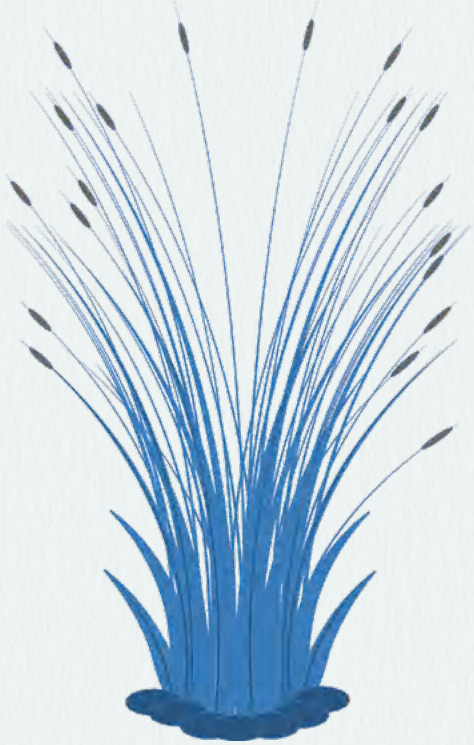
The very act of asking for a Sense Vestigia roll tells the players that their investigators are sensing something strange. Whether they are able to accurately identify the *vestigia* depends on their dice roll. At the GM's discretion, in the case of strong *vestigia*, they may allow investigators to automatically identify one element present (e.g., either the smell, sound, or sensation that forms the strongest element of the *vestigia*), whether they pass or fail their Sense Vestigia roll. See **Vestigia Strength** (page 161) for further details about weak and strong *vestigia*.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** an awareness of the presence of strong *vestigia*; a Regular success detects all elements present.
- **Hard difficulty:** an awareness of the presence of weak *vestigia*; a Hard success detects all elements present.

Pushing Examples
Close your eyes and spend more time attempting to feel the surroundings, really concentrating on anything that feels unusual or out of place; clear everything and everyone out of the location so you are not distracted and can focus solely on the attempt.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: things might happen while you've got your eyes closed! The character might fail to see someone pulling a weapon on them, for example. You misunderstand the element of the *vestigia* detected.



Social

Covers all forms of social interaction. The GM should encourage players to describe which aspect of the Social skill they're using to achieve their goal—logical persuasion, intimidation, seduction, flattery, verbal trickery, or deception. The skill may be used to compel an NPC to act in a certain way, but not in a manner completely contrary to that person's normal behaviour.

Backing up the use of the Social skill with a bribe, gift, or promise (if you are attempting to ingratiate yourself), or with a weapon or some other powerful threat (in the case of intimidation), may reduce the difficulty level or gain a bonus die on the skill roll (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111), at the GM's discretion.

If a character has the **Silver-Tongued** advantage (page 52), they gain a bonus die on Social rolls when using eloquence and persuasion.

Contacts, Connections, and the Social Skill

Each occupation has a list of contacts. These are people with whom the investigator may have established a relationship. Contacts can be really useful in game; for example, when the investigators need advice on where to go next or if they're lacking a particular area of expertise. Not every interaction with an investigator's contacts requires a Social roll, but, when it does, that roll is made with a bonus die. Note that if a deal leads to a negative outcome for the contact, the GM can decide that the relationship is soured and that individual cannot be called upon again.

If the investigator has the advantage **Connected** (page 50), they can gain favours without the need for a Social skill roll with regard to whomever they are connected. Again, if the relationship turns sour for whatever reason, a Hard Social skill roll might be required to repair things, otherwise the connection becomes strained and is no longer of value to the investigator.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

When used to deceive someone, Social can be opposed by the Read Person skill. Where it is used to intimidate or coerce someone, it can be opposed with POW. The opposing skill or characteristic can be used to determine the difficulty level (**Determining the Difficulty Level**, page 105), or the GM may instead call for an **Opposed Skill Roll** (page 116), depending on the situation. Where the skill is used to persuade someone to act (to do something), the player should state their goal. Then the GM must decide if it is reasonable and if it counts as a Regular or Hard difficulty.

- **Regular difficulty:** getting someone to do something if their opposing skill is less than 70%, or if it will inconvenience or cost them in some way.
- **Hard difficulty:** getting someone to do something if their opposing skill is 70% or more, or if it will put something on the line for them, e.g., doing what you ask would risk their job, their safety, their reputation, and so on.

Pushing Examples

Overtly flattering the target with affection; building trust by imparting a secret; using a weapon or tool to enhance intimidation.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: the target takes offence and will have nothing further to do with you; the target is associated in some way with your enemies and, while they may play along with you, they also inform on you; if the target was being threatened with a weapon, perhaps actual physical harm is done to the target—e.g., accidentally pulling the trigger of the gun you're waving at the target; the target simply laughs in your face and won't break no matter what you do; the target somehow turns the tables and intimidates the intimidator; you inadvertently reveal a secret to the target.



Stealth

The art of moving quietly and hiding without alerting those who might see or hear you. A high skill value suggests either that the character is adept at moving quietly (light-footed) and/or is skilled in camouflage or covert techniques. The skill also can be a measure of whether a character can maintain a level of patience and cool-headedness to remain still and unseen for long periods. Thus, when attempting to avoid detection, the player should attempt a Stealth skill roll for their investigator.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

When attempting to sneak or hide, the opponent's Observation skill is used to set the difficulty level for the roll. Situational modifiers may also apply (e.g., darkness or loud noises). Alternatively, depending on the situation, the GM may call for an **Opposed Skill Roll** (page 116).

- **Regular difficulty:** moving quietly around the house to avoid detection by average people, i.e., those with an Observation skill of less than 70%.
- **Hard difficulty:** sneaking past an attentive guard dog; having only seconds to find a hiding place; trying to sneak past someone with an Observation skill of 70% or above.

Pushing examples

Taking more time to study the area; removing your shoes or changing your clothing to something more appropriate; causing a distraction; sitting tight until the coast has cleared.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: unbeknownst to you, you have been spotted, and your target(s) decide to snoop on you, trap you, or instigate a surprise attack on you! The alarm is sounded and suddenly everyone is looking for you.



Expert Skills

If a character lacks an expert skill, they have nothing beyond a layperson's very basic grasp of the topic; meaning that, under most circumstances, they couldn't attempt the necessary skill roll. If none of the investigators possess a particular expert skill needed when working a case file, they may consult an NPC (for instance, one of their contacts), seek some other source of help, or they may try their Luck (**Trying Your Luck**, page 114).



ADDITIONAL RULES

There are a huge number of expert skills in the real world, and only a small selection of these are described in the following section. If you wish to include an expert skill that is not listed here, guidelines for how to create it can be found on page 321.

Accounting

Grants an understanding of accountancy procedures and can reveal the financial situation of a business or person. Inspecting ledgers or electronic spreadsheets, one might detect cheated employees, siphoned-off funds, payment of bribes or blackmail, and other notable things, along with whether the subject's financial condition is better or worse than publicly claimed. Looking through old accounts, a character could see how money was gained or lost in the past, to whom, and what purchases were made.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

If someone were trying to conceal something, the difficulty level would be based upon the Accounting skill of the person doing the concealing, i.e., if their Accounting skill was 70% or higher, the roll would be Hard (**Determining the Difficulty Level**, page 105).

- **Regular difficulty:** comprehensive and well-documented set of accounts.
- **Hard difficulty:** disorganised and partial accounts.

Pushing Examples

Taking more time to review documents; visiting banks, businesses, or people to validate findings; double-checking the maths and data.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: discussions between characters and third parties alert some enemy faction to the characters' intentions; a vital part of the accounts is destroyed or lost, e.g., perhaps in their tired state, the character spills coffee over them or accidentally hits the delete key.

Animal Handling

The ability to command and train animals to perform simple tasks. The skill is most commonly applied to domesticated animals like dogs but may include birds, cats, monkeys, and so on—at the GM's discretion. For riding animals, such as horses or camels, the Ride skill is used for breaking in and controlling the mount in question.

Example: *while an officer in the Met's Dog Support Unit would have the Animal Handling skill as part of their training and could use it to deal with any troublesome animals they encounter in the course of their duties, Nafeesa Jones, as a general police officer, doesn't have this expert skill. When she encounters a snarling stray dog in a junk yard she's investigating, she'll have to try her luck (**Trying Your Luck**, page 114) to see if she can get the animal under control and potentially learn a new skill in the process!*

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** getting a trained dog to sit, fetch, or attack on command.
- **Hard difficulty:** getting an untrained or unfamiliar dog to perform a task on command.

Pushing Examples

Taking greater personal risk in terms of getting closer to, or directly handling, the animal.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: the animal attacks the trainer or someone else nearby, most likely causing damage; the animal escapes.

Appraise

Used to estimate the value of a particular item, as well as to assess the type and quality of the materials used in its creation, and the level of workmanship involved. In addition, where relevant, it could pinpoint the age of the item, assess its historical relevance, and detect forgeries.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

If attempting to use Appraise to detect forgeries, the difficulty level is set by the creator's Art/Craft (Forgery) skill, i.e., if their skill was 70% or higher, the roll would be Hard (**Determining the Difficulty Level**, page 105).

- **Regular difficulty:** an item of common availability at its time of manufacture, made of a common material, e.g., a 50-year-old gold watch.
- **Hard difficulty:** an unusual or rare item, perhaps made of uncommon materials, e.g., a foreign-made object several hundred years old, such as an ancient book binding.

Pushing Examples

Checking an item's validity with another expert; conducting testing; researching an item.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: accidentally ruining or damaging the item in question; bringing the item to the attention of other people, leading to its theft; inadvertently activating whatever function the item might serve.

Art/Craft

The Art/Craft skill covers a host of specialisations. What counts as an "art" or a "craft" can be something of a fraught question, and may be tied to whether or not the specialisation is used to earn a living versus being undertaken purely for enjoyment's sake. In *RoL:RPG*, we make no distinction between the two, as there is often a substantial overlap.

When taking Art/Craft as a skill during character creation, the player should choose one specialisation to begin at 60% and two other specialisations to each begin at 30%. A generic "Art/Craft" skill cannot be chosen.

Examples of Art/Craft Specialisations:

Acting	Forgery
Barbering	Morris Dancing
Calligraphy	Opera Singing
Carpentry	Painting and Decorating
Cooking	Photography
Dancing	Pottery
Embroidery	Sculpting
Fine Art	Writing

The holder of a specialisation has a breadth of knowledge within that particular field, i.e., a knowledge of the subject, its history, and its contemporary practitioners, as well as the ability to perform it. Thus, a successful skill roll might provide information about an item, such as where or when it was made, some point of history concerning it, who might have made it, or some insight into the technique used in its construction or performance.

An Art/Craft specialisation enables the making or repair of an item (which includes such things as a musical composition, a stand-up routine, and so on), typically requiring time and the necessary equipment, as determined by the GM. In a situation where gradations of success might be appropriate, a higher level of success indicates the item/performance is of higher quality and/or precision.

An Art/Craft specialisation might also be used to make a duplicate or fake item. In such cases, the difficulty level would depend on the intricacy and distinctiveness of the original piece. In the case of faking documentation, a specific specialisation—Forgery—is used.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** making a standard, saleable piece (item, composition, performance, and so on).
- **Hard difficulty:** making a higher quality or particularly intricate piece.

Pushing Examples
Reworking the object, piece, or composition from scratch; conducting further research; checking with another expert.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: a vast amount of time and/or money is wasted in creating a failed attempt; the audience or customer is highly offended or physically injured by some aspect of the work; the critics slam your work, and no one desires your services any longer.

Examples of Art/Craft Specialisations
Acting: the performer is trained in theatrical and/or film/television acting, and is able to adopt a persona, memorise scripts, and utilise stage/movie make-up to alter their appearance.

Fine Art: the artist is accomplished in the art of painting (oils, acrylic, watercolour), as well as sketching in pencil, crayon, or pastels. While serious works of art might take many days or months to complete, the artist may sketch accurate impressions, objects, and people in next to no time. The skill also denotes a familiarity with the art world and art history, and the artist may be able to determine a particular artist's work, their school, and known history with a successful skill roll.

Forgery: adept at fine detail, the user can produce high-quality fake documents, covering everything from a person's handwriting to a bureaucratic form or permit, or a duplicate of a book. The forger requires suitable materials (inks, grades of paper, etc.), as well as an original from which to copy. A successful roll indicates the forgery passes a normal, cursory inspection. Someone spending time and thoroughly examining the forgery would use the Appraise skill (opposed by the original forger's skill) when determining if the fake can be spotted. If forging something ancient, the Science (Archaeology) skill might be employed in place of Appraise to detect the fake.

Photography: covers both film and digital photography. Regular snapshots do not require a skill roll. Allows the user to take clear pictures, process and develop them (if film), and enhance half-hidden details. The skill extends to cover video cameras, video playback equipment, digital photography, and digital editing, where the user is adept at the manipulation of digital images. In this case, radically different versions can be created from an original source, such as changing the location of a person in an image, who they are with, and what they are doing. Rolls would be required to achieve effective candid photographs or shots that capture fine detail—especially at long range, at speed, or in low light. This skill can also allow the user to determine if a photograph or video has been tampered with or fabricated, as well as the angle and position from which a photograph/video was originally taken.

Computer Use

Covers programming in various computer languages, the retrieval and analysis of obscure data, breaking into a secured system, exploring a complicated network, and detecting or exploiting intrusions, back doors, and viruses. Special manipulation of a computer system may require this roll, at the GM's discretion. General, everyday use of a computer, such as surfing the internet, collecting email, or running commercially available software does not warrant a skill roll.

The internet places a wealth of information at a character's fingertips. The GM may decide that the use of the internet to find highly specific and/or obscure information requires a combined Computer Use and Research dice roll (**Combined Skill Rolls**, page 322).

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** write, analyse, and debug a computer program.
- **Hard difficulty:** decipher and hack into a secure network without being identified or traced.

Pushing Examples
Taking longer to develop a program; using someone else's code as a shortcut; using untested software, e.g., a virus, to exploit a system.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: accidentally erasing sought-after files; corrupting the whole system; leaving evidence or alerting others through your actions; infesting your own computer/network with a virus.

Demolitions

The user is familiar with the safe use of demolition procedures, including setting and defusing explosive charges. Mines and similar devices are designed to be easy to set (no roll required) and more difficult to remove or defuse (usually requiring a roll). Also encompasses military-grade demolitions, e.g., anti-personnel mines and plastique.

Given enough time and resources, those proficient with the Demolitions skill may rig charges to flatten a building, clear a blocked tunnel, or repurpose explosive devices in order to construct low-yield charges, booby-traps, and so on.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** defuse a common or known type of explosive device; know where to place charges for greatest effect when destroying a bridge or building.
- **Hard difficulty:** defuse an unfamiliar explosive device.

Pushing Examples

Taking until the very last second to defuse the bomb; double-checking all the circuits/connections by hand; conducting research into the construction and design of a device.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: if defusing or removing an explosive device, the consequence of failing a pushed roll is clear—it explodes! If using the Demolitions skill to place charges, the consequence of failing a pushed roll may be a failure to detonate at the right time—or at all—or that the detonation fails to have the desired effect—either too great or too little.

Disguise

Used whenever someone wishes to present themselves as another person. The user changes posture, costume, and/or voice to enact their disguise, posing as either a specific individual or type of person. Theatrical makeup and/or a fake ID may help; a successful Art/Craft (Acting) or Art/Craft (Forgery) roll may grant a bonus die towards the Disguise roll at the GM's discretion (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).

Opposing skill/Difficulty level:

There are two distinct aspects to this skill: either you are trying to conceal your true identity (such as when the police are looking for you) or you are impersonating someone. Disguise can be opposed by Observation and Read Person, either to detect a flaw in the disguise or notice that the person is attempting to pass themselves off as someone they are not.

- **Regular difficulty:** convince strangers that you are who you say you are; for example, to return to the scene of a crime that you perpetrated yesterday and escape notice.



- **Hard difficulty:** convince professionals in a face-to-face meeting that you are who you say you are; for example, to pass as a bank employee to gain access to a bank vault.

Note: for a face-to-face meeting with someone who actually knows the person being imitated, this skill alone will not suffice, instead requiring a combined Art/Craft (Acting) and Disguise skill roll at Hard difficulty (**Combined Skill Rolls**, page 322).

Pushing Examples
Undergoing a fully immersive and intensive preparation, i.e., losing oneself in the role; stealing personal items and utilising them in the disguise; overt exaggeration to confound the target; feigning a sudden attack of illness to disorient the observer.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: being arrested; causing offence, leading to violence; finding that the person being imitated is wanted by a criminal gang who comes looking for vengeance.

Diving

To dive safely, a scuba diver needs to be familiar with the physics of diving, air pressure, and the physiological processes that occur when breathing with pressurised air. Someone with the Diving skill is trained in the use and maintenance of diving equipment for swimming underwater, including emergency procedures and proper weighting. The skill includes the ability to navigate underwater. Usually, diving in normal conditions requires no skill roll.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** diving in challenging conditions; using poorly-maintained equipment.
- **Hard difficulty:** diving in dangerous conditions; exceeding the depth or time limits.

Pushing Examples
Pushing the limits of the equipment; methodically double-checking equipment; gaining professional assistance.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: become trapped underwater; attacked by sea creatures; suffer the bends (decompression sickness); get lost underwater.

History

Enables a character to recall significant facts or details about a country, city, region, or person at any point in the subject's history. A successful roll might be used to help identify tools, techniques, or ideas familiar to our ancestors, but little known today.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** recall some pertinent and useful piece of information.
- **Hard difficulty:** recall some obscure, highly detailed, and useful piece of information.

Pushing Examples
Conducting further research; consulting another expert; hiring assistants to conduct detailed research.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: your consultations alert your adversaries, who become aware of your intent; your facts are erroneous and lead you into danger; much time and money is wasted on fruitless research.

Languages

Like Art/Craft and Science, Languages covers a wide range of specialisations. Each specialisation represents the user's chance to understand, speak, read, and write in a particular language. A generic "Languages" skill cannot be taken, so when choosing this skill, the exact language(s) must be specified.

Everyone knows their mother tongue and automatically receives it at the same value as their INT or 60% (whichever is higher, **Step Four: Determine Skills**, page 52), and if a character was raised in a bilingual household, they receive both relevant languages at the same value (assuming they are equally fluent in them); if they aren't as fluent in the other language, they receive it at half their INT value or 30% (whichever is higher). If you wish for your character to know more languages beyond these starting ones (if your character was raised in a multilingual home, for example), you must select the Language skill when determining your character's skill choices. For clarity, in **Chapter 6: A Rogues' Gallery** (page 231), an NPC's mother tongue is marked as "own."

When taking Languages as a skill (i.e., beyond knowing their mother tongue), the player should choose one specialisation to begin at 60% and two other specialisations to begin at 30% each. An individual can take this skill more than once in order to know more languages. Sign language is a Language skill specialisation.

A successful Languages roll normally allows comprehension of an entire book, presentation, or discussion. No roll is required for reading everyday texts or understanding presentations in your mother tongue. However, if a document is extremely difficult to read or is in an archaic or unusual dialect, the GM may require a successful roll against your mother tongue to decipher its meaning; the same goes for highly technical documents or presentations full of uncommon subject-specific terminology or jargon.

When a character does not have the required Language specialty, they may roll against their lowest specialism with a penalty die *if* the languages belong to the same language group, e.g., Romance languages (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).

Note: there is no requirement for your investigator to take Language (Latin) if they take Magic as a starting skill, particularly if they're a newly-emerged hedge wizard as opposed to a Newtonian apprentice—they can always take it later by spending a development point during an **Investigator Development Phase** (page 120). In the novels, Peter Grant may be learning Latin (and, later, Greek), but he doesn't need to know it fluently to cast spells, as the *formae* are taught individually on a need-to-know basis. DCI Nightingale is merely teaching Peter the same way he was taught, and because he believes it helps his apprentice to understand the structure and process of Newtonian magic.

Language Proficiency

As we mentioned (**Skill Values**, page 79), a skill's percentile value tells you something besides your chances of succeeding at a dice roll. The following applies for Languages specialisations:

- At 30%, transactional requests can be understood, e.g., "*How much is this?*", "*Where is this?*"
- At 50%, a person is fluent in that language.
- At 70%, a character can pass for a native speaker of a foreign language.

Identifying Unknown Languages

- To identify a present-day human language that's unknown to the character, use an INT roll.
- To identify an extinct human language, use a Science (Archaeology) or History roll.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

Everyday conversation, perhaps with pauses for clarification (when speaking to a less than fluent foreign speaker), does not require a roll for those who are fluent. If both parties are sympathetic to each other and there is sufficient time for conversation, most situations should be covered without the need for a dice roll.

Dice rolls are most likely to be required where there is information or clues that might otherwise be missed. In this respect, the use of the Language skill can be compared to the use of the **Observation** skill (page 84), in that they can both be used to acquire clues.

- **Regular difficulty:** conversation (perhaps at speed); written material containing a few technical or uncommon terms.
- **Hard difficulty:** high content of unusual technical terms; historically archaic phrases; speaker has unusual dialect.

Pushing Examples

Taking longer to think through the words you want to say; taking long pauses to answer what you have been asked; referencing other books/apps to make a translation.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: exaggerated or loud discussions between a character and third parties alerts an enemy faction to that character's intentions; a word or phrase is misunderstood—perhaps the meaning is reversed; the listener takes offence at an unintentional slur and they either respond with their fists or turn everyone in the neighbourhood against you.

Language Groups

There are over 7,000 living languages, spread across nearly 150 language groups. Each group has comparable linguistics and generally a common root language. Some common language groups are as follows—these are not exhaustive lists and are provided as general examples:

- **Romance languages:** Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, French.
- **Germanic languages:** German, English, Dutch, Swedish.
- **Afro-Asiatic languages:** Egyptian, Hebrew, Arabic, Berber.
- **Sino-Tibetan languages:** Mandarin Chinese, Burmese, Xiang.
- **Slavic languages:** Russian, Polish, Czech, Croatian.
- **Celtic languages:** Irish, Welsh, Cornish, Gaelic.
- **Niger-Congo languages:** Swahili, Shona, Zulu.
- **Indo-Iranian languages:** Bengali, Hindi/Urdu, Pashto, Persian, Punjabi.
- **Algonquian languages:** Cheyenne, Cree, Ojibwe, Mohican.

Law

Represents a character's understanding of their country's laws, precedents, legal manoeuvres, and court procedures. The practise of law as a profession requires intense application and study over many years. As a skill, Law may only rarely get tested with dice rolls, and those players who choose the Police Officer occupation for their investigators may feel they are being penalised by being compelled to take it as a required skill. While it's true the skill may not be rolled very often, the Law skill—and the knowledge associated with it—is in effect purchasing the authority the investigator gains by being a police officer.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty level:** understanding and utilising the details of a relevant law or legal procedure.
- **Hard difficulty:** remembering or understanding an obscure legal precedent; cross-examining a highly competent hostile witness.

Using the Law skill when in a foreign country may increase the difficulty level of any associated skill roll, unless the character has spent many months studying that nation's legal system.

Pushing Examples

Delaying to consider your argument; explaining in great detail the nuances of the case/situation; taking significant time to conduct research; bending the letter of the law to drive your argument forward.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: misinterpreting a law or stepping outside the accepted legal procedure leads you to break the law and draw police attention; wasting valuable time and money on research and legal fees; you are held in contempt of court and thrown in the cells for at least 24 hours.

Locksmith

A locksmith can open car doors, hotwire cars, jimmy library windows, figure out Chinese puzzle boxes, and penetrate ordinary commercial alarm systems. Someone with the Locksmith skill may repair locks, make keys, or open locks with the aid of skeleton keys, picks, and other tools. Especially difficult locks may require a higher difficulty level.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** opening or repairing a standard lock.
- **Hard difficulty:** opening a high-security lock.

Pushing Examples

Completely dismantling the lock; taking longer; using force to pry the mechanism.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: the lock is damaged beyond repair—perhaps your lock pick has snapped off inside the lock; you break the puzzle box—perhaps only smashing it will open it now; you trip an alarm or make enough noise for someone or something to come looking…

Magic

Covers the ability to cast spells and to detect spellcasting. Any non-fae investigator wishing to have the Magic skill must first take the **Magical** advantage (page 51) during character creation. The starting Magic skill value is 60%. Those taking the skill should always discuss how they acquired it with their GM, i.e., they should determine a rationale for how they gained it, such as being apprenticed to a Master—as Peter Grant is to Nightingale—or having learned it elsewhere. A few things to note about the use of magic:

- Each practitioner has their own magical signature (**Signare**, page 164).
- One needs a clear head to practise magic, and it is very hard to perform while drunk or using recreational drugs (**Casting in Exceptional Circumstances**, page 175).



- The use of magical spells destroys silicon chips (**Spells and Technology**, page 176).
- The overuse of magic can lead to brain damage (**Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation**, page 177).
- Human beings are very difficult to control with magic. The central nervous system generates its own autonomic magical resistance, making it really tricky to inflict gross changes.

Note: the magic of the demi-monde is quite different and does not use this skill (see **The Magic of the Demi-Monde**, page 243, for further details).

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level
All spells require a Magic roll to cast; some may be opposed by either POW or CON—see individual spell descriptions for further details.

- **Regular difficulty:** casting a spell; sensing a spell being cast (but does not determine which spell is being cast).
- **Hard difficulty:** sensing a spell is being cast and knowing which spell it is (having some idea of its potential effects).

Pushing Examples
Yelling the *forma*; exaggerating your movements; taking more time.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: suffering actual damage (**Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation**, page 177) is a hazard for magical practitioners, causing their brains to take on the appearance of a diseased cauliflower.



Mechanical Repair

Allows a character to repair a broken machine or create a new one. They may also use basic carpentry and plumbing techniques to construct or repair items, e.g., a pulley system or a steam pump. Special tools or parts may be required, at the GM's discretion. Can be used to open simple household locks, but nothing more advanced—see the **Locksmith** skill (page 93) for more complex locks. Mechanical Repair is a companion skill to Tech, and both may be necessary to fix complex devices, such as a car or an aircraft (see **Combined Skills Rolls**, page 322).

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** repair or create a simple device; open a basic household lock.
- **Hard difficulty:** repair a very badly damaged device; create a complex device with limited resources.

Pushing Examples
Completely dismantling the device; taking longer; risk using excessive force to "encourage" the device into action, e.g., hitting the thing until it works.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: you have broken the device beyond repair; you hurt yourself while working on the device—perhaps cutting your hand; you become obsessed with the device and find you have spent the whole day and night working on it.

Medicine

Permits the user to diagnose and treat illnesses, accidents, injuries, diseases, poisonings, etc., and make public health recommendations. It grants knowledge of a wide variety of drugs and potions—natural and man-made—as well as an understanding of the side effects and contraindications.

Note: everyone in the game is able to perform basic first aid on an injured or ill person, no roll required; a successful INT roll is only required if treating someone suffering from a mortal wound (see **First Aid**, page 146, for further details).

The Medicine skill can be used to save the life of a character who has suffered a mortal wound (**Medical Aid**, page 147). Treatment using the Medicine skill must be carried out within one hour of the mortal wound being sustained or the character dies, unless they receive first aid in the interim. The GM may grant an automatic success for medical treatment in a contemporary, well-equipped hospital.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** diagnosis and treatment of standard medical ailments, with access to equipment—at least a doctor's bag containing drugs and instruments—and a suitable environment.
- **Hard difficulty:** diagnosis and treatment in a dirty and unsafe environment with the minimum of equipment.

Pushing Examples
Consulting with colleagues; conducting further research; trying something experimental or risky; performing some form of clinical experiment.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: you misdiagnose and worsen the patient's condition; your good standing comes into question and you are investigated for malpractice; in the case of a dying character, if a pushed Medicine roll is failed, the patient dies.

Occult

Covers familiarity with the tenets of secret knowledge passed down from Africa and Asia, from the Medieval and Renaissance West, and from the Americas and Oceania as well. Someone with the Occult skill therefore has understanding of a subject that falls outside the normal bounds of human knowledge. They can recognise occult paraphernalia, words, and concepts, as well as folk traditions, and can identify grimoires of magic and occult codes.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** recall occult theories or information (from folklore or occult movements); understand the meaning of tarot cards or other divination techniques.
- **Hard difficulty:** identify rare or unique occult tomes; recall the finer details of secret occult practices and rituals.

Pushing Examples
Taking more time to study a site or item; conducting further research; consulting another expert; integrating with other occultists by purging oneself and undertaking extreme personal sacrifice and risk.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: information is misremembered; great offence is caused; signs or omens are read in a way entirely contrary to their meaning.

Pilot Aircraft

The aircraft equivalent of the **Drive** skill (page 83). The pilot understands the behaviour of differing forms of aircraft, from gliders to cargo planes and helicopters. No skill roll is required for anyone with a modest value in Pilot Aircraft to fly on a calm day with good visibility. A skill roll is required, though, for piloting in a storm, navigation by instrument, low visibility, and other difficult situations. Bad weather, poor visibility, and damage may raise the difficulty level of a skill roll.

A Pilot Aircraft skill roll is always required for any attempt to land an aircraft, even under the best conditions. The consequence of failure is situation-dependent. Failing a skill roll to land on a flat, grassy field on a calm summer's day may simply indicate a bumpy landing, perhaps deterring more delicate passengers from flying again. At the other extreme, failing a skill roll to land on icy tundra during a storm may result in serious damage to the aeroplane. Failure commonly represents damage to the craft, which must be repaired before the next take-off.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** land a light aircraft in a farmer's field during daylight hours.
- **Hard difficulty:** attempt an emergency landing in a farmer's field; attempt to maintain control of a faulty aircraft while in the air.

Pushing Examples
Pulling the aircraft up and making a second and final attempt at landing; pushing the vehicle to its limit; making a risky manoeuvre to lose a pursuer.



Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: the aircraft is somehow damaged and repairs have to be made before it can fly again, which may prove impossible in remote locations; passengers are injured—in some cases, severely—during the manoeuvre or accident; you emergency-landed the plane in the jungle and awake to find you are being held captive by guerrillas. Reserve burning wrecks for exceptional circumstances, such as when taking a crazy risk at high speed.

Pilot Boat

The water equivalent of the **Drive** skill (page 83). The pilot understands the behaviour of all forms of motor and sailing craft, from a kayak to an ocean liner, in various conditions (wind, storms, and tides), and can read wave and wind action to suggest hidden obstacles and approaching storms. No roll is required for anyone with a modest value in Pilot Boat to sail on a calm day with good visibility. A skill roll is required, though, for storms, navigation by instrument, low visibility, and other difficult situations. Bad weather, poor visibility, and damage may raise the difficulty level of a skill roll.

Note: there is a massive difference between a kayak and a liner, but the Pilot Boat skill, like the Pilot Aircraft skill, is considered to be very broad. If the character only really knows about simple craft (canoes, rowboats, and kayaks), the GM may wish to use the Athletics skill instead.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** pilot across a strong tide or in poor conditions.
- **Hard difficulty:** pilot a craft with faulty equipment or in severely bad conditions.

Pushing Examples

Manoeuvring the craft to make a second and final attempt at docking; pushing the vehicle to its limit; making a risky manoeuvre.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: the craft is damaged and repairs have to be made before it can be used again, which may prove impossible in remote locations; passengers are injured—possibly severely—during the manoeuvre or accident; you are shipwrecked and wash up on an unknown deserted shore.

Read Lips

Besides being of importance to deaf characters, the Read Lips skill allows an inquisitive character to "listen in" on a conversation without requiring them to hear the speakers. Line of sight is necessary, and if only one speaker's lips can be seen—the other presumably with their back to the lip reader—then only half of the conversation can be deciphered. Read Lips may also be used to silently communicate with another person if both are proficient.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

Depending on the situation, Read Lips is usually unopposed. If attempting to read the lips of a target who wishes to remain hidden or unobserved, the skill may be opposed by the target's Stealth.

- **Regular difficulty:** understand the spoken communication of a person who is in clear sight and in relatively close proximity.
- **Hard difficulty:** determine the spoken communication of a person whose mouth is occasionally obscured and/or is some distance away, e.g., in a large crowd of people.

Pushing Examples

Putting yourself in an obvious position and staring unsubtly at the target(s); filming the target—and thus likely to be observed doing so.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: the target becomes aware that you are watching them intently (or filming them), takes offence, and confronts you; the drunken man across the bar is angered, mistakenly thinking that you are looking at him, and punches you; you are so intent on the target that you miss what is happening in your close proximity, e.g., someone steals your case or you walk into a lamp post.

Ride

Applies to saddle horses, donkeys, and mules, as well as granting knowledge of a riding animal's basic care, their riding gear, and how to handle the steed at a gallop or on difficult terrain. Should a steed unexpectedly rear or stumble, the rider's chance of remaining mounted is equal to their Ride skill. An unfamiliar mount—such as a camel—might be ridden successfully, but the level of difficulty would be raised.

If a character falls from a mount, either because the animal has collapsed, fallen, or died—or because a pushed Ride roll failed—the GM should consult **Table 7: Other Forms of Damage** (page 149), most likely using the moderate or severe category, depending on how hard the ground is. Basic animal handling and riding a mount at walking pace do not require a Ride roll.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** riding at speed.
- **Hard difficulty:** riding a mount at speed in rough, unfamiliar terrain; holding onto a scared mount.

Pushing Examples

Whipping or pushing the mount aggressively—perhaps forcing a horse to jump a ravine or high embankment; taking the risk of keeping your seat rather than jumping clear as trouble approaches.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: you are thrown from the mount and possibly suffer damage; the mount is injured; your foot is entangled in the mount's bridle and you end up being dragged for some distance.

Science

Like the Art/Craft and Languages skills, the Science skill covers a range of subject specialisations. As a result, a generic "Science" skill cannot be taken, though the skill can be chosen more than once, each time with different specialisations. Practical and theoretical ability with a science specialisation suggests some degree of formalised education and training, although a well-read amateur scientist may also be a possibility.

When taking Science as a skill, the player should choose one specialisation to begin at 60% and two other specialisations to begin at 30% each. While each speciality covers quite different fields of study and research, they all share certain underlying principles, methodologies, and practices; e.g., someone specialising in Biology understands Chemistry and Physics as it applies to their subject, and so on.

Each specialty covers a particular discipline and the following list is not exhaustive. As we've already mentioned, many specialties cross and overlap in knowledge, for example, Mathematics and Cryptography, Botany and Biology, Chemistry and Pharmacy. When a character does not have the obvious discipline specialty, they may roll against their lowest specialism with a penalty die (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** conducting an experiment; analysing an unusual substance; being aware of current scientific theory within your field of specialty.
- **Hard difficulty:** conducting a particularly demanding experiment; deciphering disorganised/partial scientific records; working with improvised equipment or limited resources.



Pushing Examples
Taking more time for study; conducting further research; moving to a better-equipped laboratory; consulting another expert; taking risks.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: the experiment goes completely awry, causing unforeseen damage, e.g., explosion, fire, electrical shock, expulsion to the fae world; you incorrectly prepare the formula for a particular pharmaceutical with disastrous results; your tool slips, destroying a vital piece of equipment or rare and delicate artefact; some higher authority seizes your results/findings.

Examples of Science Specialisations
Archaeology: allows dating and identification of artefacts from past cultures and the detection of fakes. Ensures expertise in setting up and excavating a dig site. On inspecting a site, the user might deduce the site's purpose as well as the way of life of those who left the remains. Archaeology also helps identify written forms of extinct human languages.

Astronomy: the user knows the names of important stars, when eclipses and meteor showers are likely to occur, and how to find out which stars and planets are overhead at a particular hour of the day or night or on a particular day. The skill also provides knowledge of current perceptions about life on other worlds, the existence of or the formation of galaxies, and so on. An academic might also be able to calculate orbits, discuss stellar life cycles, and have knowledge of infrared astronomy or long-baseline interferometry. Navigation by the stars is also a possibility.

Biology: the study of life and living organisms, including cytology, ecology, genetics, histology, microbiology, physiology, and so on. With this skill, the user might develop a vaccine against some hideous bacterium, isolate the hallucinogenic properties of some jungle frog, or perform an analysis of blood and/or organic matter.

Botany: the study of plant life, including classification of species, structure, growth, reproduction, chemical properties, evolutionary principles, diseases, and microscopy. Sub-disciplines of botany include agronomy, forestry, horticulture, and palaeobotany. With this skill, the user might identify the properties of a particular plant—whether poisonous, edible, or psychotropic, for example—and its particular uses.



Chemistry: a study of the composition of substances and the effects of temperature, energy, and pressure upon them, as well as how they interact with one another. With chemistry, the user might create or extract complex chemical compounds, including simple explosives, poisons, gases, and acids—requiring at least a day or so with the proper equipment and reagents. The user could also potentially analyse an unknown substance to determine its components or purpose.

Cryptography: the study of secret codes and languages developed by one or more persons to conceal the contents of a conversation or message. A specialised branch of mathematics, this skill enables the identification, creation, and/or deciphering of a code. Codes are usually written but may take other forms, such as a message hidden within a musical composition, graphic art, or computer program. Cracking a code can be painstaking work, often requiring lengthy research and number crunching.

Engineering: while technically not a science, engineering is grouped here for convenience. Science is about identifying certain phenomena through observing and recording, whereas engineering takes such findings and uses them to produce practical applications, like machines, structures, and materials.

Forensics: the analysis and identification of evidence. Normally associated with crime scene investigation—the collection of fingerprints, DNA, hair, and body fluids, etc.—and laboratory examination in order to determine facts and provide expert evidence for legal disputes.

Geology: used to determine the approximate age of rock strata, recognise fossil types, distinguish minerals and crystals, locate promising sites for drilling or mining, evaluate soil samples, and anticipate volcanism, seismic events, avalanches, and other phenomena.

Mathematics: the study of numbers and logic, including mathematical theories. Also applied and theoretical solution design and development. The skill might allow the identification of bizarre geometries, solve puzzling formulae, and decrypt complex patterns or codes (see **Cryptography** for the specialised study of codes).

Meteorology: the scientific study of the atmosphere, including weather systems and patterns, and atmospheric phenomena. Use this skill to determine long-range weather patterns and to forecast effects like rain, snow, and fog.

Pharmacy: the study of chemical compounds and their effect on living organisms. Traditionally, this has involved the formulation, creation, and dispensing of medications—whether a shaman using traditional herbs or a pharmacist creating synthetic compounds in a laboratory. The application of this skill ensures the safe and effective use of pharmaceutical drugs, including synthesising ingredients, identification of toxins, and knowledge of possible side effects.

Physics: grants theoretical understanding of pressure, materials, motion, magnetism, electricity, optics, radioactivity, and related phenomena, as well as some ability to construct experimental devices to test theories. Practical devices, such as automobiles, are not the province of physicists; however, experimental devices may be, perhaps in conjunction with Tech or Mechanical Repair (**Combined Skill Rolls**, page 322).

Zoology: the study of biology that relates specifically to the animal kingdom, including the structure, evolution, classification, behavioural habits, and distribution of animals, both living and extinct. Use this skill to identify animal species from their interactions with the environment—tracks, droppings, marks, etc.—as well as their likely behaviours and territorial traits.

Sleight of Hand

Enables the visual covering-up, secreting, or masking of an object or objects, perhaps with debris, cloth, or other intervening or illusion-promoting materials, such as a secret panel or false compartment. Larger objects of any sort should be increasingly hard to conceal. Sleight of Hand includes fine manipulation, such as pickpocketing, palming a card, and clandestine use of a mobile phone. Characters lacking the Sleight of Hand skill can attempt a Hard DEX roll to achieve simple feats of sleight of hand.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

Commonly opposed by Observation. Adjust the difficulty level according to the size of the item being concealed.

- **Regular difficulty:** picking the pocket of someone with an Observation skill below 70%; concealing a small item, e.g., something that would fit in a pocket or up a sleeve.
- **Hard difficulty:** picking the pocket of someone with an Observation skill of 70% or higher; removing someone's watch or belt without them noticing; concealing a larger item.

Pushing Examples

Taking more time to study the target and their behaviours; physically touching or bumping into the target; setting up an elaborate rig inside one's jacket to conceal a card or loaded dice; having someone cause a distraction.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: you feel a police officer's hand on your shoulder; while no one can prove you pickpocketed the priceless diamond, someone has their suspicions, and you notice that for the last week you've been tailed by a mysterious dark figure; you're caught red-handed and the victim, a local hard man, doesn't take kindly to thieves—you're taken out the back and shown the business end of a cricket bat!

Survival

Provides the expertise required to survive in challenging environments, such as in desert or arctic conditions, as well as upon the sea or in wilderness terrain. It provides knowledge of hunting, building shelters, finding water, and hazards (such as the avoidance of poisonous plants), etc. Being able to find your way in any terrain requires the **Navigate** skill (page 83), while the Survival skill may help you to survive long enough to be rescued if you get lost or separated from your companions.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

- **Regular difficulty:** find/make shelter; locate water and sources of food; notice an environmental hazard.
- **Hard difficulty:** as above but when you are badly injured or if the weather is severe.

Pushing Examples

Trying something risky, e.g., drinking water without purifying it first or eating unidentified berries; using all of one's clothing to improvise a shelter; burning every possession to make a signal fire.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: the cave you found is inhabited by a very angry bear; having burned all of your clothes to make a signal fire, you have now given away your position to your pursuers—will your rescuers reach you before the pursuers do?

Tech

Enables the repair or reconfiguration of technological devices, such as mobile phones, computers, electric motors, fuse boxes, and burglar alarms. To fix an electrical device may require special parts or tools, as the parts needed for electronics often cannot be jury-rigged—they are designed for precise jobs. Often without the right microchip or circuit board, the skill-user is out of luck unless they can contrive some form of ingenious workaround.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

Time is a factor in fabrication or repair, and the difficulty level should be lowered or an automatic success granted if time is unlimited, especially if the character has access to manuals and parts. Where a character has the correct parts and instructions, putting together a standard computer or something similar does not require a skill roll.

- **Regular difficulty:** repairing minor damage to a computer or electronic device—the kind of service one might expect under warranty.
- **Hard difficulty:** repairing something that is badly damaged; working without the proper tools; working with very limited time (rushing).

Pushing Examples

Taking longer to repair or reconfigure the equipment; taking a risky short cut; buying new and/or expensive equipment and components.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: you blow the fuses and plunge the building into darkness; you wreck the thing beyond repair; you create a device that does something other than what was intended.

Track

Enables a character to follow a person, vehicle, or animal over earth and through vegetation. Factors—such as time passed since the tracks were made, rain, and the type of ground covered—may affect the difficulty level.

Opposing Skill/Difficulty Level

If tracking someone who is trying to conceal their tracks, the opponent's Stealth skill should be used to set the difficulty level; modifiers might also be applied for the prevailing terrain (**Determining the Difficulty Level**, page 105).

- **Regular difficulty:** tracking an animal or human in the forest under normal (temperate) conditions.
- **Hard difficulty:** following a trail that is several (or more) days old.

Pushing Examples

Backtracking and taking more time to study the area; walking in increasing spirals to locate the tracks; taking longer, possibly making more noise and making yourself more visible.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: the tracks you're following lead directly into the path of danger; you find yourself going round and round in circles, and night is falling as you realise you are now totally lost; you follow the tracks, only to be ambushed or caught in a trap laid by the person/thing you are following.

Combat Skills

The final skill group concerns combat skills, of which there are two: Fighting and Firearms. For more on their use in combat, see the **Combat** section of Chapter 3 (page 123). Combat skills, like common skills, automatically begin at 30%. An investigator can boost them to 60% during character creation by selecting them as part of their six starting skills (**Step Four: Determine Skills**, page 52).

Fighting

A character's ability in melee (hand-to-hand) combat. Fighting also allows a character to instinctively evade blows (**Step 2: Target Responds**, page 127).

Those starting with a Fighting skill of 60% may wish to choose a formal training style as part of their background (to account for their skill level), such as a martial art, boxing, or advanced personal security. How did your investigator learn to fight? Was it a part of their occupation (e.g., formal military training), for pleasure as a hobby (e.g., martial arts classes), or an element of their backstory (e.g., learning the hard way as a result of street-fighting?).

The skill also includes the use of melee weapons, such as knives, clubs (including a police baton, cricket bat, etc.), and improvised weapons. Humans have developed a vast range of weapons throughout history, many requiring a great deal of specialist skill to use; however, in this game, these are all covered with the single skill of Fighting. While the main focus of *RoL:RPG* is solving mysteries, combat can sometimes occur, but for ease of play, no differentiation is made between fighting styles or melee weapons.

If a character has the **Signature Weapon** advantage (page 52), they gain a bonus die on damage rolls (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111; **The Damage Roll**, page 132) when using that particular melee weapon (but no other).

Note: as a combat skill, Fighting cannot be pushed.

Firearms

Firearms is a catch-all skill covering the use of all types of firearms, including handguns, rifles, shotguns, and their derivatives. It is also the default skill for those using a bow or crossbow of any kind. Those starting with a Firearms skill of 60% may wish to specify how they became proficient to account for their skill level. How did your investigator learn to shoot? Was it a part of their occupation (e.g., formal military training), for pleasure as a hobby (e.g., sport shooting or archery), or an element of their backstory (e.g., growing up on a farm)?

For ease of play, no differentiation is made between the varying types of firearm. In this game, they are all covered with the single skill of Firearms.

If a character has the **Signature Firearm** advantage (page 51), they gain a bonus die on damage rolls (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111; **The Damage Roll**, page 132) when using that particular gun or bow (but no other).

Note: as a combat skill, Firearms cannot be pushed.







The Basic Rules

THIS CHAPTER COVERS the standard game rules for *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* (*RoL:RPG*)—the system used to ensure fairness and balance, as well as to resolve conflicts and challenges as they arise during play.

The chapter is divided into key rules sections: dice rolling and skill rolls; the investigator development phase; combat; wounds and healing; other forms of damage; and chases. While it's useful to read through all of this, when starting the game, the best advice is to concentrate on the dice rolling and skill rolls, combat, and healing sections first. You can keep coming back to this chapter to build your knowledge of the rules as you go, until you are a rules wizard!

When to Roll Dice

There's a huge amount of fun to be had playing a roleplaying game, and a lot of that fun comes from discussing your investigator's actions with your fellow players—including the Game Moderator (GM)—without the need to roll any dice whatsoever. Players say what their investigators are doing, sometimes even speaking "in character" to better express themselves. The GM states what the non-player characters (NPCs) are doing, as well as describing the world in which the game takes place and how that world is affected by the investigators' actions.

So far, so good. Everyone accepts what everybody else says and together you create an interesting story. Until, of course, someone doesn't accept what somebody else says. When that happens in a game, you can either disagree with that person or you can ask for clarification. Ultimately, if you don't agree that what they've said is happening in the story, you can resolve the situation with dice. For example, an investigator doesn't believe what Jimmy Four-Fingers (played by the GM) is telling them about the whereabouts of a missing person, so the GM calls for a dice roll to resolve the situation—in this case, probably a Read Person roll, which enables the players to judge whether Jimmy's lying or not.

Likewise, you could simply say that your investigator manages to climb to the top of St Paul's Cathedral in the pouring rain at midnight—unlikely, but possible. But if there's no dice roll to test your investigator's skill, there's no tension or drama either—and both drama and tension are important in a story.

Equally, there's no need to roll dice for everything. For example, each investigator has a Drive skill, but dice don't need to be rolled every time an investigator gets in a car to go somewhere—that would be pretty dull! If you say your investigator is driving to the shops, unless someone takes issue with you, then it's done—simply move on with the story so you can get to the exciting bits. Normal day-to-day stuff that everyone "just does" should simply happen—no dice roll needed. However, if the GM describes how another car is attempting to push your investigator's car off the road, you probably are going to object to this. You could say, "*Hold on, I'm putting my foot down and getting away,*" but still, the GM may insist the car is barging your car off the road. There's a disagreement, a conflict—a reason to roll dice to see whether your car is indeed pushed off the road. The story has reached a moment of tension that requires a definite outcome. Time to reach for the dice!

- **The GM decides if a dice roll is required and what skill is being used.** Deciding when a dice roll is needed and when it is not is up to the GM. Some groups may use dice rolls more than others. Published case files (adventures) for *RoL:RPG* advise the GM on when to call for dice rolls, but the author can't foresee all the tricky situations that the players and their investigators may get themselves into, so the GM may need to call for extra ones.
- **Roll dice when a character is challenged.** Don't roll for something that you'd expect an investigator to be able to do with ease. Consider the investigator's skills: a trained demolitions specialist with all the time and necessary equipment is going to be able to set an explosive charge

without needing to roll dice but disarming an IED is definitely going to require a dice roll because there's risk of harm and it's dramatic!

- **Learn from experience when to roll dice.** If you, as GM, call for a dice roll and the players lean forward to observe the result and then cheer if it goes well—or groan and laugh when it doesn't—you're probably doing it right! As we said above, don't call for rolls when characters are doing normal and easy things. Judging when to call for a dice roll is something you'll develop a knack for the more you play the game. If you are ever in doubt, don't be afraid to turn to your players to get their advice on whether they think a dice roll is needed.

When considering if a dice roll is warranted, consider the downside. What happens if the roll is failed? If the consequence is irrelevant or downright dull, then a roll is not needed. Only call for a dice roll when the result (good or bad) pushes the story forward or, at least, results in something dramatic.

Example: *Nafeesa is investigating a house and decides to climb over the garden fence to access the back door. Does she need to make a dice roll (Athletics skill) to climb the fence? Ask yourself if the focus of the story is on that fence—is it important to what happens next? If Nafeesa fails the skill roll, what would that mean? In all likelihood, she'd have to look for another way in or find some other way over the fence, which just delays her getting to the important part of the story: what's inside that house. So, in this case, you could say she climbs over easily.*

Alternatively, Nafeesa is being chased by a dog and decides to climb over that same fence to escape. Now, if she fails, she must face the dog and there's a risk of it attacking her. The situation feels more dramatic and could have a major impact on what happens next, so a dice roll would seem appropriate.

When attempting a skill roll, the player concerned should agree a goal with the GM, i.e., what the investigator is hoping to achieve. If the skill roll is successful, they achieve their goal. If the task is something that anyone could attempt, use the appropriate common skill for the dice roll. But when attempting something for which an investigator has no appropriate skill listed on their sheet, the GM must make a call:

- Is the knowledge or task clearly something covered by an expert skill? If so, the player can choose to spend Luck points and attempt the skill roll (**Trying Your Luck**, page 114).
- Is the knowledge something that anyone with some general knowledge might know? For example: a roll to decide whether the investigator remembers who had the Christmas number one last year. In this case, there's not really a common or expert skill that covers this, so a characteristic roll is made instead; in this case, an INT roll.
- Like the last point, sometimes there is not an appropriate skill for the situation or goal, so a characteristic roll is used instead. For example: grabbing the keys off a table before someone else could be a DEX roll; staying awake through the night while on your own would be a CON roll, and so on.

Note: Luck can be used to adjust the outcome of some dice rolls. We cover this later, in **Spending Luck** (page 113).

Skill Rolls

The word "roll" is used in conjunction with the appropriate skill or characteristic; so, when it's time to get the dice out, the GM will, for example, call for a "Research roll" or a "STR (Strength) roll." The GM has the final say about which skill or characteristic is appropriate to roll, depending on the situation and the nature of the opposition. We use the term "skill roll" regardless of whether a skill or a characteristic is used.

As we've already mentioned, a player should be clear about what they want their investigator to achieve by stating a goal *before* they roll any dice. If the goal isn't acceptable, the GM should help to rephrase it. Well-worded goals define the objective clearly and concisely, so everyone knows what is being attempted. Sometimes, a player may ask to make a roll, but the GM says it isn't necessary and that the task is simply accomplished without needing to roll the dice.

Example: *Nafeesa Jones wants to force a door open. Unless told otherwise, the GM might automatically assume that she is simply bashing into the door and creating a loud noise in the process. If Nafeesa wants to force open the door quietly, she needs to state this as her goal. "Break the door down" and "lever the door open quietly" are two different goals with potentially different consequences for Nafeesa and the story, and ones the GM needs to consider when setting a difficulty level for the roll.*



The GM's Decision is Final

While the rules are designed to be as clear and flexible as possible, from time to time you may encounter a situation where they do not provide a clear solution. In such circumstances, the GM's decision is final. While players are encouraged to offer suggestions and ideas, they should respect the GM's decision and move on with the game once the GM's decision has been made.

Skill Rolls: Determining the Difficulty Level

The GM determines the difficulty level for all skill rolls. There are two levels of difficulty in the game: Regular and Hard.

- **Regular difficulty:** a task that would challenge a competent person. The player needs to roll equal to or below their investigator's full skill or characteristic value in order to succeed. This level of difficulty should be used in the vast majority of cases.
- **Hard difficulty:** a task that would challenge a professional. The player needs to roll equal to or below one half of their investigator's skill or characteristic value in order to succeed. This difficulty level should be used occasionally and only in the most challenging of circumstances.

If you, as GM, feel that the task is easy, then don't call for a dice roll. Likewise, if you want a clue to be obvious, don't ask for dice rolls before giving the clue to the players. Save dice rolls for challenging and dramatic situations.

If an investigator is facing a living being, the GM has a choice: they can either use an opposed roll (**Opposed Skill Rolls**, page 116) or set the difficulty level using the opponent's skill level. In this case, to set the difficulty level, the GM should decide which skill or characteristic is being used by the opponent (human or otherwise) to counter the investigator's action—examples can be found with each skill entry (**Chapter 2: Skills**).

- If the opponent's skill or characteristic is below 70, the difficulty level is Regular.
- If the opponent's skill or characteristic is equal to or above 70, the difficulty level is Hard.

Example: *Nafeesa is trying to get information out of a street criminal named Jimmy Four-Fingers. Nafeesa is putting the pressure on Jimmy. The player's goal is to find out an address from the reluctant Mr Four-Fingers, so the GM calls for a Social skill roll. POW can be used to oppose Social when it is used to intimidate (**Social**, page 86), and Jimmy's POW is 80, so the difficulty level of Nafeesa's Social roll is Hard. The player rolls 17, which is less than half of Nafeesa's Social skill of 60%—a success!*

GM ADVICE

Using an NPC opponent's skill level to set a difficulty level prioritises speed of play over statistical balance. Using an opposed roll is statistically more balanced, but takes slightly longer.



In the case of non-living opponents, such as a locked door, the GM must weigh up all the pertinent factors and make a judgement. A standard challenge would be of Regular difficulty. Where the GM judges the challenge is truly exceptional, they may use the Hard difficulty level. This method is also used for **Firearms** (page 101), where hitting a target within standard range is Regular difficulty, and hitting a target at longer range is Hard difficulty.

Wherever possible, the situation should be framed so that the dice are being rolled by the players because, let's face it, they won't get much fun out of watching the GM roll the dice every time. For example, if a character is attempting to use their Stealth skill to furtively follow an NPC, the GM would use the NPC's Observation skill to set the difficulty level, with the player rolling the dice to see if they can achieve their goal. If the situation was reversed and the NPC was following the character, this time, the GM would use the NPC's Stealth skill to set the difficulty level and the player would roll the dice against their Observation skill to see if they manage to spot the tail.

Always remember: the players should be rolling the dice more often than the GM.

Rolling the Dice: Levels of Success and Failure

There are five different outcomes when a dice roll is made—further details on each follow below:

- **Critical success:** a dice roll of 01 (the best possible result).
- **Hard success:** the dice roll is equal to or below half of the character's skill or characteristic value.
- **Regular success:** the dice roll is equal to or below the character's full skill or characteristic value.

- **Failure:** (called a Weak success in opposed rolls) The dice roll is above the character's skill or characteristic value.
- **Fumble:** a dice roll of 100 (the worst possible result).

When making a skill or characteristic roll, the player states a goal, the GM confirms which skill or characteristic is being used, and the player then rolls the dice. The level of success—or failure—may have an effect on how the outcome of the roll is resolved or on what the investigator achieves (**Opposed Skill Rolls**, page 116).

If a dice roll is successful, i.e., is a Critical, Hard, or Regular success, the player should be encouraged to help describe the outcome. This can include aspects of the story beyond their investigator, such as the NPCs' actions and the surrounding environment; however, such things may be moderated by the GM. Thus, both player and GM are involved in describing the outcome of a successful roll.

Example: *Nafeesa achieved her goal of intimidating Jimmy Four-Fingers by rolling under the difficulty level set by the GM. The player now describes the scene.*

"I push Jimmy up against the wall and threaten him, '*Tell me the address or life is going to get a lot harder for you.*' Yeah, Jimmy is terrified and he agrees to take me to the address, and I follow him."

There's no need to take issue with the player's description of Nafeesa's interrogation technique—it's just description—but does Jimmy escort Nafeesa to the address? The GM considers this. The player's goal was to find out the address. The GM jumps in, slightly altering what the player has said, "Great, Jimmy leads you part of the way, then points down the street at a shabby, derelict house. He refuses to go any further."

Critical Success

A roll of 01 indicates a Critical success. This means that the investigator has performed outstandingly well, and has either successfully achieved their goal to the highest possible degree or—optionally—something beneficial has occurred. Think of it as a "*Yes, and…*" situation. The nature of the good fortune is at the GM's discretion, although the players are welcome to make suggestions. The chance of achieving a Critical success with the dice is 1 in 100, but the player can also buy a Critical success by spending Luck points (**Spending Luck**, page 113).

- In **Opposed Skill Rolls** (page 116), a Critical success beats every other outcome.
- In combat, a Critical success on an attack roll gains the attacker a bonus die on their damage roll (**The Damage Roll**, page 132).

Example: *Nafeesa looks around the outside of the derelict house. Her goal is to find evidence of who might have been there recently. The GM asks for an Observation roll while considering what evidence there might feasibly be—perhaps a footprint or a discarded scrap of paper with a note on it. Nafeesa's player rolls a 01—a Critical success. The GM describes the footprint and, as a result of the Critical success, has a passer-by say,* "Hello." *The passer-by can give a description of the people who left the house earlier that day. That Critical success really paid off, as Nafeesa now knows exactly who she's looking for.*

Hard Success

A roll equal to or below one half of the specified skill or characteristic value indicates a Hard success. This means that the character has performed exceptionally well, and has successfully achieved their goal, whether the difficulty level was Hard or Regular. If there's something extra that the character can achieve beyond what would be expected with a Regular success, now is the time for the GM to add that in, but if you're at a loss to think of something extra, just narrate what happens and move on with the story. In **Opposed Skill Rolls** (page 116), a Hard success beats a Regular success.

Regular Success

A roll equal to or below the specified skill's or characteristic's full value indicates a Regular success. This means that the character has performed proficiently and has successfully achieved their goal if the difficulty level was Regular. If the difficulty level of the dice roll was set at Hard, a Regular success indicates a good attempt but a failure nonetheless. In **Opposed Skill Rolls** (page 116), a Regular success beats a Weak success (failure).

Failure (or Weak Success)

A roll that is above the specified skill or characteristic value usually indicates a failure. This means that the investigator has performed poorly and failed to achieve their goal. Exactly how the investigator has failed is entirely up to the GM—though, of course, the players may throw in suggestions. Think about the circumstances surrounding the failed roll. Could it represent a failure to act rather than a failed attempt? Did the investigator miss the opportunity to step in and do something because they were too slow to react? Or is this a "*Yes, but…*" or "*No, but…*" situation? If it's a "*Yes, but…*," the investigator does achieve their goal to some extent, but at some cost—for example, perhaps they did pick the lock, but took so long that the security guard spots them opening the door. If it's a "*No, but…*," then, while they didn't pick the lock, at least no one knows they tried. Remember, complications are good for drama and can help take your story in new and interesting directions. Sometimes, though, a fail is just a fail. The key thing is to make sure that the story

doesn't stall because of it—keep it going, just with some juicy complications!

When a player fails a roll, in most cases, they have the option to spend Luck to change that failure into a success. For more on this, see the **Spending Luck** section on page 113.

Initial failure at a skill roll should not usually cause the investigator to take damage, depending on the circumstances. Worse things may happen if the player chooses to push the roll and fails a second time (**Pushing the Roll**, page 108). As we've already mentioned, a normal failed roll tends to mean that some obstacle has prevented success or the person didn't make a good attempt. So, save "*What's the worst that could happen?*" style consequences for failed pushed rolls and **Fumbles** (following).

Example: *Nafeesa makes her way to the derelict house. She finds the ground floor windows and doors are securely sealed with metal covers—it looks like the place has been repossessed. Looking round the back, she spots an open upper floor window. There's a drainpipe that she could climb up, and the GM sets the difficulty level of the climb as Regular. Nafeesa's player gets a result of 63 for her Athletics skill roll—a failure. The GM describes the lack of handholds and that the drainpipe feels loose. Nafeesa's goal was to get to the window, but she's still stuck on the ground. Note how the GM did not take the situation to its extreme, that of Nafeesa climbing partway then falling and suffering harm—this is something that could happen if the roll is pushed and failed (**Pushing the Roll**, page 108).*

In **Opposed Skill Rolls** (page 116), both sides roll and compare their results, and there is always a winner and a loser, even if both roll poorly. So, in an opposed roll, a failure is instead known as a Weak success because, even though it's not a great result, it's still a better (higher) level of success than a fumble. This means that, although both opponents performed inadequately, one still ends up beating the other. In a match between two complete amateurs, there is still a winner and a loser.

Fumble

If the dice read 100—remember, that's 00 on your "tens" die and 0 on your "units" die—a fumble has occurred, meaning the investigator has performed abysmally. Not only did they fail to achieve their goal, but something really bad happens—something worse than a straight failure. The nature of that misfortune or bad luck is at the GM's discretion, and the options include:

- An **Involuntary Action** (page 108).
- If using a firearm, a fumble may indicate a malfunction, causing the gun to jam or misfire.
- When fumbling a Drive roll, this may mean an engine breakdown, a brakes failure, or a blowout.



Example: *consider what would happen if, instead of rolling a 01 when investigating the derelict house, Nafeesa's player rolled a 100 for her Observation roll. The GM still describes the footprint and how Nafeesa is crouched down looking, but, this time, suddenly there's a foot on the small of her back pushing her to the ground. The people she was after have returned, and the GM took inspiration from the fumbled roll to have them sneak up on Nafeesa without any need for a dice roll on their part. Things suddenly got a lot more complicated for Nafeesa…*

The chance of achieving a fumble with the dice is 1 in 100, but this is increased to any roll of 90 or above if the character is impaired (**Impairment,** page 118).

Involuntary Actions

When a player rolls a fumble (or fails a POW roll to see if they're impaired; **Impairment**, page 118), the GM may compel their investigator to commit an involuntary action. The GM should choose whichever result they feel is most appropriate for the situation from the following list. Alternatively, they could roll 1D10 for a random involuntary reaction.

The investigator:

1. Drops whatever they are holding.
2. Cries out in terror or frustration.
3. Says something inappropriate, unwise, or incriminating.
4. Freezes on the spot.
5. Sobs uncontrollably or giggles hysterically with fright.
6. Lashes out with a fist, throws a held weapon, or pulls a trigger.
7. Backs away or hides.
8. Says or does something to get a friend in trouble, putting them in danger somehow.
9. Confesses something, or begs for mercy and forgiveness.
10. Becomes enraged, lashes out, and breaks something.

Pushing the Roll

If a player fails their initial skill or characteristic roll, they have the choice to either spend Luck to change their failure into a success (**Spending Luck**, page 113), or they can choose to push the roll. Pushing a skill roll provides the player with a second and final attempt to achieve their goal. A pushed roll is only allowed if it can be justified, and it is up to the player to do this. Whenever a player asks, "*Can I push the roll?*" the GM should not simply say yes or no, but instead should always ask, "*What action are you taking to push the situation?*" Then the player should describe the extra effort or time taken to justify a pushed roll. If the player is unsure, other players and the GM might offer suggestions.

By making a pushed roll, the player is upping the ante and giving the GM permission to inflict dire consequences should the roll be failed a second time. Pushing a roll means pushing the situation to the limit.

- If you are breaking down a door, pushing the roll may mean throwing yourself at it with no heed for your own safety; failing the pushed roll might mean taking 1 damage or attracting unwanted attention because of all the noise you're making.
- Pushing a roll may mean resorting to less than legal means to achieve your goal, like stealing a vital document because the owner won't let you see it; failing the pushed roll may lead to you being caught. If you are a Police Officer, this might lead to being disciplined, suspended, or even dismissed. For anyone else, failing the pushed roll might mean arrest—or it might mean that the document's owner now has a powerful hold over you, regardless of your occupation.
- If you are searching a room, pushing the roll could mean turning it over quickly; failing the pushed roll means you've left a real mess, making it obvious someone's been there—you've probably broken one or two things as well. Alternatively, pushing the roll could mean spending too long searching when the bad guys might return at any moment; failing the pushed roll might mean you are discovered, which could lead to a confrontation.
- If you are trying to understand someone with Read Person, pushing the roll can mean studying that person too obviously; failing the pushed roll means you've probably caused offence by staring at them so hard, and could mean they start shouting at you and causing a scene.
- If you are picking a lock, pushing the roll may mean using a little too much force; failing the pushed roll might mean you break your lock picks—or even the lock. How are you going to get that door open now?
- If casting a spell, pushing the roll may mean channelling every ounce of your willpower into the spell, forcing

the *formae* to line up properly; failing the pushed roll risks severely overreaching your abilities and causing yourself lasting harm (**Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation**, page 177).
- If you are climbing a wall, pushing the roll could mean continuing even though it feels completely unsafe, or making a jump upward in the hope of reaching a better perch; failing the pushed roll might mean falling and taking damage, or becoming stuck halfway up.

When making a pushed roll, the goal must be achievable. The skill and difficulty level normally remain unchanged but may be modified if the situation changes.



GM ADVICE

A pushed roll is not simply a re-roll; time always passes between the attempts (rolls). How much time depends on what the investigator is doing to justify the pushed roll—it may be seconds or even hours. Only skill and characteristic rolls can be pushed; Luck, opposed, and combat rolls cannot be pushed.

Foreshadowing Failure

Before rolling the dice for a pushed roll, the consequences of failure may be foreshadowed by the GM. If so, the GM says something like, "*If you fail...*" followed by as much detail as they desire. The GM should highlight things that would be apparent to the investigator, even if they're something the player hadn't considered. Things the investigator would not be aware of might only be hinted at, at the GM's discretion. Players are welcome to offer their own suggestions for consequences—especially as they often come up with more exciting ones!

There are two reasons why the GM should foreshadow the consequence:

- The player requests foreshadowing to clarify the dangers—as the investigator would be aware of them—so that they can gauge the risk and decide whether to make the pushed roll.
- The GM chooses to foreshadow to highlight the danger and increase the drama of the situation.

As we mentioned in **Failure** (page 106), it's always far more entertaining if the GM focuses on an interesting consequence rather than a complete and utter lack of success, so be creative when it comes to foreshadowing what might go wrong if the pushed roll fails.

Pushed Roll: Success

The player's goal is achieved (as it would have been for the original roll) and none of the consequences of failure happen.

Example: *Nafeesa manages to escape from the goons at the derelict building, but they come looking for her. Nafeesa is trying to hide behind a market stall in the main street. The GM determines this requires a Stealth roll at Regular difficulty. Nafeesa's Stealth skill is 30%, and her player rolls an 84—a failure. The GM describes the stall as being little more than a few boxes on the pavement—not enough to hide behind. Believing it's only a matter of time before she's caught, Nafeesa decides instead to try to hide in plain sight among the passing crowds, hoping that the goons won't see her in the throng of people. The GM approves this as justification for a pushed roll and foreshadows what might happen if the roll is failed,* "Nafeesa is trying to mingle with the crowd of people in the street—if the pushed roll is failed, she could well find herself bumping into one of the pursuers and being caught."

Nafeesa's player thinks the risk is worth it and makes a second Stealth roll, this time succeeding! Nafeesa's quick thinking means that she melts away into the crowd and escapes.

Pushed Roll: Failure

Failing a pushed roll grants the GM free rein over the outcome, which could be damage (1 or 2 depending on the situation; rarely more), loss of equipment, isolation from the rest of the investigators, capture, and so on. The GM can even incorporate the player's goal being achieved, even though the player failed the pushed roll—but at some form of cost. It's that "*Yes, but…*" again…

When a player fails a pushed roll, they are giving the GM licence to make the investigators' lives more difficult. Remember, the consequence should be interesting and steer the game towards the dramatic, taking the characters one step deeper into trouble and/or danger.

Example: *in the previous example, instead of succeeding in the pushed Stealth roll, let's say Nafeesa failed it. The GM now has licence to make matters far worse for Nafeesa and says,* "As Nafeesa tries to blend into the crowd, she finds herself jostled as she goes against the flow of people. She is pushed against a market stall and stumbles over it. As Nafeesa hits the pavement, fruit falling on her head, her sudden cry makes the crowd part around her. She looks up to see everyone staring at her, including the goons who were in pursuit. They quickly shout out, in fake friendly voices, *'There you are! Sorry we got separated. Let's get you up, eh?'* as they come forward and grab Nafeesa. The crowd seems satisfied, and no one notices the knife that one of the goons is now holding to Nafeesa's ribs as they march her into an alley."

Can Multiple Players Roll Dice for a Skill Roll?

Sometimes, a scene comes to a point when two or more characters want to work together towards the same goal. This is most likely to occur when investigators are cooperating to achieve a task that one investigator would otherwise be unable to complete on their own (**Human Limits**, page 112), but there are other occasions where this might also be the case. How many characters may be involved in a particular task is up to the GM.

Some potential situations include:

- **Reading a book:** only one person at a time may read the book if there's only a single physical copy of it available, unless their associates can somehow get hold of another physical copy or a digital version to read as well.
- **Picking a lock:** only one person may attempt to pick the lock, either by rolling the Locksmith skill or by casting **Clausurafrange** (page 190).
- **Carrying a body:** up to four people, each taking one limb, could assist in carrying a body. If the body were exceptionally heavy, each character involved would be asked to make a STR roll; as long as the person with the highest STR value succeeds at their roll and no one else fumbles, they complete the task.
- **Research:** all the investigators can consult a resource like the internet, so they may all make a Research roll. Only one successful roll is required to find the sought-for information.
- **Spotting a clue:** everyone who's in the right location may roll Observation. Only one successful roll is required.
- **Determining if someone is withholding information:** everyone who can observe the subject may roll Read Person. Only one successful roll is required to figure out what the subject's intentions are, or, for example, realise whether or not they are lying.
- **Sneaking past a guard:** the player with the lowest Stealth skill should be asked to roll; on a failure, the guard is alerted to their presence—the GM should decide if everyone has been detected or whether it's just the person who failed the roll.

The examples above are intended as guidelines. For tasks in which the number of participants is restricted, like reading a single copy of a book or attempting to pick a lock, further attempts may be made by other characters, but such attempts always require additional time. It may not be apparent in some situations whether another skill roll should be allowed or if a player is required to push a skill roll—that's for the GM to decide. In general, when an investigator is attempting the same goal a second time, ask for a pushed roll.

Example: *two players wish to interrogate a suspect and decide to use the classic good cop, bad cop routine. Both use their Social skill, with one aiming to intimidate, the other to befriend. They take it in turns to play their roles, each rolling against their Social skill to see if the suspect cracks. Once the characters have both failed one dice roll, they must either give up, or one of them must push the roll.*



Failed Dice Rolls and Sudden Endings

Wherever possible, the GM should avoid describing an outcome that brings the game to an abrupt halt or end. Be creative and describe an outcome that allows play to proceed, just not necessarily in the way the players intended. In situations that would suggest sudden death as an outcome, use some of the options we've already mentioned, such as:

- A setback: a loss of equipment or the death or injury of an NPC ally.
- The investigator is taken captive or knocked unconscious, rather than killed.
- A deal: the enemy offers a pact or deal.
- Fainting: the character passes out, only to awaken later to find themselves unharmed and the situation changed.

Example: *Nafeesa has fallen into the River Thames and has failed her Athletics roll to swim to the bank. The GM describes how she's floundering and offers her a pushed roll, which she also fails. Now the GM considers the options. The obvious outcome is that Nafeesa drowns, but that takes her out of the game. While investigators aren't invulnerable, it's good to find ways to keep the story going, if at all possible. So, the GM has the scene fade to black. After dealing with what's happening to the other investigators, the GM returns to Nafeesa a little while later and describes how she has washed up on the banks of the Thames, battered and bruised. The downside is anything she had of value on her person is now lost or ruined, but, on the other hand, she's alive! And possibly owes Mama Thames and her girls a favour…*

Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice

We've talked about the difficulty level of a roll, which is determined by how challenging someone would find that task to perform. Sometimes, though, there are other factors that can affect the dice roll, such as the prevailing conditions, the environment, and the time available. Under these circumstances, the GM may allocate a "bonus" die or a "penalty" die to a roll rather than adjusting the difficulty level. A bonus die represents a positive influence of some sort, whereas a penalty die represents a negative influence. Some **Advantages** and **Disadvantages** (pages 50 and 311, respectively) may also apply a bonus or penalty die under certain situations; see each advantage and disadvantage for further details.

If an influence is so small that it would only modify the situation in a minor way, don't bother allocating a bonus or penalty die—keep these for significant things that will influence the attempt. Driving normally in light rain should not incur a penalty die, but racing through torrential rain probably calls for a penalty die!

Note that bonus dice and penalty dice do not stack. You can only have a maximum of one bonus die or one penalty die applied to a skill or characteristic roll. For more details, see **Multiple Bonus or Penalty Dice** on page 143. In addition, one bonus die and one penalty die cancel each other out when applied to the same skill roll.



ADDITIONAL RULES

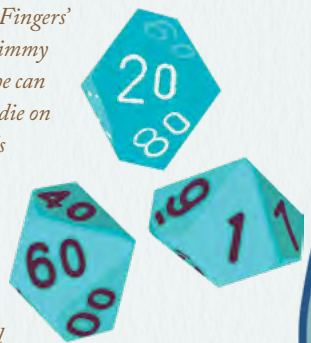
The alternative character creation rules permit your players to start with more experienced investigators; however, an experienced investigator must start play with a **Disadvantage** (page 311).

Rolling a Bonus/Penalty Die

When a bonus or penalty die is allocated, roll an additional tens percentile die alongside the usual pair of percentile dice when making the skill roll. You are now rolling three separate dice: one units die and two tens dice.

- **If you gain a bonus die:** use the tens die that yields the better (lowest) result.

Example: *Nafeesa is in Jimmy Four-Fingers' apartment and wants to search the place. Jimmy is in a police cell, so there's no rush. Since she can take her time, the GM grants her a bonus die on her Observation roll. Nafeesa's player rolls a 20 and 60 on the two tens dice and a 1 on the units die, which are combined to read as either 21 or 61. As the extra die was a bonus die, the player takes the lower roll of 21, resulting in a Hard success against Nafeesa's Observation skill of 60%. The GM describes how Nafeesa finds a SIM card taped to the underside of a drawer.*



- **If you incur a penalty die:** use the tens die that yields the worse (highest) result.

Example: *Nafeesa pays Jimmy Four-Fingers a visit at his apartment. While she's there, he gets a phone call and steps into another room to speak privately. Nafeesa uses the time to do a hasty search of the room. The GM calls for an Observation roll, but says it incurs a penalty die because time is short and Nafeesa is rushing. The player rolls a 20 and 60 on the two tens dice and a 4 on the units die, which can be combined to read 24 or 64. As the extra die was a penalty die, the player must take the higher result—a failure! Nafeesa hears Jimmy ending his call and nonchalantly returns to her seat, having found nothing.*





GM ADVICE

Where the result of a penalty die means the roll is failed, the player could spend Luck points to turn that failure into a success, but we'll talk more about that in the **Spending Luck** section (page 113).

Difficulty Levels vs Bonus & Penalty Dice

If you're unsure whether to change the difficulty level of a roll or apply a bonus or penalty die, think about what's happening in the scene. Is it the circumstances around the task that are affecting the investigator's ability to perform it, or is it the task itself that's posing the challenge? If it's the task, change the difficulty level. If it's the circumstances, allocate a bonus or penalty die. Sometimes there may not be a clear answer, so go with what feels right for that situation.

You can, if you want, alter the difficulty level and allocate a bonus or penalty die at the same time, but this should be the exception rather than the rule. Don't forget that some investigator advantages and disadvantages also allocate a bonus or penalty die to certain skill rolls (**Advantages** and **Disadvantages**, pages 50 and 311, respectively).

In the case of **Opposed Skill Rolls** (page 116), you don't set difficulty levels. So, if there are factors that provide a distinct edge or drawback for one of the characters involved, the GM should allocate a bonus die or a penalty die to only that player.



Human Limits

There are limits to what humans can achieve. As we mentioned in **Skill Rolls: Determining the Difficulty Level** (page 105), an unopposed skill or characteristic roll moves from Regular to Hard if the skill or characteristic being used to set the difficulty level has a value of 70 or above.

- The upper limit of what can be overcome with a Hard success is 100 + the character's skill or characteristic.
- Achieving any task where the opponent's skill or characteristic is beyond 100 + the character's skill or characteristic is impossible for that character, and no dice roll is allowed.

Example: *Nafeesa has STR 70. When attempting to make a STR roll to shove an NPC out of her way, the GM checks that NPC's STR to determine the difficulty level. Thus, if the NPC's STR is between 70 and 170, the difficulty level of Nafeesa's STR roll is Hard. Given the maximum STR for a human is 100, pushing a human out of her way is never going to be beyond Nafeesa's limit. However, certain creatures are stronger than humans, so if it was a creature and its STR exceeded 170—like a police horse or a unicorn—Nafeesa would automatically be unable to move them (no need for a roll).*

A character can seek help in achieving tasks that are beyond their human limit. This usually concerns tests of strength, like the one in our example above (see also **Can Multiple Players Roll Dice for a Skill Roll?**, page 110). If an investigator seeks assistance from their colleagues, the GM should think about how many people would need to be involved to make the task achievable, and how that affects the difficulty level of the skill roll. Everyone involved gets to roll at the new difficulty level determined by the GM. As long as the investigator with the highest value in the relevant skill or characteristic succeeds and no one else fumbles, the investigators jointly achieve their goal. Of course, if the attempt is failed it can be pushed (**Pushing the Roll**, page 108), or Luck could be used to alter the outcome (**Spending Luck**, page 113)—although remember that fumbles cannot be avoided by spending Luck.

When it's a heavy inanimate object, like a car, rather than a person or creature, the GM should judge how many people they think could feasibly attempt to move the object and how hard they think it would be to do so.

Example: *Nafeesa calls on her colleague Eli Venturini (STR 50) to help move an unconscious person to safety. The GM judges that, even with two reasonably strong people like Nafeesa and Eli, this is still going to be a tricky thing to do because the unconscious person is very large, and so decides to set the difficulty level at Hard. Both Nafeesa and Eli's players must now make a Hard STR roll to see if they can move the person. Nafeesa has the higher STR of 70, and*

so she must roll equal to or below 35. As long as Eli doesn't fumble, they succeed in moving the person to safety.

However, if Jordan Schneider (STR 70) and Mina Patel (STR 40) also lend a hand, things would be different. The GM judges that, with more people involved, the difficulty lowers to a Regular STR roll—there is strength in numbers! As long as Nafeesa rolls a success and the others don't fumble, the person is moved to safety.



GM ADVICE

While the temptation may be to let as many people help as possible, there may be a limit on how many people could realistically do so—in terms of accessibility, if nothing else—if space is limited or the target object is reasonably small. And don't forget: the more people who are involved, the higher the chances are (statistically) that someone is going to fumble!

Intelligence Rolls

Everyone knows bits of information about a range of different topics. An Intelligence (INT) roll can represent what's stored in the brain's attic—perhaps something the investigator learned in school, from reading, or from watching documentaries and the like. For example, the investigator might know it's dangerous to pour water into sulphuric acid without possessing the Science (Chemistry) skill or know how many legs spiders have without the Science (Biology) skill. Identification of present-day languages is an excellent use for the Intelligence roll. Remember, though, if a specific skill is more applicable to the situation, then it should be used rather than making an INT roll.

While some players like solving in-game puzzles, others don't, so the GM can call for an INT roll when an investigator is attempting to solve an intellectual conundrum. By successfully rolling equal to or below the investigator's INT value, the player receives a solution from the GM, e.g., solving a puzzle or remembering the answer to a riddle.

Luck

All investigators have a Luck value. Some NPCs—such as really important human antagonists or members of the demi-monde—also have a Luck value, but most regular humans do not. Luck has many uses in the game.

Luck Rolls

Luck rolls may be called for by the GM when external circumstances are in question, and when determining the fickle hand of fate. But if a skill or characteristic is applicable to a situation, then it should be used rather than Luck. To make a Luck roll, the player attempts to roll under or equal to their current Luck value.

For example, finding one of London's iconic black taxicabs doesn't normally require a dice roll, but getting one quickly in the middle of chase might—"*Follow that car!*" At most times of day, **Affluence Rating** (page 57) could be a factor in attracting the attention of a taxi driver on the lookout for a well-dressed fare who may tip generously. No skill is going to make a taxi appear, though—it's a matter of chance whether one may be driving down the road, so the GM must decide or call for a Luck roll instead.

Luck rolls are handy to determine if an investigator has remembered to pack a vital piece of equipment before they left the house this morning or remembered to fill the car up before going on a long journey. If a player asks, "*Do I have a light with me?*" ask them to make a Luck roll. If the roll is successful, then yes, they have a torch; if it's failed, then no—or maybe they do, but the batteries are dead, which is something they won't discover until they try to use it later. A successful Luck roll may permit the investigator to find the item they need at their current location, such as ball of string or an improvised weapon.

- If the Luck roll concerns more than one investigator, it becomes a "group Luck roll," and the player whose character has the lowest Luck score among those present should make the roll on behalf of the group.
- If something bad is supposed to happen to one random member of the group, the GM can ask who has the lowest Luck score at that moment and have that individual suffer the unfortunate event.

As well as Luck rolls, investigators can use their Luck value in two ways to achieve better results, called **Spending Luck** (following) and **Trying Your Luck** (page 114).



GM ADVICE

Luck rolls are great for determining if the investigators have enough signal to make that all-important phone call or access the internet on their mobile devices. But only use this where there could reasonably be a patchy service—like the middle of the countryside—otherwise it will look as if you're just being mean.

Spending Luck

An investigator's Luck value is also a pool of Luck points. After the player has made a skill or characteristic roll, they can spend their Luck points to alter the result, if desired.

- A player can use Luck points to alter a roll on a one-for-one basis, i.e., for every point of Luck spent, the dice result is reduced by one. For example, aiming for

a Regular success against a Social skill of 60%, you roll 66—a failure; you can let the failure stand or spend 6 Luck points to reduce the roll's outcome to 60, making it a success.
- The points spent are deducted from the investigator's Luck value, which reduces the chance of passing future Luck rolls.
- A player may spend any number of Luck points, up to their current Luck value, on a given roll.

The use of Luck points can be narrated if it feels appropriate, but there is no requirement to do this if you can't think of anything that fits the situation. So, if a player decides to spend Luck points to convert their investigator's Stealth roll into a success, they might suggest, for example, that just as the guard was about to spot them, they were distracted by their phone ringing or that the investigator was about to kick a discarded drink can but stepped over it at the last minute, and so didn't alert the guard to their presence.

What Can I Spend Luck On?
Luck can be spent on most skill and characteristic rolls made by investigators, including opposed and unopposed rolls, e.g., Fighting and Firearms skill rolls during combat, and Magic skill rolls when casting spells (in or out of combat).

- Spend Luck points to alter the dice result to 01 to achieve a Critical success, or to change a Regular success to a Hard one, and so on.
- Spend Luck points on combat damage rolls to increase the amount of damage inflicted on a target. This means that Luck points can be used to improve your level of success on the dice roll—it does not mean that you can spend 1 Luck point to add 1 damage (**The Damage Roll**, page 132).
- Spend Luck points to prevent an investigator from dying if they suffer a fatal blow in combat (**Damage Conditions**, page 133).
- Spend Luck points to reduce the effect of wounds after a fight (**Wounds and Healing**, page 144).

Example: *Nafeesa attempts to sneak past Jimmy Four-Fingers. The GM uses Jimmy's Observation skill to set the difficulty level. Jimmy has Observation 60%, which is below 70, so Nafeesa needs a Regular Success. Nafeesa has Stealth 30% and rolls 34—at this stage, a failure. Nafeesa's player chooses to spend 4 Luck to lower her result from 34 to 30, and so achieve a Regular Success. Thus, she tip-toes silently past Jimmy, who doesn't notice a thing.*

GM ADVICE



Remember, when an unopposed skill roll is failed, the player usually has the option to push the roll or spend Luck points; the choice is theirs. However, when an opposed skill roll is failed, the player only has the option to spend Luck to change the result, as you can't push opposed rolls—the same goes for combat rolls (**Pushing the Roll**, page 108).

What Can't I Spend Luck On?
There are a few things that Luck points cannot be spent on.

- Luck points cannot be spent on Luck rolls.
- Luck points cannot be spent to alter the result of a pushed roll.
- Fumbles always apply and cannot be bought off with Luck points.
- A player may only spend Luck to alter one of their own dice rolls, not someone else's.

In play, a character's Luck decreases through spending and rises through recovery (**Recovering Luck Points**, page 115).

Trying Your Luck

Another useful trick is "Trying Your Luck." If a particular expert skill is required and none of the investigators present in the scene currently possess it, any investigator can spend 10 Luck points to attempt the roll, allowing the player to use the half value of one of their characteristics (**Table 4: Which Characteristic Should I Use?**, page 117) in place of the expert skill—*for this one skill roll only.* If they fail the skill roll, they may spend additional Luck points to make it a success (as per **Spending Luck**, page 113), or they may choose to push the roll (no additional Luck points need to be spent in order to be allowed to push the roll).

If an investigator makes a successful use of an expert skill through the Trying Your Luck method, and no one else in the group has that expert skill, they can now choose to spend an additional 10 Luck points to permanently add that skill to their character sheet at a rating equal to half their appropriate characteristic value. This means spending a total of 20 Luck to retain that expert skill (possibly more, if they used Luck points to make the roll a success).

Rather than thinking of this as the investigator spontaneously acquiring the skill, think of it as revealing (through play) something they already knew. This also means that the investigator is the only one in the group who's got that expert skill, so whenever it's required, people are going to look to them. There is no limit on how often a character can use Trying Your Luck to make skill rolls, but each investigator may not acquire more than one new expert skill per game session through this method. Note that the only

To Spend or Not to Spend?

Whether it's worth spending Luck points on a roll or not can be something of a vexed question, and for players, it can be a tricky balancing act between using Luck to ensure they succeed and keeping enough in reserve in case the GM calls for a Luck roll at a crucial moment. So, here's our advice on the matter.

GMs

Encourage your players to spend Luck points when they really want to achieve success. Sometimes, all a player needs is a Regular success—if spending Luck points to raise a Regular success to a Hard success isn't going to benefit the player, then tell them so. If they are determined to defeat some opponents in combat, the players probably want to spend Luck points to win the opposed rolls rather than just rely on the fate of their dice rolls.

Players

Never be afraid to check with the GM to see if a roll is worth spending Luck points on. A player can always ask the GM if spending Luck points is worth it in the situation at hand. The GM should be honest and say whether it is or not.

Timing is important. If it's early in a game session, players may not want to spend large amounts of Luck in case a more serious or urgent situation later arises. If it's late in a session or case file, players can afford to be a little bolder with their spending, as they will be able to improve their Luck values sooner rather than later **(Recovering Luck Points**, page 115).

Remember, an investigator's Luck points are the player's resource, so they get to use them in a way that best supports their enjoyment of the game. Some players like to make their investigators' lives difficult—sorry, more interesting—so they always have the option of not spending Luck points. If a player feels that it's more dramatic for their investigator not to succeed at everything they do, then that's fine. But, hey, there's also a good case for if you've got it, flaunt it…

skill this doesn't apply to is Magic, as an investigator must first have the Magical advantage to acquire this skill.

Recovering Luck Points

After every session of play, each player makes an improvement check for their investigator's Luck. The player rolls 1D100 and if the roll is *above* their present Luck value, they add 1D10 points to their Luck. If the roll is equal to or below the investigator's present Luck value, no points are recovered.

Once during each case file, each investigator may choose to take some rest and relaxation (R&R) and gain an automatic increase of 1D10 Luck points. The player should describe what their character is doing for their R&R, and they're encouraged to tie this into the elements of their backstory. We're not talking about a five-minute breather here, though—it should be a morning, afternoon, or evening's worth of restful activity, like settling down on the sofa to watch the rugby, reading a book, or going for a nice long walk to clear your head.

At the start of every new case file, each player rolls 2D10+50 and compares it to their investigator's current Luck value:

- If the result is less than or equal to their investigator's current Luck value, their Luck remains unchanged. If the result exceeds their investigator's current Luck value, their Luck is raised to be equal to the higher value.

If the player doesn't spend any Luck points, their investigator's Luck value is likely to rise towards a score of 70 over multiple cases or adventures; chances are, however, it's going to get spent! An investigator's Luck value usually varies throughout play. The starting Luck value is not used again in the game, except for optional fae characters (**Playing Fae Investigators**, page 318). Thus, the starting Luck value can be exceeded in play.

Example: *Nafeesa is pursuing a suspect into the London Underground. They both skip the barriers and race down the escalator. A tube train is just leaving. The GM asks for a DEX roll to see if Nafeesa can board the train before the doors close. Nafeesa has DEX 40 and rolls 46—she isn't going to make it! Nafeesa's Luck is at 57, and the player chooses to spend 6 Luck*



points, reducing her result by 6 down to 40, just making it aboard the train as the doors close behind her.

At the end of the session, Nafeesa's player makes a check for Luck recovery. Nafeesa's Luck is currently 51 points. The player rolls 73 and so adds 1D10 to Nafeesa's Luck; they roll an 8, increasing her current Luck to 59.

Opposed Skill Rolls

There may be times when two characters are opposing one another, when both sides need to roll dice to determine a victor. Opposed skill rolls, such as these, are the standard for melee combat (**Combat**, page 123). Opposed rolls will most often be made against the GM (who is rolling for an NPC)—such as during combat—but they may also occasionally occur between investigators.

To make an opposed roll, both sides declare a goal, which ultimately boils down to one will win and the other will lose. The goal should specify a definite action or outcome the player wishes to achieve. Be very clear about this. Saying an investigator is shoving someone describes what they are doing, but what is the goal? Is the goal to make them fall down the stairs, fall to the floor, drop what they are holding, or break their concentration so they can't cast a spell? What outcome is the investigator trying to achieve?

Having established the opposing character's goals (probably just trying to stop whatever the investigator is attempting), each side selects a skill or a characteristic to use—not necessarily the same one—both of which must be approved by the GM. Once that's done, the opposing players both roll percentile dice. The side with the higher level of success is the winner.

In an opposed roll, there should always be a winner and a loser. Story-wise, both sides failing wouldn't be much fun. If both sides roll over their skill value and one gets a failure while the other gets a fumble, then that "failure" instead becomes a "Weak success," as a failure always beats a fumble in an opposed roll (**Failure (or Weak Success)**, page 106).

If the results are tied, i.e., both sides get the same level of success (or failure), then a tiebreaker is used. It's possible for

Critical Success > Hard Success > Regular Success > Failure (or Weak Success) > Fumble
Best result ■——————→ **Worst result**

Table 4: Which Characteristic Should I Use?

When Trying Your Luck, refer to the chosen expert skill below to find the related characteristic. When more than one characteristic is listed, use the one with the higher rating.

Expert Skill	Attribute	Expert Skill	Attribute
Accounting	INT	**Mechanical Repair**	DEX or INT
Animal Handling	INT or POW	**Medicine**	INT
Appraise	INT	**Occult**	INT
Art/Craft	DEX, INT, or POW	**Pilot Aircraft**	INT
Computer Use	INT	**Pilot Boat**	DEX or INT
Demolitions	DEX or INT	**Read Lips**	INT
Disguise	DEX or POW	**Ride**	DEX or STR
Diving	CON or DEX	**Science**	INT
History	INT	**Sleight of Hand**	DEX
Languages	INT	**Survival**	CON or INT
Law	INT	**Tech**	DEX or INT
Locksmith	DEX	**Track**	INT

a failure to become a Weak success during the **Tiebreakers** process (following).

Note: opposed skill rolls cannot be pushed.

Tiebreakers

Sometimes, both sides in an opposed roll achieve the same level of success (or failure): a tie! Now, while an impasse might occasionally make sense depending on the circumstances, it can cause the story to slow down. To prevent that from happening, there are a couple of ways to break a tie and keep the action moving.

Breaking the Tie by Spending Luck Points

If the player has enough Luck points, they can spend these to improve their level of success: for example, from a failure to a Regular success, from a Regular success to a Hard success, or from a Hard to a Critical success. As long as the level of success they've adjusted their roll to is higher than that of their opponent, they win. Knowing when to do this can be tricky, and there may be times where it's actually better *not* to spend Luck to break a tie and instead save it for another occasion (**To Spend or Not to Spend?**, page 115).

Highest Skill Wins

If the two sides remain tied on the same level of success, the skills that were used are compared, and the side with the higher skill value wins. Combat is an exception to this, where the character whose turn it is wins the tie (**Opposed Combat Rolls**, page 131). If the two sides have the same skill value, the GM must decide to either let the tie stand or to use a random tiebreaker to determine a winner, e.g., simply asking one side to pick odd or even, and then rolling a D6. You could even just toss a coin!

Example: *Nafeesa is arm-wrestling her colleague Jordan Schneider; the loser must pay for lunch. The GM calls for an opposed STR roll as it isn't really a combat situation. Both have STR 70. Nafeesa's player rolls 37; a success. Jordan's player rolls 59, also a success—a tie! Nafeesa's a little low on cash today and really wants to win. As this is an opposed roll, it can't be pushed, so Nafeesa's player decides to spend 2 points of Luck to turn her result into a Hard success. As it's the level of success that matters in an opposed roll (***Opposed Skill Rolls***, *page 116), Nafeesa wins, and Jordan's left with the bill.*

Impairment

There are situations where the investigators may be exposed to physical or mental stresses or trauma. For example, physical trauma can occur as an outcome of combat or through other physical harm, such as a car crash or falling from a window, while witnessing violence or other shocking events may lead to mental trauma. Both could lead to an investigator suffering from what we call "impairment."

- In game terms, suffering from impairment increases an investigator's fumble range.
- While an investigator is impaired, a dice roll of 90 or above for *any* skill roll counts as a fumble—rather than the usual result of 100 (**Fumble**, page 107).

Note: players cannot spend Luck points to alter a fumble (**What Can't I Spend Luck On?**, page 114).

Suffering Impairment

Impairment caused by physical trauma is dealt with separately under **Wounds and Healing** (page 144). This section discusses impairment caused by mental trauma.

If an investigator is in a stressful situation, the GM considers whether what they are seeing or experiencing could cause impairment. The GM should take their lead from how the investigator is reacting; for example, are they panicking or displaying fear, shock, or horror at what's going on around them? If they are, the GM should call for a Regular POW roll. It may be the case that a player suggests their investigator is in a stressful situation and should make a POW roll.

If the player passes the POW roll, the investigator is fine. If, however, the roll is failed, the investigator is impaired, and the player should mark the Impaired box on their character sheet to remind them. The investigator also performs an **Involuntary Action** (page 108).

In story terms, an impaired character finds it hard to focus or concentrate, or they may zone out, lose motivation, or experience an emotional outburst because of the trauma (mental or physical) they've experienced.

Example: *Nafeesa comes under gunfire for the first time, and the GM asks for a POW roll. Nafeesa's POW is 60, and her player rolls an 87: a fail; she decides not to spend 27 Luck points to turn that into a success, so the result stands. Nafeesa is now impaired and the player marks the Impaired box on her character sheet. The GM thinks a suitable involuntary action would be to freeze. Nafeesa's player agrees and narrates how the young police officer stops dead in her tracks, trying to work out where the shot came from.*

GM ADVICE

An investigator with the Steadfast advantage (**Advantages**, page 50) doesn't have to make a POW roll for impairment under certain conditions. They may still suffer impairment if they are taken down or receive a mortal wound, though (**Wounds and Healing**, page 144).



Some situations where the GM may wish to check for impairment are:

- When an investigator is the target of gunfire.
- When an investigator stumbles across or sees a grisly corpse.
- When an investigator sees a close friend or ally get seriously injured (i.e., suffers a **Mortal Wound**, page 133).
- When an investigator sees a close friend or ally die.
- When an investigator witnesses a shocking or unexpected manifestation of the supernatural.

Some of these situations may always warrant an impairment check, such as witnessing a close friend or ally being seriously hurt, but the GM can decide that a particular situation only affects an investigator the first time they experience it, e.g., the first time an investigator is shot at with a gun, as in our previous example. Equally, the GM may wish to call for a POW roll if, for example, an investigator is later fired on by a more powerful type of gun, or a significant amount of time has passed since the original shooting happened, or if the investigator suffered a mortal wound as a result of being shot on a previous occasion.

The GM may also decide that if someone has been warned they are about to see something horrific, such as a grisly corpse, they can mentally prepare themselves and thus avoid the POW roll; alternatively, the GM could grant the player a bonus die on the roll to represent their attempt to steel themselves (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).

Example: *having recovered from her experience of being shot at (**Impairment and Recovery**, nearby), Nafeesa is called to a murder scene. She hasn't seen a dead body before, but her player states that, when Nafeesa first arrives on-site, she asks the officer in charge for a full briefing—including details of what she's going to see when she's taken through the cordon—so she can ready herself for what's ahead. As a result, the GM decides to grant a bonus die on her POW roll. Nafeesa's POW is 60. Her player rolls 74 and 24 (thanks to the bonus die), and so takes the best result: a Hard success! Nafeesa avoids becoming impaired this time.*

A year later, Nafeesa is called to another murder scene. She's seen quite a few dead bodies since that first one, and the GM decides Nafeesa is used to dealing with corpses now, so no POW roll is required.

GM ADVICE

There is no hard and fast rule as to whether something causes an impairment check only once or every time an investigator encounters it—it should always be judged by the GM based on the current situation and the nature of the traumatic event, as well as taking into account the events of the story so far and an investigator's personal backstory. As always, use impairment as a tool to help make the story dramatic and engaging for the players. If it doesn't make sense to have an investigator make that POW roll, don't ask for one.

And remember, an investigator is either impaired or they are not. Once they are impaired, an investigator can't suffer from further impairment until they've recovered (**Impairment and Recovery**, nearby).



Other Effects of Impairment

As well as increasing an investigator's fumble range, when the GM considers an impaired character is in a stressful situation, they can ask the player for a Regular POW roll to test the character's composure. On a roll of 90 or above, the character performs an **Involuntary Action** (page 108), perhaps flying into a rage or sobbing uncontrollably. Lasting for just a second or two, the investigator acts normally following an involuntary action, but their reaction can have an impact on following events.

Example: *not long after the shooting incident, Nafeesa attempts to persuade Jimmy Four-Fingers to give her the name of one of his contacts. The GM asks for a Social roll and Nafeesa's player rolls 94. This counts as a fumble, as Nafeesa is impaired. Nafeesa's previous experience has obviously left her more shaken than she realised. The GM narrates an involuntary action for Nafeesa, telling how she flies into a rage and slams Jimmy against the wall, screaming threats at him. The involuntary action is brief, but as Nafeesa regains her self-control, she realises that a passer-by is filming the incident on their phone...*

Impairment and Recovery

Impairment isn't a permanent condition. When an investigator is impaired, they can recover in one of the following ways:

- When an investigator ends a case file and begins a new one, they erase the check mark in the Impaired box on their character sheet, indicating they are no longer impaired.
- If an investigator takes a break from the case file of three or more days, maybe to spend time relaxing with friends and family, they may make a Regular POW roll (the GM may wish to play this out as a short scene within the scenario). With a success, the investigator recovers from their impairment and removes the check mark from their character sheet. They gain a bonus die to the POW roll if they attend therapy or counselling (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).
- At any time, a player may choose to spend 10 Luck points to remove the impairment check mark from their character sheet. They should be invited to explain how they somehow managed to bury or recover from their trauma.

Investigator Development Phase

People's experiences shape them, and investigators in *RoL:RPG* are no different: they grow and evolve as they interact with the world around them. We represent this growth in the game through the "investigator development phase."

Typically, this phase occurs at the end of a case file or, if playing through a campaign, at the conclusion of a chapter. As every group has their own pace at which they play the game, an investigator development phase may happen after one session or it may be several sessions before you reach one. If a case file or campaign chapter continues beyond, say, three or four sessions, the GM should look for a pause in the narrative to allow an investigator development phase to take place.

There are four main stages to the investigator development phase:

- Spending **Development Points** (following) to improve skills, to buy a new skill, to buy a new spell, to master a spell, or to buy an advantage (**Spending Development Points**, nearby).
- **Altering an Investigator's Backstory** (page 122).
- **Reviewing Employment and Affluence Rating** (page 122).
- **Training** (page 122).
- Recovering from their impairment if an investigator is impaired (**Impairment and Recovery**, page 119).

Development Points

To grow and evolve, an investigator needs development points, which they gain through the course of play. Players then spend development points during the investigator development phase to improve and advance their investigators (**Spending Development Points**, nearby).

Gaining Development Points

At the end of every case file or campaign chapter, each investigator gains a number of development points, determined by the GM. The standard rule is 1 development point per session of play. How long a session takes varies from group to group, but it's likely to be in the range of two to three hours, depending on how twisty-turny the case file is or how many people there are playing through it. Development point awards for pre-written case files are detailed in the rewards section of each scenario.

Note: the more frequently a group plays, the more development points they are going to get.

GM ADVICE

A GM may wish to alter the number of development points awarded. For example, awarding an additional 1 or 2 development points at the end of a case file may suit a group that plays less frequently (perhaps only once every month). Increasing the number of points awarded means the investigators advance in skills and abilities more quickly. Conversely, if the group prefers to see their characters develop more gradually, it may be preferable to award fewer development points, perhaps only 1 per case file, rather than 1 per session. This may suit a group which plays very regularly (perhaps every week). It's up to you to judge which system works best for your group, so that you can adjust the investigators' development to a comfortable speed for everyone.

For what this means in terms of the speed of investigator advancement, see **Slow vs Rapid Advancement** on page 121.



Spending Development Points

During an investigator development phase, there are various ways a player can spend the development points they've earned:

- Increasing Skills.
- Learning and Mastering Spells.
- Buying Advantages.

Increasing Skills

During an investigator development phase, each investigator may spend development points to increase one or more skill values.

- Spending 1 development point raises one skill by 10% or two skills by 5% each, up to a maximum value of 80%.
- If a skill has a rating of 80% or higher, spending 1 development point raises the skill by 5%, up to a maximum value of 90%.
- If a skill has a rating of 90% or higher, spending 1 development point raises the skill by 1%, up to a maximum value of 99%.
- Note that any single skill can only be raised by one step (by either 10%, 5%, or 1% per their current rating) per development phase.

An investigator can also spend 1 development point to acquire a new skill. The chosen skill starts at a value equal to half of the associated characteristic value—refer to **Table 4: Which Characteristic Should I Use?**, page 117, for the list of skills and their associated characteristics.

GM ADVICE

Skill progression is limited during a development phase. Thus, if a character has 2 development points to spend, they may not increase a single skill by more than 10% (or 5% if rated at 80% of higher, and so on). This restriction is designed to stop characters advancing too rapidly. The GM could ignore this rule and allow the same skill(s) to be increased multiple times in a single development phase (e.g., spend 2 development points to increase a single skill by 20%, and so on), but this does mean investigators will quickly become highly proficient in certain skills, and does not mirror the progression of characters as seen in the *Rivers of London* novels.



Learning and Mastering Spells

During an investigator development phase, any practitioner investigators can spend 1 development point to either learn a new spell (**Learning More Spells**, page 172) or mark one spell as mastered (**Mastering a Spell**, page 171). Thus, during a single investigator development phase, if a character has 2 points to spend, they may learn a new spell (1 point) and master a spell (1 point). If they had 3 development points, they could not learn two or three spells, nor could they master more than one spell, as characters are limited to learning one new and/or mastering one spell per development phase.

Slow vs Rapid Advancement

The number of development points awarded over the course of a game has an impact on how quickly the investigators advance. For example, let's say a group takes two sessions to complete their first case file. The GM awards each player 2 development points to spend during the ensuing development phase, meaning they could:

- Increase two skills by up to 10% each (or four skills by up to 5% each, or some combination thereof) depending on their current skill values.
- Increase one skill by up to 10% (or two skills by up to 5% each) depending on their current skill values, and learn a new expert skill.
- Increase one skill by up to 10% (or two skills by up to 5% each) depending on their current skill values, and—if they're a practitioner—learn a new spell or master an existing one.
- If they are a practitioner, learn one new spell and master an existing one.
- Save their development points until they have enough to buy either a regular or major advantage.

But what if the GM had instead decided to award just 1 development point per case file? The players would have just 1 development point to spend, meaning they could:

- Increase one skill by up to 10% (or two skills by up to 5% each) depending on their current skill values.
- Learn a new expert skill.
- If they're a practitioner, learn a new spell or master an existing one.
- Save their development point until they have enough to buy either a regular or major advantage—they'll just get there a bit more slowly.

As you can see from this example, the more development points a GM awards, the more rapidly the investigators advance. If the GM is generous in awarding development points at the end of every case file or campaign chapter, the players can soon end up with powerful, highly skilled investigators. If that's what the group wants, that's great! But if it isn't, the GM should stick with the slow burn option of awarding a smaller number of development points at the end of a scenario. Thus, gaining lots of skills, spells, and advantages would take longer.

Remember: although development points may be awarded at the end of every session, they can only be spent during an investigator development phase at the end of every case file or campaign chapter.

Example: *a case file has finished after a couple of sessions of play and the GM awards Nafeesa 2 development points. She spends 1 development point to boost her Research skill by 10% (from 30% to 40%). She spends the second development point to learn a new spell.*

Buying Advantages

During an investigator development phase, an investigator can purchase a new advantage (see **Step Three: Advantages** for the list of advantages, page 50).

- An advantage costs 5 development points.
- A major advantage costs 10 development points.

Depending on how many development points the GM awards per session (and at the end of a case file), it is unlikely that an investigator can purchase an advantage during every investigator development phase, particularly not a major one. Advantages provide significant benefits, so accessing them takes longer than increasing skills or gaining spells.

Altering an Investigator's Backstory

It's not just the investigators who are likely to be affected by their exposure to magic and the world of the demi-monde—their entire lives could be turned upside down because of their experiences. So, during an investigator development phase, each player may alter or add backstory entries on their character sheet whenever they feel it is appropriate to do so. They should always discuss any changes with the GM, who has the right to veto anything they feel could derail the rest of the game. A GM may also suggest changes to an investigator's backstory based on what's happened to them and/or their friends and family during a case file.



Reviewing Employment and Affluence Rating

Another factor that could be affected by an investigator's contact with the demi-monde is their job—less so if they're seconded to the Folly or work in a field that can accommodate their investigations—as most employers won't take kindly to their staff disappearing for prolonged periods of time and neglecting their duties. And, if a character loses their job, they lose their income.

Where a character's financial situation has undergone a significant change for better or worse, the GM should review their **Affluence Rating** (page 57). The affluence bands in the game are intentionally broad, so moving up and down the scale is unusual. However, if events in the story indicate that a character should change their location on the affluence scale, they may do so—with the GM's approval.

Example: *Nafeesa acts against a powerful politician but fails to gather sufficient evidence to make her case stick. The GM warns that Nafeesa risks losing her job if she continues with her investigations. If Nafeesa were to lose her job, after a time of unemployment, her affluence rating would fall from average to poor.*

Training

Given enough money, someone will teach pretty much anything to pretty much anyone. It's no different in *RoL:RPG*. Providing there is a sufficient period between case files (several weeks at a minimum), investigators may receive some form of training. For example, the Folly has a Vestigia Sensitivity Training programme that it encourages new recruits to take; it lasts for three days and teaches non-practitioners to hone their senses, thereby improving their ability to detect the residue left behind in the environment by magic.

To provide a sense of game balance and gradual improvement, GMs are advised to award no more than 1 development point to each investigator for their training between case files, regardless of whether the downtime between cases is a few weeks or a few years.

Example: *Nafeesa finishes a case, so her player works through an investigator development phase. There is at least three months of game time before the investigators pick up their next case, and the player suggests Nafeesa might get some driving experience in that time, perhaps the equivalent of a one-week intensive training course. The GM agrees, and awards Nafeesa 1 development point to spend on increasing Nafeesa's Drive skill from 30% to 40%.*

Combat

Despite their best efforts to avoid confrontation and bloodshed, investigators are sometimes faced with situations where the outcome is going to be decided with their fists—or anything else that's potentially going to inflict harm on their opponent.

In *RoL:RPG*, combat encompasses a range of skills and goals. Sometimes, an investigator may have no option but to hit someone, but, then again, they may instead wish to merely restrain an opponent without causing undue harm, while at other times, the goal may be simply to escape unharmed.

Because of its nature, combat has its own rules, which focus on the action. They help to determine who is doing what, when it is done, and the degree of success achieved. And rather than having a single roll decide the outcome of a fight, a series of opposed rolls are made until there is a clear victor.

Combat Overview

Combat is divided into rounds (**The Combat Round**, page 124). The GM should follow the same basic process during each round combat takes place:

1. Use each investigator's actions in the story to suggest which rolls are required (**Declaration of Intent**, page 124; **Set Your Goal**, page 127; **Target Responds**, page 127).
2. Resolve the dice rolls (**Dice Rolls**, page 130).
3. Incorporate the outcome of the rolls back into the story (**Narration**, page 133).
4. Move onto the next character (**Next Player's Turn**, page 133).

Important: Tone

Some players love to wallow in grisly and gory fight descriptions, while others prefer to gloss over the unpleasant details. Is everyone happy with 18-certificate (R-rated) level violence or would they prefer it to be more family friendly (PG-13)? It's important to talk as a group and agree on a tone that is acceptable to everyone, then stick with it. This is a topic you might discuss and agree upon upfront when creating characters for a new game (**Considerate Gaming**, page 44).

Setting Combat Expectations in Rivers of London

Combat is only one potential element in the story of an *RoL:RPG* game, not its focus. As a result, combat scenes play out quicker than in some other role-playing games, and player character death is quite rare.

- **Combat is fast:** fights should play out in just a few combat rounds. It takes 3 damage to take a character out of a fight, and most attacks inflict 1 or 2 damage, so two successful hits can usually knock a character down. While a single punch could put someone out of action, the average character would need to get a Critical success (one in a hundred chance) to achieve that outcome (**The Damage Roll**, page 132).
- **Investigators have an edge:** investigators are not necessarily any tougher than anyone else, but they (unlike some other characters) have Luck points to spend. This doesn't mean they'll win every fight, but it does give them an edge, and players should be encouraged to make use of the Luck spending rules (**Spending Luck**, page 113).
- **Defeat rarely means death:** it's almost impossible to be killed in a melee fight. An accumulation of minor blows won't kill someone—it takes a very powerful attack to inflict a fatal blow, such as a Critical success on a damage roll with a shotgun (**The Damage Roll**, page 132). Losing a fight usually means a character has been knocked down and temporarily incapacitated, and investigators recover quickly from such things (**Wounds and Healing**, page 144).

Each combat sequence is its own discrete entity, and no two are ever going to be exactly the same. For example, in one combat, a Fighting roll may represent a few good punches, while in another, it's a knee to the groin, a series of kicks, or even a headbutt. The GM's description of the scene and its outcome should elaborate upon the investigators' stated intentions and be relative to the success they achieve on their dice rolls.

Most importantly: don't just repeatedly roll dice without any story. It's really boring. Think of the fight scenes in the novels: they're cinematic and entertaining to read, which is what you're aiming for with combat in this game.

Declaration of Intent

Once it becomes obvious that combat is about to occur, the GM should ask each player involved *"What is your investigator doing?"* The GM should always encourage players to describe their investigator's actions, rather than use game terminology. "*I'm rolling to hit,*" is not something an investigator would ever say and it's not very interesting, story-wise. As a GM, you should endeavour to paint a picture with your descriptions of combat and encourage your players to do likewise.

When the player has described their investigator's action, the GM should then confirm with the player which skill is being used in the action.

Player: *"I'm going to punch the guard and then run for the open door."*
GM: *"The guard is going to try to grab you. This is going to be an opposed roll, using your Fighting skill."*

GM: *"The guy is running straight at you—what are you doing?"*
Player: *"I raise my stun gun and shoot him."*
GM: *"OK, give me a Firearms roll."*

GM: *"Hannah's character is acting crazy—he's heading back into the burning building. He'll probably die in there!"*
Player: *"I'm going to grab him and wrestle him to the ground, so I can stop him from entering."*
GM: *"Let's have an opposed Fighting roll, then."*

Notice how the request for a dice roll develops out of what the player says. In the first example, the goal is to get past the guard, and the punch is simply a method of achieving that goal; damage may be inflicted as a consequence, but the GM uses the dice to judge whether or not the manoeuvre is accomplished.

In the second example, the player's goal is to incapacitate an attacker, so the dice are used to determine if the stun gun hits, and to gauge its effect.

In the third example, the player is trying to restrain a fellow character without inflicting harm. Again, the dice are used to gauge the manoeuvre's success.

Once the action and type of roll have been determined, the dice are rolled, often by the GM and the player simultaneously (an **Opposed Combat Roll**; page 131), and the results used to determine if a manoeuvre or attack is successful.

The Combat Round

Combat is structured into rounds. During each combat round, each player takes one action (a turn).

A combat round doesn't represent a specific, fixed amount of time. Instead, it's deliberately elastic, meaning that everyone who wants to get involved has a chance to complete one action—referred to as "taking a turn." When every investigator and GM-controlled character (NPC) have had an opportunity to act, that combat round is over, and if the encounter has not fully resolved, another round can begin. So, in every combat round, everyone involved gets to take one turn—meaning that everyone gets to "initiate" an action once per round.

Before a new combat round starts, the GM checks to see if the scene has been resolved. If the fight is over, then no more combat rounds are required, and the story moves on.

Who Goes First?

Combat can begin in a variety of ways. Generally, one person says their character is making an attack and initiates combat. Then, one or more characters may wish to react (respond) to that initial attack. Of course, only those characters in the same scene can join in.

What happens in hand-to-hand (melee) combat is decided with opposed rolls. If there's any disagreement about which character is initiating combat, the character with the highest DEX among those vying for first place is the one who acts first. In the case of a draw (i.e., both have the same DEX), use the standard **Tiebreakers** rules (page 118).

Example: *Nafeesa is in Jimmy Four-Fingers' apartment, pressuring him for information. When she threatens him with arrest, the GM states that Jimmy stands up and pushes Nafeesa towards the wall to get her out of his way, so he can leave. The player isn't having that and says Nafeesa is going to grab Jimmy's arm as soon as he moves. The GM realises this is the start of a scuffle and considers who's making the first attack. Did Jimmy attack first with the push or did that just provoke Nafeesa into making the "real" first attack? They're not sure, so they go with highest DEX. Jimmy has DEX 60 and Nafeesa has DEX 40, so the GM decides Jimmy acts first in the combat round.*

Alternatively, if Jimmy had not made any move to raise his arm, and Nafeesa just decided to restrain him, the player would clearly be initiating combat and Nafeesa would act first in the combat round.



GM ADVICE

Because melee combat uses opposed rolls, the character acting first doesn't necessarily get to inflict damage first. Quite the opposite may happen—the person initiating combat may be the first one to suffer damage if the opposed roll doesn't go their way!

Who Goes Next?

Once the first attack has been resolved, the player—or GM—who initiated that attack rolls a die: if they roll an even number, play passes to that person's left; if they roll an odd number, play passes to their right. This roll is made only once in each combat scene—i.e., once the direction of play is established, continue using that same direction for the entire combat. Doing it this way means the players won't know in advance which direction combat is going to proceed, so won't be able to "game" the situation by choosing where to sit.

Once every player has taken their turn, and play has come full circle back round to the first player or the GM (whoever initiated the first roll), that's the end of the first combat round. If the combat has not been resolved (there are still people fighting), that first player now starts a second combat round, with everyone getting another turn in the same order. Play as many combat rounds as are required to resolve the situation.

When playing through a combat scene, the order of play is intended to mirror the order of play used in most board games, simply proceeding clockwise (or anticlockwise) around the table, which is something most people are familiar with.

Playing Online

Of course, you may not be playing around a table—you may be playing the game online, in which case the GM should use their on-screen view of the players at the start of the combat to place everyone in a set order. This could be as simple as writing down people's names in a list on a piece of paper, starting with the person in the top left of the screen and working down to whomever is in the bottom right. The important thing is that the GM manages the order of play and ensures that each player is aware of their place in the turn order.





GM ADVICE

People can drop in and out for a variety of reasons during an online game session. Some video conferencing and online gaming platforms reorder how people appear on your screen when this happens, so be sure to make a note of the original order you set up and stick with that, rather than relying on what you can see on your screen at any given time. As long as everybody gets to have a turn each round, it's all good.

Handling NPCs

There may be more than one NPC in the scene, and the GM plays all of them. If one of the NPCs acted first in the combat round, once that character's turn is resolved, the GM rolls the die and play passes either to their left or right, just the same as it does for any other player. Then, when play circles back round to the GM, they play the rest of their NPCs in whatever order they wish. Round two starts with the NPC who initiated combat taking their next turn.

Diagram A: *with four NPCs—Annie, Celia, Ella, and Frank—let's say that Annie is the first to act in combat. After Annie's turn, play passes to Player 1, then Player 2, then Player 3, and then back to the GM. The GM then plays Frank, then Celia, then Ella, and that's the end of round one. The GM starts round two with Annie taking her next turn.*

Diagram A

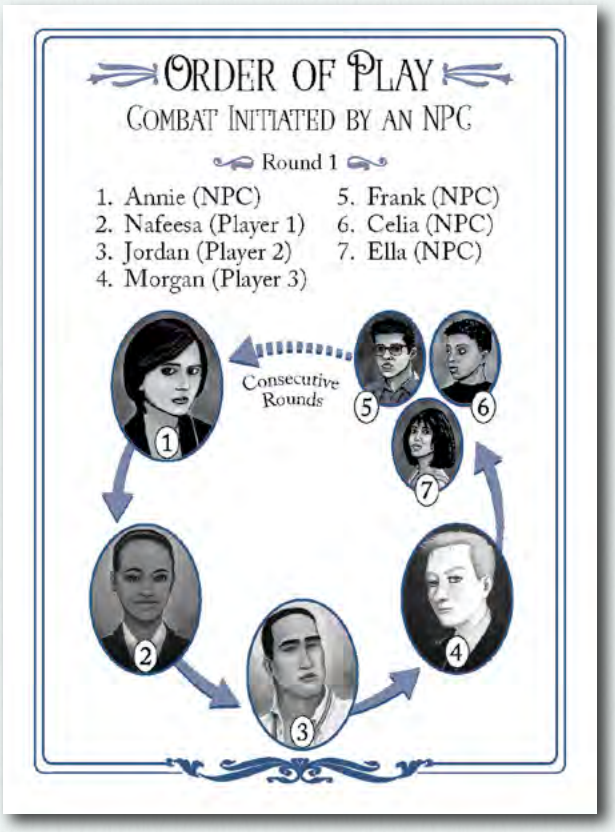
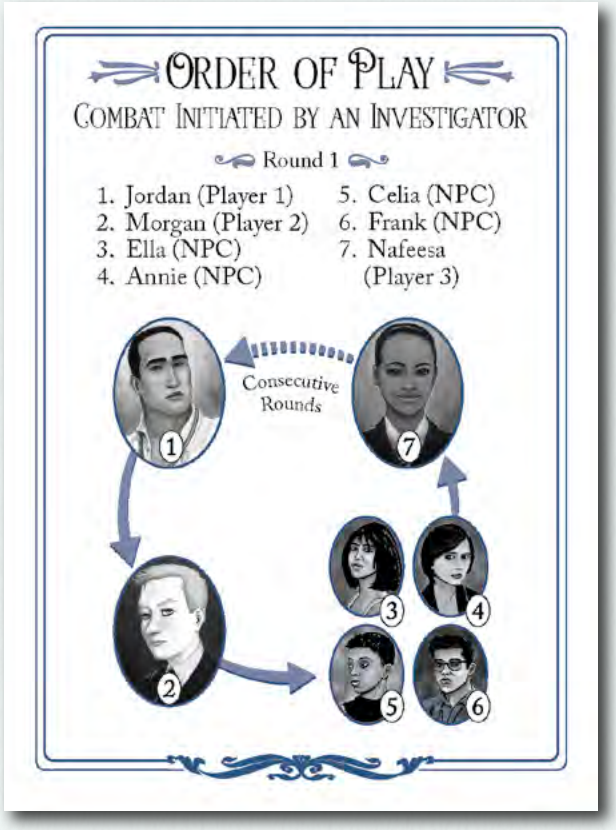


Diagram B: *the investigators start a fight. Jordan initiates the combat, so his player becomes Player 1. Play then passes to Player 2, and then to the GM, who decides to play their NPCs in a slightly different order this time—Ella, Annie, Celia, then Frank. Finally, it's Player 3's turn, meaning Nafeesa gets to go last this round.*

Diagram B



Actions in a Combat Round

On their turn in a combat round, the player decides on one action they want their investigator to perform during that turn. They may use their action to:

- Initiate a melee attack using the Fighting skill.
- Initiate a firearms attack using the Firearms skill.
- Initiate a spell attack using the Magic skill, if the investigator possesses the skill.
- Flee—this may require an opposed roll to break free of the fight, if already engaged in combat.
- Perform some other action requiring time and perhaps a dice roll, such as picking a lock while others fight. Note that simple actions—like speaking—don't "use up" a character's turn, but moving anything more than a short distance may (**Distances in Combat**, page 127).

A character may wish to draw a weapon on their turn. For ease of play, under most circumstances, drawing a weapon counts as a "free" action. The only exception to this is where it's clear that the weapon is somehow difficult to access—such as a handgun carried in a briefcase, for example—which takes one action (one turn) to extract the weapon, ready for use in the following round.

Important: note that initiating an action on your turn in a combat round is different to "reacting" to someone else's attack on you. Reactions, which we call "responses" in combat, are covered in **Step 2: Target Responds**, on page 127.

Distances in Combat

In play, distances are judged upon verbal descriptions of the environment rather than quantifiable measures. The game uses a "theatre of the mind" approach, rather than a tactical battle map showing exact locations and distances. That said, during combat, some actual measurements, such as ranges for different types of firearms, are used. The GM is the final arbitrator on whether a target is in range or not.

When playing through a combat scene it's important that everyone keeps track of where each character is in relation to everyone else. Because this is all done with words, and people may miscommunicate or misunderstand each other, the GM makes the final determination, but they should always be ready to listen and adjust to ensure fair play. If it helps, draw a sketch map and ask people to indicate their positions, or use a token or miniature to represent each character. If you're gaming online, some platforms allow you to upload maps and create character tokens for use in your game. See also **Who's Where?** (page 221).



GM ADVICE

Some players may struggle to visualise what's going on in combat without the use of maps, tokens, and/or miniatures. Always use what makes the game as accessible as possible for your group.

In combat, you can use a character's MOV to determine whether movement takes up their entire turn or not. A character can move a number of metres/yards up to their MOV rating and take another action on their turn. If they wish, they can move further than this, moving up to five times their MOV (in metres/yards), but this counts as their entire action (turn) for that combat round. For example, a character with MOV 8 can use their turn in a combat round to:

- Move up to 8 metres/yards and act normally (such as attack, use a skill, cast a spell).
- Move up to 40 metres/yards, but have to wait until the next round to take another action.

Also, where this chapter uses the term "arm's length," this indicates approximately 1 metre/yard. Point-blank for firearms is 3 metres/yards.

Running Combat Encounters

All combats, whether involving fists, swords, firearms, or spells, are resolved using the same six steps.

- **Step 1: Set Your Goal** (following)**:** describe what your character is doing (what action are you initiating?).
- **Step 2: Target Responds** (below)**:** the target describes how they intend to respond (how is the target reacting?).
- **Step 3: Dice Rolls** (page 130)**:** usually, both you and the target roll percentile dice (an opposed roll) to determine who wins. Sometimes, especially for ranged attacks, only the attacker rolls dice (an unopposed roll).
- **Step 4: Damage Roll** (page 132)**:** figure out any damage or other effects.
- **Step 5: Narration** (page 133)**:** the winner describes what happens.
- **Step 6: Next Player's Turn:** play moves on to the next character (an investigator or NPC) who now starts their turn with Step 1.

Let's look at each of those steps in a little more detail.

Step 1: Set Your Goal

This is the essence of roleplaying—put yourself in your character's shoes and describe what they do. If this were a TV show, your character would be on screen right now. Describe what's happening so everyone can see it in high definition!

"I stand up, kick the chair out of the way, and punch Louis hard in the nose."
"I pull out my pistol, level it with both hands, and shoot Rhonda."
"I shape the forma *in my head, throw my hand forward, and shoot a fireball at the vampire."*

Remember, you're describing what you want to do—what action you are initiating. Whether it plays out as you intended will depend on how the dice fall.

Step 2: Target Responds

Whoever is playing the target now says what that character is doing in response (their reaction to the attack). If that's you, just put yourself in the shoes of your character and think about what you would like to see them do. That might be to dodge the blow, attack back, or run away. Don't concern yourself with the rules at this point, just describe what we see the character doing.

"Louis is not having that! He throws out a sharp right hook to knock you flat before you even touch him."
"Rhonda's not having that! She knocks the gun to one side and punches you in the face."
"The vampire makes to dodge behind the van."

The GM should consider how the target is responding and fit it into one of the following four options (each of the responses is detailed below):

- **Response 1: Do Nothing** (unlimited reaction).
- **Response 2: Dodge** (unlimited reaction).
- **Response 3: Fight Back** (limited to once per combat round).
- **Response 4: Flee.**



GM ADVICE

While a character can (usually) only "fight back" in response once per combat round, they may respond with dodges multiple times in the same round and can keep running away or doing nothing if they like, too (see also **Outnumbered**, page 135).

Important: Attack vs Response

Don't get "responses" confused with "initiating" an action/attack. You can only initiate an action/attack once in a combat round, but you can respond multiple times to attacks targeting you in that same round, even though you may be **Outnumbered** (page 135). The only limited response is fighting back, which can only be chosen once per combat round, unless you have **Fast Reactions** (page 51).



Response 1: Do Nothing

Whether the attacker needs to roll dice depends on the nature of the attack:

- **Melee:** if you're just going to stand there and let them hit you, then there's no need for any dice to be rolled; the attacker just makes a damage roll to see how much damage they inflict on you. Doesn't sound like a great option, does it?
- **Firearms:** the attacker must make an unopposed Firearms roll to hit you (**Step 3**, page 130).
- **Magic:** the attacker must make an unopposed Magic roll to hit you (**Step 3**, page 130).



ADDITIONAL RULES

For those wanting more complexity, rules for surprise attacks can be found on page 327.

Response 2: Dodge

There are two different types of dodging a character can do—depending on how they are being attacked. First, there is "dodging" a blow in melee combat; and second, there is "diving for cover" to avoid being shot by firearms, bows, or magic.

- **Dodging in Melee:** if you choose to dodge a melee attack, you roll your Fighting skill in an opposed roll against your attacker as part of **Step 3** (page 130). This includes dodging items that are thrown at you with the Athletics skill.
- **Dive for Cover:** you can't dodge bullets or fireballs! But you do have the option to dive for cover, which is the next best thing to dodging, under the circumstances. Diving for cover may mean jumping behind a physical barrier, throwing yourself to the floor, or ducking and diving to present a more challenging target.

When diving for cover, the target has made themselves harder to hit, and in **Step 3** (page 130), the attacker incurs a penalty die on their unopposed Firearms or Magic roll (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111). Diving for cover is a desperate response to a desperate situation. A character who dives for cover must forgo their next action when it comes to their turn in the combat round. If they have already had their turn this round, they must forgo their turn in the following round.

Diving for Cover Example

Nafeesa: *DEX 40, Fighting 60/30 .*
Izzy: *DEX 70, Fighting 60/30, Firearms 30/15.*

Step 1: Set Your Goal: *Izzy is shooting Nafeesa with a handgun.*

Step 2: Target Responds: *Nafeesa sees Izzy preparing to shoot her, so she opts to* ***Dive for Cover*** *(nearby), meaning Izzy incurs a penalty die on her Firearms roll.*

Step 3: Dice Rolls: *the two combatants are 10 metres/yards apart, which is within standard range (**Table 5: Firearms**, page 132), so the difficulty level of the shot is Regular. The GM rolls with a penalty die, getting 27 and 77 for Izzy, and takes the higher of the two rolls. 77 is a failure; the shot misses.*

Step 4: Damage: *the missed shot inflicts no damage.*

Step 5: Narration: *the player describes how Nafeesa leaps behind a car and avoids being shot.*



ADDITIONAL RULES
Rules for investigators who wish to take a bullet for their companions can be found in **Holding Your Action** on page 328.

Response 3: Fight Back

You can "fight back" using melee, firearms, or magic in combat, but you can only choose the fight back response once per combat round. An exception to this is when an investigator has the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51), allowing them to make a second fight back action if attacked a second time in the same combat round.

Example: *the first time an investigator is attacked in a combat round, their response is to dodge—perhaps they're trying to assess their opponent to find some weakness they can exploit when it gets to their turn in the round. If the investigator is attacked again this round, they can respond again—they still have all of their response options open—so this time, they decide to fight back. Should the investigator be attacked a third time in this same combat round, they could now only choose to dodge, flee, or do nothing, as they've already used their one fight back response.*

For further details on what happens if a character is attacked more than once in a single combat round, see **Outnumbered** (page 135).

Fight Back Using Melee

If your attacker is within arm's reach, you can fight back with melee, regardless of how they're attacking you. Picture what the attacker is doing and think how you could beat them. You might say that you are quicker and get your blow in first, or how you try to knock their gun away, or you could describe how you swirl to avoid their attack and then hit them.

"I weave around the blow and strike back with an upper cut to the chin."

"I grab the gun and twist it out of their hand."

To fight back using melee, you make an opposed roll using your Fighting skill during **Step 3** (page 130). If you win the opposed roll, your attack both hits your attacker and negates their attack on you. If you want to achieve something other than simply inflicting harm, such as tripping your attacker up or disarming them, see **Combat Manoeuvres** (page 134).

Fight Back Using Firearms

If you are holding a loaded firearm in your hand, you can fight back by letting off a single shot at your attacker, regardless of how they are attacking you. To do this, roll your Firearms skill in the opposed roll during **Step 3** (page 130). If you win the opposed roll, your attack both hits your attacker and negates their attack on you.

Fight Back Using Magic

Note: For more details on magic and spells, see **Chapter 4: Newtonian Magic**.

If you're able to use magic, you can fight back by casting a spell at your attacker, regardless of how they are attacking you. To do this, you roll your Magic skill in the opposed roll during **Step 3** (page 130).

To cast your spell, make a Magic roll, including any relevant modifiers (**Ranged Attack Modifiers**, page 138; **Mastering a Spell**, page 171). If you win the opposed roll, you've managed to cast your spell before your opponent gets their attack in. If the spell inflicts damage, it negates your opponent's attack, whether they are casting a spell, firing a gun, or throwing a punch.

Not all spells are designed to inflict harm, though. If the aim of the spell is to distract your attacker, the target is required to make a POW roll to test whether they can maintain their concentration.

If they fail the POW roll, their attack (whatever it might be) fails. To see this in action, let's look at this scene from *Moon Over Soho*, where Peter Grant is confronting the Faceless Man.

'If you're going to shoot,' *he said,* 'then shoot.'

So I shot him. It was worth it just for the obvious outrage it caused him, and I enjoyed it right up until the point where he caught the bloody fireball. Just snatched it out of the air and held it, Yorick-like, in front of his face.

I'd released it as soon as it got near him but it hadn't exploded. He twisted it this way and that, as if examining it like a connoisseur, which perhaps he was. I figured he wanted me to lob another one at him so he could catch it, or deflect it, or do something else with annoying insouciance. So I didn't. Besides, the more time he spent taunting me, the further away Simone could get.

'You know,' *he said,* 'when I first saw you I thought you were with the Thames girls, or a new sort of fae, or something really outlandish like a witch doctor or an American.' *The man popped the fireball like a soap bubble, and rubbed his thumb and finger under his nose.*

Let's pick up the action at the start of Peter's turn in the combat round:

Step 1: Set Your Goal: *Peter is aiming a fireball at the Faceless Man, hoping to cause him damage.*

Step 2: Target Responds: *the GM makes a Magic roll for the Faceless Man and gets a Hard success, indicating he's able to detect which spell Peter is casting (**Sensing a Spell Being Cast**, page 176). The Faceless Man chooses to fight back with magic and picks the second order spell **Invisible Catch** (page 184). Being unsure of Peter's abilities, the Faceless Man boosts the spell with 3 magic points, making it capable of catching a fireball worth up to 5 damage.*

Step 3: Dice Rolls: *both are within standard range and with no other modifiers. Peter makes a Magic roll and gets a Regular success (**Levels of Success and Failure**, page 105). The GM then rolls Magic for Peter's opponent and gets a Hard success. Peter elects not to spend Luck to alter the result (**Spending Luck**, page 113), so the Faceless Man wins the opposed roll.*

Step 4: Damage Roll: *the Invisible Catch spell inflicts no damage, but it does catch Peter's fireball.*

Step 5: Narration: *the Faceless Man catches the fireball and studies it, mocking Peter, as he tries to divine Peter's Master.*

Step 6: Next Player's Turn.

Response 4: Flee

When someone attacks you, you can try to avoid getting hit and run away *as long as* there is an escape route available.

- **Fleeing a Melee Attack:** if you choose to flee, you still make an opposed roll against your attacker using your Fighting skill during **Step 3** (page 130). If you win, you evade their blow and run away. If they win, you suffer damage before you flee—as long as you're still able to do so after suffering the effects of their attack.
- **Fleeing a Ranged Attack:** running away is always an option when bullets or spells start flying. You can run away at full speed (moving five times your MOV rating in metres/yards) with much the same effect as diving for cover, except that you put greater distance between you and your attacker. Your attacker makes an unopposed Firearms or Magic roll (**Step 3**, page 130).

If you run away at full speed and your MOV is 8 or higher (**Fast-Moving Targets,** page 138), your attacker makes their Firearms or Magic roll with a penalty die. If your MOV is 7 or lower, your attacker does not receive a penalty die as you are not a Fast-Moving Target (but you may still be able to reach cover or get out of range next round; **Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).

A character opting to flee in combat must forgo their next action when it comes to their turn in the combat round (in the same manner as when diving for cover). If they have already taken their turn this round, they must forgo their next turn in the following round. A character could flee for a round or two and then stop if they so wish, but, by that time, they would have moved a considerable distance away from the action. Usually, people don't return to combat once they've fled from it—unless they've gone to fetch help!

Step 3: Dice Rolls

In most cases, both opponents roll percentile dice to determine what happens in a fight—an opposed combat roll. In the case of ranged attacks (both Firearms and Magic), only the attacker rolls dice—an unopposed combat roll—unless the target has chosen to fight back (**Response 3: Fight Back**, page 129).



Opposed Combat Rolls

Both sides roll percentile dice and compare their results with the appropriate skill to determine their individual level of success:

BEST RESULT

- **Critical success**: a dice roll of 01.
- **Hard success**: a dice roll equal to or below half of the character's skill value.
- **Regular success**: a dice roll equal to or below the character's full skill value.
- **Weak success***: a dice roll above the character's full skill value.
- **Fumble**: a dice roll of 100 is a fumble (or 90 or above if they are impaired).

WORST RESULT

In opposed rolls, the side with the higher level of success is the winner. A Critical success beats a Hard success, a Hard success beats a Regular success, and so on. If both sides achieve the same level of success, they each have the option of spending Luck points to raise their level of success (**Spending Luck**, page 113), whether they initiated the attack or are responding to it; but ultimately, if they are still tied, the character whose turn it is in the round wins the tie.

***Weak Success:** normally, rolling over your skill value is considered a failure, but, in combat—as in other opposed rolls—we call it a **Weak Success** (page 106). Consider two rank amateurs playing chess: someone's still going to win, and it's the same with a fight—even when both sides are inept, one is still going to beat the other.

Which Skill to Use in Combat

- If a hand-to-hand melee attack, use the **Fighting** skill.
- If throwing something, use the **Athletics** skill.
- If shooting a firearm or a bow, use the **Firearms** skill.
- If casting a spell, use the **Magic** skill.



Unopposed Combat Rolls

If you're making a ranged attack and the target has chosen to respond by doing nothing (**Do Nothing**, page 128), **Dive for Cover** (page 128), or **Flee** (page 130), the attacker now rolls percentile dice. The difficulty level of a ranged attack roll is set according to distance. For firearms, refer to **Table 5: Firearms** (nearby) for weapon ranges. All ranged spells have the same range as a standard handgun.

- A target within standard range: Regular difficulty level.
- A target beyond standard range (up to maximum range): Hard difficulty level.

Step 4: Damage Roll

Following a successful attack, if the goal was to inflict damage (rather than to restrain or some other combat manoeuvre), a damage roll should be made to determine the amount of damage inflicted.

- For melee attacks, the damage roll is a STR roll. This includes all unarmed attacks (kicks, bites, and punches) and all melee weapon attacks (police baton, clubs, knives, etc.).
- For firearms and other ranged attacks, the damage roll is a DEX roll.

The Damage Roll

Roll percentile dice and compare it with the attacking character's STR (melee) or DEX (firearms/ranged):

- **Failed or fumbled:** 1 damage (no weapon damage is added)
- **Regular success:** 1 damage + base weapon damage
- **Hard success:** 2 damage + base weapon damage
- **Critical success:** 3 damage + base weapon damage

If a player rolled a Critical success on their attack roll (or bought one with Luck points), they gain a bonus die to their damage roll (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111). If a character has the advantage **Damage Bonus** (page 51), they add +1 damage to unarmed and melee attack damage, but not to ranged, firearm, or spell attack damage. The final amount of damage inflicted may also be affected by **Cover and Concealment** (page 138) and **Armour** (page 135).

Spell Damage Rolls

Spell attacks in combat are treated the same as firearm attacks, but replace the Firearms roll with a Magic roll. With a success, the caster makes a damage (DEX) roll and applies the base spell damage to the result, if applicable. For base spell damage values, refer to individual spell descriptions in **Chapter 4: Newtonian Magic**.

Table 5: Firearms

To determine the amount of damage inflicted, make a "damage roll" and add the weapon's base damage (**The Damage Roll**, nearby). Missed shots do not cause damage.

Firearm	Base Weapon Damage	Standard Range	Maximum Range
Bow	1	30 metres/yards	100 metres/yards
Crossbow	1	50 metres/yards	150 metres/yards
Heavy Handgun	2	15 metres/yards	50 metres/yards
Machine Gun	2	100 metres/yards	300 metres/yards
Regular Handgun	1	15 metres/yards	50 metres/yards
Rifle	2	100 metres/yards	*300 metres/yards
Shotgun	2	50 metres/yards	150 metres/yards
Submachine Gun	2	15 metres/yards	50 metres/yards

***Rifle:** the maximum effective range can be doubled to 600 metres/yards with effective bracing and use of a telescopic sight.

Damage Conditions
Damage is cumulative, i.e., every time a character is dealt damage in combat, it is added to any damage they have already suffered in the fight so far. The amount of damage suffered affects the character in different ways.

- A character suffering a total of 1 damage is **Hurt** (page 144).
- A character suffering a total of 2 damage is **Bloodied** (page 144).
- A character suffering a total of 3 or more damage is **Down** (page 144).

Whenever an investigator suffers damage, their player should tick the relevant box or boxes on their character sheet. Thus, an investigator suffering 1 damage would tick the Hurt box; if they suffer another 1 damage during the same combat, they tick the Bloodied box, and so on. Note that big damage is serious:

- A character suffering 4 damage *in a single blow* (be that from a spell, a weapon, or a firearm) has taken a **Mortal Wound** (page 146).

Example: *Nafeesa is hit by her opponent. The GM makes a damage roll using Nafeesa's opponent's STR and gets a Critical success! That's 3 damage, plus 1 base weapon damage for the brass knuckles they were using, for a total of 4 damage. As that 4 damage comes from the same blow, Nafeesa has suffered a mortal wound. She urgently needs medical attention if she's to survive.*

- An investigator suffering 5 or more damage *in a single attack* has taken a fatal blow and must spend 30 Luck points, otherwise they are killed outright. If they can spend 30 Luck points, the damage is reduced to 4 (a mortal wound)—perhaps that lucky silver cigarette case in their breast pocket saved the day!

Example: *let's change the previous example and say Nafeesa's attacker wasn't using brass knuckles but a shotgun instead. In this case, the damage roll is a DEX roll, but the GM still achieves a Critical success. Nafeesa isn't wearing ballistic armour (**Armour**, page 135), so that's 3 damage plus 2 base weapon damage for the shotgun, for a total of 5 damage: a fatal blow. Nafeesa's player opts to spend the 30 points of Luck to reduce the fatal blow to a mortal wound—she's still very badly injured, but at least she has a chance of surviving now.*

Outcomes Other Than Damage
If the attacker chooses to use a combat manoeuvre instead of inflicting damage, they may restrain, disarm, knock prone, or otherwise move their opponent. For more information, refer to **Combat Manoeuvres** (page 134). Spells can also have an effect other than causing damage, so refer to individual spell descriptions for details in **Chapter 4: Newtonian Magic**.

Step 5: Narration
The winner now takes the lead on describing what happens, which should incorporate what was said in the earlier steps. So, if you, the person throwing the initial punch, win, you could say, "*Yeah, so like I said, I kick the chair out of the way and move in on Louis. I see he's going to try to hit me, so I block with my left and smack him in the mouth with my right.*"

Or, if your opponent won, the GM might say, "*So, you go to kick that chair out of the way and almost fall over it—you're an easy target! Louis just smacks you with a right hook to the side of your head before you even know what's happening.*"

The surroundings should be brought into the story whenever possible. For example, fighting in the London sewers is very different to fighting in an office. The sewers are dark, foul, and slippery—you could drown your opponent or get washed away by a sudden torrent of water. On the other hand, an office is well-lit and there are lots of things around—you could strangle your opponent with a cable or find yourselves confronted by security staff. You get the idea.

Step 6: Next Player's Turn
When a character's turn is over, play passes to the next character in the round, as described in **Who Goes Next?** (page 125). If every character has already acted this round, including the NPCs, then, if the fight is not over, it's time to start the next combat round.

Turn Structure at a Glance
Step 1: Set Your Goal.
Step 2: Target Responds.
Step 3: Dice Rolls.
Step 4: Damage Roll.
Step 5: Narration.
Step 6: Next Player's Turn.

Other Factors in Combat



The previous section covers the format for all combats but makes reference to some of the elements that are listed below.

ADDITIONAL RULES

Optional combat rules are presented in the **Additional Rules** chapter, starting on page 327.

Combat Manoeuvres

If someone describes making an attack with a goal other than inflicting physical harm, we call this a "combat manoeuvre." The GM should consider the main focus of each goal (**Step 1: Set Your Goal**, page 127). If the key goal is to achieve something other than inflicting harm, such as pushing someone out of the way, throwing an opponent to the floor, restraining someone in a headlock, disarming an opponent, and so on, then treat it as a combat manoeuvre. Either side—or, indeed, both sides—could be attempting a combat manoeuvre at the same time.

Any character performing a combat manoeuvre rolls their Fighting skill in the opposed roll during **Step 3** (page 130). If a character performing a combat manoeuvre wins the opposed roll, they can:

- Restrain their target, imposing a penalty die on actions made by that target—until the target escapes from restraint or is released. Note that the person being restrained (or a third party) can attempt to attack the character doing the restraining, and if they succeed on their turn in the round or a following one, they are released.
- Apply handcuffs to an already restrained character.
- Knock the target prone. Subsequent Fighting attacks made against a prone character gain one bonus die. A prone character may stand up on their turn in the round as a free action.
- Disarm the target or knock whatever the target was holding to the ground. If the character initiating this combat manoeuvre wins by two levels of success or more (for example, they get a Hard success against an opponent who rolls a Weak success), they may wrest whatever was being held away from the target and take it for themselves.
- Move the target up to 5 metres/yards, perhaps pushing their opponent through a doorway or down a stairwell.

Although a combat manoeuvre is different to most other forms of attack—in that the primary goal is to restrain, disarm, or move the target in some way, rather than inflict damage—it may still lead to some damage, depending on what the manoeuvre is; e.g., if one character successfully uses a combat manoeuvre to push their opponent off a rooftop. If the combat manoeuvre causes something to happen in the story that would obviously cause damage, the GM should refer to **Table 7: Other Forms of Damage** (page 149).

There is a limitation on combat manoeuvres. If the opponent's STR exceeds that of the character attempting the manoeuvre by 50 or more points, the combat manoeuvre is ineffective and automatically fails. A character might be able to grab hold of their opponent, but if that opponent is much stronger than them, there's little they can realistically achieve.

Police Training

In the UK, the police receive extensive training on how to de-escalate confrontations so they can avoid having to engage in melee combat. As a result, a police officer character's first line of action in combat should be to try and talk their opponent down, using an opposed Social skill roll. Depending on what they say to their target, the target might oppose with Read Person to see if they believe what the officer is saying, or POW, if the target is all riled up and spoiling for a fight. Don't forget that, if the officer is in uniform or shows their warrant card, they get a bonus die on the Social skill roll (**Police Officer/Detective**, page 71).

Even if the officer character fails to dissuade their target from getting physical, their training dictates that they'll first attempt to restrain an opponent rather than try to cause them harm. (See also **The Four Es**, page 71).

Improvised Weapons

In games, everyone is encouraged to make use of the environment in their fight narrations. Doing so adds a unique feel to each combat and helps to bring the setting to life. Picture the scene and grab what comes to mind. If the fight takes place in a bar, you should be swinging pool cues, throwing bottles, and hitting each other with barstools. Fire pokers, hat stands, and ornamental swords may be at hand inside a mansion. Computer monitors, power cables,

and scissors could all be deadly in an office. The GM should encourage the players to improvise and try not to block their ideas without good reason. If you want to introduce the fickle hand of fate to determine whether a handy improvised weapon is present, call for a **Luck Roll** (page 113). If the roll is successful, there it is!

All sorts of items can be used to inflict physical harm: staplers, cricket bats, rocks, and so on. Even an electric kettle or toaster could be smashed over the back of someone's head for a nasty injury. Improvised weapons are used with the Fighting skill if they are used in melee combat or the Athletics skill if they are thrown at the target. If the item is particularly cumbersome or unwieldy, the GM may allow it to be used as a weapon with a penalty die (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).

All improvised weapons have a base weapon damage 1 (**Table 3: Weapons**, page 61).

Outnumbered

If in **Step 1: Set Your Goal** (page 127), you attack (target) an individual who has already been targeted by someone else this round, you make your Fighting roll with a bonus die (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111). As, when a character is "outnumbered" by the opposition, that character is at a disadvantage. This only applies to melee attacks.

Remember, each character may initiate one action on their turn in a combat round. In addition, they get to react (respond) to each attack made against them (**Step 2: Target Responds**, page 127), which creates the opposed roll in melee combat. A character's first response is free but if they are targeted again in the *same* combat round, while they still get to respond, their opponent now gains an edge—the bonus die on their Fighting roll. This doesn't apply to ranged attacks like firearms and spells.

Example: *let's go back to our example from* ***Response 3: Fight Back*** *(page 129). Our investigator is engaged in melee combat with three opponents. The first time the investigator is attacked in the combat round, their response is to dodge—as this is their first response (reaction), it's free. Then the second opponent attacks them; the investigator can still respond, but the second attacker is now awarded a bonus die on their Fighting roll—because the investigator is now outnumbered. As the investigator still has all of their response options open, this time they decide to fight back. When the third opponent attacks, they are also awarded a bonus die on their Fighting roll—as the investigator is still outnumbered. The investigator, having used their one fight back response, can now only choose to dodge, flee, or do nothing. Perhaps it's time for them to run away…*

The exception to the outnumbered rule is when a character has the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51), as those with this advantage can never be outnumbered; thus, their opponents do not gain the bonus die. Remember, someone with Fast Reactions can also use the fight back response twice in the same combat round—rather than once like everyone else.

Armour

Characters can wear armour to lessen the effects of being damaged. In some cases, the environment may provide "armour" in terms of some general protection, such as when hiding behind a tree or wall (**Cover and Concealment**, page 138). There are three types of "worn" armour: Natural Toughness, regular armour, and ballistic armour.

- **Natural Toughness:** can be taken by an investigator as an advantage (page 51). Unarmed and blunt melee weapon attacks—batons, cricket bats, etc.—against a person with Natural Toughness inflict 1 less damage. The damage from knives, bullets, or damage-causing spells, e.g., **Fireball** (page 183) is not affected. Some beings possess natural toughness innately; an elephant does because of its tough skin, and the fae do, too, because, well… just because.
- **Regular armour:** includes the standard issue Met stab vest and is uncommon outside of the police. Such armour reduces the damage from melee attacks by 1 damage. Note that this armour type does not protect against firearms and certain spell attacks (see individual spell descriptions).
- **Ballistic armour:** is heavy, and generally restricted to military or specialised police issue, e.g., Armed Response/SWAT teams or other officers attending a firearms incident. Damage inflicted for melee and firearms attacks is reduced by 2 damage. Note that this armour type does not protect against certain spell attacks (see individual spell descriptions).

GM Advice

Armour cannot help against poison damage, drowning, or certain magical attacks (see individual spell descriptions). A character with Natural Toughness who also wears regular or ballistic armour gains the benefit for both types, but remember that Natural Toughness *only* applies to unarmed and blunt weapon attacks, not knives, firearms, and spells.

The damage reduction provided by all three types of armour stacks with that from the **Shield** spell (page 185).



This extended example takes you through and builds on many of the concepts we've discussed in the preceding sections. Nafeesa is in Jimmy's flat again, trying to get some more vital information out of him, but will she succeed? There are three characters in the scene: Jimmy, Nafeesa, and Izzy.

Combat Round 1

Jimmy's turn:

Jimmy: *STR 70, DEX 60, Fighting 40/20.*
Nafeesa: *STR 70, DEX 40, Fighting 60/30.*

Step 1: Set Your Goal: *Jimmy is attacking Nafeesa, pushing her hard against the wall.*
Step 2: Target Responds: *Nafeesa decides to dodge Jimmy's attack.*
Step 3: Dice Rolls: *the GM rolls 13 for Jimmy's Fighting roll—below half of Jimmy's skill value of 40%, so a Hard success. The player rolls 73 for Nafeesa's Fighting roll, above Nafeesa's skill value of 60%, so a Weak success. The GM's Hard success beats the player's Weak success.*
Step 4: Damage Roll: *as Jimmy has beaten Nafeesa, he makes a damage roll. As it's melee combat, that's a STR roll. The GM rolls a 52; as Jimmy's STR is 70, that's a Regular success, which inflicts 1 damage, plus the base weapon damage. Jimmy is unarmed, so, in this case, he inflicts a total of 1 damage (as he isn't using a weapon of any sort;* ***Table 3: Weapons****, page 61). Nafeesa is not wearing her body armour, so the player ticks the Hurt box on the character sheet (****Damage Conditions****, page 133).*
Step 5: Narration: *the GM describes how Jimmy pushes Nafeesa hard. Her head smacks against the wall, making her see stars.*
Step 6: Next Player's Turn.

Nafeesa's turn:

Jimmy: *STR 70, DEX 60, Fighting 40/20.*
Nafeesa: *STR 70, DEX 40, Fighting 60/30 (Hurt).*

Step 1: Set Your Goal: *Nafeesa is going to try to grapple Jimmy to the ground.*
Step 2: Target Responds: *Jimmy is dodging (****Response 2: Dodge****, page 128)*
Step 3: Dice Rolls: *the GM rolls 15 for Jimmy, another Hard success! The player rolls 43 for Nafeesa, a Regular success.*
Jimmy has the better level of success and wins the opposed roll.
Step 4: Damage Roll: *Jimmy won, but he was dodging so no damage is inflicted.*
Step 5: Narration: *the GM describes how Jimmy slips like a fish out of Nafeesa's hands. Nafeesa's attack has failed, but Jimmy hasn't achieved anything, either.*
Step 6: ***Next Player's Turn.***

Izzy's turn:

Jimmy: *STR 70, DEX 60, Fighting 40/20.*
Nafeesa: *STR 70, DEX 40, Fighting 60/30 (Hurt).*
Izzy: *STR 40, DEX 70, Stealth 30/15, Fighting 60/30.*

Up to this point, it was just Jimmy and Nafeesa in the fight, but unbeknownst to Nafeesa, Jimmy has a friend—Izzy—hiding in the cupboard. It's the GM's turn again as Nafeesa has taken her turn, and the GM decides to have Izzy act rather than stay in hiding. While Nafeesa and Jimmy were fighting, Izzy exited the cupboard and now makes her attack.

Step 1: Set Your Goal: *Izzy rushes at Nafeesa, intending to shove her to the floor.*
Step 2: Target Responds: *Nafeesa tries to fight back, lashing out with an elbow.*
Step 3: Dice Rolls: *the GM rolls with a bonus die because Nafeesa is* ***Outnumbered*** *(page 135), rolling 95 and 45 for Izzy, and taking the better result because of the bonus die: a Regular success. The player rolls 13 for Nafeesa, a Hard success. The player has a better level of success and wins the roll.*
Step 4: Damage Roll: *the player rolls 03 for Nafeesa's damage (STR) roll and decides to spend 2 Luck points to adjust the result to a Critical success (****Spending Luck****, page 113), inflicting 3 damage on Izzy. The GM marks Izzy as Down (****Damage Conditions****, page 133).*
Step 5: Narration: *Nafeesa's player describes how she pulls her hand back sharply to grab her handcuffs from her belt (with a view to restraining Jimmy next round), accidentally smacking the unseen Izzy square in the face with her elbow. The GM adds that Izzy hits her head on the floor as she goes down and is now out cold, with blood pouring from a broken nose.*
Step 6: Next Player's Turn.

Combat Round 2

Jimmy's turn:

Jimmy: *STR 70, DEX 60, Fighting 40/20.*
Nafeesa: *STR 70, DEX 40, Fighting 60/30 (Hurt).*
Izzy: *STR 40, DEX 70, Stealth 30/15, Fighting 60/30 (Down—cannot act this round).*

Step 1: Set Your Goal: *Jimmy is pulling out a knife and trying to stab Nafeesa.*
Step 2: Target Responds: *now faced with a more serious threat, Nafeesa drops her handcuffs and tries to disarm Jimmy. She has chosen to fight back with a* ***Combat Manoeuvre*** *(page 134).*
Step 3: Dice Rolls: *the GM rolls 55 for Jimmy, a Weak success. The player rolls 43 for Nafeesa, a Regular success. The player has a better (higher) level of success and wins the roll.*
Step 4: Damage Roll: *Nafeesa used a combat manoeuvre, so no damage is inflicted.*
Step 5: Narration: *the player describes how Nafeesa grabs Jimmy's arm and beats it against the wall, forcing him to drop the blade on the floor. Jimmy is now disarmed.*
Had the player chosen restraint instead of disarming, Jimmy would now have a penalty die on his actions, but he would still be holding his knife—meaning Nafeesa would still be at risk of being stabbed on Jimmy's next turn.
Step 6: Next Player's Turn.

Nafeesa's turn:

Jimmy: *STR 70, DEX 60, Fighting 40/20.*
Nafeesa: *STR 70, DEX 40, Fighting 60/30 (Hurt).*
Izzy: *STR 40, DEX 70, Stealth 30/15, Fighting 60/30 (Down—cannot act this round).*

Step 1: Set Your Goal: *the GM describes how one of Jimmy's buddies is knocking on the front door and shouting. Nafeesa, realising that the odds are not in her favour, is making for the back door (fleeing).*
Step 2: Target Responds: *Jimmy decides to try to take Nafeesa down with a swift headbutt to the face before she can leave.*
Step 3: Dice Rolls: *the GM rolls 21 for Jimmy, a Regular success. Nafeesa's player rolls 69, a Weak success. Nafeesa is already hurt, so her player decides to spend 9 Luck points to lower the roll by 9 to 60, adjusting it to a Regular success. That means a tie, which Nafeesa wins because it's her turn in the combat round.*
Step 4: Damage Roll: *Nafeesa is simply fleeing, so no damage is inflicted.*
Step 5: Narration: *the player describes how Nafeesa manages to sidestep Jimmy as his forehead rushes towards her face. Nafeesa is now out of the back door and running.*
Step 6: Next Player's Turn: *the GM decides that Jimmy isn't giving pursuit, so the combat ends here.*

The Next Day

The next day, Nafeesa spots Izzy leaving a corner shop (convenience store) and shouts for her to stop. Izzy, still smarting from that broken nose, reacts with an attack, triggering combat.

Combat Round 1

Izzy's turn:

Izzy: *STR 40, DEX 70, Athletics 30/15, Fighting 60/30.*
Nafeesa*: STR 70, DEX 40, Fighting 60/30.*

Step 1: Set Your Goal: *Izzy drops her shopping bag, grabs a tin of baked beans, and hurls it at Nafeesa. This is a thrown attack, using the Athletics skill.*
Step 2: Target Responds: *Nafeesa is attempting to dodge (thrown attacks can be dodged).*
Step 3: Dice Rolls: *the GM decides that Izzy is about 20 metres/yards from Nafeesa, which is far enough away to qualify as beyond standard range; thus, Izzy must roll Athletics with a penalty die. The GM rolls 18 and 28 for Izzy and takes the higher result because of the penalty die: a Regular success. Nafeesa's player rolls a 25, a Hard success. Nafeesa wins the opposed roll, and the attack misses.*
Step 4: Damage Roll: *it's a miss, so there's no damage.*
Step 5: Narration: *the tin of baked beans whistles past Nafeesa's head as she ducks out of the way.*
Step 6: Next Player's Turn: *perhaps Nafeesa decides to pursue Izzy, initiating a chase. So, for the moment, we'll leave this example here…*



Ranged Attack Modifiers

There are a variety of factors that can give an attacker a distinct advantage or disadvantage when making a ranged attack, granting them either a bonus die or a penalty die on their skill roll—such as **Dive for Cover** (page 128; **Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111). The most common options besides diving for cover are detailed here, but others may occur during play—if they do, the GM should use their discretion as to whether a penalty or bonus die is justified.

Each relevant penalty or bonus die for a given firearms, spell, or melee attack is added up, then applied to the appropriate skill roll to determine the outcome. One penalty die cancels out one bonus die, and vice versa. If you end up with more than one bonus die or more than one penalty die on a roll, refer to **Multiple Bonus or Penalty Dice** (page 143).

Cover and Concealment (Penalty Die)

When a character isn't wearing armour, one way they can attempt to protect themselves is by using cover and concealment. The degree of protection offered by cover and concealment is variable—a wooden fence may not stop a bullet, but it does obscure the target, making the shot more difficult. Concealment of at least half of the target's body adds one penalty die to a firearms or spell attack roll.

Common sense dictates that, if the shooter can't see their target, it's going to be harder to hit them, but if they're hiding behind something that's barely larger than they are, then it may still be worth a shot or two through that cover, particularly if it's something relatively fragile, like a wooden crate. If shooting at a target through cover, the GM should use their judgement in selecting a comparable material from **Table 6: Cover Protection** (nearby). The points of protection are deducted directly from any damage before it is applied to the target.

Example: *Nafeesa is using the cover of a plywood crate, but her opponent's rifle shot still hits the mark (even with a penalty die), passing through the wood and into Nafeesa. The shot inflicts 2 damage but this is decreased by the "armour" provided by the crate. In this case, 2 damage is reduced to 1 damage.*



Table 6: Cover Protection

Material	Blocks
2.5 cm (1 inch) plywood	1 damage
2.5 cm (1 inch) brick or concrete	2 damage
4 cm (1.5 inch) bulletproof glass	2 damage
5 mm (3/16 inch) steel plate	2 damage
Large sandbag	3 damage

Point-Blank Range (Bonus Die)

If the target is within point-blank range, meaning within 3 metres/yards or less, the attacker gains a bonus die on their relevant skill roll. This counts for spells, firearms, and other ranged weapons.

Aiming (Bonus Die)

When a character wants to increase their chance of hitting with a firearm or spell, they can take a pause to aim their attack. The intention to take careful aim must be declared on the character's turn in the order of combat, with the character taking an aiming action for their turn (they can do nothing else). The attack is made on their turn in the following round. If no other actions are taken before the attack is made, i.e., they take a turn aiming and nothing else, the attacker gains one bonus die on the relevant skill roll. But if the aiming character suffers damage or moves while aiming, the aiming advantage is lost. Only one bonus die may be gained by aiming.

Spending a combat round aiming improves the attacker's chance of hitting their target. The rules don't cover called shots; if a player describes aiming at a specific area of an NPC—for example, the target's head—the player and GM should interpret the dice rolls and consequent damage to determine if the specified area is hit. So, a firearms attack that only inflicts 1 damage could be interpreted as hitting the target's ear or grazing the side of their face. Instead, if it inflicts 5 damage (a fatal blow), the shot has hit the target smack dab between the eyes (**Damage Conditions**, page 133).

Fast-Moving Targets (Penalty Die)

A target moving at full speed (MOV 8 or more) is harder to hit. Apply one penalty die to the skill roll. This counts for both spells and firearms attacks alike.

Point-Blank Range Example

***Nafeesa**: Magic 60/30.*
***Jimmy:** DEX 60, Fighting 40/20.*

***Step 1: Set Your Goal:** Nafeesa is casting Fireball at Jimmy Four-Fingers.*

***Step 2: Target Responds:** Jimmy is charging towards her, wielding a knife.*

***Step 3: Dice Rolls:** Nafeesa's player rolls Magic with a bonus die because Jimmy is in point-blank range, rolling 18 and 88, and taking the lower result—a Hard success. The GM doesn't make a roll—Jimmy isn't diving for cover, he's just charging in, so the player's roll is unopposed.*

***Step 4: Damage Roll:** Nafeesa's player makes a damage roll; as she is casting a spell, that's a DEX roll (**Damage Roll**, page 132). They get a success, so that's 1 damage plus base weapon damage; in this case, the weapon is a fireball, which inflicts 2 base damage, so that's 3 damage overall.*

***Step 5: Narration:** the player describes how the fireball hits Jimmy in the chest and he just staggers and falls (the GM marks Jimmy as Down). Nafeesa whips out her Airwave and calls for an ambulance, and then rushes to see how badly hurt Jimmy is.*

Step 6: Next Player's Turn.

Target Size (Bonus or Penalty Die)

Smaller targets are harder to hit. If the target is the size of Toby (a small dog) or below, apply one penalty die to the skill roll.

On the other hand, larger targets are easier to hit. If the target is the size of a Ford Asbo (standard car or larger), apply one bonus die to the skill roll.

Reloading Firearms

Normally, it takes one combat round to reload any firearm, and a character can do this as their action on their turn in the combat round. Note that it is possible for a character to reload a firearm on their turn in the combat round, then fire a shot from that same firearm as a fight back action later in the same combat round (**Fight Back Using Firearms**, page 129).

Multiple Shots (Bonus Die/Increased Damage)

Many firearms—such as machine pistols, submachine guns, and assault rifles—can fire multiple shots per round. In *RoL:RPG*, the term "multiple shots" always means three shots fired in rapid succession. Some automatic weapons can be set to fire a short burst of three shots with one pull of the trigger, which these rules also treat as multiple shots. Firing multiple shots places speed above accuracy. This counts for firearms and certain spells (see individual spell descriptions for further details).

When firing multiple shots, only one dice roll is made to hit the target. Before rolling to hit, the attacker must choose either to increase their chance to hit or increase their damage:

- **Increased chance to hit:** roll to hit with a bonus die, but roll only once for damage (as for a single shot)—basically, firing multiple shots with this option increases the chance to hit but does the same damage as a single shot.
- **Increased damage:** do not take the bonus die, gambling that you'll do more damage if you hit. Make the damage roll as normal, but double the damage indicated by the level of success *and then* add base weapon damage, e.g., a failure inflicts 2 damage, a Regular success with an automatic handgun inflicts 3 damage (Regular damage of 1 doubled to 2 + 1 base weapon damage), and so on.

If the attacker chooses the increased damage option but fails the roll, they cannot then decide to add the bonus die retroactively in hopes of changing their failure into a success.

GM ADVICE

In *RoL:RPG*, "multiple shots" like the ones described in this section are always directed at a single target.

ADDITIONAL RULES

For rules covering shooting at multiple targets with semi- and fully-automatic weapons, see the **Automatic Fire** section, page 329.

Multiple Shots Examples

First, let's play through an NPC choosing the bonus to hit option. Izzy pulls a pistol and lets off three shots at Nafeesa at point-blank range (3 metres/yards).

Izzy: *DEX 70, Firearms 30/15.*
Nafeesa: *DEX 40.*

Step 1: *Set Your Goal: Izzy is shooting at Nafeesa—bam, bam, BAM!*

Step 2: Target Responds: *Nafeesa acts on instinct and dives for cover.*

Step 3: Dice Rolls: *Izzy incurs a penalty die because Nafeesa is diving for cover. Izzy also gains a bonus die for* ***Point-Blank Range*** *(page 138), as well as another bonus die for firing multiple shots. That's two bonus dice and one penalty die—one bonus die cancels out one penalty die, so Izzy ends up with one bonus die on her Firearms roll. The GM rolls 61 and 11, taking the lower result, a Hard success. That's a hit.*

Step 4: Damage Roll: *the GM rolls 89, which is over Izzy's DEX. That means the shot does 1 damage. The player marks the Hurt box on Nafeesa's character sheet. She was lucky, this time.*

Step 5: Narration: *the GM describes how Izzy fires off 3 rapid shots, one of which grazes Nafeesa's thigh.*

Step 6: Next Player's Turn.

Now let's replay that with the increased damage option.

Izzy: *DEX 70. Firearms 30/15*
Nafeesa: *DEX 40*

Step 1: *Set Your Goal: Izzy is shooting at Nafeesa—bam, bam, BAM!*

Step 2: Target Responds: *Nafeesa acts on instinct and dives for cover.*

Step 3: Dice Rolls: *Izzy incurs a penalty die because Nafeesa is diving for cover. Izzy also gains a bonus die for* ***Point-Blank Range*** *(page 138). The bonus and penalty die cancel each other out. As Izzy decided not to gain a bonus die for multiple shots, she makes a straight Firearms roll with no extra dice. The GM rolls 11; a Hard success. That's a hit.*

Step 4: Damage Roll: *the GM rolls 89, which is over Izzy's DEX. That means the shot inflicts 1 damage, but this is doubled to 2 because of the Multiple Shots rule, which means Nafeesa is bloodied.*

Step 5: Narration: *the GM describes how Izzy fires off 3 rapid shots, one of which hits Nafeesa squarely in the thigh.*

Step 6: Next Player's Turn.

Shooting into Melee Combat

Combatants in melee combat are constantly on the move. If the shooter misses because of a fumble, the GM can declare that they've hit a random ally instead. This counts for spells and firearms alike. If it's an investigator who fumbled the shot, the GM could use the other investigators' Luck values to see who gets hit, if appropriate (**Luck Rolls**, page 113).

Ranged and Thrown Weapons

Ranged missile attacks (such as crossbows) are treated like firearms attacks. So, if you're using a bow, for example, anywhere that says "this applies to firearms attacks"—or words to that effect—also applies to you.

Thrown weapons attacks are resolved in the same way as melee Fighting attacks but use the Athletics skill instead of the Fighting skill. If the attack is made beyond standard range, the attacker must roll with a penalty die.

Combat FAQ

Combat can be literally life and death for the characters, so players may have all sorts of questions about what's allowed, what they can do, and so on. Let's try to answer a few of those in the following sections.

Can I Push My Combat Roll?

No. There is no option to push combat rolls (whether Fighting, Firearms, or Magic). Outside of combat, skill rolls are resolved with one or two rolls, but combat is resolved with a sequence of rolls. Pushing a skill roll indicates a subsequent attempt—a concerted effort to succeed. In combat, this subsequent attempt would simply be your next punch, your next shot, i.e., your next attack in the following round.

What Does it Mean if I Roll a Critical Success in Combat?

Critical Success (page 106) rules apply as normal, including the award of a bonus die on the successful attacker's damage roll (**The Damage Roll**, page 132). A Critical success can also be used to incorporate aspects of the surroundings into the fight, and the GM should encourage the attacker to elaborate when describing their superb attack. For example, did some element of the surroundings help them to achieve that Critical success? Did a passer-by distract the target momentarily, allowing the attacker to land the perfect blow, or did the weather help in some way to give the attacker an opening they weren't expecting?

What Does it Mean if I Roll a Fumble in Combat?

Fumble (page 107) rules apply as normal, and, like a Critical success, can also be used to incorporate aspects of the surroundings into **Step 5: Narration** (page 133). A fumble means an exceptionally poor outcome. This could be a particularly ineffective attack, or it could indicate the character is having a bad interaction with their surroundings, or that more enemies arrive. A fumble grants the GM permission to add something interesting to the story in the opponent's favour. For example, if using a gun, a fumble could indicate a **Firearms Malfunction** (page 143). If using a melee weapon, it could mean dropping the weapon or it breaking. In the case of unarmed attacks, it could mean that the character who fumbles harms themselves in some way (suffering 1 damage)—after all, it's pretty common for people to injure their own hands in a fist fight.

What Are My Options When Someone Tries to Hit Me?

If someone tries to hit you with a punch or a weapon, such as a knife, you can:

- Take no direct action and hope they don't inflict too much damage when they hit you (**Do Nothing**, page 128).
- Attempt to avoid their blow (**Dodge**, page 128).
- Attempt to avoid their blow and hit them back (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).
- Attempt to hit them with a spell before they hit you (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).
- If you have a firearm in your hand, you can attempt to shoot them before they hit you (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).
- Attempt to avoid their blow and run away (**Flee**, page 130).
- If the attacker is using a weapon, you could attempt to disarm them using a **Combat Manoeuvre** (page 134). This could allow you to knock the weapon to the floor or perhaps wrest possession of it from your opponent.
- Attempt to avoid their blow and restrain your attacker using a **Combat Manoeuvre** (page 134).
- Attempt to avoid their blow and move your attacker using a **Combat Manoeuvre** (page 134). This could be to knock them to the floor or push them away, or, if you're on top of a building, it might be to push them off!



What Are My Options When Someone Shoots at Me?

If being shot at from *beyond* arm's reach, you can:

- Take no direct action and hope that the shot misses (**Do Nothing**, page 128).
- Turn and flee, in which case the shooter incurs a penalty die if you have MOV 8 or higher (**Fast-Moving Targets**, page 138).
- **Dive for Cover** (page 128).
- Attempt to hit them with a spell before they hit you (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).
- If you have a firearm in your hand, you can attempt to shoot them before they hit you (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).

In addition, if being shot at from *within* arm's reach, you can fight back using your Fighting skill to perform one of the following options (remember, though—you can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage; page 51):

- Attempt to inflict harm on the attacker. Use your Fighting skill to oppose your attacker's Firearms roll. If the shooter loses the opposed roll, they take damage and have fired and missed.
- Attempt to disarm the attacker. Use your Fighting skill to oppose your attacker's Firearms roll (**Combat Manoeuvre**, page 134). This could allow you to knock the firearm to the floor or perhaps wrest possession of it from your opponent.
- Attempt to restrain the attacker. Use your Fighting skill to oppose your attacker's Firearms roll (**Combat Manoeuvre**, page 134). This could be to restrain the hand and arm holding the gun (pointing it away from you as it fires) or restrain/knock the shooter and somehow foil their shot.
- Attempt to avoid their shot and move your attacker using a **Combat Manoeuvre** (page 134). This could be to knock them to the floor, or push them away, or, if you're on top of a building, it might be to push them off!



What Are My Options When Someone Casts a Spell at Me?

If being targeted with a spell from *beyond* arm's reach, you can:

- Take no direct action and hope that the spell fails (**Do Nothing**, page 128).
- Turn and flee, in which case the caster incurs a penalty die if you have MOV 8 or higher (**Fast-Moving Targets**, page 138).
- **Dive for Cover** (page 128).
- Attempt to hit them with a spell before they hit you (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).
- If you have a firearm in your hand, you can attempt to shoot them before they hit you (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).

In addition, if being targeted with a spell from *within* arm's reach, you can fight back using your Fighting skill to perform one of the following options (remember, though—you can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage; page 51):

- Attempt to inflict harm on your attacker. Use your Fighting skill to oppose your attacker's Magic roll. If the attacker loses the opposed roll, they take damage and their spell fails.
- Attempt to restrain the attacker. Use your Fighting skill to oppose your attacker's Magic roll (**Combat Manoeuvre**, page 134). This could allow you to restrain the attacker and cause their spell to fail.

Firearms Malfunctions

Firearms can be prone to jamming or misfiring. With any fumbled attack roll, the GM may decide that the shooter does not merely miss, their weapon doesn't even fire. If the weapon is a revolver, break-open gun, or bolt-action rifle, the problem is merely a dud round. If the weapon is lever-action or automatic, the malfunction is a jam. Fixing a jam requires a successful Mechanical Repair or Firearms skill roll. The user can keep trying to fix the problem once per combat round (on their turn) until they succeed. Later, outside of combat, the effort of fixing a jam might be easy, so no skill roll is needed.

Alternatively, the GM may decide that a Firearms fumble leads to some other outcome, such as hitting an ally (**Shooting into Melee Combat**, page 140) or the wielder injuring themselves in some way.

Multiple Bonus or Penalty Dice

Sometimes, after you've considered all the factors affecting a combat roll, you may find that you've incurred more than one penalty die—and/or gained more than one bonus die—on a single roll. However, when it comes time to roll the actual dice, you cannot have more than one penalty die or one bonus die applied to that roll at a time.

Remember that one penalty die and one bonus die cancel each other out, so add up all the bonus and penalty dice that apply to a roll first, and remove any that cancel one another out. Then see if you have more than one of either sort still applied to the roll. If you do, then any excess dice are taken care of as follows:

- If, overall, an attack gains two or more bonus dice, make the attack roll with one bonus die. If the attack is successful, you gain a bonus die to the damage roll.
- If, overall, an attack incurs two or more penalty dice, make the attack roll with one penalty die. If the attack is successful, you incur a penalty die to the damage roll.

Example: *targeting a speeding rat would incur two penalty dice—one for* ***Fast-Moving Targets*** *(page 138), the other for* ***Target Size*** *(page 139)—but only one penalty die is applied to the combat roll. If the Firearms roll is a success, the rat is hit. The damage roll is now made with a penalty die because of that second applicable penalty die.*

What Factors Affect the Damage Roll?

The damage roll can be affected by the following factors:

- If a player rolled a Critical success on their attack roll (or bought one with Luck points), they gain a bonus die to their damage roll.
- The damage roll may gain a bonus die if the successful attack roll originally gained two or more bonus dice (**Multiple Bonus or Penalty Dice**, page 143).
- The damage roll may incur a penalty die if the successful attack roll originally incurred two or more penalty dice (**Multiple Bonus or Penalty Dice**, page 143).
- Successful attacks against certain fae characters with an iron weapon gain a bonus die to the damage roll (**The Effects of Cold Iron**, page 245).
- If a character has the advantage **Damage Bonus** (page 51), they add +1 damage to unarmed and melee attack damage, but not to ranged, firearm, or spell attack damage.
- If a character has the advantage **Natural Toughness** (page 51), they suffer 1 less damage from unarmed and blunt melee weapon attacks. The damage from knives, bullets, or damage-causing spells, e.g., **Fireball** (page 183) is not affected.

- A character wearing regular armour, e.g., a Met stab vest, suffers 1 less damage from melee attacks (**Armour**, page 135). Damage from firearms and some spells is unaffected.
- A character wearing ballistic armour suffers 2 less damage from melee and firearms attacks (**Armour**, page 135). Damage from certain types of spell attack is unaffected.
- The final amount of damage inflicted may also be affected by **Cover and Concealment** (page 138).

Wounds and Healing

So, a character got injured during combat? How does that affect them, both narratively and in game terms? This section looks at what happens when someone gets injured and how quickly they can heal.

Always remember, damage in *RoL:RPG* is cumulative (**Damage Conditions**, nearby), and:

- If a character suffers a total of 1 damage, they are **Hurt** (nearby).
- If a character suffers a total of 2 damage, they are **Bloodied** (nearby).
- If a character suffers a total of 3 damage, they are **Down** (nearby).
- If a character suffers 4 damage *in a single blow* (be that from a spell, a weapon, or a firearm), they have a **Mortal Wound** (page 146).
- If an investigator suffers 5 or more damage *in a single attack*, they have suffered a fatal blow and must spend 30 Luck points, otherwise they are killed outright. If they can spend 30 Luck points, the damage is reduced to 4 (a mortal wound).

Note: in the list above, "character" means both investigators and GM-controlled characters or creatures. However, only investigators can spend Luck to avoid certain death.

Describing Injuries

When someone is injured, descriptions of their wounds should be appropriate to the type and degree of damage they received. A character is not merely shot but shot in one arm or the other; likewise, a fall might mean the character has sprained an ankle, or now has a lump on their head.

Damage Conditions in Depth

Here, we look closely at what each damage condition means. Again, "character" means both investigators and GM-controlled characters (NPCs) and creatures. When a damage condition is applied to an investigator, the player should check the appropriate box on their character sheet.

Hurt: "Ow, That Smarts!"

The character has taken a painful blow or a flesh wound. They are in pain but are otherwise able to carry on as normal.

Bloodied: In Serious Trouble!

The character is still standing but is the worse for wear. They may have blood running down their face or from somewhere else, but they're not out of the fight yet!

While bloodied, the character is impaired (**Impairment**, page 118). Any rolls of 90 or over count as a fumble and trigger an **Involuntary Action** (page 108). In the case of an investigator, the player should check the Impaired box on their character sheet to remind them of their investigator's impairment status. A character is either impaired or not, so if they were already impaired there is no additional effect to being bloodied.

Down: Out of Action!

The character is floored and out of the fight. They are on the ground, groaning and bleeding. *They are not dead.* They are not unconscious, but neither are they really aware of what's going on around them. In effect, they are incapacitated. If other characters are still fighting, leave the downed character on the floor until the fight is done and dusted or someone tends to them. If an already downed character takes further damage it is ignored, but a determined effort to kill them would normally be successful (**Death—Bloody Murder!** following).

Death: Bloody Murder!

When a character suffers 5 damage from *a single attack* it is a fatal blow and causes instant death. An investigator can choose to spend 30 Luck points to turn that fatal blow into a **Mortal Wound** (page 146). Otherwise, the only way for an investigator to be killed in combat is for another character to

GM ADVICE

During combat, avoid saying, *"You took 1 damage,"* when someone is hit. Instead, describe the effects of damage based on the level of detail you and your players are comfortable with (**Important: Tone**, page 123). If the victim is an investigator, first describe the scene and injury and then let them know how much damage they've suffered in numerical terms, so they can check off the relevant boxes on their character sheet.

ADDITIONAL RULES

If a downed character wants to stay in the fight, see **Spending Luck to Resist Incapacitation** (page 333) for an advanced optional method to keep them in the action.

purposefully declare they are murdering them. For example, if the character is down already and someone states they are strangling them or putting a bullet in their head at close range—clearly with the goal of murdering them—then the target is well and truly dead.

NPCs, by default, leave downed investigators on the floor and run off, or take them captive, rather than murdering them. We see Peter Grant get beaten sometimes and, rather embarrassingly, kidnapped[1], but do you imagine he would ever be murdered in the novels? At the same time, however, we want the threat of death to create tension. In the novels, Peter fears he might die, and we, as readers, share his fear even though we feel sure he will survive… *this time*.

After the Fight

Once a fight is finished, stop using combat rounds and check to see how badly the characters have been injured. This section, except for **Down** (page 144) and **Mortal Wound** (page 146), applies to both investigators and NPCs. The GM can use both the down and mortal wound rules for characters besides the investigators if they wish, but equally, they can just decide how badly injured an NPC is—or whether they live or die—as required by the plot.

After the Fight: Hurt

Anyone who was **hurt** at the end of the fight is soon fully recovered. In the case of an investigator, the player should erase the check mark from the Hurt box on their character sheet.

After the Fight: Bloodied

Anyone who was **bloodied** at the end of the fight soon recovers, though it should be noted that they may now look terrible: ruffled, torn, dirty, or blood-stained clothes; grazed knuckles, a split lip, or a black eye; and so on. In the case of an investigator, the player should erase the check marks in both the Hurt and Bloodied boxes on their character sheet.

If the character was impaired because of being bloodied, they lose the impairment once the fight is over. In the case of an investigator, the player should remove the check mark from the Impaired box on their character sheet. If they were impaired for any other reason, they recover in the usual way (**Impairment and Recovery**, page 119).

After the Fight: Down

Anyone who was **down** at the end of the fight soon makes a partial recovery. As with bloodied, it should be noted that they may now look terrible: ruffled, torn, dirty, or blood-stained clothes; grazed knuckles, a split lip, or a black eye;



Footnote: [1]*Lies Sleeping*

and so on. If an investigator, the player should erase the marks in the Bloodied and Down boxes on their character sheet, but apply the following two conditions:

- The investigator remains **hurt** until the end of the following day, or they can spend 10 Luck points to remove the check mark from the Hurt box on their character sheet.
- The investigator remains **impaired** until the end of the following day (**Impairment**, page 118), or they can spend 10 Luck points to remove the check mark from the Impaired box on their character sheet.

Thus, with a spend of 20 Luck points, the investigator has been very lucky indeed—though they were briefly knocked down and out of the fight, they have escaped any lasting harm and have managed to walk away with barely a scratch! In the case of an NPC, the GM can either apply these rules or decide if it suits the story for the character to recover from their injuries, and how long that recovery takes.

After the Fight: Mortal Wound

A character takes a mortal wound when they suffer 4 damage *in a single blow*. A mortal wound means the character's injuries are severe. The character is automatically down and can take no actions, and they require either urgent treatment from a trained professional, or hospitalisation (**Medical Aid**, page 147). If they do not get such help, they are dead within an hour, although **First Aid** (following) can buy them some time.

In the case of an NPC, the GM can either apply these rules or decide if it suits the story for the character to recover from their injuries, how long that takes, and what the long-term effects might be.

First Aid

It is assumed that all characters can provide some level of first aid. First aid is only useful when dealing with a mortal wound, when it can help the dying person survive until they receive medical assistance (**Medical Aid**, following). Anyone attempting to administer first aid should make an INT roll:

- With a success, the time it takes a mortally wounded character to die extends from "within an hour" to "within



two hours," granting more time to benefit from proper medical treatment and/or for an ambulance to arrive.
- If first aid is successfully applied before a Luck roll is made to call an ambulance (**Medical Aid**), then one bonus die is applied to the roll (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).
- If the first aid roll is failed or fumbled, the first aid is superficial and grants no benefit.



GM ADVICE

Luck points can be spent on the INT roll for administering first aid (**Spending Luck**, page 113). Alternatively, a player has the option of pushing the roll, but failure means they haven't extended the injured party's time to receive medical treatment before they die.

Medical Aid

Doctors and nurses in this game do not possess the healing magic that some players may be accustomed to in other fantasy RPGs, and cannot miraculously heal people in the middle of a fight. Healing magic is not a part of Newtonian practice, but it is said to feature in some other magical traditions. As a result, medical aid works in the game much as it does in the real world.

Only the Medicine skill can save the life of a character who has sustained a mortal wound, and anyone with the Medicine skill can try to save a dying person. To save someone with a mortal wound, a character must have the Medicine skill and suitable equipment; the minimum equipment being what you'd expect to find in a doctor, paramedic, or nurse's bag (see the relevant occupations in **Chapter 1** for further details). How and where the treatment is administered affects the Medicine roll:

- If administered single-handedly in a street, with just the bare minimum of equipment, the Medicine roll incurs one penalty die.
- If administered in a safe, clean place with reasonable equipment and supplies, the Medicine roll is made without bonus or penalty dice.
- If administered with an assistant and quality facilities and equipment, grant one bonus die to the Medicine roll.
- If administered in a well-equipped and modern hospital, the GM should forgo any dice rolls and declare the dying character is automatically saved.

If the Medicine roll is failed, the character dies—although Luck points can be spent to turn it into a success (**Spending Luck**, page 113). It's hard to see what would justify pushing the roll in this case, but if the players come up with something that works for you, then the GM should allow it.

The alternative to making a Medicine roll is to rush the patient to hospital. An ambulance with paramedics is hopefully never too far away in a modern city, but if the wounded character is in a remote location or other factors would make access difficult, the GM can call for a Luck roll on behalf of the dying character to determine whether help reaches them in time. If the Luck roll is failed, the character dies on their way to hospital or before the ambulance arrives. The GM must use their discretion to judge whether a Luck roll is required and which investigator should make the roll.

If getting an ambulance or a medical professional might be difficult or take too long, another option is **First Aid** (page 146).

Recovering from a Mortal Wound

If medical aid is successfully administered for a mortal wound, the injured investigator's player must choose two of the following—each of these is explained in the following sections.

- **Injured:** the investigator remains **bloodied** for three days, then **hurt** for the rest of the week (four more days), plus the investigator is **impaired** for the whole duration.
- **Luck Loss:** the investigator loses 20 points of Luck.
- **Development Loss:** the investigator loses 1 development point.
- **Disfigurement:** the investigator takes a significant physical disfigurement. An investigator can take this option only once (**Disfigurement**, page 148).

Injured

In narrative terms, if a player decides their investigator remains **bloodied** for three days, and then **hurt** for the rest of the week, think of it as showing that the investigator is bruised and aching after their ordeal, and unable to act at full capacity.

Luck Loss

When a player decides to spend 20 Luck points, so their investigator recovers from a mortal wound, consider this as like a cat using up one of its proverbial nine lives. The investigator's lowered Luck means that they may not be so fortunate the next time around. Of course, following such an incident, the character's Luck value may continue to rise and fall according to the rules (**Recovering Luck Points**, page 115).

Example: *during a fight scene, Nafeesa is hit by a shotgun blast, suffering 4 damage. Her Met vest offers no protection against firearms, so she takes a mortal wound. The player marks the boxes for Hurt, Bloodied, and Down. Nafeesa is on the ground, bleeding. Fortunately, Morgan Omans is also on the scene and calls for an ambulance, which arrives promptly. Nafeesa is taken to hospital and receives treatment. The player must choose two options from the list. Firstly, the Injured option is taken—bloodied for three*

days and then hurt for the rest of the week, plus the Impaired box is checked on the character sheet. Secondly, they choose Luck Loss—losing 20 points of Luck. The player describes how Nafeesa stays one night in hospital but then checks herself out, and re-joins the investigation, much to Morgan's concern.

Development Loss

The investigator has suffered a significant setback and does not develop their skills as swiftly as they might otherwise have done. Perhaps, rather than devoting time to practising magic or some other skill, they must use the time undergoing physiotherapy or rest to recover fully from their injuries. This is represented by the loss of a development point.

If using the standard development point award system (**Gaining Development Points**, page 120), an investigator may not have any development points to lose in this way, e.g., if they haven't saved any from a previous case file. It is up to the GM whether they allow a player to choose this option—deferring the loss of a development point until the end of the case file. The GM should make a note of who should have a development point deducted when it comes to awarding them at the end of the case file. The investigator may only defer once per case file, and the deferment could mean they receive no development points at all for the scenario.

Of course, if the investigator has saved development points, the loss is immediate.

Disfigurement

As we witness at the end of the first novel, characters can suffer significant physical changes because of injury, and these can have a major effect on the story. The nature of the disfigurement should be appropriate to the injury and have a lasting effect in the investigator's life, such the loss of (or loss of the use of) a limb, hand, or foot, or a significant facial disfigurement of some kind. Note that going forward, this should be considered a feature of the investigator and not a handicap. Such characters, as we see in the novels, are not penalised in their ability to achieve their goals, though their priorities may change.

A player can choose this option only once for their investigator. The disfigurement must be significant: a scar on the upper leg is rarely going to be seen, so does not count, no matter how nasty it is.

Example: *Nafeesa is in another fight and is downed by opponents wielding knives, suffering 4 damage. The player has marked the boxes for Hurt, Bloodied (plus ticked the Impaired box), and Down. After the fight, Nafeesa gets medical aid, and so the player decides to take Luck Loss—losing 20 points of Luck—and Disfigurement—writing on her character sheet that Nafeesa now has a large scar running down the side of her face. The disfigurement is a lasting reminder of the fight and something that other people are going to notice.*

Other Forms of Damage

Sometimes, the GM is forced to make a judgement call about the amount of damage inflicted by a random event, such as dropping a TV set on someone's foot, running into a doorpost, or being accidentally *Impello*-ed over a balcony. Whatever the cause, consider the likely injury and rate its level on **Table 7: Other Forms of Damage**, and then deal the suggested damage to the victim. Don't feel compelled to limit yourself to the example amounts of damage listed—you may wish to increase or decrease these based on the circumstances surrounding the particular incident. The information provided here is a guide.

Each injury type is for one incident or one round—one round of drowning, one round of being burned, etc. The character suffers damage on each successive round they are still exposed to the source of the harm.

The GM should consider each situation individually, using their discretion in selecting the appropriate level of damage. Anything less than Moderate damage can be described without recourse to rules or ongoing damage effects.

Example: *Nafeesa fails a pushed Stealth roll while attempting to follow someone through a fairground, and the GM rules she is struck by one of the fairground rides. There is no damage listed for fairground rides so the GM refers to* ***Table 7: Other Forms of Damage****. The GM feels it would be likely to knock someone unconscious and chooses Severe damage, which inflicts 2 damage, but Nafeesa's MET vest reduces this to 1 damage. Thus, the GM narrates the scene, saying the ride hits Nafeesa's body rather than her head.*



Table 7: Other Forms of Damage

Level	Suggested Damage	Examples
Minor: a person could survive numerous occurrences of this level.	Make a CON roll: if failed, take 1 damage; otherwise, no damage is suffered.	Mild acid, breathing smoky atmosphere*, a thrown fist-size rock, falling (per 3 metres/yards) onto soft swamp.
Moderate: it would take a number of occurrences at this level to kill a person.	1 damage	Falling (per 3 metres/yards) onto grass, strong acid, breathing water*, exposure to vacuum*, fire (e.g., a burning torch).
Severe: one or two occurrences at this level would render a person unconscious or dead.	2 damage	Falling (per 3 metres/yards) onto concrete, fire (flamethrower, running through a burning room), being 6 to 9 metres/yards from an exploding hand grenade or stick of dynamite, a mild poison**.
Deadly: the average person has a 50% chance of dying at this level.	3 damage	Hit by a car at 48 kph (30mph), being 3 to 6 metres/yards from an exploding hand grenade or stick of dynamite, a strong poison**.
Terminal: outright death is likely at this level.	4 damage (probably a **Mortal Wound**, page 146).	Hit by a speeding car (65+ kph/40+ mph), being within 3 metres/yards of an exploding hand grenade or stick of dynamite, a lethal poison**.
Splat: outright death almost certain at this level.	Make a CON roll: if a success, it's a **Mortal Wound** (page 146); if a failure, immediate death (but can reduce to a mortal wound if 30 Luck points are spent—see **Damage Conditions**, page 133).	Being involved in a high-speed head-on collision, being hit by a train.

Notes

***Asphyxiation and Drowning:** make a CON roll for the character at the start of their turn in each round (or each minute if not in combat). Each time the CON roll is failed, the character suffers 1 damage as long as the threat remains. For Moderate damage (water and vacuum), apply a penalty die to the CON roll after the third round (or after 3 minutes; **Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).

****Poison:** always call for a CON roll. If failed, apply the damage as stated. With a successful CON roll, move up one level on **Table 7: Other Forms of Damage**. For example: with a successful CON roll, a lethal poison is treated as a strong poison (Deadly rather than Terminal); with a Hard success, move up two levels on **Table 7: Other Forms of Damage**. Poisons may cause a variety of additional symptoms including: stomach pains, vomiting, diarrhoea, chills, sweats, cramps, jaundice, altered heart rate, impaired vision, convulsions, unconsciousness, and paralysis—it's up to the GM whether the symptoms permit the victim to act or not, act with a penalty die, or with an increased level of difficulty. At the GM's discretion, they may allow a poison's effects to be shaken off completely if the CON roll is a Critical success.

Chases

Action scenes in films and books mostly fall into one of two categories: fights or chases—both of which can be used to increase the drama and excitement in your game. An entertaining chase is more than a simple test of speed, though, and should be made up of a string of locations that challenge the characters as they race through them.

A chase is played out in rounds, much like combat rounds. At the start of each chase round, the GM describes the situation and then asks what action each investigator is taking when it comes to their turn. The GM determines what dice rolls are required, the outcome of which should be incorporated into the story of the chase, perhaps even changing the situation faced by the next player.

While some measure of gritty realism might be desirable, avoid becoming overly preoccupied with trying to recreate reality. Always bear in mind that the aim is to create an exciting story, not to mirror real-world physics. Accurate distances and speeds are not tracked but are instead abstracted and described in terms that support the scene's narrative.

These rules assume the fleeing character has an escape route. If a character is trapped, they must escape before a chase can ensue. Likewise, if a character is already engaged in combat, they may need to make an opposed Fighting roll to escape combat before they can flee (**Response 4: Flee**, page 130).

The Chase Round

A chase can begin in a variety of ways. As a general rule, one person says they're making the first move and then another character responds (reacts), and *voila*! They've initiated a chase. If there's any disagreement about who acts first, the character with the highest DEX goes first; in the case of a draw, use the standard **Tiebreakers** rules (page 118).

On their turn in a chase round, each player may be asked to make either a DEX or Athletics roll to determine their investigator's progress in the chase (**You Want to Run Away?**, page 151).

Once the first player's turn has been resolved, that player rolls a die: if an even number is rolled, play passes to the player's left; if an odd number is rolled, play passes to the right, and continues in the chosen direction for the entire chase—just like in combat (**Who Goes Next?**, page 125). The GM oversees the order of play and ensures everyone gets to act on their turn, in order, in the chase round. If you're playing online, refer to **Playing Online** (page 125). If you were using combat rounds prior to the start of the chase, simply continue with the same order of play that you were using during the combat.

Unlike combat, though, where the GM may have NPCs acting at the start and end of each combat round (**Handling NPCs**, page 126), in a chase round, the GM gets only one turn in which *all* of their NPCs act. Also, the GM does not make chase rolls. They only need to roll dice if an NPC makes an attack; it's important

How Big is Each Location?

The distance covered in one chase round is not defined and is intentionally elastic. Think of it like a chase scene in a movie, where the camera often cuts from one location to the next—our hero is in their hotel room, someone is banging on the door—cut—our hero is exiting the window and climbing down the drainpipe to the street below—cut—the pursuer is looking out the same window—cut—our hero is running down the street—cut—the pursuer is exiting the hotel entrance and giving pursuit, and so on. One location can encompass the hotel room to the street below, while another location can be the street alongside an entire city block, or just a section of busy road the investigators are crossing.

Consider each location as presenting one type of challenge for those involved in the chase. Thus, each location is tied to a predominant style of movement: for example, getting from the hotel room to the street requires climbing down a drainpipe; the city block is an all-out run; and crossing the busy road requires the person to dodge through traffic, and so on.



for players to keep track of when the GM's turn occurs in the chase round so they know when an attack might be imminent.

The following rules are presented in two parts. **Part 1** presents the rules for when the investigators are fleeing from one or more NPCs. **Part 2** turns that around and deals with when the investigators are the ones chasing the NPCs.

Part 1: You Want to Run Away?

The players use the following four steps when fleeing (each is explained in the following sections):

- **Step 1: Establish the Location:** describe where your investigator is headed based on the GM's description of the location.
- **Step 2: Chase Roll:** the investigator's actions determine whether they're using a burst of speed (DEX) or negotiating obstacles (Athletics) to avoid their pursuers.
- **Step 3: Track Successes:** each player keeps a running tally of how many chase successes and failures they have accumulated so far.
- **Step 4: Combat or Next Player's Turn:** if the investigator decides not to make a ranged attack against their pursuer, play moves on to the next character's turn.

Step 1: Establish the Location

The current chase location—where the chase starts or where it's moved on to—should be described by the GM. The player then states where their investigator is heading. For example: if the chase starts in a London street, the player says whether they are running away along the road, running down a side street, or into a shop or somewhere else, such as a Tube station.

The player concerned may ask questions about where they are. The GM may have to think on their feet a little here, and make snap decisions about locations—for example, is there a back door to the shop, and is it locked? Is there a Tube train boarding as they enter the platform? In either of these possible situations, it is an opportunity for the GM to call for a Luck roll to determine if something "useful" is in the player's favour.

- **Luck roll is successful:** that element of the location is skewed in the investigator's favour—so yes, there is an open door at the back of the shop to escape through, or yes, the doors of the Tube train are still open.
- **Luck roll is failed:** that element of the location is skewed against the investigator—there is no back door, or there is one, but it's locked; the Tube train has just pulled out or won't arrive for another three minutes.

One of the great things about playing a game set in the modern-day is that we have access to online maps displaying views of the streets where our chases may take place. These allow you and your players to see photos of the streets, vehicles, shops, houses, building sites, Tube stations, and so on, and to navigate your way through them together—see **Use the London Setting** (page 340) for further details.

Rather than simply running away, once a chase is under way, the investigator may take other actions, including:

- Stop moving, wait for their pursuer to catch up, and engage the pursuer in combat (including casting combative spells)—in which case, simply shift to combat rounds with that NPC.
- Stop moving, turn, and make a ranged attack of some kind (**Ranged Attacks Mid-Chase**, page 156).
- Perform some other action requiring time and perhaps a dice roll, such as barricading a door or casting a spell that isn't a ranged one.

Step 2: Chase Roll

The next step in the chase is to establish whether moving through the location counts as a **burst of speed** or **negotiating obstacles**. There may be a brief discussion about this, but ultimately the GM has the final say.

Burst of Speed

If the location is relatively free of obstacles and hazards—such as when sprinting down an open road—the challenge is simply one of speed. Compare the MOV speed of the investigator with that of their opposition:

- If the investigator's MOV is higher, they gain an automatic chase success. The player doesn't need to make a chase roll this round.
- If the investigator's MOV is lower, they incur an automatic chase failure. The player doesn't get to make a chase roll this round.
- If the investigator's MOV is equal to that of their opponent, the player must make a DEX roll.

If the player has to make a chase roll using DEX, the GM should refer to the pursuing NPC's DEX to set the difficulty level.

- If that NPC's DEX is 69 or below, the difficulty level of the DEX roll is Regular.
- If the NPC's DEX is 70 or above, the difficulty level of the DEX roll is Hard.

If the investigator succeeds with their DEX roll, they gain a chase success; if they don't succeed, they incur a chase failure.

Negotiating Obstacles
If the location features an obstacle or hazard—such as a wall to climb over, a stream to swim across, or a gap to leap over—an Athletics roll is used to gauge the investigator's progress. If the player has to make a chase roll to negotiate hazards, the Keeper should refer to the chasing NPC's Athletics skill to set the difficulty level.

- If the NPC's Athletics skill is 69 or below, the difficulty level of the Athletics roll is Regular.
- If the NPC's Athletics skill is 70 or above, the difficulty level of the Athletics roll is Hard.

If the investigator succeeds with their Athletics roll, they gain a chase success; if they don't succeed, they incur a chase failure.

Pushing the Roll
If the player fails the chase roll (either DEX or Athletics), they might decide to accept a chase failure this round. Alternatively, they could spend Luck points to turn the result into a success (**Spending Luck**, page 113), or attempt to push the roll (**Pushing the Roll**, page 108). Failing a pushed roll always means something bad happens and, in a chase, the default outcome includes losing the chase, thus being caught by their pursuer.

Step 3: Track Successes

Each round, an investigator either gains a chase success or incurs a chase failure. The player should keep track of how many successes and failures their investigator accumulates for the chase. You could just keep a tally of the successes and failures on some paper or use coloured beads or counters (two colours: one for successes and one for failures).

Winning the Chase
If a player gains two chase successes before incurring two chase failures, they win the chase, and have outpaced and lost their pursuer. The chase is over, and they got away.

Handling Chases with Multiple NPCs

While each player runs one investigator, the GM may have several NPCs to manage in the scene. These NPCs all act on the GM's single turn in the chase round. As we've already mentioned, the NPCs move forward in the chase automatically without the need for dice rolls. Ideally, treat the NPCs as one group who all act together. But what if the NPCs have different MOV ratings and/or different Athletics values?

- If the investigators are being pursued by a group of NPCs, then focus on the fastest NPC.
- If the fastest NPC catches an investigator, then it's up to you to use your discretion as to whether the other NPCs soon catch up—if you're not sure, it's another good opportunity to ask the player for a Luck roll!

Alternatively, if the investigators are pursuing a group of NPCs (**You Want to Catch Someone?**, page 154), ask the players which specific NPC or NPCs they're prioritising.

- If they choose one specific target, the rest can be ignored, and everyone can focus on that one NPC; assume the others get away.
- On the other hand, if the investigators would be happy to catch any one of a group of NPCs, then just deal with the slowest NPC in the group. Again, the other NPCs can get away. Either way, you're then managing only one NPC.

If the investigators decide to split up and each follow a different NPC, then you have multiple chases to track. This may happen, but it's likely to be very rare. Depending on your confidence, you can either run out each of the chases to their conclusion in turn or switch backwards and forwards between them. The former option is probably the best if you're all still learning the rules, but it does mean some players will have to wait a while for their turn (perhaps it's a good time for them to go and take a break). The latter option means more excitement for everyone and ensures no one is sitting around for too long waiting for their investigator to do something.

Losing the Chase
If a player incurs two chase failures before gaining two chase successes, their investigator loses the chase. Their pursuer catches up and can now, on the GM's next turn, try to grab or attack them. However, if the NPC fails to incapacitate, trip, or restrain them, the investigator can carry on fleeing on following rounds. But from now on (starting next round):

- Each time the investigator incurs a chase failure, the NPC stays in range and can attack them again on the GM's turn.
- Each time the investigator gains a chase success, they move ahead, out of melee range of their pursuer.
- If the investigator now gains a chase success on two consecutive rounds, they outpace and lose their pursuer. The chase is over, and they got away.

Step 4: Combat or Next Player's Turn

Fleeing characters can potentially make a ranged attack; see **Ranged Attacks Mid-Chase** (page 156) for further details on how this works.

The GM's Turn

Use the following two steps for the GM when they are controlling NPCs in pursuit of the investigators:

- **GM's Turn Part 1: Move Forward**: automatic.
- **GM's Turn Part 2: Combat or Next Player's Turn**.

GM's Turn Part 1: Move Forward
On the GM's turn, the GM simply describes the NPCs moving through the location however they wish. The GM does not roll dice for NPC movement in a chase. The NPCs move forward, and the players' dice rolls decide who wins the chase. Be creative and use the players' results to describe the pursuers catching up (investigator chase failure), falling behind (investigator chase success), or stumbling over obstacles the investigators negotiated with ease (investigator chase success) or vice versa.

GM's Turn Part 2: Combat or Next Player's Turn
If the investigator incurs two chase failures before they gain two chase successes, the pursuing NPC catches up to them. The GM can now have the NPC try to tackle them, hit them, trip them, or whatever else they wish to do.

If the GM decides that the NPC is going to attack the investigator, then play through the six steps of combat (**Running Combat Encounters**, page 127). Remember, though, that the fleeing investigator has their back to their attacker, and both are moving at speed. The fleeing investigator can't "fight back" without stopping. For the purposes of combat within a chase, because both the attacker (the NPC) and their fleeing target (the investigator) are



moving at speed, the fleeing target is automatically treated as dodging (**Response 2: Dodge,** page 128).

The chase ends here if the attack inflicts enough damage to incapacitate the investigator (marking them "Down"—or worse; **Wounds and Healing**, page 144). Alternatively, the NPC may use a **Combat Manoeuvre** (page 134) to try to grab the investigator or knock them prone.

Following the attack, if the investigator is not down, restrained, or prone, they can continue to run away using the guidelines in the **Losing the Chase** section (page 153). Or, on their turn in the round, the investigator can, of course, decide to stop fleeing and engage their pursuer in combat—or whatever else they wish to do.

Part 2: You Want to Catch Someone?

Investigators use the following four steps for chases when they are pursuing someone (each is explained in the following sections):

- **Step 1: Establish the Location:** describe what your investigator is doing based on the GM's description of the location.
- **Step 2: Chase Roll:** the investigator's actions determine whether they're using a burst of speed (DEX) or negotiating obstacles (Athletics) to catch up with their target(s).
- **Step 3: Track Successes:** the player keeps a running tally of how many chase successes and failures they have accumulated so far.
- **Step 4: Combat or Next Player's Turn:** if the investigator decides not to make a ranged attack, play moves on to the next character.

Step 1: Establish the Location

The current location should be described by the GM, who also says where the NPC is heading, much the same as in **Step 1** of **You Want to Run Away?** (page 151). NPCs face the same potential location obstacles as do the investigators, meaning this is an opportunity for the GM to call for a "group Luck roll" (**Luck Rolls**, page 113) if more than one investigator is involved in the chase, or a normal Luck roll if it's just a single investigator.

- **Group Luck roll is successful:** that element of the location is skewed against the NPC—there is no back door, or there is but it's locked; the Tube train has just pulled out or won't arrive for another three minutes.
- **Group Luck roll is failed:** that element of the location is skewed in the NPC's favour—so there is an open door at the back of the shop to escape through, or yes, the doors of the Tube train are still open.

Once the chase is underway, an investigator may wish to take other actions besides pursuing their target, including:

- Making a ranged attack of some kind, including casting a spell (**Ranged Attacks Mid-Chase**, page 156).
- Performing some other action requiring time and perhaps a dice roll (including casting spells that aren't ranged ones).

Step 2: Chase Roll

Resolve this step exactly as before—see **Burst of Speed** (page 151) and **Negotiating Obstacles** (page 152) for further details.

Step 3: Track Successes

Each round, an investigator either gains a chase success or incurs a chase failure. Each player should keep track of how many successes and failures their investigator accumulates for the chase.

Losing the Chase

If an investigator incurs two chase failures before gaining two chase successes, they lose the chase and are left out of breath, while the NPC runs off out of sight.

Catching Up with the Quarry

If an investigator gains two chase successes before incurring two chase failures, they catch up with the NPC and can now try to grab or hit them (**Combat or Next Player's Turn**, following). However, if the investigator fails to incapacitate, trip, or restrain them, the NPC can carry on fleeing in the following rounds. If combat doesn't ensue and the target isn't restrained—i.e., the chase continues—from now on (starting next round):

- Each time the investigator incurs a chase failure, the NPC moves out of range.
- Each time the investigator gains a chase success, they catch up and can make another attack on the NPC on their next turn.
- If the investigator incurs a chase failure on two consecutive rounds, the investigator loses their quarry and is left out of breath, while the NPC runs off out of sight.

Step 4: Combat or Next Player's Turn

As mentioned in the previous section, if the investigator gains two chase successes before incurring two chase failures, they catch up with the fleeing NPC and can now try to tackle them, hit them, trip them up, or whatever else they wish to do.

Depending on what the investigator does, it may be time to switch from the chase rules to play through the six steps of combat (**Running Combat Encounters**, page 127). The

Chase Example

Nafeesa is fleeing from Greg on a London street.

Nafeesa: *MOV 8, DEX 40, Athletics 30/15, Fighting 60/30.*
Greg: *MOV 9, DEX 50, Athletics 50/25, Fighting 30/15.*

Chase Round 1

Nafeesa's turn:

Step 1: Establish the Location: *Nafeesa is running down the street at a sprint.*
Step 2: Chase Roll: *clearly, this is a* ***Burst of Speed*** *(page 151), but Nafeesa's MOV is lower than Greg's, so she automatically gets a chase failure this round. Greg is closing in!*
Step 3: Track Successes: *Nafeesa has 1 chase failure.*
Step 4: Next Player's Turn.

Greg's turn (GM):

GM's Turn Part 1: Move Forward: *Greg automatically moves forward; no need for any rolls.*
GM's Turn Part 2: Combat or Next Player's Turn: *Greg's not caught up with Nafeesa yet and doesn't have any ranged weapons, so the chase continues. It's now Nafeesa's turn again.*

Chase Round 2

Nafeesa's turn:

The GM says there's busy traffic on the street.
Step 1: Establish the Location: *Nafeesa opts for dodging her way through the traffic.*
Step 2: Chase Roll: *the GM agrees that this counts as* ***Negotiating Obstacles*** *(page 152). Greg's Athletics skill is below 70, so the difficulty level for Nafeesa is Regular. The player gets 24 on Nafeesa's Athletics roll: a chase success.*
Step 3: Track Successes: *Nafeesa now has 1 chase failure and 1 chase success.*
Step 4: Next Player's Turn.

Greg's turn (GM):

GM's Turn Part 1: Move Forward: *Nafeesa has made her way through the traffic and gets ahead, but Greg is still coming, weaving through the traffic behind her.*
GM's Turn Part 2: Combat or Next Player's Turn: *Greg's still not caught up with Nafeesa and doesn't have any ranged weapons, so the chase continues and it's back to Nafeesa.*

Chase Round 3

Nafeesa's turn:

Her player asks what she can see. The GM replies that there's lots of people and cars driving down the street, and that there's a Tube station nearby.
Step 1: Establish the Location: *the player asks if there's a bus that Nafeesa might leap onto. The GM asks for a Luck roll, which the player fails. There's no option but to keep running, so Nafeesa heads into the Tube station.*
Step 2: Chase Roll: *this is another burst of speed, which means another automatic chase failure (as Greg's MOV is 9 to Nafeesa's MOV 8).*
Step 3: Track Successes: *Nafeesa now has 2 chase failures and 1 chase success. Those 2 chase failures mean that she's lost the chase and Greg has caught up with her.*
Step 4: Next Player's Turn.

Greg's turn (GM):

GM's Turn Part 1: Move Forward: *Greg catches up with Nafeesa as she gets to the escalator leading into the Tube station.*
GM's Turn Part 2: Combat: *Greg makes an attack:*
Combat Step 1: Set Your Goal: *Greg tries to grab hold of Nafeesa as she's running.*
Combat Step 2: Target Responds: *Nafeesa just keeps running; under the circumstances, this counts as dodging (****GM's Turn Part 2****, page 153).*
Combat Step 3: Dice Rolls: *both sides roll percentile dice for an opposed Fighting roll. The GM rolls 83 for Greg: a Weak success (****Opposed Combat Rolls****, page 131). The player rolls 38 for Nafeesa: a Regular success. Nafeesa wins the roll because she has the higher (better) level of success.*
Combat Step 4: Damage Roll: *no damage is inflicted.*
Combat Step 5: Narration: *the player describes how Nafeesa screams* "Stand on the right!" *as she charges down the escalator. Greg failed to stop Nafeesa, so the chase continues.*

Chase Round 4

Nafeesa's turn:

Step 1: Establish the Location: *the player asks if there's a Tube train on the platform. The GM asks for another Luck roll, which the player passes this time. The player asks if Nafeesa can get aboard this round and the GM agrees.*
Step 2: Chase Roll: *this is another burst of speed, which means another automatic chase failure.*
Step 3: Track Successes: *Nafeesa now just tracks her chase successes and chase failures round by round. This round was a chase failure, so Greg has kept up with her.*
Step 4: Next Player's Turn.

Greg's turn (GM):

GM's Turn Part 1: Move Forward: *Greg gets on board the Tube train just as the doors close. The GM and player agree the chase is over, with them shut in a train carriage to who knows where…*

fleeing NPC can't "fight back" without stopping. For the purposes of combat within a chase, because both the attacker (the investigator) and their fleeing target (the NPC) are moving at speed, the fleeing target is automatically treated as dodging (**Response 2: Dodge,** page 128).

The chase ends here if the attack inflicts enough harm to incapacitate the NPC (marking them "Down"—or worse; **Wounds and Healing**, page 144). Alternatively, the investigator may use a **Combat Manoeuvre** (page 134) to try and grab the NPC or knock them prone.

Following the attack, if the NPC is not restrained, prone, or down, they can continue to run away using the guidelines in the **Catching Up with the Quarry** section (page 154). Or, on their turn in the round, the NPC can decide to stop fleeing and engage the investigator in combat—or whatever else they wish to do.

The GM's Turn

The GM uses the following two steps when the NPC is fleeing from the investigators:

- **GM's Turn Part 1: Move Forward**: automatic.
- **GM's Turn Part 2: Combat or Next Player's Turn**.

GM's Turn Part 1: Move Forward

On the GM's turn, the GM simply describes the NPCs moving through the location however they wish. The GM does not roll dice for NPC movement in a chase. The NPCs move forward, and the players' dice rolls decide who wins the chase. As when the investigators are being pursued, the GM should use the dice results to help narrate how the chase is going, working in elements of the surroundings to give it lots of flavour.

GM's Turn Part 2: Combat or Next Player's Turn

Fleeing NPCs can potentially make a ranged attack; see **Ranged Attacks Mid-Chase** (following) for further details on how this works.

Ranged Attacks Mid-Chase

Each character, following their chase roll (if they have to make one), can make a firearms or spell attack on their turn in the chase round.

- If the character moved forward in the chase this round, their Firearms or Magic roll incurs a penalty die because they are attacking on the move (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).



- If an investigator stops moving to make a ranged attack, they can do so without incurring the penalty die, but their progress in the chase for that round is treated as an automatic chase failure.
- If an NPC stops moving to make a ranged attack, they can do so without incurring the penalty die. If this is the only NPC in the chase, immediately following the GM's turn, all players gain one additional chase success. If there are multiple NPCs and some stop and some continue to move, refer to **Handling Chases with Multiple NPCs** (page 152).

Vehicle Chases

The rules for vehicle chases mirror those for chases on foot. If the players and NPCs find themselves in a car chase, for example, use the same structure and steps already outlined in the previous sections, with a few minor tweaks.

Burst of Speed (Vehicles)

Whenever the driver can put their pedal to the metal on sections of open road, treat it as a burst of speed. Use the same rules as for **Burst of Speed** (page 151), but substitute the Drive skill for DEX.

Negotiating Obstacles (Vehicles)

Whenever the location features an obstacle or hazard—such as sharp turns in narrow London back streets, slaloming through rush-hour traffic, or debris on the road—use the same rules as for **Negotiating Obstacles** (page 152) but substitute the Drive skill for the Athletics skill.

Vehicular Combat

Drivers may use their vehicles to "combat" other vehicles, mirroring the combat rules but substituting the Drive skill for the Fighting skill. These rules for vehicular combat assume that the vehicles involved are travelling at speed. The default goal in vehicular combat is to collide with the other vehicle and put it out of action, either through direct damage or by causing their opponent to lose control of their vehicle, but most likely a combination of both. Think *The Fey and the Furious*. Vehicular combat uses the same six steps as regular combat:

- **Step 1: Set Your Goal:** describe what your character is doing.
- **Step 2: Target Responds:** the target describes how they intend to respond.
- **Step 3: Dice Rolls:** roll percentile dice.
- **Step 4: Damage:** figure out any damage or other effects.
- **Step 5: Narration:** the winner describes what happens.
- **Step 6: Next Player's Turn.**

Firearms vs Vehicles

All the best action movies have their goodies and baddies shooting at each others' vehicles with a wide variety of firearms. However, vehicle damage is on a different scale to character damage. To take out a vehicle, a character with a firearm could either target the driver or the tyres.

Tyres are small targets and so incur one penalty die to the Firearms roll. Plus, a penalty die may be imposed if the vehicle is moving at high speed (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111; **Target Size**, page 139; **Fast-Moving Targets**, page 138; **Multiple Bonus or Penalty Dice**, page 143). Damage rolls are made as for regular combat; 1 damage to a tyre is enough to puncture it. Drive rolls for a vehicle with one or more burst tyres are made with a penalty die.

The same conditions apply if the attacker is trying to shoot the driver—ordinarily, a person wouldn't count as a small target, but they most definitely are if you consider how little of them can be seen over a steering wheel.

Steps 1 and **2** remain much the same as in the **Running Combat Encounters** section (page 127). In **Step 3: Dice Rolls**, the two drivers make an opposed combat roll using their Drive skills. Determine the winner by the usual method (**Opposed Combat Rolls**, page 131).

Next comes **Step 4: Damage**, in which you figure out any damage or other effects. There is no need to make a damage roll; use the following conditions to work out how much damage each vehicle suffers (if any):

- If the vehicle's Build is greater than double the other's, the one with the higher Build is dealt no damage, while the one with the lower Build suffers 3 damage.
- If the vehicle's Build is greater than the other's—up to double its Build—the one with the higher Build suffers 1 damage, and the one with the lower Build suffers 2 damage.

- If the vehicles have equal Build values, they both suffer 2 damage.

Damage dealt to a vehicle is recorded in three levels—the same as damage done to a person, just with different names. Also like the damage done to people, vehicular damage is cumulative.

- When a vehicle takes 1 damage, it is **Pranged** (still drivable).
- If a vehicle takes 2 damage, it is **Damaged** (still drivable—just!).
- If a vehicle takes 3 damage, it is **Wrecked** (no longer drivable).

Wrecked Vehicles
A vehicle is wrecked once it's received a total of 3 damage. Wrecked vehicles are out of the chase, and when it comes to **Step 5: Narration** (page 133), the GM, with suggestions from the players, should describe the event in a way that seems appropriate to the location. For example: it may be that the vehicle has rolled spectacularly into a ditch, burst through a shop window in a shower of glass, or been forced to execute a soggy dive into a river, and so on. The driver and passengers may be injured, and the GM should refer to **Control Roll** (following) to see how badly they've been harmed.

Control Roll
Whenever a vehicle is damaged in a collision, or the driver suffers damage, the driver must make a Drive roll to maintain control of the vehicle.

- If a vehicle suffers 2 damage in one collision, the Drive roll incurs a penalty die (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).
- Bicycles and motorcycles involved in a collision always incur a penalty die on any Drive roll made to maintain control.

If the Drive roll to keep control is failed, the vehicle crashes and the driver and any passengers suffer damage. The degree of damage is primarily determined by the vehicle's speed (which is judged by the GM according to the situation):

- At low speed (such as when chasing through dense urban traffic, under 40 kph/25 mph): 2 damage to vehicle and passengers.
- At medium speed (such as when chasing through empty streets, up to 120 kph/75 mph): 3 damage to vehicle and passengers.
- At high speed (such as when chasing on the motorway (freeway), over 120 kph/75 mph): 4 damage to vehicle and passengers.

Narrating the Outcome of Vehicular Combat

After the vehicular combat rolls and damage have been taken care of, next comes **Step 5: Narration** (page 133), in which the outcome is described by the winner of the opposed Drive roll, unless the vehicle has been wrecked in the process (**Wrecked Vehicles**, nearby). This is followed with **Step 6: Next Player's Turn** (page 133).

Repairs

After a vehicular combat, if enough time and money is spent on the vehicle, pretty much any damage can be fixed, though wrecks may be beyond repair. The cost and time needed for such repairs should be determined narratively between the GM and players—that is to say, the rules do not attempt to address this level of detail. The GM can, at their discretion, ask for a Luck roll to see whether the vehicle can be repaired or not. A success indicates that it can be fixed and put back on the road, while a failure means the vehicle is a total write-off. Remember, you cannot spend Luck points on a Luck roll, nor can you push Luck rolls.



Table 8: Vehicles

Vehicle	MOV	Build	Passengers
Bicycle	10	1	1
Horse (with rider)	11	5	1
Motorcycle, Light	13	2	1
Motorcycle, Heavy	16	4	1
Car, Economy	13	5	4
Car, Standard	14	6	5
Car, Deluxe or SUV	15	7	5
Sports Car	16	6	2
Pickup Truck	14	7	2+
5.5-tonne Truck	13	8	2+
18-Wheeler	13	10	2+

Notes

MOV: rating of the vehicle's speed and manoeuvrability in chases.
Build: rating of the strength and size of the vehicle.
Passengers: the number of people that can be accommodated.







Newtonian Magic

MAGIC IS FUNDAMENTAL in the world of *Rivers of London*—without it, there would be no Folly, no Nightingale, and no Peter Grant. At least, not in the way that we have come to know them over the course of the novels. As you might expect, magic is also important in *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, so this chapter discusses the nature of spells, how spells are learned, how they are cast, and what they actually do. But first, we're going to look at two other important side effects of magic: *vestigia* and *signare*.

Vestigia

Magic leaves an imprint on the physical environment—what Newtonian practitioners call "*vestigia*." Everyone can sense this imprint without necessarily being aware of the fact; thus, Sense Vestigia is a common skill with a starting value of 30%. Some people, though, are much more attuned to the *vestigia* around them. Investigators who take the Magic skill during character creation automatically boost their Sense Vestigia skill to 60%, as do any fae investigators (**Sense Vestigia**, page 85).

It's also possible for people to hone their senses when it comes to detecting and understanding *vestigia*. An investigator can improve their ability to perceive *vestigia* with a few hours of training, even though they lack the Magic skill. The Folly has a formal three-day programme for this, called Vestigia Sensitivity Training. An investigator without the Magic skill may wish to take this course during downtime between case files, as doing so grants a development point to spend on their Sense Vestigia skill (**Training**, page 122). Alternatively, they can spend general **Development Points** (page 120) to increase the skill during an **Investigator Development Phase** (page 120).

As well as being able to sense *vestigia*, some creatures and beings, such as revenants, ghosts, and vampires, feed on *vestigia* (**Werelight**, page 182, and **Vampires**, page 255).

Vestigia Strength

It seems that *vestigia* can manifest in a huge variety of ways and tends to be registered by humans as a sensation of some sort—a sound, a smell, a physical sensation, or a combination of all three. However, the amount of *vestigia* left hanging around can vary widely, which affects how easy they are to detect, and any *vestigia* the investigators encounter are likely to be one of three strengths: weak, strong, or extremely strong.

Weak Vestigia

Generally, weak *vestigia* have been around for a very long time and includes the underlying levels of *vestigia* that surround us in our general environment—sort of like background radiation, just for magic—it's always there, but you only find it if you deliberately look for it. Also, some materials don't retain *vestigia* very well, so even recent magic use on or around such materials may not leave a strong imprint (**Vestigia in the Environment**, page 163).

Strong Vestigia

Generally, the kind of *vestigia* left behind by recent magic use or other supernatural occurrences. *Vestigia* are also generated by human activity, especially that involving strong emotions, such as festivals and football matches, but even some low-key events like a village fete can leave traces. Such *vestigia* can build up over time and become strong if the emotions creating it become trapped within certain materials that are good at retaining *vestigia* (**Vestigia in the Environment**, page 163).

Extremely Strong Vestigia

Really strong negative emotions can leave a stain on the environment. Places such as massacre sites can be saturated with powerful and unpleasant extremely strong *vestigia*, which can develop into a hostile force (known as either a despair or a malignancy, depending on its behaviour)[1]. Even those who haven't honed their senses can be well aware that something bad happened in places like that. Very powerful magic used against (or

Footnote: [1]*The October Man*

in the presence of) certain materials also generates an extremely strong *vestigium* (**Vestigia in the Environment**, page 163).

Detecting Vestigia

When in the presence of *vestigia*, the GM may ask a player for a Sense Vestigia roll. The GM decides whether the *vestigia* are weak or strong. In some cases, the *vestigia* may be extremely strong, so the GM may decide to forgo the skill roll altogether and just tell the investigators what they can sense—"obvious" clues like this are indicated in pre-written case files (scenarios).

For extremely strong *vestigia*:

- Usually, no skill roll is necessary to sense extremely strong *vestigia*.

For strong *vestigia*:

- A Regular success permits someone to detect all a particular *vestigium's* elements.

For weak *vestigia*:

- A Regular success permits someone to detect the main element of that *vestigium*; its core element.
- A Hard success permits someone to detect all of that particular *vestigium*'s elements.

Using Vestigia in Case Files

The *vestigia* sensed in a particular location or attached to a particular object or person might only provide some background colour and depth, but it could equally supply a clue of some kind—either to a person or a place's history, or to the nature of a crime or who committed it. For example, if a series of crimes were being committed by the same *genius loci*, then their *vestigia* would leave a trace at each of the scenes of infraction, and this would be detectable when the investigators finally meet up with the perpetrator. The same goes for a practitioner's **Signare** (page 164), which is detected in the same way as *vestigia*.

Table 9: Example Clues from Vestigia

Vestigia	Possible Clue
Cigarette smoke	The location was once somewhere where smoking regularly took place, like a pub or club.
Expensive cologne/perfume	The perpetrator's father or mother always wore this scent, and they associate it with a strong emotion, which is why it's hanging around at the scene of the crime.
The Beatles singing "In My Life"	A song the victim associates with the perpetrator, or the perpetrator associates with themselves, which is why it's left traces either on the victim or at the scene of the crime.
A surge of passion	The perpetrator or victim associates the location with sexual activity, even if the crime itself wasn't sexual in nature.
A vivid flash of sunlight	The crime took place either early or late in the day, when the sun was low in the sky.
The smell of new leather seats	The victim was in a new car—either with their attacker or on their way to meet them—or the perpetrator has connections to the motor trade.
The smell and feel of coal dust	The perpetrator or victim associates the location with coal dust, perhaps a cellar or outbuilding.
The stink of formaldehyde	The perpetrator or victim works in a mortuary or some other industry that uses formaldehyde, such as plastics production.
The scent of hyacinths	The perpetrator or victim is a gardener or allotment holder—or it could even be as simple as Hyacinth being the perpetrator's or victim's name.
The stench of vomit	The perpetrator was revolted by the crime, so much so that it made them feel sick inside, a feeling that repeats every time they think of it.



GM ADVICE

Don't forget, members of the Folly are trained to carry out an Initial Vestigium Assessment (IVA) the moment they arrive at the scene of a crime to determine if there's any magical involvement (**Types of Evidence**, page 204).

Sometimes, the sensations derived from *vestigia* only make sense in hindsight—they are often subtle clues, quite tangential or obscure, that give an inkling of the truth rather than concrete evidence you could produce in court. It could be just enough to let the investigators know that something is "off" about a crime scene, or it might point them in the right direction to look for physical clues or further leads. For example, the song Peter Grant hears when investigating the death of Cyrus Wilkinson[2] leads him to the dead man's connection to jazz, and so on.

- If the investigators are struggling to figure out what a particular *vestigium* means, i.e., how it relates to the case, permit them an INT roll. If they are successful, they understand what the *vestigium* is trying to tell them.
- If the clue is essential to moving the plot forward (an "obvious" clue), let the investigators have it with no need for a roll. Remember, keep dice rolls for dramatic or tense moments where success or failure adds interest to the plot.

Vestigia in the Environment

Some materials hold *vestigia* longer than others.

- **Stone:** soaks up everything around it, meaning some old houses are positively dripping with *vestigia*.
- **Concrete:** almost as good at storing *vestigia* as stone.
- **Metals:** not as good at storing *vestigia* as stone.
- **Wood:** not as good at storing *vestigia* as metals. Green wood dampens magic and can act as a magical insulator.
- **Plastics:** some types of plastic, e.g., PVC, retain *vestigia* very well, some better than metals.
- **Corpses:** the human body is terrible at retaining *vestigia*. Magic strong enough to kill a person results in some *vestigia*, but even then, it might only last a few days.



Footnote: [2]*Moon Over Soho*

Signare

The man popped the fireball like a soap bubble, and rubbed his thumb and finger under his nose. 'Who trained you?' he asked. 'Not Jeffers, that's for certain. Not that he was without skill, but you've got spirit. Was it Gripper? He's just the kind to bleat about what he's doing. Have you noticed that about journalists? All they really want to talk about is themselves.'
—Moon Over Soho

Every practitioner has their own unique *signare*—a magical signature that can be perceived by other practitioners and members of the demi-monde in much the same way that one detects *vestigia*. Just as an expert can determine whether a painting is a genuine "old master" by studying the brushstrokes and technique, so can a practitioner detect subtleties in the casting of a spell that distinguishes who performed it. Each practitioner has their own unique *signare*, but an element of a master's *signare* is passed on to any apprentices they may teach.

In the novels, Peter Grant senses Nightingale's *signare* as being like the sound of cymbals, as heavy as a mallet, and as sharp and controlled as the point of a needle; there is also a tick-tock precision and the smell of willow. This clockwork precision is passed on to Lesley May, whose *signare* combines the tick-tock element with the razor strop and a seagull's cry.

Detecting Signare

As *signare* and *vestigia* are related, *signare* are detected in exactly the same way—using the Sense Vestigia skill (**Vestigia**, page 161).

GM ADVICE



Fae investigators (**Playing Fae Investigators**, page 318) don't generally have signare—anyone successfully using Sense Vestigia on a fae investigator simply becomes aware of something strange and otherworldly about them (the same as they would for any other fae character).

Creating an Investigator's Signare

An investigator choosing the Magical advantage during character creation and who subsequently takes the Magic skill as one of their six starting skills needs to create their own *signare*—so other practitioners and members of the demi-monde can recognise them for who and what they are.

To create a *signare* for your investigator, either choose one sound, one smell, and one other sensation from **Table 10: Signare** or, if you can't (or would rather not) decide, roll 1D100 on each of the three columns instead. Choose to keep any two of them and disregard the third. If you don't like what you've rolled, roll again (or choose this time). Feel free to adjust the descriptions as you wish—the listed entries are there for inspiration. Alternatively, create your own *signare* using these as a basis for your own ideas. If your investigator is being trained by a character with a known *signare*, you should incorporate one aspect of the teacher's *signare* into your own as a third element.

For example: *Nafeesa's player isn't sure which* signare *to choose, so they decide to roll randomly. They roll 1D100 for a sound, getting 01—the song of a blackbird. This is followed by a 77 for smells—menthol rub. Finally, a 07 for other sensations—the taste of fresh apple. Nafeesa's player decides to keep the sound and the taste of apple because they suggest a garden theme, which quite appeals to the player. If Nafeesa is being trained by Nightingale, it would make sense for her to have his tick-tock element as well. So, Nafeesa's final* signare *is: the song of a blackbird, the taste of fresh apple, and a tick-tock sound.*



Table 10: Signare

Dice Roll (1D100)	Sound	Smell	Other Sensations
1	A blackbird's song	Freshly baked bread	The flash of sunlight low in the sky
2	The soft grunting of a pig	The breath of a dying person	A sense that there's someone behind you right now
3	A guitar being tuned	Passing by an Indian restaurant	Moonlight shadows
4	The wind in the trees	The smoke from an extinguished candle	The flicker of seagull wings
5	Children's laughter	School changing rooms	The movement of bugs in the air
6	The ringing of glass wind chimes	Grandmother's cupboard under the stairs	The taste of blood in your mouth
7	A motorbike engine rumbling	Hot chips (fries) and vinegar	The taste of fresh apple
8	A match being struck	Wet dogs	The feel of plunging your hands into a bowl of hot washing-up water
9	The rustling of newspaper	The heavy scent of lilies	Pins and needles
10	The click-clack of knitting needles	The first day of spring	A sudden desire to dance
11	A cascade of musical notes like running water	Alcohol	A chill down your spine
12	A fingertip running around the rim of a wine glass	Bananas	A warm fireside
13	A whispering clash like the sound of cymbals	Belgian chocolate	The aftermath of a photo flash
14	A woman's voice singing	A bowl of rotting shrimp	Awe
15	A dog barking	The yeasty smell of uncooked bread	Bicycles
16	Rain on a corrugated metal roof	Brick dust	The bite of cold metal
17	Children playing football in the distance	Burned wood	A blast of bone-numbing cold
18	The muffled rumble of engines underground	Burning candlewax	Blood
19	A child crying	Burnt earth	A burst of heat, like stepping out into the hot sun
20	Chisels on stone	Carbolic soap	Children bouncing up and down in excitement

Dice Roll (1D100)	Sound	Smell	Other Sensations
21	The clash of machines	Cement dust	Concrete walls
22	The click-click of insect legs and mandibles	Cigarette smoke	Cricket and beer on a sunny summer's afternoon
23	The clinkety-clink of a pianoforte	Cigars	Dad blowing up a paddling pool
24	A clockwork tick	Pipe tobacco	Desire
25	Evensong	Clean laundry	Disappointment
26	The flick-flick-flick of an old-fashioned film projector	Coal dust	Evening television flickering through net curtains
27	The grinding of metal teeth	Coffee	Excitement
28	A deep, rumbling growl	Old cooking fat	Exultation
29	The heavy slap of men carrying weight on their shoulders	Cooking smells	A screaming sense of fear
30	Jazz heard on a Bakelite radio	Cut wood	The feel of rolling tobacco
31	Heartfelt laughter	Diesel	The feel of wet papier mâché
32	Your Mum shouting	Drains	Dogs fighting
33	Piano music—pub sing-along style ("Roll Out the Barrel"/"Knees Up, Mother Brown")	Dried sweat	The flicker of insect wings
34	The rattle of a hand-powered machine (butter churn)	Dust	Fresh and cool
35	The ring of hammers on metal	Petrichor	The greasy tension of magic
36	A saxophone solo	Expensive cologne	The rough texture of a hemp rope
37	Running feet	A farmyard	The hot, communal breath of the hive
38	Screams of excitement	Fish guts	Hot steam
39	Ringing silence	The sea	A hot summer afternoon
40	Shouting	Formaldehyde	A hungry dog/wolf

Dice Roll (1D100)	Sound	Smell	Other Sensations
41	A shrieking voice (inhuman—almost like cats fighting)	Fresh loam	Illegal acceleration
42	Singing	Freshly mown grass	The taste of lemon drops
43	Snatches of music	Furniture polish	A metallic taste
44	The sound of a crowd cheering	Gunpowder	Pain
45	The sound of ripping fabric	Pine needles	People dancing
46	The sounds of an outdoor market (shouting, traders' calls, haggling)	Horse manure	Plunging face first into an icy stream
47	A strange cry, like a seagull	Horses	Pride
48	The fluttering of paper wings	Hot oil	Rushing
49	The sound of anvils ringing like bells	Hot plastic and dust	A sense of despair
50	A trembling chime	Hyacinth	A skin-crawling sensation, like your face being stroked by thousands of tiny cilia
51	A trombone	Incense	The slip-slide of lip balm
52	Whispered conversations	Leather	Surge of sexual desire
53	Wind breathing through the strings of a harp	Liquorice	The taste of greasy food
54	A yappy little dog	Machine oil	The taste of green curry
55	The deep contented purr of a cat	New car seats	The taste of fresh orange
56	Whispering of papers	Oily water	The taste of macaroni cheese
57	The click and whirr of a cuckoo clock	Ozone	The taste of pizza
58	A horse's whinny	Patchouli oil	The taste of vodka
59	Sheep bleating	Pepper	Terror
60	Water babbling over stones	Petrol (gasoline)	A lover's kiss

Dice Roll (1D100)	Sound	Smell	Other Sensations
61	Rushing water	A pigsty	The controlled terror and excitement of a rollercoaster
62	The clang of a church bell	Roast pork	A huge crowd
63	A wheezing, groaning sound	Rotting straw	The heat of the kiln
64	The blare of a trumpet	Roast beef	The last drop into oblivion
65	The loud rattle of thunder	Sherbet	The promise of beer and skittles
66	Pottery breaking	Silage	The sensation of rain
67	A kettle boiling	A slaughterhouse	Tick-tock precision
68	Creaking floorboards	An old cinema	A warm, snuggly blanket
69	The lazy drone of insect wings	Spilled port	The touch of velvet on the cheek
70	The fizzing of a newly opened bottle of pop (soda)	Spirit gum	Treacle
71	A short, sharp grunt	Stale beer	A twist and punch sensation
72	The honking of geese	Stilton	A surge of strength
73	A car horn blaring	Suburban roses	Violence
74	A balloon bursting	Earl Grey tea	Walking home from the pub by moonlight
75	Bees buzzing	Tinned cat food	The whetstone scrape of a blade
76	The drip, drip, drip of a leaking tap	Unwashed bodies	A flash of movement out of the corner of your eye
77	The soft clucking of chickens	Menthol rub	The feeling of sand between your toes
78	A brief snatch of a favourite TV show theme tune	A waft of dank air	Scratchy new clothing
79	Loud rock music	Newly washed cars	The soft caress of silk
80	The hoot of an owl	Wet pavement	A tightness in the chest

Dice Roll (1D100)	Sound	Smell	Other Sensations
81	An unhappy moan	Wet wool	A sick knot in the pit of your stomach
82	An old-fashioned rotary phone ringing	A whiff of gunmetal	The sharp stab of a needle
83	The screech of car brakes	Rosemary	Dampness
84	A thin, high-pitched wail	Thyme	Loneliness
85	The insistent beeping of an alarm clock	Molasses/treacle	Sorrow
86	A short, sharp whistle	Molasses	Elation
87	A loud splash	Lemon juice	Relief
88	Coughing	Frying bacon	The feeling of rain on your face
89	The snipping of scissors	Orange zest	A shiver
90	The whir and clatter of a sewing machine	Frying onions	A hot flush
91	Splintering wood	Ripe strawberries	A moment of dizziness
92	A bull's bellow	Fresh doughnuts	An electric shock
93	The snapping of a twig underfoot	Suntan lotion	Goosebumps
94	A key turning in a lock	Mothballs	Aches and pains
95	A pigeon cooing	Bleach	Numbness
96	Breaking glass	Toast	A cool breeze across the skin
97	A zip being pulled open or shut	Peppermint	A sudden release of tension
98	The hiss of escaping steam	Lavender	Toothache
99	An ice cream van's chime	Old books	Snow falling on your tongue
100	Gunfire	Coconut	The taste of your favourite food

Newtonian Spells

'A spell is a series of forma *strung together to achieve an effect, while a ritual is what it sounds like: a sequence of* forma *arranged as a ritual with certain paraphernalia to help move the process along,' said Nightingale. 'They tend to be older spells from the early part of the eighteenth century.'*
—Rivers of London

Spells from the school of Newtonian magic are cast by forming shapes in the mind, to which a Latin word is attached, known as a *forma*. Different *formae* have different effects; for example, *lux* is the *forma* for light—as a single *forma*, it can be used to cast the spell that many wizards learn first: **Werelight** (page 182). Spells that use a single *forma* are referred to as "first order" spells and are relatively simple to cast. Higher-order spells use multiple *formae* strung together to create more complex spells. Roughly speaking, the number of *formae* used to create the spell determines the order of the spell. A selection of spells, based on those found in the novels, is presented later in this chapter (**Spells**, page 178).

BEN SAYS

Newtonian magic in the world of *Rivers of London* is complex and involved. A system that reflected all its nuance and idiosyncrasies would be longer than this book and probably not that much fun. By necessity, the system presented here abstracts much of that complexity to smooth the playing experience.

Investigators and Spells

To be able to cast spells, an investigator must first choose the Magical advantage during character creation (**Advantages**, page 51). Once done, they can choose Magic as one of their six starting skills (**Investigators with Magic**, page 54). Starting investigators with the Magic skill begin with three spells:

- Two "first order" spells (one mastered, one unmastered).
- One "second order" spell (unmastered).

Some spells, particularly those from higher orders, have prerequisites for learning them (**Spell Prerequisites**, page 178). An investigator must always have the correct prerequisite spell(s) for any spell they wish to acquire during character creation or learn during an **Investigator Development Phase** (page 120). See the individual descriptions in the **Spells** section (page 178) for further details.

GM ADVICE

Why so few spells? Well, the investigators in a standard *Rivers of London* game have limited experience, so they haven't really had the opportunity to learn much in the way of magic just yet. Remember, in *Rivers of London*, Peter Grant spends almost the entire first half of the book only knowing how to cast a werelight, and he doesn't learn how to cast a fireball until *Moon Over Soho*.



ADDITIONAL RULES

If you want your investigators to begin the game with more spells, allow your players to make use of the optional **Spellcaster Experience Package** during character creation—see **Investigator Experience Packages**, page 309, for more details.

Newtonian Apprentices

The safest and most efficient way to learn Newtonian magic is to be taught by an experienced practitioner.

- All investigators beginning the game as a Newtonian practitioner's apprentice (like Peter Grant is to Nightingale) start with **Werelight** (page 182) as their mastered spell, after which the choice of spells is up to the player.
- A common second spell to learn is **Impello** (page 178). These are both first order spells.

In a UK-based game, the only way for an investigator to become a full Newtonian apprentice (like Peter Grant) is to be inducted into the **Society of the Wise** (page 260) before they learn any spells. DCI Thomas Nightingale is their Master, assisted by Varvara Sidorovna Tamonina (see their write ups in **A Rogues' Gallery**, pages 233 and 240 respectively). The GM should encourage the player to explain how their investigator came to the Folly's attention and was thereby taken on as an apprentice during Step Five of character creation (**Create a Backstory**, page 56).

If an investigator already knows how to cast spells before they join the Folly, they are classed as a **Hedge Wizard** (following), though Nightingale and Varvara will undoubtedly be responsible for any further training they receive.

The Practitioner's Oath

Investigators who are also practitioners are expected to swear an oath upon joining the Folly (**By My Troth**, page 54), whether they are police officers or civilians. Police officer practitioners do so in front of the Commissioner and DCI Nightingale, promising to keep secret what they're taught, among other things (for the oath's exact wording, see **Game Moderator Advice**, page 217). The civilian oath is nearer to the one taken by Patrick Gale and his associates (**The City of London**, page 275), and is likewise accompanied by a suitably binding non-disclosure agreement, separate to the one required for the Folly consultant's card.

Hedge Wizards

The term "hedge wizard"—or, more rarely, "hedge witch"—is an umbrella term used for the many alternatives to being a formally-trained Newtonian practitioner. Some investigators may have spontaneously discovered their ability, while others may have been taught by a "rogue" practitioner—or a practitioner from another school of magic entirely.

- The choice of spells for a hedge wizard is entirely open, but again, they should start play with two first order spells (one of which is mastered) and one second order spell (unmastered).

Example: *Nafeesa is an apprentice Newtonian practitioner and so automatically starts with Werelight (mastered) plus two other spells of her choosing. Her player picks the first order spell* Impello *and the second order spell Fireball. Morgan is a hedge wizard, and chooses the first order spells Flash Bulb (mastered) and* Aqua, *and the second order spell Shield.*

Mastering a Spell

As we learn in the novels, casting a spell carries inherent risks—including **Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation** (HTD, known in some US circles as Rebenstock's Syndrome; page 177)—but, through practise, individual spells can be mastered. A mastered spell is safer and more reliable to use than an unmastered one.

- Apprentice practitioners schooled by a master of Newtonian magic begin play with the spell Werelight already mastered.
- Hedge wizards begin play with one mastered first order spell of their choosing.
- Once a spell is mastered, the player should check the Mastered box next to the spell's name on the character sheet.
- A mastered spell gains a bonus die to the Magic skill roll made to cast it.

Example: *Nafeesa begins play with Werelight already mastered; her player marks the check box next to the spell's name on Nafeesa's character sheet. Morgan, as a hedge wizard, decides which spell they have mastered. Morgan's player chooses Flash Bulb as Morgan's mastered spell. Like Nafeesa's player, Morgan's player now marks the Mastered check box on their character sheet so they can see at a glance which of their spells are mastered and which are unmastered.*

During each **Investigator Development Phase** (page 120), a player has the option of spending 1 development point to select one of their investigator's unmastered spells and mark it as mastered.

- An investigator must have two spells of a given order mastered before they can master spells of the order above.
- To begin with, an investigator can only master first order spells. Once they have mastered two first order spells, they have the option of mastering a second order spell, and so on.
- Once an investigator masters a spell, it is mastered permanently.

GM ADVICE

A player can spend a maximum of 1 development point to master an existing spell or learn a new spell; they cannot do both in the same development phase if they have only 1 development point available (as learning a spell and mastering one requires 2 points), nor can they learn or master multiple spells at a time. This restriction reflects that learning and mastering spells requires considerable effort to achieve (**Learning and Mastering Spells**, page 121).



Learning More Spells

During each **Investigator Development Phase** (page 120), a player has the option of spending 1 development point to learn a new spell.

- An investigator must know two spells of a given order before they can learn spells belonging to the order above.
- In addition, the balance of the orders of spells known by an investigator cannot be top heavy, i.e., an investigator can never know more spells in any given order than they know in any of the orders below it.
- Thus, an investigator with two first order spells and two second order spells could learn either an additional first order spell or a third order spell. They couldn't, however, learn any more second order spells for the moment, as that would lead to them having more second order spells than first order ones: a definite imbalance.



GM ADVICE

An investigator can spend only 1 development point to learn one new spell during an investigator development phase (**Learning and Mastering Spells**, page 121).

Example: *Nafeesa knows two first order spells,* Werelight *and* Impello*, and one second order spell,* Fireball*. During her first investigator development phase, she has 1 development point to spend. She could mark* Impello *as mastered, learn a new first order spell, or learn a new second order spell. She opts to master* Impello*. If she had 2 development points to spend, she could invest that second point to also learn a new spell or use it to also increase her Magic skill, but if she had 3 or more points to spend, she couldn't spend any further points to buy more new spells or master other ones until her next investigator development phase.*

Casting Spells

This section takes you through how a character, be they investigator or non-player character (NPC), uses their Magic skill and magic points to cast spells.

- A Magic skill roll must be made when attempting to cast a spell, unless the caster is not pressed for time (**Spellcasting Rolls**, page 173).
- Each spell requires a certain number of magic points to be spent before it can be cast (**Magic Points and Spells**, following).
- It takes one combat round (or the narrative equivalent) to cast a spell—the same amount of time it takes to throw a punch or fire a gun in combat, i.e., it takes up the caster's turn in a combat round (**The Combat Round**, page 124).
- Various factors affect whether or not the spellcasting roll gains a bonus die or incurs a penalty die (**Table 11: Mastered vs Unmastered Spells**, page 174; **Ranged Attack Modifiers**, page 138).
- The standard rules for **Multiple Bonus or Penalty Dice** apply to spellcasting rolls (page 143).

Magic Points and Spells

Magic points must be expended to cast spells. Remember, an investigator begins the game with magic points equal to one-fifth of their POW, plus one point for their mastered first order spell. Every time an investigator masters a spell, they gain another magic point.

Example: *Nafeesa has POW 60, which divided by five, results in a magic point value of 12 points. She begins with Werelight as a mastered spell, increasing her magic point score by one to 13. During her first investigator development phase, where she masters a second spell, her magic point score increases by one, giving her a new total of 14 magic points.*

Spent magic points regenerate naturally, returning to their normal maximum value for **The Next Scene** (nearby).

- The base cost of attempting to cast a spell is a number of magic points equal to the spell's order.
- The cost of a mastered spell can be boosted (raised) if the caster wishes to increase or alter its effects (**Boosting a Spell**, page 176). Not all spells can be boosted.

Example: *Nafeesa has mastered Werelight. When casting this spell, she can either spend the base cost of 1 magic point (because it is a first order spell) to get one golf ball-sized sphere of light, or she can spend 2 magic points (the base cost plus a boost of 1 magic point) to get an intensely bright ball of light.*

- Once a practitioner runs out of magic points, they may continue to cast spells, but such attempts may cause them harm (**Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation**, page 177).
- There is no need to track "negative" magic points, but a practitioner must roll for HTD every time they attempt to cast a spell when they have zero magic points available.



The Next Scene

The phrase "the next scene" is used to indicate the passing of time between one scene and the next, and its nature is elastic. It is necessary that a short period of time (approximately 30 minutes or so) passes between scenes: moving from one room of a house to the next is not sufficient time, whereas driving across London from one location to another is. If in doubt, the GM decides whether enough time has passed for a character to refresh their magic points.

Example: *while exploring an abandoned underground station, Nafeesa casts Werelight, costing her 1 magic point. While there, she defends herself using Fireball, costing her 2 magic points. She has spent a total of 3 magic points, reducing her available magic points to 10. By the time she arrives back at the Folly (at least 30 minutes later), she has recovered her lost magic points and her total is back up to 13.*

Spellcasting Rolls

Casting a spell requires skill and concentration. Casting an unmastered spell can be challenging and the outcome unpredictable, whereas casting a mastered spell is more straightforward due to the caster's familiarity with the spell through practise and experience. As a result, mastered spells gain a bonus die on their spellcasting roll.

To make a spellcasting roll, the player should roll percentile dice and compare the result with their investigator's Magic skill. If rolling with a bonus die, the caster takes the best result (**Rolling a Bonus/Penalty Die**, page 111).

- **Regular success or better:** the spell works just as it should.
- **A failure:** the result is in the hands of the GM; something happens, just not what the caster originally intended (**Failing Spellcasting Rolls**, page 174).
- **A fumble:** the caster is drained of all magic points and must roll for **Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation** (page 177).

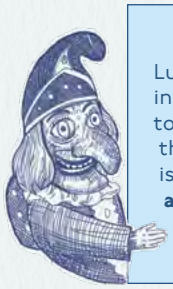
Example: *Nafeesa's attempt to cast Werelight in the underground station requires a spellcasting roll. As she has mastered Werelight, the Magic roll gains a bonus die. Nafeesa's player rolls 22 and 62, and takes the best result: 22—a Hard success. Nafeesa's werelight pops into being, illuminating her surroundings. Nafeesa decides to cast another spell—Fireball. She must make a new Magic roll to see if she successfully casts it, but, as she hasn't mastered that spell, she doesn't gain a bonus die on the roll this time. Nafeesa's player rolls 08, another Hard success! A ball of fire flies at her target…*



If the spellcasting is made under unusual circumstances, such as within an area imbued with magic, refer to **Casting in Exceptional Circumstances** (page 175). When casting spells in combat, where speed is of the essence, refer to **Spellcasting in Combat** (following), **Which Skill to Use in Combat** (page 131), and **Fight Back Using Magic** (page 129).

If the caster has unlimited time and no other pressing concerns, the GM should just let the spell work with no Magic skill roll required. It can be assumed that, sooner or later, the caster will roll a success and that they are resting long enough to recoup lost magic points between such attempts. In this situation, roll 1D100 to see how many minutes it takes them to safely cast the spell. However, dice rolls should always be made when casting in exceptional circumstances and when using magic in combat.

Example: *Nafeesa is practising casting Fireball in one of the teaching labs upstairs in the Folly. It's not a spell she's mastered yet, but because there's no time pressure in this situation, the GM doesn't call for a Magic skill roll to see if she manages to cast it or not—it's clear that at some point, she will succeed. The GM instead asks Nafeesa's player to roll 1D100 to see how long it takes her. The result is 52, so 52 minutes later Nafeesa finally manages to throw out a perfect fireball.*



GM ADVICE

Luck points can be spent to turn a casting failure into a success, but as usual they cannot be used to buy off a fumble (**Spending Luck**, page 113). If the casting roll is made outside of combat, there is also the option to push the Magic roll (**Pushing a Spellcasting Roll**, page 175). Remember: combat rolls cannot be pushed (**Can I Push My Combat Roll?**, page 141).

Spellcasting in Combat

In combat, spells work in the same manner as firearms, but the caster makes a Magic roll instead of a Firearms roll. For example, if the caster is attacking with the Fireball spell, they make a single Magic roll to determine if the spell is successfully cast and whether it has hit the target.

- The damage roll for spells usually uses the caster's DEX to reflect that they are attempting to hit a target. Thus, use DEX rather than POW or STR when consulting the **Damage Roll** section (page 132).
- As with a firearms attack, spellcasting rolls in combat are subject to the same bonuses and penalties as firearms (**Ranged Attack Modifiers**, page 138).
- The target(s) of a spell during combat have the same response options as if they are being shot at (e.g., **Dive for Cover**, page 128, or **Fight Back**, page 129).

Failing Spellcasting Rolls

I can run you up a werelight in torrential rain or while reading the newspaper and the size and intensity of the light will be consistent every time. So imagine my surprise when I flicked open my palm and got a werelight the size of a football and the colour of a yellow party balloon.

—Broken Homes

Table 11: Mastered vs Unmastered Spells

The following table summarises the differences between a mastered and an unmastered spell.

Spell Type	Can I Boost the Spell?	Normal Conditions	Exceptional Circumstances	In Combat
Mastered	Yes	Bonus die to spellcasting roll	Bonus die to spellcasting roll cancels out penalty die due to exceptional circumstances	Bonus die to spellcasting roll cancels out any one penalty die incurred as a result of combat situation (e.g., if target is diving for cover)*
Unmastered	No	—	Penalty die to spellcasting roll	Bonus or penalty die to spellcasting roll based on combat situation (e.g., if target is diving for cover)*

See **Ranged Attack Modifiers (page 138) for other factors affecting Magic rolls during combat.*

If an investigator fails their Magic roll to cast a spell, a player has the option to spend Luck points to adjust the roll (**Spending Luck**, page 113) or they can push the roll instead (**Pushing a Spellcasting Roll**, following). But in combat, a player only has the option to spend Luck points to alter their Magic roll result (**Can I Push My Combat Roll?**, page 141).

If a player chooses not to spend Luck or push the roll (if permitted), failing the initial Magic skill roll to cast a spell does not mean that the spell completely fails—something always happens, even if it's just a disappointing fizzle or brief flash of light. To keep things interesting, we suggest that failing an initial spellcasting roll results in an unintended effect—perhaps weaker, stronger, or weirder than the practitioner was aiming for. Alternatively, in the case of a spell directed against someone or something (such as in combat), a failed spellcasting roll could indicate that the spell simply misses its target, e.g., the fireball shoots off in the opposite direction to its intended mark.

The effect of a failed spell is in the GM's hands, who should be creative with strange and unexpected results, although the effect should not cause significant harm to the caster. The GM should also be willing to take suggestions from the player whose investigator was casting the spell, but, as always, the GM's word on what actually happens is final. Failing a pushed spell roll has its own consequences—see **Pushing a Spellcasting Roll** (following).

Pushing a Spellcasting Roll

If the initial Magic roll to cast a spell is failed, the magic points are still spent, and as long as their investigator is not using magic in combat, the player immediately has the option to push the roll—with a bonus die if the spell is mastered. Pushing a spellcasting roll can be done by screwing up your eyes and focusing really hard on the shapes in your mind, or yelling the *formae* at the top of your lungs, or by some other means that makes sense for that particular spell. As always, the GM should encourage the player to say what they're doing to push the roll. There is no immediate magic point cost for pushing a spellcasting roll.

- **Pushed roll is successful:** the spell works normally; no additional magic points are spent above the original cost of the spell.
- **Pushed roll is failed:** the spell works normally, but the caster is drained of all magic points and must roll for **Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation** (page 177).
- **Pushed roll is fumbled:** the spell fails, and the caster is drained of all magic points and must roll for **Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation** (page 177) with a penalty die.

Example: *Nafeesa attempts to cast* Impello. *As it's a first order spell, she spends 1 magic point (the base cost) and rolls her Magic skill, getting an 84: a failure. Nafeesa's player decides to push the casting roll, and this time rolls a 06: a success. The book Nafeesa was attempting to levitate lifts off the desk. The spell has cost Nafeesa a total of 1 magic point. For what would happen if Nafeesa had failed the pushed roll, see the example under* ***Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation*** *(page 177).*

GM ADVICE

Pushing a spellcasting roll forces the spell to work, but at the risk of self-inflicted harm. Thus, pushing a spellcasting roll is a gamble for the player—not on if the spell will work (it will, unless the pushed roll is fumbled), but whether their investigator is badly injured in the process. And, like all pushed rolls, pushing a spellcasting roll takes additional time, which is why they cannot be pushed in combat. Alternatively, an investigator could choose not to push the spellcasting roll and instead take a breath and then attempt a "fresh" casting of the same spell, which means paying the spell's magic point cost again.



Casting in Exceptional Circumstances

The environment in which one performs a spell can have an effect upon the casting. Areas imbued with magic can intensify, dampen, or alter the effects of a spell.

- Casting a spell in "exceptional circumstances" inflicts a penalty die on the character's Magic skill roll.
- The bonus die gained from mastering a spell cancels out the penalty die for casting in exceptional circumstances.

If the roll is successful, the spell works normally. If the roll is failed, the GM decides the outcome (**Failing Spellcasting Rolls**, page 174). If the roll is fumbled, the investigator loses all remaining magic points and must roll for **Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation** (page 177).

It's also worth pointing out that magic and alcohol/recreational drugs don't mix well—casting spells requires a focused mind. If the caster is judged to be drunk or high, any spellcasting should be treated in the same manner as casting in exceptional circumstances.

GM ADVICE

Most people would struggle to even think about casting a spell when the pressure's on, but magic-wielding investigators in *RoL:RPG* are exceptional. They can broadly do what Peter Grant does, which includes having the wherewithal to attempt spellcasting in exceptional circumstances and during combat.



Boosting a Spell

A caster may choose to spend additional magic points when casting certain spells to boost their effects. To take advantage of this, the practitioner must have mastered the spell in question. The effects of boosting a spell with additional magic points are noted in each spell entry. Unmastered spells cannot be boosted in this fashion. In story terms, a spell boost can be rationalised as the use of magical finesse, through such techniques as:

- *Adjectivia:* (sing. *adjectivum*) a *forma* that has the sole purpose of changing other *formae*.
- *Inflectentes:* a method for "bending" *formae*.

The number of magic points a practitioner can spend to boost any single spell is limited. The limit is equal to the highest order of spell they have mastered. So, an investigator who has only first order spells mastered can spend a maximum of 1 additional magic point to boost any of their mastered spells. If they had a second order spell mastered, they could spend up to 2 magic points boosting each of their mastered spells. Any increase in the magic point cost of a spell above its base cost is considered a boost. The base cost to cast a spell is equal to the spell's order.

Example: *Nafeesa casts Werelight, one of her mastered spells. The spell is first order, so costs 1 magic point to cast. Nafeesa elects to spend a second magic point to boost the spell. Her Magic skill roll is successful, creating a ball of intensely bright light, for a total cost of 2 magic points.*



Sensing a Spell Being Cast

For once Nightingale didn't object, partly because sensing formae *is the key to winning a magical duel.*
—The Hanging Tree

In a scene, when a character declares they are casting a spell, any nearby practitioners should be given the opportunity to make a detection (Magic) roll before the caster makes their spellcasting roll:

- **Regular success:** the practitioner senses a spell is being prepared, but has no idea which spell is being cast. They may attempt to rapidly cast a spell of their own in response (**Fight Back Using Magic**, page 129).
- **Hard success:** the practitioner senses a spell is being prepared, and, if they are familiar with the spell, the GM should tell them its name. If they are not familiar with the spell, some hint of the spell's effects should be given. They may attempt to rapidly cast a spell of their own in response (**Fight Back Using Magic**, page 129).

If the caster is an NPC, the GM should offer any practitioner investigators present the opportunity to make a detection (Magic) roll—on a success, they detect that a spell is being cast as previously described.

Example: *Nafeesa is facing off against a hedge wizard who plans to cast* ***Ice Blast*** *(page 187) against her. The GM asks Nafeesa's player for a Magic roll to see if she can detect the upcoming spell. Her player rolls a 42—a Regular success. This means Nafeesa knows a spell is about to be cast, but she doesn't know what it is. If she'd rolled a Hard success (30 or lower), she would get a sense of icy coldness in her face but not the spell's name, as Varvara hasn't taught Nafeesa Ice Blast yet.*

Spells and Technology

I pulled my phone and gave it a shake—it made the sandy rainmaker sound that indicated it had been fried by the magical discharge.
—False Value

As a rule, magic and microprocessors do not get on. Casting a spell around any form of electronic device while it's connected to a battery or other power supply can be disastrous for the item involved, so much so that the Folly equips its recruits with mobile phones that have jury-rigged physical switches to disconnect the battery—far less laborious than having to constantly pop the battery in and out every time you might be in the vicinity of a magical discharge. Recruits are also encouraged to carry a spare phone (battery separate), just in case they need to cast a spell quickly, thereby accidentally disabling their main phone.

As long as the microprocessor isn't attached to a power source, it's safe. If it is attached to a power source, the silicon in its chip is highly likely to be turned into fine sand, rendering the device useless (known as "sanding"). Whether an electronic device survives or not is related to how far it is from the source of the magical discharge. In game terms, use the following guidelines:

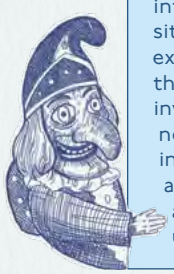
- Any powered electronic device within arm's length of the magical discharge (i.e., within 1 metre/yard) has its chip immediately destroyed.
- Any powered electronic device farther away than arm's length, but still within point-blank range (i.e., between 1–3 metres/yards) has its chip destroyed if the owner fails a Hard Luck roll.
- If a spell has been boosted, then any powered electronic device beyond 3 metres/yards also has its chip destroyed if the owner fails a Regular Luck roll. The maximum range for this effect is 15 metres/yards.

Of course, magic's effects on electronics can be very handy if you need to disable a car, camera, or computer, for instance—and it forms the basis of Peter Grant's **Car Killer** spell (page 183). Peter even used the effect to create a form of "magic detector" once[3].

Anything without a microprocessor is, as far as we can tell, immune to the damaging effect and leads to a potentially useful way to spot practitioners who are attempting to hide their abilities—they all wear mechanical watches and tend to drive cars that predate electronic engine management systems.

GM ADVICE

If you're feeling mean, you may wish to ask players to make an INT roll every time their investigators cast a spell to see if they've remembered to disconnect the battery in their mobile phone or Airwave radio beforehand. Investigators forgetting to do so is likely to happen when they are suddenly plunged into combat, have to react quickly to a developing situation, or have a spell cast at them they weren't expecting. Outside of the aforementioned situations, though, we suggest you take it as read that the investigators have remembered to take all the necessary precautions, unless it would make it interesting for the story if they suddenly had to find a spare phone. Thus, avoid using this rule too often, as it can get in the way of the excitement, and only use it when it makes narrative sense to do so.



Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation (HTD)

Investigators may be tempted to overuse magic. But, in doing so, they put themselves in real danger. When a character overuses magic, they risk suffering from the effects of HTD, which can cause them physical damage. In the *Rivers of London* books, the effects accumulate over time, leading to the tell-tale sign of a brain that looks like a diseased cauliflower.

In the game, HTD is simplified into a dice roll with immediate effects. If a character fumbles a Magic roll when casting a spell, fails a pushed spellcasting roll, or continues to cast spells when they've run out of magic points, they must make a POW roll. If they fumble a pushed spellcasting roll, the POW roll incurs a penalty die (**Pushing a Spellcasting Roll**, page 175). The result of the POW roll determines how badly injured a character is by their overuse of magic.

- **Fumble:** the character's magic points are reduced to zero, and they suffer severe physical trauma (such as a stroke, heart attack, or aneurysm). They immediately suffer 5 damage—a fatal blow. If they do not (or cannot) spend 30 points of Luck straight away to reduce the damage to a mortal wound, they die (**Damage Conditions**, page 133).
- **Fail:** the character's magic points are reduced to zero, and they immediately suffer 4 damage—a **Mortal Wound** (page 146).
- **Regular success:** the character's magic points are reduced to zero, and they suffer 2 damage.
- **Hard success:** the character's magic points are reduced to zero, and they suffer 1 damage.
- **Critical success:** the character's magic points are reduced to zero, but they suffer no damage.

Example: *Nafeesa's player rolls 86 on a pushed Magic roll: a failure. Nafeesa reduces her magic points to zero and her player makes a POW roll for HTD, achieving a Regular success. This means Nafeesa suffers 2 damage. As she's currently uninjured, her player marks off the Hurt and Bloodied boxes on Nafeesa's character sheet, along with the Impaired box (**Bloodied: In Serious Trouble**, page 144). Despite the damage, the pushed spell works (**Pushing a Spellcasting Roll**, page 175), although the cost to Nafeesa was significant.*

Footnote: [3] *Foxglove Summer*

Spells

This section contains the spells available to investigators. Classical spells—those that have existed for centuries—each have a Latin name and may also have a colloquial "shorthand" name as well. Modern spells, such as those devised by Peter Grant, may have somewhat informal English names and completely lack a Latin name.

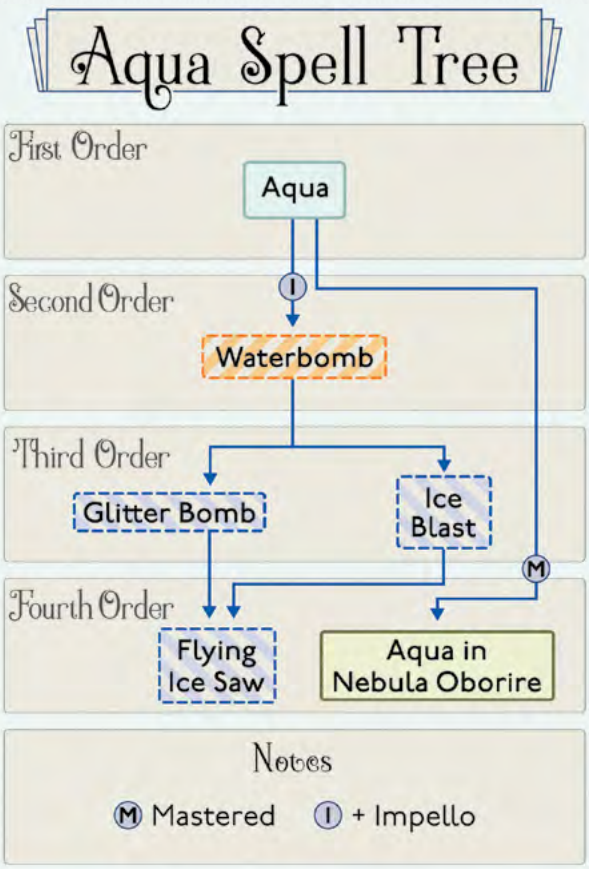


GM ADVICE

Remember: the base cost for a spell is equal to its order.

Spell Prerequisites

As Newtonian spells consist of a sequence of *formae* strung together, certain spells have prerequisites, i.e., you cannot learn a particular spell unless you have first learned the spells containing the base *formae* that combine to form the spell. A spell's prerequisites are listed in the spell's description. Where a spell has no prerequisites, the entry reads "none." An investigator cannot take a spell during character creation nor learn it during an **Investigator Development Phase** (page 120) unless they satisfy all of that spell's prerequisites.



First Order Spells

Aqua

Prerequisite: none.

A simple *forma* used to generate a sphere of water the size of a ping-pong ball just above the caster's palm. Useful if you need a source of water in a hurry.

Boost: spending more magic points increases the amount of water generated. Each additional point forms an additional ball of water or makes the existing ball of water larger.

It's a lot like lux *in that you shape the* forma *in your mind, open your palm and, hopefully, find yourself with a globe of water the size of a ping-pong ball.*
—Broken Homes

Flash Bulb

Prerequisite: none.

Formerly known as *fulge*, this spell creates a bright flash of light. Can be used as a distraction or to temporarily blind someone. When cast in front of someone, the target must make a POW roll: if failed, they are stunned and partially blinded for 1D10 rounds. Targets blinded in this way lose their next action, and any actions that require sight are made with a penalty die while stunned.

The spell knocked her on her back, but she rolled, did something that I didn't recognise, and a viciously bright flash in front of my face blinded me. I went crashing down to the cobbles. All I could see was a bruise-coloured blotch in front of my eyes.
—Lies Sleeping

Impello

Prerequisite: none.

Impello is a *forma* used to push, pull, or levitate objects. This is usually the second spell that a Newtonian apprentice is taught. One limitation of *Impello* is that the caster cannot lift themselves from the ground, not even by lifting something to which they are attached. The spell is useful for pushing an opponent back a metre/yard, thus potentially enabling a character to flee. If the target object is small, i.e., something you could conceal in one hand, the GM may ask for a successful POW roll to accurately target the object.

The effect of *Impello* is comparable to an invisible hand that can be used to push, pull, or lift a target. In a situation where the GM would call for a STR roll to test whether the character is strong enough to move an object, the GM should instead call for a POW roll. *Impello* could easily levitate an apple with no POW roll required, but if lifting or pushing something heavier, the GM should call for a POW roll. The difficulty level of the POW roll should be set by the

Spell List

The spells an investigator can learn are listed here by order, along with their base casting cost.

First Order

Base Cost: 1 Magic Point

- Aqua*
- Flash Bulb
- Impello
- Noisemaker
- Rock Drill*
- Scindere*
- Snapdragon
- Terra*
- Werelight*

Second Order

Base Cost: 2 Magic Points

- Candano
- Car Killer
- Fireball*
- Impello Palma*
- Impello Vibrato*
- Invisible Catch*
- Light Bulb*
- Serra Obscura
- Shield*
- Wandering Light*
- Waterbomb*

Third Order

Base Cost: 3 Magic Points

- Ball of Lightning*
- Bumblebee
- Glitter Bomb*
- Grasping Hand*
- Ice Blast*
- Skinny Grenade*
- Throw Sound*

Fourth Order

Base Cost: 4 Magic Points

- Aqua in Nebula Oborire
- Coffin Bell*
- Flying Ice Saw*
- Natchaduri
- Telescopium
- Wall Banger*

Fifth Order

Base Cost: 5 Magic Points

- Clausurafrange*
- Seducere*
- Sīphōnem
- Vultus Occulto*

Sixth Order

Base Cost: 6 Magic Points

- Heart Stop*
- Vox Imperante*

Spell List Key

- No Prerequisites
- Single Spell
- Multiple Spells
- Single Mastered Spell
- Multiple Mastered Spells

See text for spell prerequisite details.

*Indicates spells which can be boosted once mastered.

Society of the Rose Spell

target's STR (**Determining the Difficulty Level**, page 105). Alternatively, if used against a character—rather than an inanimate object—the GM could call for an opposed POW vs STR roll (**Opposed Skill Rolls**, page 116).

Although the basic *Impello* spell isn't intended to inflict harm, it can cause damage, e.g., if the spellcaster successfully uses it to push an opponent down some stairs. If the use of *Impello* causes something to happen in the story that would obviously cause damage, the GM should refer to **Table 7: Other Forms of Damage** (page 149).

We sat down on opposite sides of the lab bench and Nightingale placed an object between us. It was a small apple. 'Impello,' *he said, and the apple rose into the air. It hung there, rotating slowly, while I checked for wires, rods and anything else I could think of.*
—Rivers of London

Noisemaker

Prerequisite: Werelight.
Creates a small cloud of gas that expands with a humorous farting noise, as well as making things shake (if the cloud is large enough). Useful for creating distractions if cast at a distance.

Now, I have the advantage over my nineteenth century peers of knowing what infrared is and how it relates to imparting heat energy to a small cloud of gas so that it expands with a humorous farting sound—oh, how they must have laughed.
—The Hanging Tree

Rock Drill

Prerequisite: *Impello*.
Creates a force powerful enough to break through rock or concrete. The power of the spell comes through bashing *Impello* repeatedly against the surface you want broken. The spell can break up 7.5 cm (3 inches) of concrete per round or 30 cm (1 foot) of compacted earth per round.

Boost: on each round following, 1 additional magic point can be spent to sustain the spell.

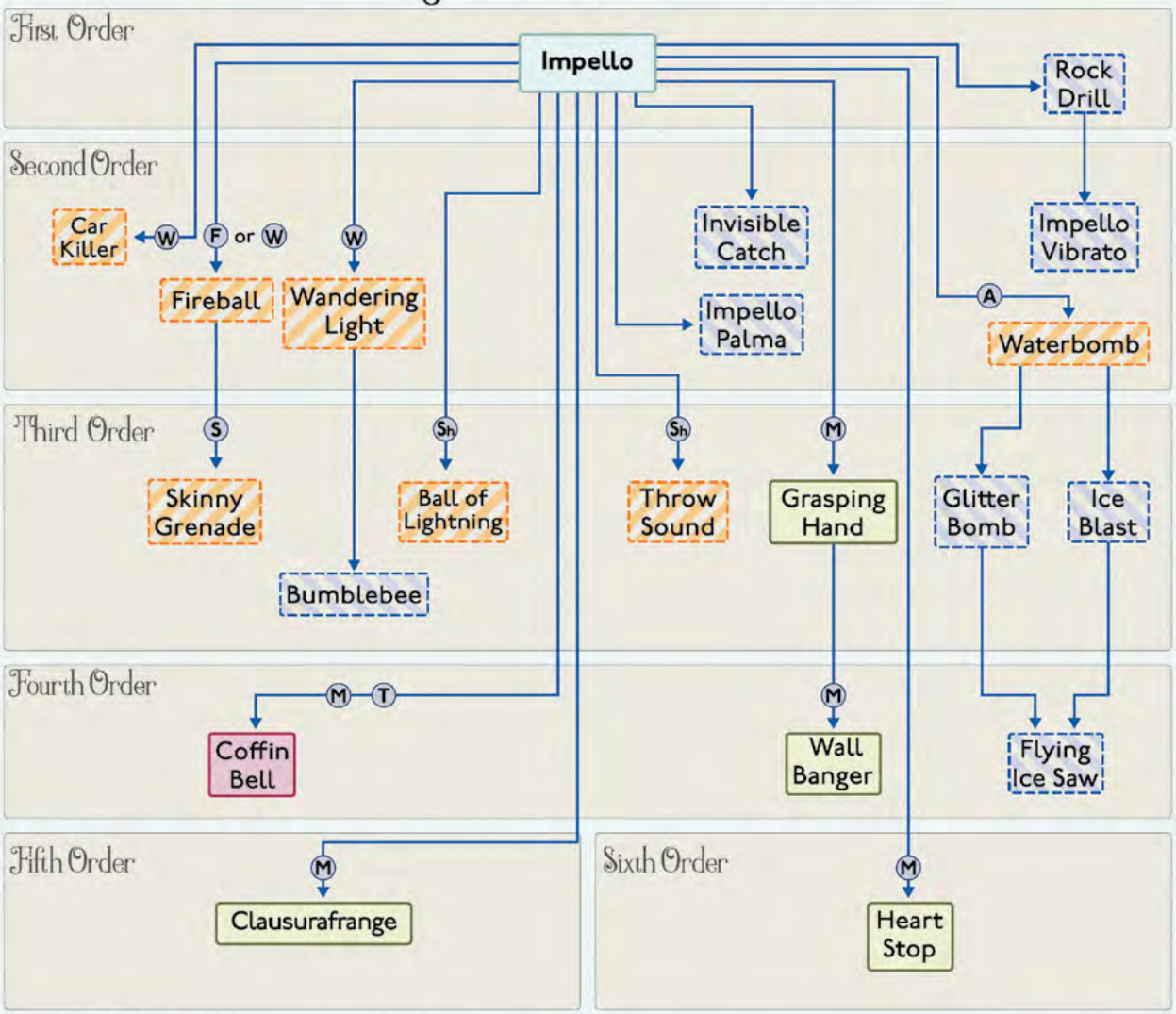
You don't make an invisible pneumatic drill by picturing it in your mind. You do it by shaping the correct variation of impello, *lining it up in the right direction and then essentially turning it on and off as fast as you can.*
—Whispers Under Ground

Scindere

Prerequisite: none.
The effect of *Scindere* is comparable to an invisible hand used to hold an object stationary. *Scindere* can hold something up to the size of a large watermelon (approx. 10kg/22lbs). An opposed STR vs POW (of the caster) roll would be required if someone was attempting to move something held in place with *Scindere*. If someone wishes to use magic to move an object held by *Scindere* (such as using *Impello* vs *Scindere*), the GM should call for an opposed POW roll between the two spellcasters to determine who triumphs (**Impello**, page 178).



Impello Spell Tree





Boost: the base cost permits the caster to hold objects up to the size of a large watermelon. Boosting the spell with additional points increases the weight of what can be lifted or held in place. Instead of dealing with precise weights, the game uses objects to provide a sense of what can be achieved:

- **+1 magic point** (total cost of 2 magic points)**:** increases the amount that can be lifted/held to that of any human being.
- **+2 magic points** (total cost of 3 magic points)**:** increases the amount that can be lifted/held to that of any horse or cow.
- **+3 magic points** (total cost of 4 magic points)**:** increases the amount that can be lifted/held to that of an average car, and so on.
- Prior to the end of the spell's duration, 1 additional magic point can be spent to sustain the spell for another 5 minutes.

The first time Nightingale demonstrated the forma, *I'd asked how long the apples would stay fixed in place. He'd said that it depended on how much magic the apple had been imbued with.*
—Moon Over Soho

Snapdragon

Prerequisite: none.
Produces a flash and a loud crack that can be used to cause a distraction or scare. Not originally Newtonian, but now adopted into the roster.

'She'd already taught me the snapdragon by the time I was seven,' said Lady Helena. Nightingale asked for a demonstration; she made a flicking gesture with her hand and there was a flash and a loud crack that echoed off the walls and caused Molly to suddenly appear behind Nightingale's chair.
—The Hanging Tree

Terra

Prerequisite: none.
Generates a small golf-ball-sized rock or handful of earth. One of the basic forms, producing similar effects to those achieved by the **Quiet People** (page 253). Useful if you need rocks to throw or if you need earth to smother a fire.

Boost: spending more magic points increases the amount of earth or rock generated. Each additional point forms an additional ball or makes the existing ball/handful larger.

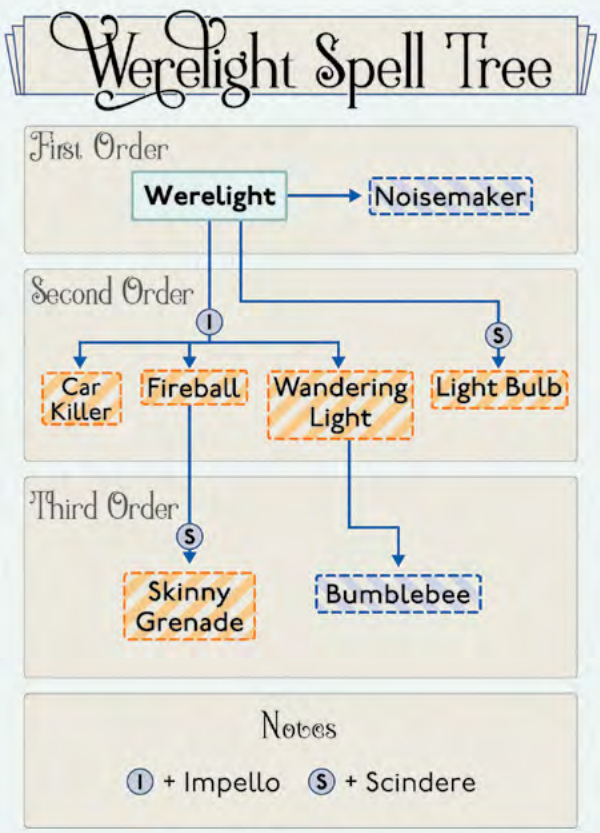
It [aqua] *used to form the* empedoclean *along with* lux, aer *and* terra*—two of which went out of fashion when the four-element theory of matter failed to survive the age of Enlightenment.*
—Broken Homes

Werelight

Prerequisite: none.
Generates a small ball of bright light about the size of a golf ball with the brightness of a domestic lightbulb. The standard werelight gives off no heat. Werelights do not usually move of their own volition, but while on the caster's hand, they move with it, or the caster can position them in a static location. See **Light Bulb** (page 184) and **Bumblebee** (page 186) for mobile variations of the Werelight spell. A werelight lasts for 5 minutes.

Boost: spending 1 additional magic point increases the brightness of the light created or generates an additional ball. Boosted with one magic point, the light is so intense that it is painful to look at, and could illuminate a large hall. Prior to the end of the spell's duration, 1 additional magic point can be spent to sustain the spell for another 5 minutes.

Ghosts are drawn to the magical energy of a werelight, and they enjoy feeding from it. While a ghost feeds, the werelight's colour slowly changes from a soft white/milky blue to yellow to red/dark crimson; the ghost becomes visible and is likely to converse with the caster.



Mastered: change the brightness of the light (sort of like a domestic lightbulb on a dimmer switch). The caster can also change the werelight's colour, even shifting down the spectrum to something barely visible. Cast at a very low power, the werelight produces a soft glow without blowing nearby microprocessors. It can also be modified to go beyond the range of visible light and into infrared, thus creating heat.

I have a nice low powered werelight that I can conjure in an interview room without blowing all the surveillance—you'd be amazed how often I have to use it. My latest refinement was to add a scindere forma *so that I can park it over my shoulder and use it as a reading light.*
—The Hanging Tree

Second Order Spells

Candano

Prerequisite: none.
Also known as Tanglefoot, from the Greek (*khandánō*), this spell creates a magical bolo that wraps around a person's lower legs and ankles. An effective way to prevent someone from running away and/or to trip them up.

In combat, the spell's attack is resolved in the same manner as a firearms attack (**Combat**, page 123), with the attack roll (Firearms) replaced by the spellcasting roll (Magic). If the spell is cast successfully, its target is permitted a DEX or STR roll (whichever is higher). With a Hard success, the target avoids becoming entangled by the bolo or breaks free from it. Otherwise, the target's legs become entangled for 2 rounds; if they attempt to move, they fall over and become prone (**Combat Manoeuvres**, page 134). However, the target cannot stand up again on their turn as a free action until the spell ends. Attacks against a prone character gain a bonus die.

Car Killer

Prerequisites: Werelight + *Impello*.
Magic has the side effect of frying microprocessors (**Spells and Technology**, page 176) and thus modern vehicles can be disabled with a single well-placed spell. The spell's title is "Car Killer," but the spell can be used to disable any piece of modern technology containing a microprocessor.

And once you've quantified an effect, it becomes that much easier to weaponize it. All you need to do is modify your werelight a bit with a couple of formae inflectentes *and, after about three weeks of trial and error, you have a projectable spell that will burn out every microprocessor within a conveniently small radius.*
—Foxglove Summer

Fireball

Prerequisites: *Impello* + Werelight or Flash Bulb.
Uses the *forma lux* (light) coupled with *iactus* (an *adjectivum*) and *impello* (to move it about), to create the classic fireball. The spell can vary widely in magnitude. This is typically a loud and flashy spell, causing a sudden flash of light and sounding like a bedsheet being ripped in half. The resulting fireball is, however, a relatively slow projectile and can be stopped by modern ballistic armour.

In combat, the spell's attack is resolved in the same manner as a firearms attack (**Combat**, page 123), with the attack roll (Firearms) replaced by the spellcasting roll (Magic). A damage roll should be made using the caster's DEX. The basic spell inflicts 1 weapon damage, which is added to the result of the damage roll, if applicable (**The Damage Roll**, page 132).

Boost: each additional magic point can be used to increase the spell's damage by +1. The attacker can choose to describe this as a single larger fireball or an additional fireball; the result is the same.

Mastered: the size of the fireballs can be altered. Narrow-gauge fireballs can be used to disguise the method of attack, creating wounds that look more like those of a handgun.

'You didn't say the Latin,' I pointed out.
'You practise this in silence,' he said, 'from the outset. This spell is a weapon. It has a single purpose and that is to kill. Once you've mastered it you are under the same obligations as any other armed constable, so I suggest you familiarise yourself with the current guidelines on firearms use.'
—Rivers of London

Impello Palma

Prerequisite: *Impello*.
Creates an invisible hand-like force that can be used to swat at objects and people, such as knocking a book out of someone's hands or slapping a person across the face. Often deployed as a non-lethal means of delaying or distracting someone.

If used in combat, the spell is an attack and is resolved exactly the same as a firearms attack (**Combat**, page 123), with the attack roll (Firearms) replaced by the spellcasting roll (Magic). If successful, it inflicts 1 damage total.

Boost: additional magic points can turn the invisible force into a temporary barrier that lasts as long as the caster maintains their concentration or 5 minutes, whichever occurs first. There are two ways another person may attempt to push through the invisible barrier:

- If trying to run and force their way through the barrier: ineffective—it's like bouncing off a plate-glass window; the person suffers 1 damage.
- If trying to slowly and deliberately push their way through the barrier: it's like walking through treacle/molasses, but if the person succeeds with an opposed POW roll versus the caster, they pass through unharmed; if failed, they cannot pass through.

- **+1 magic point** (total cost of 3 magic points)**:** creates a barrier the size of typical single door.
- **+2 magic points** (total cost of 4 magic points)**:** doubles the size of the barrier (e.g., a double door).

Note: this barrier does not protect against damage; for that, see **Shield (Basic)** (page 185).

I didn't give him a chance to finish the movement—I made the formae *in my head, flung out my left hand, still holding my phone, and shouted, much louder than I'm supposed to,* 'Impello palma.'
—Whispers Under Ground

Impello Vibrato

Prerequisite: Rock Drill.

A subtler and more advanced version of **Rock Drill** (page 180). Can be used to cause matter to vibrate, making it useful for making out of reach objects fall over or fall off a surface on which they're resting, all the way up to causing a structure to collapse or crumble. It can only be used to vibrate inert matter such as earth, brick, or concrete. This spell is unusual as it requires the spellcaster to concentrate for three or five rounds; this means they can undertake no other actions while the spell is performed. If the caster is injured or otherwise caused to be distracted, the caster should make a POW roll to determine if the *Impello vibrato* spell is disrupted (fails).

The effect is like someone hitting the targeted area with an invisible, silent hammer. The GM must figure out what effect this might have: a hammer could break a ceramic or glass object or knock out the load-bearing bricks of a chimney, while a sledgehammer (see **Boost**) could destroy a wall or cause a larger structure to fail. If aiming to collapse a structure, e.g., a chimney, the entire structure need not be vibrated, just the critical load-bearing parts—a successful INT roll prior to use allows the caster to target the spell efficiently to minimise their magic expenditure. The spell has no visible effect until the caster ends the spell.

To collapse a structure where the spell has been targeted with a successful INT roll requires three rounds. The structure collapses immediately after the caster's turn in the third round is over. When the spell hasn't been targeted with a successful INT roll, it takes five rounds to push the weakened structure over.

Boost: spending 2 additional magic points upgrades the invisible, silent hammer to a sledgehammer.

I'd been working on loosening up the chimney stack with what I call Impello vibrato *but which Nightingale calls will you stop messing about and pay attention, while Faceless had been chatting.*
—Moon Over Soho

Invisible Catch

Prerequisite: *Impello*.

Combining *Impello* with *iactus* (an *adjectivum*) allows the caster to catch objects in mid-air. It can be used upon living or non-living objects. If the target object is moving quickly (such as if thrown), the casting roll must be made with a penalty die (as per **Fast-Moving Targets**, page 138).

The effect of Invisible Catch is comparable to an invisible hand. In a situation where the GM would call for a STR roll to test whether the character is strong enough to catch an object, the GM should instead call for a POW roll. The spell could easily catch an apple with no POW roll required, but if catching something heavier, such as a child falling from an upstairs window, the GM should call for a POW roll. The spell can be used to catch other magical effects, such as fireballs (see **Boost**). It cannot catch bullets—they're way too fast.

Boost: for the spell to be powerful enough to hold an incoming projectile, such as a thrown weapon, heavy object, or fireball—but not a bullet—the total number of magic points spent must equal or exceed the damage the projectile would otherwise inflict.

So I shot him. It was worth it just for the obvious outrage it caused him, and I enjoyed it right up until the point where he caught the bloody fireball. Just snatched it out of the air and held it, Yorick-like, in front of his face.
—Moon Over Soho

Light Bulb

Prerequisites: *Scindere* + Werelight.

Uses *lux iactus scindere* to fix a werelight in position to provide light. Those who don't know any better would mistake this for a standard light fitting. This spell combines features of the **Werelight** spell (page 182) and **Scindere** spell (page 180), and is fixed in a location chosen by the caster. The light lasts for 5 minutes.

Boost: each additional magic point spent allows the caster to increase either the size or the brightness of the light created. Prior to the end of the spell's duration, 1 additional magic point can be spent to sustain the spell for another 5 minutes.

Note: if the caster wishes to fix the werelight in a position they cannot physically reach, they must combine this spell with **Impello** (page 178) to manoeuvre the werelight into position. This combined version of the spell is third order and has a base cost of 3 magic points; it can be boosted as described above.

I fixed the werelight to the ceiling with scindare *in the hope that Reynolds would mistake it for a light fixture...*
—Whispers Under Ground

Serra Obscura

Prerequisite: Shield.

Creates a small force blade up to 6 cm (2.4 inches) in length, which extends from the caster's palm, thumb, or finger (caster's choice). The blade can be used to cut through rope or other materials, or can be used as a melee weapon. The blade lasts for 1 minute (or the equivalent of 6 combat rounds). If used as a weapon in combat, attacks are made using the wielder's Fighting skill, as per non-magical melee weapons. The blade has a base damage of 1.

While they were chatting, I created a little shield and, very carefully, sliced off the ropes around my wrist.
—Foxglove Summer

Shield (Basic)

Prerequisite: none.

Uses *aer congolare* to control the air in front of the caster, allowing them to form a shield that's capable of stopping bullets—or, at least, slowing them down dramatically. It's also rather handy at protecting against melee weapons and fists.

Each firearms attack should be resolved in the usual way (**Combat**, page 123), with the result of the damage roll reduced by the shield. The spell reduces the damage inflicted by an attack (or each bullet) by 2, and can withstand a total of ten times that number, i.e., once the shield has absorbed a total of 20 points of damage, it fails. The Shield spell also stacks with **Armour** (page 135).

Boost: each additional magic point spent allows the caster to choose one of the following:

- Fix the shield in place.
- Increase the defensive value of the shield, reducing the incoming damage by a further 1 (meaning 1 additional point would reduce damage by 3, and withstand a total of 30 damage, and so on).

On each following round, 1 additional magic point can be spent to sustain the spell, adding another 10 points to the total damage the shield can withstand.

Mastered: can be cast at an angle to deflect projectiles hitting it. This increases the amount of damage the shield can withstand from ten times to 20 times, so the basic spell can withstand a total of 40 damage before failing.

Nightingale took the trouble to teach me aer *because, combined with the equally tricky and out-of-fashion* congolare, *it creates a shield in front of my body.*
—Whispers Under Ground

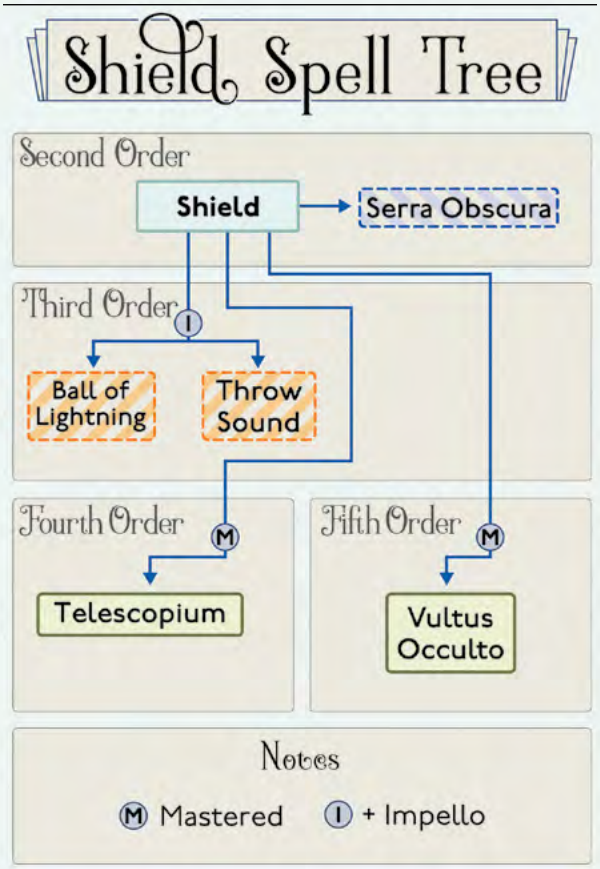
Wandering Light

Prerequisites: *Impello* + Werelight.

Uses *lux impello* to create a werelight that bobs along with the caster in a fixed position. The light could be behind you, to the side, in front, or above. The light lasts 5 minutes.

Boost: each additional magic point spent allows the caster to increase either the size or the brightness of the light created. Prior to the end of the spell's duration, 1 additional magic point can be spent to sustain the spell for another 5 minutes.

I cast a simple lux impello *combo which put a yellowish werelight about two metres over my head where, hopefully, it would bob about after me like a balloon, only brightly lit.*
—Foxglove Summer



Waterbomb

Prerequisites: *Aqua* + *Impello*.

Causes a balloon-sized ball of water to appear where the caster directs.

Boost: each additional magic point spent allows the caster to choose one of the following:

- Propel the balloon to hit a target.
- Cause the water to be chilled.

While this spell causes no harm, it can cause a distraction. Anyone struck by the spell must make a POW roll, with a penalty die if the water is chilled. Those failing the POW roll lose their next action and must apply a penalty die to any roll made as their next action.

I flicked a water bomb into his face—a nice cold one, thanks to a trick Varvara taught me—and followed up by kicking him in the bollocks. He gave me a puzzled look and then fell flat on his face.
—Lies Sleeping

Third Order Spells

Ball of Lightning

Prerequisites: *Impello* + Shield.

Creates a fist-sized ball of lightning that propels itself at a target. Like an advanced fireball, but based on the use of *aer* rather than *lux*. The spell's attack is resolved in the same manner as a firearms attack (**Combat**, page 123), with the attack roll (Firearms) replaced by the spellcasting roll (Magic). A damage roll should be made using the caster's DEX. The basic spell inflicts 2 weapon damage, which is added to the result of the damage roll, if applicable (**The Damage Roll**, page 132).

Boost: each additional magic point spent increases the power of the spell by +1 weapon damage.

Just in time, because a fist-sized ball of lightning struck it at chest height and exploded—half blinding me.
—The October Man

Bumblebee

Prerequisite: Wandering Light.

Generates a golf-ball-sized orangey-red sphere that flies about erratically for a few rounds, making a distinctive squealing sound as it bounces around. It is apt to shoot off the wrong way first before returning to the caster and then flitting about in the direction it was supposed to go. It doesn't do much, other than create a hard-to-ignore distraction.

The basis is your bog-standard lux-impello *combination—the complications come in the various modifiers you add to the principal* formae. *I opened my hand and an orangey-red sphere the size of a golf ball immediately shot back down the tunnel the way we'd come.*
'Ah,' said Nightingale.
'It always does that,' I said. 'Wait a second.'
—Lies Sleeping

Glitter Bomb

Prerequisite: Waterbomb.

An icy projectile is generated and thrown at a target causing an area to freeze. The name of the spell evokes the light reflecting from the ice crystals that form where the spell hits. A wave of cool air flows outward from the point of impact. Those caught within the blast radius of the spell may suffer damage. The radius of the spell is 2 metres/yards.

The spell's attack is resolved exactly the same as a firearms attack (**Combat**, page 123), with the attack roll (Firearms) replaced by the spellcasting roll (Magic). A damage roll should be made using the caster's DEX. The basic spell inflicts 2 weapon damage, which is added to the result of the damage roll, if applicable (**The Damage Roll**, page 132).

Boost: each additional magic point increases the radius by 1 metre/yard.

This was one of Varvara's wartime spells as translated by Abigail—Ledyanaya Bomba *in Russian, but we call it a glitter bomb because of the way light sparkles off the ice crystals that form around the epicentre.*
—Lies Sleeping

Grasping Hand

Prerequisite: *Impello* (mastered).

A more complex version of the first order *Impello*, allowing the caster to grasp and move structures with superhuman strength. This version of the spell is designed to cause damage and is very handy for pulling off car doors!

The effects are hard to quantify precisely but, as a guide, the standard spell allows the caster to rip a locked car door off by its hinges or roll an object like a standard car onto its roof without the need for a STR roll. Enterprising burglars could use it to rip locked doors out of their frames, should the mood take them.

While not intended for deployment against the living, if the spell is used against people or creatures, they are picked up and flung with considerable force a number of metres/yards equal to the caster's POW; refer to **Table 7: Other Forms of Damage** (page 149). The standard spell inflicts Severe damage.

Boost: each additional magic point spent increases the size of object that can be damaged or rolled by this spell.

- **+1 magic point** (total cost of 4 magic points)**:** roll a large vehicle (heavy car or pickup truck); causes Deadly damage if used against living creatures.
- **+2 magic points** (total cost of 5 magic points)**:** roll a delivery truck; causes Terminal damage if used against living creatures.
- **+3 magic points** (total cost of 6 magic points)**:** roll an articulated lorry or rip the door off a bank vault; causes Splat damage if used against a living creature.

I made it into my own gap between a BMW 5 series and a Jaguar XJ, whose resale value Lesley had recently lowered by ripping open the doors, just before a chunk of the ceiling collapsed onto the spot where I'd been lying.
—The Hanging Tree

Ice Blast

Prerequisite: Waterbomb.

An attack spell creating a blast of freezing ice particles of varying sizes. The effect spreads forward from the caster's hand in a conical shape, extending 30 metres/yards. At the caster's end, the cone is only a hand's width in size, but, at the far end, the effect is 3 metres/yards wide. Anyone in the line of the blast may suffer damage.

The spell's attack is resolved exactly the same as a firearms attack (**Combat**, page 123), with the attack roll (Firearms) replaced by the spellcasting roll (Magic). A damage roll should be made using the caster's DEX. The basic spell inflicts 2 weapon damage, which is added to the result of the damage roll, if applicable (**The Damage Roll**, page 132). Armour has no effect versus Ice Blast.

Boost: each additional magic point spent increases the power of the spell by +1 weapon damage.

It saved my life, because the next instant I was struck by a freight train full of icicles.
—Broken Homes

Skinny Grenade

Prerequisites: Fireball + *Scindere*.

Lux impello scindere creates a projectile that sticks to its target before exploding a few seconds later—although sometimes it can take more than a minute. In effect, a skinny grenade is a delayed-action fireball, with a blast radius of 2 metres/yards.

The spell's attack is resolved exactly the same as a firearms attack (**Combat**, page 123), with the attack roll (Firearms) replaced by the spellcasting roll (Magic). Roll 1D10 to determine how many rounds it takes for the skinny grenade to explode (there is always a delay between casting and the skinny grenade exploding), and then make a damage roll using the caster's DEX. The standard spell inflicts 1 weapon damage, which is added to the result of the damage roll, if applicable (**The Damage Roll**, page 132).

Boost: each additional magic point spent increases the power of the spell by +1 weapon damage.

Mastered: the delay between casting and exploding is dictated by the caster (choose from 1–10 rounds).

'Skinny grenade,' I said. 'You use Scindere *like you do with* Lux impello scindere*, except instead of a light in a fixed place you get a bomb.'*
'Skinny grenade?'
'From Scindere*,' I said. Nightingale shook his head.*
—Moon Over Soho

Throw Sound

Prerequisites: Shield + *Impello*.

Allows the caster to throw their own voice, making it seem as if it is coming from elsewhere in the vicinity. The spell uses the *aer forma* and various *inflectentes* to create a sound. Another useful spell for creating a distraction.

Boost: spending 1 additional magic point allows the caster to create sounds other than their own voice, such as the barking of a dog or the sound of a car.

I noticed then that Nightingale's Jag, which I swore I'd heard pull up in front of the barn, was nowhere to be seen.
—Broken Homes



Fourth Order Spells

Aqua in Nebula Oborire

Prerequisite: *Aqua* (mastered).

Created by a mountebank in the Folly's wild pre-respectable days, this spell raises a mist from a body of water by exciting the water molecules on the surface, but only enough to form a mist in whatever atmospheric conditions prevail—not that the creator of this spell knew that! A moderately difficult spell that some claim only exists to make spectators murmur "*Oooooh!*", it can be used for nefarious purposes with a little planning aforethought.

Once the spell has been cast on a suitably large body of water—at minimum, a large duck pond or a small lake—a mist gradually begins to gather. It takes five minutes for there to be enough mist to roll off the water and form an oddly warm wall of water vapour 100 metres/yards in diameter—sufficient to hide in. While in the mist, investigators gain a bonus die on Stealth rolls and incur a penalty die on Observation rolls, e.g., when attempting to spot other people moving through the mist. The mist rapidly dissipates after 15 minutes.

Coffin Bell, The

Prerequisites: *Terra* (mastered) + *Impello* (mastered).

Moves 2 cubic metres/yards of earth or debris. Especially useful if one finds oneself buried alive—hence the spell's name.

Boost: each additional magic point spent increases the amount of earth moved by +1 cubic metre/yard.

There's a spell that dates back to the Victorian era called the coffin bell, *designed to allow a skilled practitioner to dig himself out from his own grave. It's a fourth order spell, so I reckon you'd have to be a pretty good practitioner to be able to cast it after being accidentally buried alive. I also have doubts about whether it could shift four cubic metres of loose earth, but it certainly made short work of the pile of office furniture I was under.*
—False Value

Flying Ice Saw

Prerequisites: Glitter Bomb or Ice Blast.

Creates a large disk, 3 metres/yards across, that spins like a circular saw blade or drill head. The blade moves at speed through the air, slicing through whatever it contacts. As it moves, it emits a loud humming sound. The disk inflicts damage on anything it hits. It lasts for one round and can be used to attack 3 separate targets, as long as they are within 10 metres/yards of each other.



The spell's attack is resolved exactly the same as a firearms attack (**Combat**, page 123), with the attack roll (Firearms) replaced by the spellcasting roll (Magic). A damage roll should be made using the caster's DEX. The basic spell inflicts 2 weapon damage, which is added to the result of the damage roll, if applicable (**The Damage Roll**, page 132).

Boost: each additional magic point spent increases the power of the spell by +1 weapon damage.

I only saw it coming because of the rain from the sprinklers. It was like a lens, an optical distortion whirling through the air—a circular saw three metres across, droplets spraying off the top. Even as I was dropping I saw it slice horizontally through the front of the Humvee. And it was fast.
—The Hanging Tree

Natchaduri

Prerequisite: *Candano*.

Also known as Dancing Rope, this spell creates a braid of crimson smoke that can be used to bind, slap, or pummel someone or something up to 15 metres/yards away. The name is an anglicisation of the Bengali নাচের দড়ি(*Nācēra daṛi*).

Natchaduri acts like a whip, and can be used in one of two ways: to perform a **Combat Manoeuvre** (page 134), such as entangling a person or knocking something from their hand, or to inflict harm. The *natchaduri* lasts for 2 rounds, but the caster is limited to performing one action with it (combat manoeuvre or harm).

In combat, the spell's attack is resolved in the same manner as a firearms attack (**Combat**, page 123), with the attack roll (Firearms) replaced by the spellcasting roll (Magic). If used to bind, the target is permitted a DEX or STR roll (whichever is higher). With a Hard success the target avoids becoming entangled or breaks free; otherwise, they remain bound for 4 rounds. If used to harm, any damage roll should be made using the caster's DEX. The spell inflicts 1 weapon damage, which is added to the result of the damage roll, if applicable (**The Damage Roll**, page 132).

Using the "rope" for climbing is a challenge as it is short-lived and must be affixed to something. Depending on the situation, the GM may call for a DEX roll to anchor the "rope," followed by a Hard Athletics roll to scale the "rope" before it dissipates.

Telescopium

Prerequisite: Shield (mastered).

Manipulates the air in front of the caster to create two lenses, bending light to create the effect of a telescope. Similar in essence to the shield spell, using two carefully aligned mini-shields to distort and focus light.

Newton's spell used the aer forma *to grab hold of the air in front of your face and then craft it into two lenses that act like a telescope. The great man called it* telescopium*, which tells you everything you need to know about his approach to branding. Beyond the usual drawbacks—i.e., the risk of having your brain turn into a diseased cauliflower—if the lenses are the wrong shape you get a face full of rainbows. And if you're stupid enough to look at the sun you can make yourself permanently blind.*
—Broken Homes

Wall Banger, The

Prerequisite: Grasping Hand (mastered).

Rips apart architecture, unzipping brickwork and syphoning it up into the air only to deposit it unceremoniously somewhere nearby. The effect is powerful enough to pull apart one face of an average house—bricks, doors, windows, and all—and drop the resulting rubble into two big piles on either side. The spell uses a variant of the *impello forma* along with *temperāre* and some other complicated twists.

Boost: for every 2 additional magic points spent, an extra amount of wall of similar size is ripped apart.

Then the front of the barn literally unzipped—bricks fountaining up and away in two diverging streams and the doors abruptly ripped off their hinges and went spinning off through the air like something from a catastrophic decompression.
—Broken Homes



Fifth Order Spells

Clausurafrange

Prerequisite: *Impello* (mastered).

Used to deal with locks with varying degrees of subtlety. The caster must be close to the target lock. A successful casting unlocks any mundane—i.e., non-magical—lock. If the caster has plenty of time—and skill—this spell neatly "drills" the lock. If you're in a hurry, you can use it to pop the lock right out of its frame.

Boost: spending 1 additional magic point allows the caster to very neatly pick the lock, leaving it undamaged.

I was working to perfect my first fifth order spell, clausurafrange, *which was supposed to neatly pop out a lock but was currently just making damp holes in the riverbank…*
—False Value

Seducere

Prerequisite: none.

Grants the ability to bend a single target to the caster's will, with an effect similar to the *genii locorum's* **Glamour** (page 243). The single target of the spell may be compelled to do anything from fetching something useful through to performing a dangerous act that could harm themselves or others. The spell works by causing a biochemical reaction, releasing hormones—serotonin, etc.—into the target's system. As a fifth order spell, *Seducere* costs 5 magic points, but its effects are limited to one animal, such as a single dog. It may be boosted to affect a single human.

When *Seducere* is used upon a target, they are permitted a POW roll to resist its effects. If targeting animals or non-practitioners, the outcomes of the POW roll are as follows:

- **Fumble or failure:** they do as they are bid without question, nor do they ever think to question why they acted as they did.
- **Regular or Hard success:** they do as they are bid without question, but later they perhaps wonder what possessed them to act as they did. Of course, they soon console themselves with any excuse that feels the most rational to them.
- **Critical success:** they are unaffected by the spell and react to the request as though it were asked by another person. They are not aware of anything magical having taken place.

GM ADVICE

Whether the target is aware of the spell or not, if it's an investigator, they can spend Luck to overcome a failed POW roll (**Spending Luck**, page 113). The player could also choose to push the roll—represented by them struggling to maintain their self-control and resist the compulsion, just as Peter Grant does when facing Lady Ty's actual glamour[4]—though a second failure would leave the investigator completely at the caster's mercy.



Important: Consent

Certain spells, such as *Seducere* and *Vox imperante* involve compelling a character to behave in a certain way if they fail to resist the spell's effects. The GM and players should discuss the boundaries of what that entails for their group and set limits accordingly to ensure that no one is ever made to feel uncomfortable or unsafe out of character through those spells' usage.

Whereas, if targeting a practitioner or someone aware of the glamour, the outcomes of the POW roll are as follows:

- **Fumble:** they behave exactly as bidden. They are unaware of the use of the spell.
- **Failure:** they begin to act as requested, perhaps taking a few steps or speaking a few words, but then recover their self-control. They are aware of the use of the spell.
- **Any level of success:** they are aware of the use of *Seducere*, but are not compelled to act upon it.

Boost: spending 2 additional magic points extends the effect to a single human being.

'Seducere,' *he said. 'The Compulsion, or, as the Scots say, "the Glamour". According to Bartholomew, many supernatural creatures do it as a form of self-defence.'*
—Rivers of London

Footnote: [4]*Rivers of London*

Sīphōnem

Prerequisite: none.

Used to disarm a **Demon Trap** (page 324). Each stage of the spell has to be carefully worked so as not to trigger the trap, after which the magical essence that powers the trap is released. As this power is released, some clue as to the nature of the trap's construction and the *signare* of its creator may be detected.

As a fifth order spell, *Sīphōnem* costs 5 magic points to cast. If cast successfully, it disarms a standard demon trap. Disarming a greater demon trap is more challenging, and requires the practitioner to achieve a Hard success on the casting roll.

Failing the casting roll activates a trigger on the demon trap (**Disarming a Demon Trap**, page 326).

To do sīphōnem *you have to run through each of the* formae *in turn, in the right sequence and with the right modifications. And you have to do this faster than the demon trap can release its magical payload.*
—False Value

Vultus Occulto

Prerequisite: Shield (mastered).

An illusion spell that disguises a person, so that their face is hard to see—almost as if the person has no face at all. The spell lasts for 10 minutes. A determined magician can see through the illusion by spending a whole round staring at the caster and making a successful Magic roll.

Boost: each additional magic point spent increases the duration by 10 minutes.

I still couldn't see his face, but I'd done a bit of reading since Alexander Smith had given us the description of his face or, more accurately, hadn't. Victor Bartholomew, possibly the most boring magician that ever lived, named it as Vultus occulto, *which even I knew was pig Latin, and had devoted an entire chapter on the subject of countermeasures which, typically for Bartholomew, I could boil down to one sentence: Keep looking really hard and sooner or later you'll see through it. So that's what I did.*
—Moon Over Soho



Sixth Order Spells

Heart Stop

Prerequisite: *Impello* (mastered).

At best, a temporary paralysis spell. At worst, the caster can cause the target's heart to stop beating, which is, by all accounts, a very difficult thing to achieve. Following a successful spellcasting roll, the caster must win an opposed roll with the target, with the caster pitting their POW against the target's CON.

The number of magic points spent determines the amount of damage inflicted. If the target fails the opposed roll, the spell's effect lasts as long as the caster maintains their concentration or 5 minutes, whichever occurs first. Due to the complexity and degree of control needed to cast this spell, it can only ever be directed against a single target. As a sixth order spell, Heart Stop costs 6 magic points and, at this level, inflicts 3 damage if the target loses the opposed roll, immediately marking them as Down (**Wounds and Healing**, page 144). Cast at this level, the damage presents as temporary paralysis.

If cast against an investigator, they have the option of spending Luck to win the opposed CON vs POW roll (**Spending Luck**, page 113), or to buy off the effects of a mortal wound or survive a fatal blow (**Wounds and Healing**, page 144).

Boost: by increasing the magic point spend, the effect can be increased:

- **+1 magic point** (total cost of 7 magic points)**:** inflicts 4 damage in a single blow (i.e., a **Mortal Wound**, page 146) if the target loses the opposed roll. Cast at this level, the damage presents as a severe angina attack or a mild heart attack.
- **+2 magic points** (total cost of 8 magic points)**:** inflicts 5 damage in a single attack (i.e., a fatal blow; **Damage Conditions**, page 133) if the target loses the opposed roll. Cast at this level, the spell presents as a severe heart attack.

Human beings are really difficult to directly control by magic—Dr Walid has postulated that the human central nervous system generates its own autonomic magical resistance as a function of evolving in a world where potential predators can do magic. In order to partially paralyse me like that, Mrs Chin had to be a very highly trained practitioner. A true master, in Nightingale's terms. An utter pain in the arse, literally, in mine.
—False Value



Vox Imperante

Prerequisite: *Seducere.*

Issues a short, sharp command (no more than three words in length) that causes one or more targets to immediately stop what they are doing and obey the caster's command without thinking. The caster must be able to see the target(s) and the target(s) must be able to hear the caster for this spell to work. With this spell, the caster could command the target(s) to:

- "*Stop!*"
- "*Drop it!*"
- "*Sit!*"
- "*Kill them!*"
- "*Go away!*"
- "*Open the door!*"
- "*Get me… [something/someone]!*"

While similar to *Seducere*, *Vox imperante* enables the caster to affect groups of animals and people. It is also harder to correctly cast as it is usually only deployed in an emergency and at speed. The spell costs 6 magic points and can affect up to four targets (people and/or animals). When targeted at named NPCs or player characters, those characters make a POW roll to resist its effects, while non-named NPCs and animals are automatically affected.

If targeting a non-practitioner who is a named character or investigator, the outcomes of the POW roll to resist the spell are as follows:

- **Fumble or failure:** they do as they are bid without question, nor do they ever think to question why they acted as they did.
- **Regular or Hard success:** they do as they are bid without question, but later they perhaps wonder what possessed them to act the way they did. Of course, they soon console themselves with any excuse that feels rational to them.
- **Critical success:** they are unaffected by the spell and react to the request as though asked by another person. They are not aware of anything magical having taken place.

Whereas, if targeting a practitioner who is a named character or investigator, the outcomes of the POW roll to resist the spell are as follows:

- **Fumble:** they behave exactly as bidden. They are unaware of the use of the spell.
- **Failure:** they begin to act as requested, but then recover their self-control. They are aware of the use of the spell.
- **Any level of success:** they are aware of the use of *Vox imperante* but are not compelled to act upon it.

Boost: by increasing the magic point spend, the effect can be increased:

- **+1 magic point** (total cost of 7 magic points)**:** extends the effect to groups of eight targets.
- **+2 magic points** (total cost of 8 magic points)**:** extends the effect to groups of 16 targets.
- **+3 magic points** (total cost of 9 magic points)**:** extends the effect to groups of 32 targets.

There's a spell called Vox imperante. *To do it you've got to string together six* forma *and a dozen* inflectores *with absolute precision.*
—Cry Fox



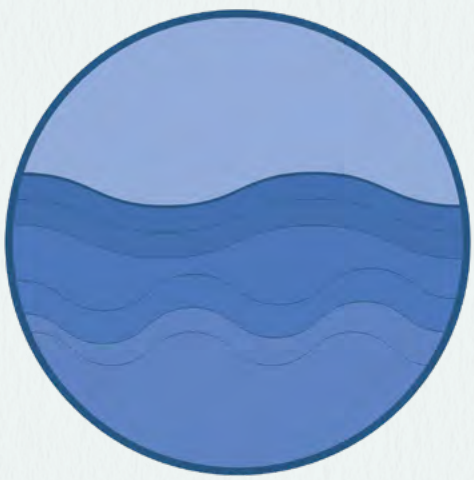
GM ADVICE

The phrase "named NPC" is used to refer to key non-player characters in the game, such as the characters described in **Chapter 6: A Rogues' Gallery**; this also includes key antagonists you create for your case files.



GM ADVICE

As with **Seducere** (page 190), if an investigator is the target of the spell, they can spend Luck to overcome a failed POW roll (**Spending Luck**, page 113). The player could also choose to push the roll—represented by them struggling to maintain their self-control and resist the command—though a second failure would leave the investigator completely at the caster's mercy.




METROPOLITAN POLICE
WORKING TOGETHER FOR A
STRANGER LONDON
Artemis Vance
No REFUNDS!
KNOCK

5

Bringing the Rivers of London to Life

AT ITS HEART, the *Rivers of London* universe revolves around the interactions between two very different worlds: one of magic and fantasy and one of everyday humdrum reality. For games based in Britain's capital city, those worlds are represented by London's demi-monde, particularly Mama Thames and her daughters, and its agents of law enforcement, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). While their interactions may frequently be fraught with difficulty and misunderstanding, they are fundamental to creating a rich and engaging atmosphere within your game. Thus, you, the Game Moderator (GM), must learn to portray the mundane along with the mystical.

With that in mind, the first half of this chapter aims to provide background details on various aspects of law enforcement in Britain, as well as details on how criminal investigations are carried out in the real world. While primarily written for the GM, parts of this information may be of use to players who are unfamiliar with British police procedures and fictional crime dramas. We've also provided **Table 12: A Glossary of Common Police Acronyms and Slang** (page 214) to help clarify some law enforcement jargon.

The second half of this chapter is full of hints and tips for GMs, including helping players immerse themselves in the world so they become a vibrant part of the stories you tell together.

GM ADVICE

While the information provided in the first half of this chapter is meant to give you an understanding of how things work in the real world, don't feel that you have to slavishly include every element of it in your *Rivers of London* game. It's here to help you "sell" the setting to your players. Remember, even the most accurate TV dramas and crime novels still take some creative licence to make their stories work, so pick and choose what supports your version of the world and ignore the rest.

Law Enforcement in London

This section is intended to give GMs and their groups an understanding of what playing as a member of the Metropolitan Police Service (also known as the Met or "the Old Bill") would be like. It's not exhaustive by any means, and what *your* in-game version of the Met looks like is up to you. If you would like a deeper understanding of British policing or ideas on how to utilise the police in a more realistic fashion, see **Appendix C** for a selection of books and websites that could help you do just that.

There is no one police force governing all the UK. Each county has its own service with its own uniform and internal structure, so what goes for the Met doesn't necessarily apply elsewhere. However, policing in Britain, and therefore London, is said to be "by consent"—i.e., with the common consent, cooperation, and approval of the public—based on Robert Peel's *Nine Principles of Policing* (although they probably weren't actually written by him). All police services have some commonalities, though. Each has teams of officers who deal with non-emergency and emergency responses, as well as general beat duties. They all have a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and also specialised units.

Just as all police services share some similarities, all police officers share some common duties. It is their job to maintain the Queen's Peace, prevent crime (or detect it once it has been committed), and to protect life and property. An officer of the law must be prepared both physically and mentally to jump into a case and hit the ground running, no matter what that case may be.

GM ADVICE

Something to bear in mind is that *RoL:RPG* is set around the time of *False Value* (2016). If you want to run a more contemporary game, be aware that the Met has undergone massive infrastructure rearrangements since 2017 and that some of the departments and organisations mentioned in this book may no longer exist.

Policing Issues

In an ideal world, all police officers would be infallible upholders of the law for every section of society, but in the real world this has proven time and again not to be the case. While there has long been official scrutiny regarding the actions of its officers, the state of British law enforcement was acknowledged to be deeply problematical by the 1970s and 1980s. A huge push was made to address problems and improve professionalism within the force as a whole, but there are still ongoing issues with regard to institutionalised racism, discrimination, and wrongdoing.

The Rivers of London novels acknowledge that the British police are not always the shining paragons of law enforcement that they could or should be. For example, Peter Grant has been subject to racial abuse from so-called colleagues and profiling by fellow officers while out of uniform. Many police forces across the world have been accused, to varying degrees, of racial or religious profiling when it comes to identifying suspects, with some officers focusing purely on a particular ethnicity or religion when it comes to the investigation of certain types of crime. How much of these issues you wish to portray in your game is up to each individual group and is something the GM should discuss with their players. Some groups may wish to explore police discrimination as part of their game, while others may not. See also **Considerate Gaming** (page 44) and **It's Not "Gritty"** (page 218).



A General Overview of the Metropolitan Police

Up until the early 1800s, most towns and cities were protected by local law enforcement agents hired by their individual civic authorities. There was no government involvement in policing—well, not directly, at least. These constables were paid by their communities to keep the peace and patrol their neighbourhoods; those who patrolled after dark were known as Night Watchmen.

By the 1800s, London was protected by about 450 constables and 4,500 Night Watchmen, each working independently within their communities with very little interaction between them. But, the nature of law enforcement was changing. Having created the first centrally-organised police force in the world in Ireland in 1804, Robert Peel brought his ideas to England's capital and, as a result, the Metropolitan Police Service (Met or MPS) came into being in 1829.

Peel's Met was a full-time, centrally-organised police force responsible for the care of the Greater London Area. From its then headquarters in Whitehall, the Met brought a series of professional standards to the job, as well as the iconic uniform and "custodian" helmet. The nicknames of "Peelers" and "bobbies" were coined in honour of their creator. From London, the idea spread out across England, Wales, and Scotland (though Glasgow had already formed its first professional police force in 1800).

GM ADVICE

As odd as it may sound, the City of London, the so-called "Square Mile," has its own police force, founded in 1839. It is separate from, but works alongside, the Met. Then there's the British Transport Police (BTP), a national force founded in 1949—and the law enforcement agency Sgt Jaget Kumar works for. The BTP has jurisdiction over the national rail network, and within the capital is responsible for policing the London Underground and all the city's overground rail services.



In 2016, there are over 40,000 members of the MPS, from constables to support officers and police staff (civilian workers), who work within the boroughs of London to keep the city and its people safe from harm—both mundane and magical, when it come to the *Rivers of London*. Its current headquarters in New Scotland Yard, near the Victoria Embankment, act as both the bastion of professional British policing and as a museum of crime memorabilia.

The bulk of the Met at the time of *Lies Sleeping* and *False Value* is divided into units called Borough Operational Command Units (BOCU), with one for each of the 32 London Boroughs. Each unit has its own Met force, working within their respective borough under a Chief Superintendent. Boroughs can request help from one another when it comes

to serious crimes such as murder, and the location where a crime takes place determines which BOCU has jurisdiction over the resulting investigation.

The Met's specialised units include the Dog Support Unit and the Mounted Branch, among others, as well as the Specialist Crime Directorate, which contains the Economic and Specialist Crime team—the division the Special Assessment Unit (SAU; aka Operation Falcon, i.e., the Folly) "officially" belongs to (not that it's a matter of public record, of course). The Folly also maintains a degree of independence from its parent department, and operates as its own Operational Command Unit (OCU).

GM ADVICE

From 2017, the 32 BOCUs are reorganised into 12 BCUs (Basic Command Units), each containing from two to four boroughs each. There's a lot of cooperation between the BOCUs/BCUs and the specialist units when it comes to crime, and officers who are part of the Special Assessment Unit can go pretty much anywhere they need to while pursuing a case. Given how small the Folly's police team is, your investigators will be cooperating with other units as a matter of course. This is rather handy, as it means you can leave all the drudgery of police work—the paperwork, the routine inquiries, and so on—offscreen in the hands of uniforms or specialists so that it doesn't bog down the action of the game.



Ranks

There are a number of ranks within the Metropolitan Police Service. Each of them, up to Chief Superintendent, can add the prefix "Detective" to distinguish those officers from their uniformed counterparts. While uniformed officers are involved in day-to-day (operational) policing, detectives are tasked with investigating serious crimes, such as murder. For most games set in London, this means officers from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Special Branch (who deal with matters of national security and intelligence), or the Folly.

Constable

Abbreviation: PC (Police Constable) or DC (Detective Constable).
Examples: PC Judith Hua, DC Peter Grant.

The lowest rank, representing by far the largest proportion of the Met's workforce. This rank includes new recruits who have just finished their initial month of training. After the trainees have made their attestation in front of a magistrate (i.e., they are sworn in) and received their **Warrant Card** (page 211), they embark on a two-year probationary period. Once their probation is complete, a constable may choose to stay in that role or apply to join a specialised unit. When additional staffing is needed at a location, constables are called in. As first responders, constables are also often the first police officers to arrive at the scene of a crime.

A constable answers to a sergeant or directly to an inspector, depending on the type of duty they have been assigned. Met officers tend to travel in pairs. Patrols can be on foot (often for purposes of visibility), but there is usually a mobile unit (i.e., a police car, officially referred to as an Incident Response Vehicle or IRV) nearby to offer backup.

GM ADVICE

Slightly confusingly, every attested police officer is classed as a "constable" in the eyes of the law, regardless of whatever other rank they hold. This is because it's the constable's attestation that gives police officers the powers of search and arrest mandated by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), i.e., their ability to uphold the Queen's Peace.



Sergeant

Abbreviation: Sgt (uniformed) or DS (Detective Sergeant).
Examples: Sgt William Daverc, DS Sahra Guleed.

This is the first of the supervisory ranks, often colloquially referred to as a "skipper." Sergeants act as team leaders for the constables under their command and as sources of information. It's often a sergeant who delivers the daily briefing and assigns duties to their officers. One sergeant is usually responsible for up to five constables. Most officers become sergeants within the first five to ten years of their career.

Inspector

Abbreviation: Insp (uniformed) or DI (Detective Inspector).
Examples: Insp Francis Neblett, DI Miriam Stephanopoulous.

The second supervisory rank, inspectors are on call 24/7. Uniformed inspectors are, like their sergeants, involved in organising and overseeing operational policing, while Detective Inspectors are often the ones portrayed as "police detectives" in crime fiction, e.g., **Miriam Stephanopoulos** (page 238). DIs are authorised to conduct and manage investigations into serious criminal activity and, within the Met, are usually tied to a specific department dealing with a particular type of crime. Detective Inspector is the lowest rank that can become a Senior Investigating Officer (SIO), though for crimes such as murder, the SIO is likely to be of a higher rank, such as a Detective Chief Inspector. DIs and above can also use their own cars for work purposes, rather than one from the police pool.

Chief Inspector

Abbreviation: Ch Insp (uniformed) or DCI (Detective Chief Inspector).
Examples: DCI Alexander Seawoll, DCI Thomas Nightingale.

A Chief Inspector is usually the leader of a team of police officers. In the case of major criminal investigations, a Detective Chief Inspector assigns work, authorises queries, and speaks to the Superintendent and above for permission to use certain specialised units, such as forensics or the Specialist Firearms Command (SCO19)—or the Folly. They decide the overall focus of the case under investigation and are the person you answer to when things go wrong. They, in turn, must answer to their higher-ups if they decide to "go above the law." There are many famous fictional DCIs, including the Folly's own **Thomas Nightingale** (page 233). Rising up to Chief Inspector can take 15–20 years, although it can be fast-tracked.



GM ADVICE

Keep in mind that, while other Chief Inspectors exist within the Met (around 300 of them), your investigators will mostly be dealing with DCI Nightingale. Any other DCIs they meet depends on the types of cases on which they consult.

Superintendent

Abbreviation: Supt (uniformed) or DSI/Det Supt (Detective Superintendent).

Superintendents are the heads of divisions within a BOCU, such as CID or emergency response departments. Often referred to simply as "Super."

Chief Superintendent

Abbreviation: Ch Supt (uniformed) or DCS (Detective Chief Superintendent).

The Chief Superintendent is the overall boss of each BOCU. They answer only to the Commander and above, and watch over each of the divisions within their borough. This is a role that can take a person almost their entire career as a police officer to reach.

Commander

The ranks above Chief Superintendent are managerial in nature when it comes to investigations, starting with the Commander, the first chief officer rank. This rank is responsible for the overall management of the BOCUs, along with being the overall approval centre for any changes made to departments within the Met.

Commissioner

There are four levels of commissioner with the Met: Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and Commissioner. The three junior ranks act as intermediaries between the Commissioner and the Met's various divisions. The Commissioner is the most senior police officer in the UK, answerable to the Mayor of London and the Home Secretary. They are the official public face of the Met and are accountable for the force's overall actions. The post is special as it is the only one in the Met that has an appointment period of five years.

Special Constables

Abbreviation: SC.

When Peter Grant is called to investigate the goings-on at the New Bloomberg building, he liaises with Special Constable Geneviève Nguyễn of the City of London Police[1]. SCs, also just known as "Specials," are the part-time voluntary branch of British policing, including the Met. They have the same powers as full-time police officers but their own ranking system. They undergo some of the same training as full-time officers, and are there to support their paid colleagues when it comes to "frontline" policing within their assigned community: road safety and anti-crime initiatives, high visibility foot patrols, providing security at public events and incident scenes, responding to 999 calls, house-to-house inquiries, etc.

Short-Term Ranks

People who have been temporarily promoted to a rank by someone higher up the chain of command may have one of two prefixes attached to their new rank.

- If the promotion is for a short period (usually six months), they use the Temporary prefix, e.g., Temporary Detective Sergeant.
- If the promotion is to replace an officer on leave or when certain information may be required from that person (such as knowledge of magic in a murder case), they use the Acting prefix, e.g., Acting Detective Sergeant.

Footnote: [1] *Lies Sleeping*

Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs)

PCSOs are another part of modern British policing, mostly made up of people who live within the communities they patrol. As such, their personal knowledge of the cultures and traditions within a given area can be valuable. This is especially so in London, where most police officers do not live where they work (**Your Friendly Neighbourhood Police Officer?**, page 200). There is no rank system for PCSOs and they have limited powers when compared with a regular police officer and a Special Constable, e.g., they cannot arrest anyone, and they do not carry a baton. They are, effectively, employed as community liaisons and to act as a visible deterrent to opportunistic criminals.



GM ADVICE

One way to use a non-player character PCSO is as the first point of contact between the investigators and the PCSO's community, whether it be of the magical or mundane variety. Some can even act as temporary translators, if the need arises.

Police Staff

In 2015, only around 50% of those working for British police forces were actually police officers, with around 35–40% of the rest being civilian police staff (previously called civilian police support staff or civilian workers). The same is true for the Met. Frequently, but not exclusively, police staff are involved in administration and secretarial work, supporting criminal investigations with intelligence collation and analysis so that police officers can concentrate on solving crimes rather than handling all the paperwork.

Training

As long as an applicant passes the vetting procedure, there aren't too many requirements to join the Met circa 2016 besides being 18 years of age. Previously, there were height and weight restrictions, but these were dropped decades ago. To get onto the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP)—a two-year course including classroom and practical policing experience that also acts as the police constable's probationary period—applicants need the appropriate Level 2 qualification in English Language at grade C or above, plus, ideally, the same level of qualification in Maths. Alternatively,



the Met accepts a suitable Level 3 qualification, or its equivalent, to become an officer-in-training. If the applicant lacks those, various courses are available to acquire the necessary education paperwork. Provided they pass their probation, the officer becomes a fully qualified member of the Met.

Alternatively, applicants may choose to take specific degrees in professional policing. These courses are available at various colleges nationwide. Taking one of these courses permits a person to enter the police at a higher rank than those on the IPLDP (once they have completed a shorter probationary period).

Once you have become a police officer, each rank has its own specific training requirements. Met officers who are in line for promotion are expected to pass various selection interviews and written exams, complete on-the-job assessments, prepare portfolios demonstrating their competence, and complete a probationary period (usually one year) before their new rank becomes permanent. They may also have to attend university to secure any degree-level qualifications their new post requires.

Your Friendly Neighbourhood Police Officer?

A lot of the Met's officers do not actually live in Central London. Although they are trained in the city, most of them have homes around the outskirts of the Greater London Area or even further afield. They, like so many other members of the capital's workforce, are commuters.

For a long time, a police officer was not allowed to live in the same area they worked to avoid potential conflicts of interest. While a local bobby would get to know the communities on their beat after years of walking it, foot patrols are less common now than they once were. While these restrictions have since been repealed, living where you work isn't always an option given the cost of housing in Central London. As a result, there are police officers who had never lived in London prior to taking up their position in the Met.

In 2014, the Met introduced the London Residency Criteria, with the aim of increasing recruitment from Black and other marginalised communities. Under this scheme, applicants to become police constables had to have lived in London for three out of the previous six years.

Trainee officers may live in police accommodation within their BOCU, like Peter and Lesley do at the beginning of *Rivers of London*. Those recruited to the Folly may find themselves living on-site, but there's no requirement for them to do so, particularly if they have a family.

GM ADVICE

While the IPLDP was one of the main routes into policing in 2016, it is currently being phased out in favour of newer routes, including the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA). In the Met, specialised entry paths have been in use since 2014 to increase recruitment from underrepresented communities.



Diversity and the Met

The MPS has the most diverse police force in the UK, and around half of Britain's Black and Minority Ethnicities (BME) officers work in the Met. That doesn't mean it entirely reflects London's multiracial and multicultural society, though. While around 40% of London's residents in 2016 came from BME communities, that number was only around 12% for the Met's police officers. And, while the city's population is split pretty evenly male to female, only around 25% of its police officers were women at that time. All in all, the Met was (and still is) largely the preserve of white male police officers, although there was more diversity among police staff (25% BME, 56% women).

Terminology

While BME may be the term used by a wide variety of official bodies and government departments at the time *RoL:RPG* is set (hence its use here and in **Table 12: A Glossary of Common Police Acronyms and Slang**), this is no longer the case, in part due to confusion about the acronym's meaning and the marginalised groups it included. Current guidelines are to use the term "ethnic minorities" instead and to capitalise the names of individual ethnic groups, e.g., Black, Roma, etc.

Following on the heels of the London Residency Criteria in 2015/2016, there was a push to encourage people to join the service, especially those who were fluent in at least one of 20 specified languages spoken in London. As a result, people of all ethnicities and genders applied to become part of the workforce. Some elements of the recruitment programme were successful—the number of BME officers increased to a little over 13% and was still rising—but the expansion was largely held back due to budget cuts.



GM ADVICE

Thankfully, due to the Folly's independent funding resources, recruitment and operational expenses aren't something you need to worry about. Just remind the investigators to get Nightingale's approval for any big spends first.

A lack of diversity can and does cause issues on the front line. An officer may develop a false impression of the community in which they operate if their only interaction with it (and knowledge of it) happens when a crime has been committed. This lack of familiarity and understanding can, in turn, lead to a breakdown in communication. Therefore, diversity training, community-based PCSOs, and working with local community groups are fundamental to the Met's smooth operation at street level, as is the continued recruitment of officers from marginalised communities.



GM ADVICE

As mentioned in **Policing Issues** (page 196), how much discrimination (of whatever type) you wish to have in your game is something you should discuss with your players, ideally as part of your initial conversations (**Creating Your Character**, page 44).



A Typical Met Officer's Equipment

Uniformed police officers are usually equipped with the following items when on patrol:

- Photo ID (warrant) card (**The Warrant Card**, page 211).
- Their "collar number"—a unique officer number, usually worn on their shoulder epaulettes (SCs, PCs, and Sergeants—higher ranks don't have officer numbers). The officer number contains two letters which identify the officer's BOCU.
- Velcro name badge (rank and surname).
- Reinforced headgear—the iconic custodian helmet or a flat peaked cap for male officers (depending on rank), or a bowler-style hat for women officers.
- Shoulder-mounted personal Airwave radio. Airwave radios are a secure means of communication that cannot be "listened in" on, unlike US police radios.
- Mobile phone.
- Police pocket notebook (PNB) and pens.
- Body Worn Video (BWV) camera, used to record interactions with members of the public.
- Stab or ballistic vest, depending on unit.
- Torch (flashlight).
- Extendable baton.
- Speedcuffs.
- Incapacitant spray (CS or PAVA).

Some officers may also be authorised to carry a stun gun. Note that the vast majority of British police officers do not carry guns—there are specialist units of armed police officers who are called on as and when the need arises; for the Met, that's SCO19.

A Typical Met Detective's Bag

Plainclothes detectives, unlike their uniformed colleagues, have a "bug out" or "grab" bag near them at all times, that contains the following:

- Photo ID (warrant) card (**The Warrant Card**, page 211).
- A reliable timepiece for accurately recording when relevant events occurred—a mechanical (wind-up) watch is essential for any officers who are also practitioners.
- Day book or PNB and pens.
- Fully charged mobile phone, along with its charging lead (and/or spare battery—particularly handy when dealing with magic).
- A list of important contact numbers for their superiors.
- Airwave radio with a list of channels.
- Torch (flashlight) and spare batteries.
- Essential documents, such as witness statement forms and crime scene tags.
- Weatherproof clipboard with writing or drawing paper.
- Crime scene barrier tape and evidence bags.
- Forensic gloves and protective clothing (mask, disposable paper suit, etc.).
- Digital/physical maps.
- Practical weatherproof clothing.
- Food and drink.
- Physical money.
- *Blackstone's Crime Investigators' Handbook* for referencing.

Criminal Investigations

Having looked at the structure of the Metropolitan Police Service, it's time to look at what they do and how they do it. If your *Rivers of London* game is Folly-based, the major focus of each case file is likely to be a criminal investigation. But what does that actually mean? According to the Criminal Procedure and Investigation Act 1996's Code of Practice, the official legal definition of a criminal investigation is:

"An investigation conducted by police officers with a view to it being ascertained whether a person charged with an offence is guilty of it."

To mount a criminal investigation, the officers involved must establish what type and category of crime was committed (**Types of Crime**, page 203). They must conduct the investigation—gathering evidence, questioning witnesses, etc.—to deduce who the culprit is and their motive for the crime. It is also up to the investigating officers to figure out what other resources they might need (**Police Resources**, page 208). These could be specialist investigators who deal with technology, finance, or magic; or civilian specialists, such as book dealers, librarians (like Elsie "Hatbox" Winstanley[2]), or architects.

The Stages of a Criminal Investigation

All criminal investigations have a set procedure. Knowing what the various steps are can help you, the GM, bring a level of realism to your games. It also helps you figure out the stages when your investigators are most likely to become involved. The steps are:

1. Crime Instigation and Call Handling
2. Response and Management
3. Investigation and Suspect Management
4. Case Management and Court
5. Case Disposal

Crime Instigation and Call Handling

A criminal investigation usually starts when someone calls in to report a crime. This usually means a phone call from a member of the public or an Airwave call from an officer at the scene. *When* a crime is reported is a crucial factor in

GM ADVICE

Don't forget that any uniformed police officers recruited to the Folly automatically swap their everyday uniform for plainclothes, even if it's only a temporary secondment. If taken on permanently, they'll still need their dress uniform for official occasions, though, like swearing their oath to become Newtonian apprentices (**The Practitioner's Oath**, page 171).

GM ADVICE

In the real world, almost every aspect of an investigation is planned down to the tiniest detail. We don't advise that you to use this level of realism in your *Rivers of London* games, as doing so would be rather dull. No one plays a roleplaying game to simulate police administration and paperwork! Focus on the exciting and intriguing parts of criminal and supernatural investigation instead.

Footnote: [2]*Tales from the Folly* ("A Rare Book of Cunning Device")

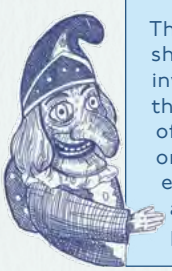
an investigation. As discussed in **Evidence** (page 204), the longer the time period between a crime taking place and it being reported, the more opportunities there are for evidence to become lost, contaminated, or destroyed, and for the culprits to establish their alibis or interfere with witnesses.

Response and Management

Once the call has been received, first responders are dispatched to survey the **Crime Scene** (page 204). This can include people outside of the Met, such as members of the other emergency services. This is also when security and preservation of the crime scene begins—making sure the scene remains intact, so when the investigating officers begin their work, they have as much information available to them as possible.

Investigation and Suspect Management

Using the preliminary information gathered during the Response and Management step, inquiries can now be made to identify the culprits, interview witnesses, and interrogate suspects. This is also when analysis of any physical or intelligence-based evidence takes place. For the senior officers in charge of the investigation, it's their job to manage what's happening, including assigning tasks to junior officers, reviewing the investigation's progress and adapting their strategy as required, identifying the key suspect(s) and, hopefully, overseeing an arrest. However, a case does not automatically end once a charge has been made.



GM ADVICE

The **Investigation and Suspect Management** step should be the key focus of most of case files if the investigators are junior police officers, as they are the ones who will be sent out to do at least some of the legwork. But, as we've mentioned before, only involve them in the interesting and dramatic elements of the investigation—leave data entry and the rest of the paperwork to the supporting police staff.

Case Management and Court

The police in England and Wales do not make the decision as to which cases proceed to court—that's down to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), based on whether or not there is a realistic chance of securing a conviction. If the CPS decides there is sufficient evidence for the case to go to trial, the investigation's focus switches to assisting the prosecution in preparing their evidence for court. All case-relevant information is then gathered and presented for the courts to decide the fates of those on trial.

Case Disposal

Once the court case is complete, the associated paperwork is finalised, and the outcome recorded. The case is now considered closed. Cases that do not proceed to court may be closed through lack of evidence or left open in the hope that new evidence comes to light that can secure an arrest and conviction.

Most Folly cases are unlikely to come to court, as there isn't usually a mundane culprit to convict, e.g., ghosts, vampires, the personification of a children's rhyme, and so on. As a result, Folly-trained detectives are often expected to come up with their own solutions to such cases; for example, by finding a suitable compromise that satisfies both sides involved in a problematical disagreement[3].

Types of Crime

In Britain, crimes are split up into different groupings for the purposes of determining who investigates them. (PIP: Professionalising Investigation Programme.)

- **Volume Crimes:** common crimes, such as theft and public order offences. PIP Level 1.
- **Priority Crimes:** crimes deemed of concern to a particular force and community, such as burglary and car crime. PIP Level 1.
- **Serious and Complex Crimes:** crimes involving violence (including guns and knives), large-scale financial crime, or crimes that carry a penalty of a 3-year prison sentence or above. PIP Level 2.
- **Major Crimes:** crimes such as murder or kidnap, or a serious crime that has escalated, perhaps through media and community interest. PIP Level 3.

The Officer in Charge (OIC) of PIP Level 1 crimes is usually a Police Constable, although CID (and the Folly) may become involved if the situation warrants it. For PIP Level 2 crimes, a DC, DS, or a DI may be the OIC of the case or investigation, depending on the seriousness of the crime. PIP Level 3 crimes automatically require a Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) to be in charge.

Footnote: [3] *Rivers of London*

The Crime Scene

If there's been a crime, there will be a crime scene, but what that actually constitutes is up to the Officer in Charge. As you might expect, the nature of a crime scene varies depending on the type of crime committed, and the number of people who attend the scene also varies for the same reason. However, every crime scene is processed in much the same way.

The first police officer on the scene is known as the First Attending Officer (FAO); they are almost always a Police Constable, called in by a report from a member of the public (**Crime Instigation and Call Handling**, page 202). Once they have identified themselves to the public to establish their authority, the FAO is responsible for:

- Preserving the crime scene by securing the perimeter and creating a single entry/exit point.
- Ensuring evidence isn't tampered with or destroyed.
- Identifying victims and key witnesses.
- Enabling any required specialists to proceed with evidence gathering—forensics, tech experts, demi-monde, etc.

Depending on the circumstances, the FAO may have to arrest a suspect or give up on preserving the crime scene to save a victim's life—always their highest priority.

After that, the seriousness of the crime determines who else attends. This may include detectives of various ranks, up to an SIO if there's been a murder. It's incredibly rare for an SIO to be first on the scene, but it does occasionally happen; usually, they're called in once the nature of the crime has been established. If there's a body, there will be a Forensic Medical Examiner (FME) ; their job is to certify that the victim is dead, as well as examining the body and its surroundings for evidence. There may be Scene of Crime Officers (SOCOs; called Crime Scene Technicians/Investigators in the US), whose job it is to decide what does and doesn't count as evidence; it is also their responsibility to gather that evidence for later analysis.

Further crime scene attendees may include a police photographer, as well as a sergeant whose job is to brief new arrivals on what's happened. For a detective, that includes preliminary information on what led to the call, as well as who to speak to or interview next. There are likely to be additional uniformed officers, who are responsible for guarding the crime scene until it is released by the Officer in Charge (OIC); this may take some time, depending on the seriousness of the crime.



GM ADVICE

Depending on the nature of the case, the investigators are unlikely to be the FAOs—they're much more likely to be called in after the fact for their specialist expertise.

Evidence

Every investigation requires evidence if the culprit is to be identified and brought to justice. This section looks at the different types of evidence a detective might come across during the course of their investigations, as well as discussing the all-important chain of evidence.

Timewise, for every case, there are two main phases. The first is the "Golden Hour"—the precious period immediately after a crime has been committed, where the physical evidence is fresh, witness statements are more accurate, and the culprits have yet to establish their alibis. This is the prime time to collect as much evidence as possible, as every second counts. It begins the moment the police are first contacted about the crime (**Crime Instigation and Call Handling**, page 202).

After the Golden Hour, time becomes a resource that needs to be managed efficiently if a case is to reach a successful conclusion. Every request, enquiry, and stakeout takes time to complete—the larger the case, the more time it takes to sift through all the evidence and draw useful conclusions. In an ideal world, the investigative team would have all the time, resources, and money they need to bring every case to a successful conclusion. Sadly, time is always of the essence, and with every passing day, the perpetrators have more opportunities to clean up evidence and lockdown their alibis, making a successful prosecution harder to achieve.

GM ADVICE

Keep in mind that time is an important factor in your cases, especially when it comes to revealing clues to your players. As already mentioned, much of the legwork should be carried out by non-player characters (NPCs) off screen to keep the story flowing—only include something if it's interesting and builds atmosphere and tension. While the SAU may be small, it is still part of the Met and has access to all of its resources, as well as a few unusual ones of its own (**Police Resources**, page 208).



Types of Evidence

Evidence comes in many forms, but can broadly be defined as physical, intelligence-based, or, in *RoL:RPG*, magical in nature.

Physical Evidence

When we talk about physical evidence, we mean things like fingerprints, DNA, blood and other bodily fluids, fibres (such as hair or fur), wounds, and objects found at the crime scene. These are usually collected by SOCOs and collated by the investigation's Scientific Services Officer and Exhibits Officer (the officer responsible for receiving and safeguarding all the items gathered during an investigation; **The Chain of Evidence**, page 206).



GM ADVICE

If an investigator is searching for physical evidence at a crime scene, they are probably using their Observation skill. If they are analysing evidence after it has been collected, they may need to use a suitable expert skill, like Science (Forensics) or Art/Craft (Forgery), instead.

Intelligence

Witness statements, phone records, emails, police records, who the victim or culprit has been in touch with—these all are examples of intelligence that can be analysed to provide evidence. This being *Rivers of London*, witnesses and contacts don't have to be human—they could be ghosts, *genii locorum*, or any other member of the demi-monde. The history and folklore of the scene of crime might also be just as important as what's physically found there, as was the case in a certain Covent Garden book shop[4]. (See also **The Bookshop**, page 285.)

CCTV footage also counts as intelligence: where a person has or hasn't been in the run up to or the aftermath of a crime can be useful information when it comes to identifying or eliminating suspects. The Met does not have their own CCTV network (besides cameras on their own buildings), but the cameras owned by local authorities, businesses, and organisations (like the London Underground) do form a huge unofficial system of coverage. However, despite the large number of CCTV cameras in London, there are still numerous dead spots where there is no coverage at all.

Detectives usually have to request permission to view CCTV footage from cameras owned by someone other than the police, and sometimes this may require a warrant if the owner doesn't wish to share it. On top of this, it can take hours to properly analyse camera footage if the viewer doesn't know exactly what they're looking for—anything up to eight hours for one hour of recording! So, unless the investigators have a very narrow time frame they're interested in, or know exactly who it is they're looking for, it's probably best to leave in-depth analysis to off-screen NPC technicians.



Footnote: [4]*Tales from the Folly* ("The Cockpit")



GM ADVICE

Remember, investigators use their Research skill to sift through recorded information—notes, written statements, etc.—or, if the information is more specialist, they may use the appropriate expert skill, e.g., Accounting for assessing a company's financial records. For eliciting information directly from witnesses and the victim's family and associates, investigators should use their Social skill. They may also use their Read Person skill to judge if someone is telling them the truth or not.

Magical

In terms of magical evidence, the most common type that Folly-trained officers will come across is *vestigia*. As discussed in **Using Vestigia in Case Files** (page 162), the type of clues *vestigia* provides can be very nebulous and subtle, unless dealing with extremely strong instances (**Vestigia Strength**, page 161). The process of checking for *vestigia* at a crime scene—or any other location of interest—is known as an Initial Vestigium Assessment (IVA).

All other evidence falls under the banner of either physical evidence or intelligence, regardless of its magical nature. Of course, depending on what it is, magical evidence may be of little use in a court of law, which is why the Folly tends to deal with the more bizarre cases in their own inimitable manner.

The Incident Room (IR)

While Falcon investigations tend to have a certain degree of informality to them when they only involve members of the Folly, more often than not the Special Assessment Unit is seconded to a mainstream Met unit, such as DCI Seawoll's Murder Investigation Team.

Investigations of serious crimes need to be well managed if they are to succeed. One tool at a senior officer's disposal that helps with this is the incident room (IR), or, in the case of a really serious or complex case, a Major Incident Room (MIR). Think of this as the investigation's nerve centre. It may be an actual physical location, full of desks, computers, analogue records, and personnel, or it can be a virtual one created inside the HOLMES 2 database.

One of the most recognisable scenes in any police drama is the "briefing," where a DCI calls all the officers working on the case into the incident room to inform them of the case's progress, discuss investigation strategy, and assign actions to individuals. Even if the case the investigators are working on doesn't have an official incident room because it isn't large or serious enough, it's still a good idea to have a daily briefing where Nightingale or Peter Grant are on hand to dispense advice, particularly if the players could use some direction regarding where their investigators should go next (**Missing Clues**, page 226). This is most likely to take place in the Folly's briefing room, but it could just as easily occur over tea and cake in the atrium. The GM can use a briefing scene to help the players sum up what they know so far and enable them to discuss how they want to proceed, using NPCs like Peter and Nightingale to help focus their thoughts and keep the investigation heading in the right direction.

The Chain of Evidence

Police dramas and crime novels often refer to the "chain of evidence," sometimes known as the "chain of custody." Evidence is admissible in court only if it has been lawfully obtained, properly handled, and kept safe until the time of the trial—this is where the chain of evidence comes in. The chain of evidence is the record of the following:

- What the evidence is.
- When and where it was obtained.
- Who obtained it.
- Who has had access to it and when.
- Who has analysed it and how.
- Where it has been stored and under whose control it has been while in storage.
- How it has been preserved.

Breaking the chain of evidence can have serious repercussions if the case comes to court. For evidence to be usable, there can be no gaps in the chain that could lead to accusations of it having been contaminated, tampered with, or even planted. The chain of evidence also helps to guard against the loss of evidence—accidental or otherwise.

In the UK, responsibility for maintaining the chain of evidence usually falls to someone known as the Exhibits Officer.

Investigative Tricks and Techniques

There are many different rules of thumb that police officers use when undertaking a criminal investigation. We discuss the main three—the ABC rule, the Six Ws, and TIE—in the following sections.



GM ADVICE

Another staple of the incident room is the evidence board—usually, a whiteboard or a corkboard with pictures of the victim, witnesses, suspects, and any other relevant items pinned to it. Evidence board organisation varies but, in fiction, there's usually also something like red string or marker pen lines joining various items (clues) together. It's a good way to organise information in a visual format, and you may wish to actually create an evidence board for your case files—some of our playtesters did this to help them keep track of the clues and where they led, to great effect. If playing in person, you can set up an actual (portable) whiteboard or corkboard for the players to add to in every session, and there are virtual whiteboard apps available if you're playing online.

ABC Rule

Once a crime has been reported and the detectives briefed, the toughest part of any investigation begins: the evidence gathering. In this stage, teamwork, feedback, and sharing of information become key to solving the crime. One important tool that can help an investigator is the ABC rule, as recommended by *Blackstone's Police Operational Handbook* (and frequently referred to by Peter Grant):

- Assume Nothing.
- Believe Nothing.
- Challenge/Check Everything.

The rule encourages investigators to approach cases with an open mind and remain receptive to ideas beyond their initial—potentially erroneous—preconceptions. There are many different factors that influence an investigator's ability to draw the correct conclusion from the evidence they uncover—prejudice, inexperience, and so on. By following the ABC rule, they are more likely to keep their wits about them in even the most complex investigations.

Six Ws

More accurately: the five Ws and an H, this method of breaking down an investigation is a more in-depth version of the classic trifecta: Means, Motive, and Opportunity. It's a very ancient technique, based on six fundamental questions: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How?

- **Who was the Victim?** A deep dive into who the victim was, and what led to them being the target of the crime.
- **What happened?** Details of the incident, built up from witness reports, physical evidence, CCTV footage, etc.
- **Where did the incident take place?** Geographical details of the incident, including transport to and from the location.
- **When did it take place?** A time and date can be crucial in confirming/refuting alibis and eliminating possible suspects.
- **Why did it happen?** The motive—the reasons behind the crime.
- **How did it happen?** The method used to commit the crime.

TIE

TIE stands for Trace, Identify/Interview/Implicate, and Eliminate. It tends to be used if there are no obvious suspects for a crime, but may be useful in ruling out an obvious suspect, as Peter Grant does with Hugh Oswald[5]. The major issue with this approach is that it can be very labour intensive and, if not handled well, incorrectly exclude the actual culprit.

Following a crime, detectives use the circumstances of the crime, as well as intelligence-based evidence, to create what are known as TIE categories. Each TIE category covers a particular characteristic, such as:

- Physical appearance (age, ethnicity, tattoos, etc.).
- Relationship to the victim.
- A known similar *modus operandi* (MO) or previous conviction for a similar crime.
- Access to the crime scene and/or being in the vicinity of the crime scene at the correct time.
- Access to vehicles of interest.
- Place of residence.

Officers need to populate their TIE categories with people who share its defining characteristic, using intelligence databases, official records, witness statements, interviews, etc.—hopefully, including the actual offender. Everyone within a TIE category becomes a TIE subject until they are eliminated by further inquiries and comparison to what is known about the actual perpetrator. Physical resemblance, time frame, forensic evidence (DNA, footprints, fingerprints, etc.), and a credible alibi can all help eliminate a subject, with varying degrees of confidence.

Whether a subject has been eliminated from the enquiry or not can be tracked through **HOLMES** (page 210). Not being eliminated from a TIE category doesn't automatically make the subject guilty of the crime or absolve them of it, but the TIE process can help narrow down a general list of suspects to those who are more likely to have been in the right place at the right time. Those identified as persons of interest then undergo more in-depth scrutiny in an attempt to identify the true perpetrator.

Footnote: [5] *Foxglove Summer*

Police Resources

Every crime requires resources to solve it, but what those resources are may vary greatly depending on its nature—all the way from how many people are assigned to investigate the case up to the use of cutting-edge forensic techniques for serious incidents. Any use of resources has to be authorised by a Chief Inspector, as time and specialist services cost money. As already mentioned, the Folly's quasi-independent status and finances allow it a degree of latitude in this area that other divisions envy, but investigators still need to run things past DCI Nightingale before they start splashing the cash around on external agencies and consultants.

The following sections look at some of the specialist services investigators may wish to call on during the course of a case file. We also look at **HOLMES** (page 210) and the **Police National Computer** (PNC, page 210), as well as some other useful databases (**Forensic Databases**, page 210).

Constables and Trainee Officers

Sometimes, police inquiries simply require a lot of "legwork" to get the job done. For example, going door-to-door collecting witness statements, scouring CCTV footage of Covent Garden to figure out the journey taken by a murderer[6], inputting the data from witness statements into HOLMES, or standing for several hours in the rain guarding a crime scene while the investigators are off sipping tea with ancient gods and goddesses.

Work such as this requires more hands on deck and, often, less expertise, so it's better to let NPCs take care of it off screen—a Chief Inspector, such as Nightingale, can commission various other constables and trainee officers to help with these aspects of a case so that the investigators are focused on the more dramatic and exciting elements of the plot.

GM ADVICE

If the investigators really want to get their hands dirty by analysing hours of CCTV footage, remember, you can use a Research skill roll to quickly determine not if they are successful, but rather *when* they are successful; i.e., the level of success they achieve on the roll suggests how long it took them to find the information. For example, a Regular success could mean it takes an investigator four hours to find what they're seeking, while a Hard success could mean they find it in half that time; a failure would mean it took them double the time—potentially an issue if time is of the essence, with only a fumble meaning they spot nothing and have to call in a fresh pair of eyes.





Footnote: [6]*Rivers of London*

Police Forensic Services

Constant innovations in the field of forensic science—from fingerprints to DNA profiling—have been a great asset to criminal investigations across the globe. In the Met, this type of work often falls to the Metropolitan Police Forensic Services.

Forensic Services technicians are responsible for examining physical evidence via a wide range of analytical techniques. It is also their job to interpret evidence and present it to the detectives working the case in a form they can understand and use. For example, fingerprints are collected, catalogued, and compared to reference samples to furnish the detectives with a positive match and a suspect's name.

Sometimes, a lack of resources, or the need for more specialist expertise, means analysis must be outsourced to trusted providers—in the case of demi-monde-related/magical evidence, this, of course, includes the Folly. Usually, such evidence is shared independently of case details to avoid bias, although this may not be true for Falcon-related cases.

Unless one of the investigators is a forensic scientist, and, therefore, in a position to analyse the evidence directly, it's most likely they'll receive a written or verbal summary of what's been found at their crime scene from an NPC from Police Forensic Services.

Specialist Firearms Command

While most officers within the Met do not carry firearms, situations can arise requiring an armed response. The unit called upon on these occasions is the Specialist Firearms Command (SCO19). Its officers are trained in two specific weapons: the Glock 17 pistol and the Heckler & Koch MP5 carbine; they are also trained in the use of tear gas. SCO19 officers are experts in abseiling, door breaching, and the safe handling of hostages. All officers approved for this command must undergo various psychological tests before they are cleared for duty.

In *RoL:RPG*, it is unlikely that the investigators are members of SCO19, but they may need to call on its services if a case file escalates beyond their control. For "off the books" situations, they may even need to call in **Frank Caffrey** (page 239) and his associates from the Parachute Regiment[7].

Family Liaison Officers

For every victim, there are loved ones left behind. Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) are specially trained officers responsible for gathering evidence from affected families and providing support and advice to them throughout the case, as well as keeping them up to date with the investigation's progress. FLOs should be in attendance whenever investigators need to speak to a victim's family members and close associates; for example, when Peter Grant interviewed Zachary Palmer, Sahra Guleed was present as one of the assigned FLOs[8]. An FLO's role is to brief detectives on the interviewee's general state, provide advice on how to approach certain aspects of the conversation, and to answer any questions the family members might have during the interview process.

Communications and Data Specialists

In our increasingly tech-reliant society, the ability to access electronic devices and the information they store can be of vital importance when it comes to cracking a case. This is often a highly-specialised area, so investigators may need to call on the services of a communications data specialist when it comes to mobile phone tracking, search history checking, and recovering information from corrupted hard drives.

While these skills may be of use in *RoL:RPG* case files, the effects magic has on technology may mean there is little for a data specialist to analyse (**Spells and Technology**, page 176). Even the best may have real difficulty recovering anything from a tiny pile of fine golden sand!

Financial Investigators

"White-collar crime," such as corporate fraud, requires specialist investigation, like that carried out by SC Nguyễn on behalf of the City of London Police9. Anyone's financial records can be of use in determining a potential motive. The Met's Economic Crime Unit is dedicated to following the money, usually by obtaining and analysing a person of interest's financial records. They may also track transactions into and out of the country by a company or individual, as well as keeping a dossier of the suspect's assets (buildings, investments, modes of transport, and so on). All requests for financial investigation must be approved by a Chief Inspector, and investigators must provide reasonable grounds for needing such information.

As well as being useful for providing a motive or evidence of a crime, financial records can be important in tracking down a missing suspect. The aforementioned dossier might help the investigators identify where that person has gone or what method of travel they're using to get around. Likewise, a check on a suspect's credit card usage may reveal their current location.

Pathologist

If there's a body, a pathologist will perform an autopsy to establish the cause and time of death. For the Folly, this role falls to **Dr Abdul Haqq Walid** (page 235) and **Dr Jennifer Vaughan** (page 236). In England and Wales, pathologists are state-registered but independent of the Home Office, the police, and the coroner; many are freelance, but some work within the National Health Service (NHS), occasionally in other roles as well.

Footnote: [7]*Rivers of London*

Footnotes: [8]*Whispers Under Ground*, [9]*Lies Sleeping*

While a pathologist may attend a crime scene at the SIO's request, they don't usually act as the Forensic Medical Examiner—that role is taken by a local General Practitioner (GP) or a contractor from a specialist service provider. More often than not, the pathologist first becomes involved in the case when the body arrives at the mortuary. They are appointed to the case by Her Majesty's Coroner for that area, once the Coroner's Office has been informed by the police of the victim's death.



GM ADVICE

In the novels, Drs Walid and Vaughan regularly invite Peter Grant and Nightingale to the Iain West Forensic Suite to view a body and discuss their results. Unless they are a pathologist, it's unlikely an investigator will carry out an autopsy themselves, but if one takes place during a case file, the investigators should have the opportunity to attend it.

HOLMES

The Home Office Large Major Enquiry System (HOLMES) was established in 1985 as a data collection and investigation management program, and upgraded to HOLMES 2 between 2000 and 2004. It is a cataloguing system for collecting case information from across the UK into a single location, and can be used to cross reference cases as far back as 1990. Usually used when investigating major crimes such as murder, HOLMES can be accessed anywhere in the world—once you have the necessary clearance to do so. As it is a fairly old system—at the time of *Rivers of London*, it runs on a Microsoft Windows 2000 platform—some training is required to enter and retrieve data from it, but it still serves as an important online data management and collation resource.

All data generated by a case, regardless of who collected it, are catalogued onto HOLMES for ease of access. A user can search the database using various methods—open questions, case numbers, names, locations, etc.—to find the information they seek. As a result, HOLMES is a handy resource for investigators tracking down details on possible related cases and potential suspects using the Research skill. It is also a useful tool for managing a case's progress in terms of which leads have and haven't been followed up on—in police-speak, what actions have and haven't been completed.

Of course, due to the nature of most Folly-led inquiries, certain information cannot be stored on HOLMES, and as such, the Folly has its own cataloguing system comprised of a card index—although Peter Grant is working on transferring the records onto a separate secure database for Folly personnel (**Ground Floor**, page 264). Less serious, mundane cases may rely solely on paper-based records.

The Police National Computer (PNC)

The PNC is the main police database, accessible by all police services and some additional law enforcement agencies across the UK. Originally created to record stolen vehicles, by 2017, it contained more than 12 million personal records, almost 60 million driver records, and over 60 million vehicle records.

The PNC's persons database holds records on anyone with a criminal conviction, as well as people awaiting trial, those who have been cautioned, who are wanted or missing, who have a court order against them, who have driving convictions, who hold a driver's licence, and those who hold a firearms certificate. The vehicle database holds the details of every car registered in the UK, including their insurance details. There is also a property/stolen items database.

The amount of information stored in the PNC is staggering and highly detailed, making it a valuable resource for investigators.

GM ADVICE

The PNC and its companion, the Police National Database (PND), were due to be replaced in 2020 by the National Law Enforcement Data Service (NLEDS); however, that system is currently overdue, with no sign of when it will be implemented. The PND was set up in 2010 to allow individual police forces to share their intelligence nationally.



Forensic Databases

There are many other databases the police, and therefore any Folly-attached investigators, can access. This section contains a small selection of some of the key ones.

The National Injuries Database (NID)

Part of the National Crime Agency (NCA), the National Injuries Database team analyses weapons and wounds to help officers identify the type of weapon used in a crime. Its services are available to UK police forces and internationally. It is also available to medical and forensic practitioners.

The National Fingerprint Database

Also known as IDENT1, this database contains fingerprints, palm prints, and other scene of crime "marks." It is primarily used to record, search, and compare fingerprints taken from arrestees to those in the database found at crime scenes.

The National DNA Database (NDNAD)

Anyone arrested on suspicion of committing a recordable offence—i.e., one that by law has to be recorded on the PNC—must give both a fingerprint and a DNA sample. The DNA profile is stored in the NDNAD. If that person isn't formally charged or is found not guilty, their sample must be deleted from the database within a given time period;

otherwise, it is stored permanently. The database also holds the unidentified DNA profiles from blood and other bodily fluids, hair, and skin cells found at crime scenes.

Magical vs Mundane Investigations

The Met's policy regarding magic and the supernatural is somewhat nebulous. The exact details of the "arrangement" between members of the magical world and the Commissioner are unknown to most of the Met's workforce. Senior officers and above have a greater understanding of what's going on, as they are the ones most likely to call on the Folly when "weird bollocks" starts happening. However, as magic increases in the world, even junior officers are becoming more aware of what the term "Falcon-related" means and who they're gonna call at any sign of trouble.

- The Special Assessment Unit (i.e., the Folly) must be informed if there is anything "odd" about a case, so that an assessment can be made as to whether or not it is genuinely Falcon-related. If it is, the Folly assigns officers to assist with the case.
- An officer experiencing direct contact with anything unexplainable or overtly supernatural in the absence of a Folly investigator should inform their senior officer immediately and take no further action. However, it's not unknown for lower-ranking officers to contact the Folly directly, especially if they've had prior experience or are working as Folly liaison officers in the community, like PC Robert Maginty[10].
- An officer who comes into contact with the supernatural while working alongside a Folly investigator should seek their advice before taking any further action, unless a life may be in danger.

Folly-trained officers carry a greater degree of responsibility than their blissfully unaware colleagues, as it falls to them to maintain the Queen's Peace in the face of the various magical and supernatural entities that call London their home—and all without revealing the existence of magic and the demi-monde to the world at large. This is a tricky balancing act to pull off, and often requires tact and diplomacy—as well as a certain degree of lateral thinking—in order to preserve law and order. Arrest and prosecution may not always be possible, depending on the nature of either the crime or the criminal, so Folly officers must remain flexible and adaptable in their approach to solving and resolving case files. Folly investigators should bear the following in mind to help maintain the shroud of secrecy over their work.

- All official reports pertaining to Falcon-related cases should keep any mention of magic and the supernatural to an absolute minimum. This may require a deliberate degree of vagueness regarding certain aspects of the crime and/or perpetrator. There is a separate, Folly eyes only system to record the actual details of every Falcon-related case for posterity.
- Evidence collected during the course of an investigation should be treated the same way it would be for a mundane case—as long as it's the sort of evidence that would be admissible in a court of law. Otherwise, it's up to the investigator to create their own independent chain of custody (**The Chain of Evidence**, page 206), including storage and possible disposal once the situation has reached its conclusion.

Police Powers

A police officer's attestation gives them their authority to operate as an officer of the law. And, while those powers may not be as amazing as Newtonian magic, they can be equally effective. All police powers in the Great Britain are regulated by the codes of conduct set down in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), including **Stop and Search** (page 211), **Arrest and Detention** (page 212), and **Interviews and Interrogations** (page 212). PACE also contains laws concerning the treatment of evidence and how interviews are conducted.

The Warrant Card

One important physical representation of a police officer's authority is their warrant card. This credit-card-sized piece of photo ID contains an officer's name, rank, and the police service to which they belong. Uniformed officers tend to wear theirs on a lanyard or clipped to their uniform, while plainclothes detectives tend to carry theirs in a separate wallet. It isn't always necessary for an officer to present their warrant card to use their powers, especially not if they're in uniform, but it must always be available to show upon request.

If an officer is suspended from duty, they must turn in their warrant card. If an officer loses their warrant card, it may become a disciplinary matter if the card is then used by someone committing a crime.



GM ADVICE

While civilian consultants attached to the Folly have their own identity card (**The Folly Consultant's Card**, page 60), remember, it grants them far less power than their colleagues' warrant cards.

Stop and Search

Stop and search has a deeply chequered history. Used correctly and without discrimination, it can be a useful tool for identifying suspects and following up on leads, although it is a contentious issue, as it has often been used to target marginalised sections of society. While we may

Footnote: [10]*False Value*

predominantly think of the term in relation to stopping and searching a person, the power also covers the search of belongings, homes, and other private locations.

In England and Wales, a police officer has the authority to stop and question anyone they wish, as long as they identify themselves as a police officer and provide proof if not in uniform (i.e., show their warrant card). They may ask who the subject is, where they are going, or what they are doing in that particular location, for example. The subject is under no obligation to stop or respond to the questions they've been asked if they do not wish to do so.

A police officer cannot just search someone. They must have reasonable grounds for doing so, e.g., they believe the suspect is carrying stolen or illegal goods. The officer must clearly identify themselves, tell the suspect exactly what they expect to find, and why the search is being carried out. In addition, they must explain legally why they are allowed to carry out the search and offer the suspect a record of the search. A person can only be searched without reasonable grounds under very limited circumstances and then only with the approval of a senior police officer.

When it comes to searching private property, such as homes, a search warrant is usually required, otherwise any evidence obtained is inadmissible in court. The search warrant must specify what the officer expects to find and what reasonable grounds the officer has for believing it will be in that location. There are some exceptions to this, though, the main ones being when an officer fears either a life or the property is in imminent danger.

Arrest and Detention

The power of arrest is one of the few powers that all members of the Metropolitan Police Service share—from constables to Commissioners—and can use to start detention proceedings. To arrest someone, a police officer must have reasonable grounds to believe the person is intending to commit, is in the process of committing, or has committed, a criminal offence *and* that it is necessary to arrest them—usually the case if the crime has yet to be committed or in order to protect the safety of a person or item of property. Under these circumstances, there is no need for a formal arrest warrant. Note that some circumstances might require a formal warrant, e.g., the suspect's home address is unknown so they cannot be summoned to court. Warrants are only issued if the alleged crime is indictable and/or punishable with a prison sentence.

As with stop and search, an officer must clearly identify themselves and inform the suspect of the reason for their arrest. An officer must caution the suspect at the time of their arrest—the British equivalent of reading a suspect their rights. If the officer fails to deliver a caution correctly, anything the suspect says becomes inadmissible as evidence (as they weren't warned that it could be used against them; **British Police Caution**, nearby).

Depending on the circumstances surrounding the arrest, police officers are entitled to use "reasonable force" to detain the suspect. Reasonable force includes the use of handcuffs if the officer believes the suspect may attempt to use force to escape. However, there is no legal definition of what "reasonable force" actually is and individual perceptions vary, which has sometimes led to its abuse.

Once arrested, the suspect is taken to the police station of choice—this may not be the closest one if they are a suspect in a specific case. Once at the station, the suspect's name, date of birth, and address are recorded, and any items within their possession—aside from their clothes and shoes—are confiscated. Once booked in, the suspect may be held in the custody suite for up to 24 hours and questioned at any time regarding the crime for which they've been arrested. The suspect is entitled to legal advice—either provided free by the Met or through their own lawyer. Suspects are permitted to communicate with the outside world in order to let friends and family know where they are, and are entitled to food and drink, along with medical treatment if they are injured.

Interviews and Interrogations

A key part of evidence gathering involves interviews and interrogations. An interview is a more informal approach, used when talking to a witness or suspect in an informal setting outside the police station, or if someone has been called in for questioning; for example, when gathering witness statements. An interrogation, on the other hand, suggests that an arrest has been made and the subject is in custody.

GM ADVICE

Arresting members of the demi-monde may not always be feasible or desirable. Small fry like Zachary Palmer—yes; but *genii locorum*—not so much. Any investigator wishing to formally arrest a member of the demi-monde should first clear it with DCI Nightingale to avoid any unfortunate incidents. As with all things demi-monde related, there is usually a subtler, off the books way to handle matters. If all else fails, the new custody suite in the Folly's basement is equipped to handle such unusual prisoners (**Basement**, page 264).



British Police Caution

"You do not have to say anything. But, it may harm your defence if you do not mention, when questioned, something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence."

If an interview is conducted in an informal setting, the approach taken is left largely to the officer's discretion. However, any interview or interrogation taking place on police premises always uses what is known as the PEACE model:

- **Preparation and Planning:** an interview plan—covering key points for discussion, what questions will be asked, and how to close the interview—is drawn up prior to the interview and presented to the Officer in Charge of the case for approval. The plan should include details of any previous contact the subject has had with the police, as well as any special assistance requirements they may have, e.g., language services (interpreter), disability aids, etc.
- **Engage and Explain:** the interview preamble, where the officers involved introduce themselves and explain the reasons why the interview is taking place and what will happen once the interview is over. The police caution is also issued again to remind the interviewee that what they say may be used in evidence.
- **Account:** where the interviewee is asked to give their recollection of the incident. A good interviewer takes care not to lead the witness/suspect, but lets them tell the story from their perspective. Once this initial account is complete, the officer may seek clarification on certain points, as well as ask their pre-prepared questions. Any question asked should be short and simple, but, wherever possible, open-ended, to encourage the suspect to elaborate—and potentially slip up.
- **Closure:** closing the interview by thanking the interviewee for their cooperation and summarising and confirming their account of what happened. This stage includes answering the interviewee's questions and restating what will happen following the interview.
- **Evaluate:** the information collected is evaluated to determine what the next steps should be, e.g., further interviews, follow up inquiries, etc. It's also when an officer evaluates their own performance during the interview for future improvement.

GM ADVICE

You may not wish to follow all the PEACE model steps exactly as written if the investigators end up carrying out a formal interview or interrogation during a case file, and you're probably not going to ask them to come up with an in-depth plan before hand—unless, of course, you think it's something your players would really enjoy doing. But, it helps sell the setting if you know how these things are done in the real world. As always, use what helps tell the story, and ignore anything that slows it down.





Police Oversight

There have been several occasions where Peter Grant has been investigated by the Directorate of Professional Standards (DPS) as a consequence of his actions[11,12,13,14]. The DPS is the Metropolitan Police Service's internal investigation department, responsible for looking into complaints against Met officers. These may originate from members of the public or other services, but the DPS also investigates suspicions of fraud or corruption, and when an officer has broken their professional codes of conduct.

Each police service has their own Professional Standards Department, like the DPS. The police are also overseen by a wholly independent body known as the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC; replaced in 2018 by the Independent Office for Police Conduct). The IPCC investigates the most serious complaints against police officers, such as deaths in custody, as well as handling complaints from those who are dissatisfied with the way a regional Professional Standards Department has dealt with a prior complaint.

Table 12: A Glossary of Common Police Acronyms and Slang

Acronym	Definition	Acronym	Definition
4Es	Engage, Explain, Encourage, Enforce	MIR	Major Incident Room
6Ws	Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How	MISPER	Missing Person
ABC	Assume Nothing; Believe Nothing; Challenge/Check Everything	MO	*Modus operandi*
Action	Set of written instructions telling an officer to carry out a specific line of enquiry	MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
ASBO	Anti-social Behaviour Order (and the nickname given by Peter Grant to one of his cars)	NCA	National Crime Agency
Bent	Corrupt (in a police context)	NDNAD	National DNA Database
BME	Black and Ethnic Minorities	NID	National Injuries Database
BOCU	Borough Operational Command Unit	NHS	National Health Service

Footnotes: [11]*Moon Over Soho*, [12]*Broken Homes*, [13]*The Hanging Tree*, [14]*Lies Sleeping*

Acronym	Definition	Acronym	Definition
Bobby	Slang for a police officer	Nicked	Slang term for being arrested
BTP	British Transport Police	NLEDS	National Law Enforcement Data Service
BWV	Body Worn Video	OIC	Officer in Charge
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television	Old Bill, the	Slang for the Metropolitan Police Service
Ch Insp	Chief Inspector	PACE	Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
Ch Supt	Chief Superintendent	PAVA	Pelargonic Acid Vanillylamide
CID	Criminal Investigation Department	PC	Police Constable
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service	PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
DC	Detective Constable	PEACE	Preparation and Planning; Engage and Explain; Account; Closure; Evaluate
DCI	Detective Chief Inspector	PIP	Professionalising Investigation Programme
DCS	Detective Chief Superintendent	PNB	Pocket Notebook
DI	Detective Inspector	PNC	Police National Computer (database)
DPS	Directorate of Professional Standards	PND	Police National Database
DS	Detective Sergeant	POI	Person of Interest
ECU	Economic Crime Unit	PSD	Professional Standards Department

Acronym	Definition	Acronym	Definition
FAO	First Attending Officer	Refs	Refreshments
FLO	Family Liaison Officer	SAU	Special Assessment Unit (aka the Folly)
FME	Forensic Medical Examiner	SC	Special Constable
GCHQ	Government Communications Headquarters	SCO19	Specialist Firearms Command
HOLMES	Home Office Large Major Enquiry System	Sgt	Sergeant
IDENTI	National Fingerprint Database	SIO	Senior Investigating Officer
Insp	Inspector	SOCO	Scene of Crime Officer
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Commission	Supt	Superintendent
IRV	Incident Response Vehicle	TIE	Trace, Identify/Interview/ Implicate, Eliminate
Met, the	The Metropolitan Police Service	WOW	Wanted on Warrant
MIA	You may have noticed that APB (All Points Bulletin) and BOLO (Be On The Lookout) are both missing from Table 12. That's because, despite their frequent appearances in TV crime dramas, they are both American police terms and not used in the UK. Not that your investigators can't use them, just expect people to look somewhat baffled if they do!		



Game Moderator Advice

The Commissioner gave a mirthless chuckle. 'Does he know what he's getting himself into?'

'Does any copper?' asked Nightingale.

'Very well,' said the Commissioner. 'On your feet, son.'

We stood. Nightingale told me to raise my hand and read me the oath: 'Do you, Peter Grant of Kentish Town, swear to be true to our sovereign Queen and her heirs. And well and truly serve your Master for the term of your apprenticehood. And ye shall be in obedience to all the wardens and clothing of that fellowship. In reverence of the secret of the said fellowship ye shall keep and give no information to any man but of the said fellowship. And in all these things ye shall well and truly behave yourself and secretly keep this oath to your power, so help you God, your Sovereign and the power that set the universe in motion.'

I so swore, although I did almost stumble over the clothing bit.

'So help you God,' said the Commissioner.
—Rivers of London

The GM's Role: an Overview

Taking on the role of Game Moderator (GM) can be a little daunting, especially if you are new to roleplaying games (RPGs). The following sections exist to give you a deeper understanding of what's involved, as well as giving you some tools and ideas to help you along. If you need encouragement, we hope you find it here!

RoL:RPG, like all other RPGs, is a collaborative storytelling game that aims to be enjoyable for everyone taking part. Although, as GM, you have a very different role during the game than your players, you are not their opponent, as you might be in a traditional boardgame. Though your non-player characters (NPCs) might oppose the players' investigators at times, it is not your job to outwit them, nor the players' job to "beat" you—you are, ultimately, all on the same side. You work together as co-creators of each case file (also known as an adventure or scenario), telling a shared story.

The first part of your role involves reading this rulebook so that you understand how the game works. You don't have to memorise everything before you begin playing, but you might want to make a few notes to help you remember the important parts. **Appendix B** is a useful resource, as it



contains quick-reference rules summaries to use during a game, or to print out and share with your players to help them know what to do, too.

The next part of your role is to write a case file—or familiarise yourself with a pre-written one. We recommend you use the pre-written case file in this book first, before designing your own. But, when writing your own adventure, it should be engaging, a little challenging, immersive, and in keeping with the *Rivers of London* setting. Your case file needs to be logically coherent. The game rules help you with this, but the rules are not the most important aspect. Nor are rules the final arbiter of what happens in your game: *you are*. A GM is far closer to an enabler than a tyrant. Your task is to guide the investigators through the plot by giving them the clues they need to solve the case, and so help them to reach a successful outcome.

Your players' role, on the other hand, is to undertake that investigation willingly and with focus. They need to keep notes of clues, ask questions, and proactively follow up lines of enquiry, all while roleplaying their investigators. Players are not meant to be an awestruck audience to your storytelling prowess, and they are not there to play second-fiddle to much more powerful NPCs, such as Nightingale. The players and their investigators are the stars of the show and should be centre stage in the story.

As the GM, you have a head start, having done all your pregame preparation like reading the case file and preparing some notes to help you remember its key plot points. You are—hopefully—enthused and engaged before you even sit down with your players. So, the next part of your role is to lift your players up to that level, to get them to invest emotionally in their investigators, in the fictional world, and in solving each case.

GM ADVICE



You may be feeling a little nervous if this is the first time you've run a game for anyone. Don't worry. You've got this. No one is expecting you to be perfect—we all make mistakes when we're GMing, but we learn from them. The more you play, the more experienced you and your players will become. Rules that at first seem complicated will become second nature. And, in time, you'll wonder what you were so nervous about!

As you can see, to be a GM, you need to be knowledgeable and quick-thinking, as well as flexible and sometimes firm. You need to be sensitive to the players' mood, both as a group and as individuals (**Considerate Gaming**, page 44). You also need to see that everyone gets their say, and that each investigator gets their moments of achievement and triumph, so that everyone in the team feels like they have a place. And, every now and again, you might need to arbitrate between players or make a final call on how a rule is being used in a particular situation.

Being a GM might sound like a lot to ask—but there's a tremendous reward and satisfaction in GMing a good game. Remember, be fair. Act from a place of goodwill. Do your best. Finally, don't forget that this is just a game, and all of you are supposed to be having fun.

Tone of Play

'What did you sense in there?' asked Nightingale as we walked back to the Jag.

'As in vestigium*?'*

'Vestigium *is the singular,* vestigia *is the plural,' said Nightingale.* *'Did you sense* vestigia*?'*

'To be honest,' I said, 'nothing. Not even a vestige.'
—Rivers of London

Each *RoL:RPG* case file is, at heart, a detective investigation. This genre takes many fictional forms, from "Cosy Crime" to the darkest, most harrowing "Modern Noir." So, if you want to stay true to the books, it's important to be aware of tone.

It's Not "Gritty"

The *Rivers of London* books take place in an idealised version of reality. There is violence—and murder—but the gory details are passed over lightly, and characters tend to shrug off experiences that would, in real life, hurt them emotionally. Nobody quits the job due to grinding stress, and it takes seven novels before Peter Grant even admits that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) might be an occupational risk[15]. Sexism and racism are certainly flagged up as existing, but are not dwelt upon. The Metropolitan Police Service is a meritocratic equal-opportunities bunch just trying to do the right thing. Corruption, brutality, and systemic racial, homophobic, and misogynistic bullying (both internal and external) that might come to light in the real world are, in the fiction, largely under control, so that the police are, above all, professionals.

Police budgetary resources are something to grumble about, not slashed to the point where law and order are in jeopardy. Most working-class criminals are just ordinary folks making a living. And the "social work" end of police activity—attempting to keep the peace in a populace riddled with pockets of poverty, social marginalisation, alcohol abuse, drug addiction, and mental health problems—is almost entirely missing. So, if you want to stick to the feel of the original books when using the London setting, remember the following points.

Footnote: [15] *Lies Sleeping*

- The Met are the "Good Guys," and the stories are told from their point of view. Individual officers may be grumpy, unhelpful, or even crooked, but this is no more than a mild impediment to the investigators. The system itself is largely benign, and the status quo is worthy of being upheld.
- Punch up, not down. Peter Grant is (like most police officers) a working-class lad who really distrusts those he deems "posh," and assumes that they probably have something to hide. If you create a genuinely sociopathic or cruel boss villain along the lines of the Faceless Man, they should be entitled and wealthy, or not human at all. Organised Newtonian magic in Britain up until World War II was an exclusive "gentlemen's club" and this legacy remains. The Little Crocodiles cadre of ethically-challenged magicians originated from the most privileged white, male, Oxford-University-educated social background[16] (**Little Crocodiles**, page 263), and Lady Helena Linden-Limmer's matriarchal tradition[17] is upper-class, too (**La Société de la Rose**, page 263).
- Avoid plots revolving around child abuse, sexual violence, and degradation—or treat these themes with extreme caution. You should be thrilling your players, not disturbing or depressing them. The horrors of the Strip Club of Doctor Moreau are deliberately kept undescribed in the books. See **Considerate Gaming** (page 44) and **Important: Tone** (page 123).
- Your games should maintain a generally optimistic view of humanity, and an inclusive definition of what constitutes a person, with their inherent rights and dignity. The first duty of a Met police officer is to protect people, and Peter Grant, even at his most cynical, does not doubt that the general public deserve protection—even if they are not strictly "human." This attitude contrasts with Lesley May's, who comes to see magical beings as literal monsters[18]. Peter even stands up to Nightingale in some cases where his superior officer thinks that keeping the Queen's Peace justifies extra-judicial execution[19].
- Treat marginalised groups with respect. Our heroes, Peter and Sahra Guleed, both come from immigrant communities. Most of London's downriver gods are Black Anglo-Nigerians. Do your cultural research and avoid stereotypes. And, make sure that NPCs of other ethnicities are as individualised and nuanced as those from your own culture.

It's Not Horror

Of course, there are supernatural threats and monsters, and even some genuinely horrific elements—such as Larry the Lark's fate[20]—but *Rivers of London* is miles away from the nihilism of true horror. Peter Grant narrates his adventures with a breezy, geeky wit, and although his sense of humour is sometimes dark it is always present. Our heroes are not broken loners squaring off against the uncaring Abyss. Community is a source of strength, both magical and emotional. Family ties matter to everyone. London is a home to which characters feel they belong and a place in which they have a stake. Any supernatural entities running around causing trouble can ultimately be contained, and many are functional parts of society—or at least amenable to negotiation.

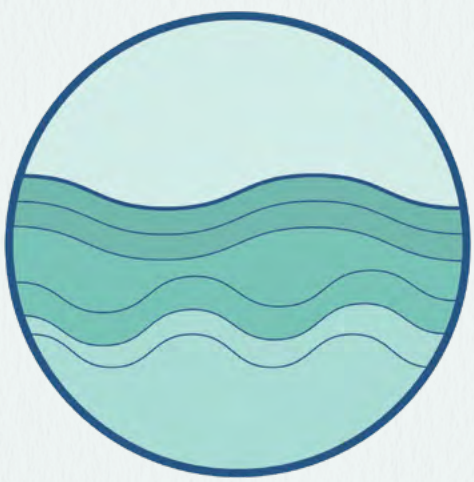
An *RoL:RPG* game should end with the case file being solved satisfactorily. Or if it isn't, this should just be a stepping stone in a longer and larger plot and, ultimately, a more important victory for the Folly.

If you are familiar with Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* RPG, it's obvious that it would be easy and fun to write crossover scenarios, using the Folly as an investigator organisation in *Call of Cthulhu* games or introducing Lovecraftian existential horror into Peter's Grant's London (Ghouls on the Tube? Cultists in the British Museum?). Just be aware that there will have to be a tonal shift one way or the other. *Call of Cthulhu* is very much a game about raging against the dying of the light. In *Rivers of London*, the light is not dying—or, alternatively, *Rivers of London* is about taking a light into dark places.

If a player fails a pushed roll, the results need not be catastrophic or threatening, as they would be in a purely horror game. They may, instead, be humorous or embarrassing—for the investigator, not the player! Peter Grant doesn't stand too much on his dignity, so neither should your investigators.

BEN SAYS

Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game could even be described as "*Call of Cthulhu*—now with added hope!"



Footnotes:[16, 19, 20] *Moon Over Soho,* [17] *The Hanging Tree,* [18] *Lies Sleeping*

Spirit of Place

Erasmus Wolfe wrote extensively about genii locorum *in his ground-breaking and—at two thousand pages—wrist-breaking* Exotica. *He theorised that there was an upper limit to the size and power of an individual* genius loci… *None of the really huge rivers of Europe—the Volga, the Danube, or the Rhine—appeared to possess a single tutelary deity. Instead there were Rhine Maidens, plural, a French and a German Mosel, and at least ten recorded gods and goddesses of the Don.*
—Lies Sleeping

In this game, setting and locality is fundamental. The *Rivers of London* universe is an animist one, not a theistic one: the gods don't create the material world, they emanate from it. Supernatural (i.e., magical) entities abound, but are focused on small areas of operation. The river "gods" like Mama Thames are merely top-end *genii locorum*—localised magical emanations—and are not personifications of abstract qualities. Note that some of them take serious exception to the very label "god" and prefer "spirit" or "*orisa*."

No deities above this scale exist. This means that your players should not be running into angels—even in Islington—devils, or gods like Mars or Thor, although it would certainly be possible to encounter a local entity that pretends to be Mars, or even thinks it is him. For example, in one novel we meet the Isis of the Walbrook[21], but this is not the "universal" Great Goddess Isis—she is a local river spirit who manifests in Isis-style due to her particular history as a half-Egyptian human.

Running a Game

The following sections aim to give you the tools you'll need to set up and run a successful *Rivers of London* game, including information on running published case files and the possible effects of **Player Group Size** (page 222), as well as discussing **Player Agency** (page 221).

Running a Published Case File

By far, the easiest way to start your journey as an *RoL:RPG* GM is to use a published, ready-to-play case file, such as the one in this book (**The Bookshop**, page 285). If this is your first time as a GM, congratulations! As we mentioned earlier, don't worry about getting everything perfect the first time, because there is no such thing as "perfect." Every GM has their own individual style, and it might take you a little while to settle into yours. You'll probably be a bit shaky on the rules at first, or even make some decisions that you later think better of, but none of this should stop you and your gaming group from having fun as you learn the ropes together. Here are some tips that might help.



ADDITIONAL RULES
Pointers on creating your own adventures can be found in the **Writing a Case File** section on page 336.

Be Prepared
If you're nervous about thinking on your feet, or you tend to go blank under pressure, advanced preparedness is what will save you. Make notes and take some time to think ahead as to what might happen in the game. For example, if you think a fight scene is likely, read up on the combat rules to remind yourself of the key points. If you have a meeting with an important NPC coming up, jot down a short list of the key information they are going to tell the investigators.

Use Bookmarks
Until it becomes second nature to find the right rules, tables, etc., bookmarks or sticky notes used as tabs help enormously when flipping backwards and forwards through the rules. The rule summaries at the back of this book are designed to be copied or printed out as aide-mémoires.

Read Through the Case File Before Game Day
Read over the adventure ideally twice, if not three times. On the first read-through, you are trying to get an overall picture of the shape of the scenario, the personalities of any major NPCs, the moments of crisis or action when the investigators might be under threat, and the game's pacing. Is it action-oriented or more puzzle-solving in theme? What is the atmosphere or tone? Spooky? Crime-caper? Violent? And does this change from scene to scene? Is it likely to be one session long, or more—and if so, where would be a reasonable break point? Will the investigators' actions drive the plot or will you be actively intervening with, say, a villainous counterattack? How does the case file end, and what counts as a "success" in this particular instance?

The second read-through is when you start taking notes, whether pencilling in the margins or using a notebook. Some GMs literally write out all their notes about a published scenario on prompt cards. Others simply underline the vital details, maybe using different highlighter pens to pick out skill rolls, clues, important dialogue, etc. It's a question of finding what works for you. You don't need to carry every detail of a case file in your head, but the information needs to be there at your fingertips. Some GMs make a note of page numbers where they'll find key information and use these to navigate when running the game.

While you're reading, ask yourself: are you happy with the case file as written or can you think of little tweaks that will suit your purposes better? Check that the way the clues link together makes sense to you and that they'll be clear to your players—remember, they have to be able to solve the

Footnote: [21] *Lies Sleeping*

case! Clarify clues and add details or incidents if you feel it's needed. If you think your players might miss a clue or if you can't see a logical reason why a clue should be where it is, put it somewhere else (having the same clue appear in different places is a useful tip for these kind of games). There's no requirement to stick to what's written if adapting it suits you, your ongoing campaign, or your players, better.

Go on the Internet and Look Up Real Places Used As Settings In the Scenario
Find out what those places look like—it really helps you to describe a location to your players. There are more suggestions about making the most of internet resources later in this chapter, under **Props** (page 226) and **Using Tech** (page 227).

Q&A
Some published scenarios contain a lot of descriptive text that you can either read out verbatim or paraphrase, but players often get a better mental grasp of, for example, a crime scene, if they can ask questions, rather than trying to absorb an info-dump all at once. Keep initial descriptions brief and paint your picture in broad strokes, ready for follow-up Q&As. As long as you have a clear image of the scene in your head, you can answer those questions or make incidental details up on the fly, bringing the location to life. Thus, set the scene and then get your players to ask you about the details.

Who's Where?
Combat in *RoL:RPG* is narrative-driven rather than map-based; this is not meant to be a wargame. But, in a hand-to-hand (melee) combat, things can go more smoothly if both you and the players are clear on the relative locations of any investigators and NPCs present, as well as environmental hazards like stairwells and lifts (elevators). It can cause upset and frustration if you and a player have different mental pictures and are talking at cross-purposes, so using a sketch map that everyone can see to keep track of who is where, and who they're fighting, can be very helpful. You don't need painted gaming miniatures (though many people love them)—chess pieces, tiddlywinks, coins, buttons, or similar will do just fine. Virtual gaming platforms can also be really useful for displaying where everyone is during combat if playing online. See also **Distances in Combat** (page 127).

NPCs
Keep a list of random names that can be used for minor NPCs, should the players ask (because they will). This is just a list of names you can use as necessary. Profiles for important NPCs will be included in any published case file. If an unexpected situation arises and you have to make up NPC stats (characteristics, skills, etc.) on the fly for opposed skill rolls, the main thing to remember is that expert skills start at 60%, while common and combat skills start at 30%. Just set them at a level appropriate to the NPC's job and/or their role in your story. If ever in doubt, go with 50%.

Backstories
Be ready to make use of investigator backstories. During **Step Five: Create a Backstory** (page 56), if players invent family members, or particular social circumstances, take note—you can use these later as plot hooks or sources of information. See also **Friends and Family** (page 59).

Player Agency

'Does this happen a lot?' asked Caroline.

'Nope,' I said. 'Sometimes Beverley rescues me, sometimes Lady Ty, occasionally Molly—I think there's a rota.'
—The Hanging Tree

Always remember, your players are taking part in an interactive game, not reading a novel or listening to a podcast, so their choices must have an effect on how the plot flows. This includes actions taken by their investigators via the game rules—e.g., what skill rolls they make—and the players' own creative contributions, e.g., deduction, roleplaying, intuitive leaps, crazy ideas that are too good for the GM to resist, and so on.

When your players first build their investigators, give guidance as to what sort of group will work best with the games you have in mind. Encourage them to specialise their skills so they aren't all competing to be the one making the History roll or stun gunning the mad axeman. These discussions can, and should, form part of your Session Zero (**Creating Your Character**, page 44).

Every player should, ideally, contribute to how the story develops in every game session, or they may lose interest. So, when you are running your sessions, make sure to include skill rolls from a variety of disciplines. You might also find that you have one or two players who do all the talking and who tend to make all the decisions. Be alert to quiet players and make sure you engage them. Ask open-ended questions, for example: "*What are you thinking, DC Smith?*" "*What would you like to look into next?*" "*What's your next step, do you think?*"

If it all hits the fan and NPC backup has to be called in for the climactic showdown, make sure your players still have something to do. Keep the players front-of-stage with skill rolls and decision-making, while what the NPCs are doing forms a dramatic background to the investigators' actions. Even an elderly historian can play lookout and make that crucial Observation roll when a villain is trying to sneak out the back, or get into a fist-fight with a minion!

Potential Problems

RoL:RPG potentially has a twofold problem with player agency. First, law enforcement investigators work within the police hierarchy and must adhere to the law of the land, at least when under public scrutiny. Helpfully, since the investigators are members of a magical taskforce whose existence must be kept out of the press, they have a lot more leeway than other officers when it comes to breaking procedure—and even the law—if the end justifies the means. Most of the time, they are expected to deal with demi-monde antagonists *in situ*, rather than try dragging them into court. Thus, the Powers That Be tend to cover up for investigators, unless they become more of a liability than an asset (**Police Oversight**, page 214).

Two major considerations for the investigators are discretion and obeying the chain of command. It's clear that extra-judicial executions by Folly operatives are sanctioned if the threat is deemed high enough (e.g., vampires[22]), but they are carried out secretly. Investigators will not get away with initiating gunfire on someone in a crowded street, but persuading Nightingale to call in Frank Caffrey's snipers? That's a different kettle of fish…

GM ADVICE

If some of your investigators are police officers and some are civilians, their working relationship needs to be established right from the start. It won't be much fun for civilian investigators if they're always taking orders or being told to wait safely at the back in dangerous situations—just see how Abigail resents Peter doing that! This is a case where gameplay trumps realism. Give your civilian investigators autonomy and treat them as equals on the team if they want to step up and take risks, even in situations where realistically speaking they would be sidelined. If conflict arises between officers and civilians due to legitimately differing goals and worldviews, use it as a roleplaying opportunity.

The whole premise of the game supports the idea that police and civilian investigators are working together as a team to solve cases. No, it's not quite like that in the real world, but the real world doesn't have water spirits either! So go with the fiction, embrace the setting inspired by Ben's novels, and don't worry about simulating real life.



Secondly, there's the problem of practitioners who simply outclass the investigators, at least initially. High-level wizards exist, but you don't have to bring them in as antagonists until the investigators are ready for them. If they are human criminals, they'll certainly be trying to fly under Nightingale's radar as they go about their nefarious business. Seducing investigators away from the side of Law, as the Faceless Man does[23], is a strategy that could pay them bigger dividends in the long term than any all-out attack on the Folly ever would.

But, when it comes to high-level practitioners, the most difficult for the GM to deal with in a London-based game is not any villainous opponent but the investigators' guvnor, Nightingale; and, to a lesser extent, Peter Grant—if you're using him as an NPC. Most senior police officers in crime fiction are grumpy stuffed shirts who exist in a relationship of mutual annoyance with the protagonist, with the put-upon underling solving the mystery and earning their superior's grudging acclaim. Nightingale, however, does not fit this mould. He is handsome, clever, and immensely powerful; a literal war hero with a tragic past who gets younger and more athletic with time. His only major flaw is that he's out of touch with modern technology. If you are not careful, your players may give up and call Nightingale in every time things get difficult for them, or start to see themselves as office gophers for the real hero.

The answer to this is make sure you keep Nightingale in the background as much as possible. He might have to be busy on important business as the case progresses, maybe somewhere really far off like Aberdeen or continental Europe. He should be available on the phone to explain pertinent details, dispense advice, or ask critical questions, but even this should not be an automatic fall back, as practitioners often have to turn their phones off. Make the players treat him as a resource, not as the solution. If you have to, critically injuring him is an option; it's exactly what pushes Peter into tackling Mr Punch on his own[24]. Reducing his mobility, temporarily or permanently, goes a long way towards making sure the investigators are the ones in the front line. The same goes for Peter.

Player Group Size

… writing the ever-expanding Folly Expansion document—now incorporating the lessons learnt from Operation Jennifer. The principal one being that we needed to maintain a complement of at least six new magical practitioners, and that was only counting the ones that were also police officers.

—Lies Sleeping

The number of players in your game makes a big difference, and you should only GM for a group size that you are comfortable with—and if you're new to GMing, smaller is better, at least until you get the hang of things. *RoL:RPG* is designed to work best with 2–4 players and a GM. But it can be played with more (we suggest no more than six players plus the GM), or it can be run as a one-to-one investigation, where the GM guides one player through a case (with some extra, helpful NPCs to assist when needed).

Generally speaking, it is much easier to cater for a small group of players than a large one. You can pay individual attention to each investigator more easily, and combat, in particular, flows more swiftly. You'll find the whole gaming experience more relaxed with a smaller group.

Footnotes: [22]*Rivers of London*, [23]*Broken Homes*

Footnote: [24]*Rivers of London*

The game is written under the assumption that, in a small group, at least one—and possibly all—the investigators are law enforcement officers and, in a London game, it's probable they were seconded to the Folly through normal routes, either after their two-year probationary period in uniform or as a sideways move later in their careers. They've been taught some basic Newtonian magic and are ready to tackle cases on their own with minimal supervision. A small, police-focused group like this makes for a tighter, more investigatory style of gameplay.

Not every player wants to take the role of a police officer, so you may have a more diverse collection of investigators. In a larger group (four or more players), in particular, there are definite benefits to having civilian investigators in terms of skill diversity and roleplaying flexibility. Of course, there's nothing stopping you from having all the players take on non-police investigators; perhaps they are loosely attached to the Folly or are acting completely independent of Nightingale and co.

Some NPC police roles might make good investigators, but realistically speaking, forensic medical examiners (formerly known as police surgeons) and forensic specialists are likely to be office-bound and their official roles too tightly demarcated to get involved in stakeouts, combat, and general adventuring shenanigans. Civilian consultants, like archivist Harold Postmartin and wildcard investigators like Abigail Kamara, are a better bet for flexibility. They can go places off-limits to the police and get into all sorts of interesting trouble. Be extremely careful allowing investigators who are heavily armed—such as Frank Caffrey's ex-Para firefighters—in a game set anywhere in the UK, as they are liable to upset the balance of the party and cause a lot of legal problems for the Folly.



ADDITIONAL RULES

The Folly doesn't have to be limited to London, if you don't want it to be. For advice on how to expand the Folly's operations to another location in the UK, see **Your Local Folly?** (page 317).

The following civilian expertise could be brought in to assist with a case:

- **Consulting Detectives:** (Occupation: Private Investigator) Fictional examples of the consulting detective abound. They tend to be employed when the police are desperate for ideas and are a pretty good fit for the Folly.
- **Criminal Psychologists/Profilers:** (Occupation: Lecturer, with a specialisation in Read Person and Observation) Associated with murder cases in general and serial killer cases in particular, these are experts in the inner, mental life of different types of criminals and reading the psychological implications of physical clues, enabling them to predict their future behaviour. Note that they are far more effective and accurate in crime fiction than in real life!
- **"Psychics" or Mediums:** (Occupation: any, but Entertainer if professional) More common in the USA, but real-life British examples have occurred, with somewhat underwhelming results. In an *RoL:RPG* setting, they are not so risible, and are a reasonable way for a hedge witch to be co-opted by the Folly.
- **Scientific Consultants:** (Occupation: Doctor of Medicine, Lecturer) In real life, they are unlikely to step out of their laboratory to chase perps, but fictional settings allow them more freedom.
- **Community Consultants:** (Occupation: any, but suits Chancer) Remember, there are many fae of varying levels of magical ability and knowledge in London's demi-monde; they would make excellent Folly irregulars and interesting characters to play—see **Playing Fae Investigators** (page 318) for more details.
- **Criminal Underworld Contacts:** (Occupation: Criminal) May be an informant, also known as a grass, snitch or—more formally—a Covert Human Intelligence Source. A risky role. Note that a contact in the criminal underworld might also be an undercover police officer, but this puts that investigator at double the jeopardy from the people they are trying to blend in with.
- **Digital Forensics Experts:** (Occupation: Computer Specialist) Specialists in tracing and retrieving digital files, hacking, photographic enhancement, etc.

In *RoL:RPG*, given the Folly's recent personnel expansion, almost any occupation might be taken on and trained in magic on a less "official" basis, provided their skills, contacts, or backstory are useful and they are brought to Nightingale's attention. Historians in particular are an obvious fit. Remember, anyone could potentially have the ability to use magic. Of course, amateur sleuths who help out the forces of law and order—and always seem to be there at the right moment, somehow—are a favourite of crime writers and TV dramatists, and they include priests, stage magicians, lawyers, and sweet little old ladies.



ADDITIONAL RULES

Further options for bringing in larger numbers of investigators can be found in the **Troupe Play** section (page 313).

One-to-One

A one player-one GM game is, in some ways, closest to the original books, which are all told from Peter Grant's point of view. The positives are that the player is always centre-stage and engaged in the action. The negatives are that it puts more pressure on them to interpret your clues and come up with clever ideas. There's also less of the back-and-forth bounce of energy that a group of people brings to the table.

In a one-to-one game like this, Nightingale should almost always be on hand with advice as required, though you must make even more sure that he does not take over and steal the show. You need to be careful not to incapacitate the only investigator through violence, so one-to-one games should typically have less physical jeopardy. Being rescued from, say, a kidnapping by the rest of the player group is acceptable to most players. Being rescued by a magical NPC as a literal *deus ex machina* can feel tedious and belittling if not handled well—although Peter certainly has set a precedent for it, to the point he even jokes about it[25]!

Using Flashbacks

During Session Zero and character creation, give some thought to the question: how did the investigators come to be associated with the Folly? Do you want your players to make their own backstory up and introduce themselves in the first gaming session (**Brush with the Supernatural**, page 57)? Or do you want to leave this unsaid for the moment?

If you do decide to leave things vague, a nice option two or three games in—after your players have settled in with the rules and you've all come to know each other's characters a little—is for you to run a "flashback" scenario that covers the investigators' introduction to the Folly and its staff, and the creation of their team. This might mean retconning their skills and attributes, as it would probably be set before they were trained in Newtonian magic, so make sure you keep a copy of their original character sheets (physical or electronic) the first time you play. This is a fun way of adding extra depth to roleplaying and rewarding players for their immersion in the game. Of course, you will have to be extra careful not to kill the investigators during the flashback!



Footnote: [25]*The Hanging Tree*

Don't Sweat the Science…

This game takes place in a fantasy world, not ours, so don't try to explain the physics of magic beyond the rules mechanics—even Nightingale and Peter have only the haziest idea how magic works.

When it comes to mundane science, you are also not expected to be a forensics expert—and don't worry if you have to sacrifice strict factual accuracy for good gameplay. Keep things simple and consistent if you can, but allow yourself some flexibility. For example, DNA matching takes about 8 hours from delivery to the laboratory if it is an urgent priority case—hours or days longer if not, with an average of 24–72 hours. You can cut this time down to a couple of hours to keep the momentum up—after all, certain TV forensic shows do this all the time. Conversely it is always easy to cite a weeks-long "backlog" if you aren't in a hurry to hand out the information, or you want your NPC suspect to be released from custody.

Your tweaks to the laws of reality should be subtle, wherever possible. For example, in *RoL:RPG*, injuries recover extremely quickly, and rarely remove players from taking part in the action for long (**Wounds and Healing**, page 144). Of course, this means avoiding statements like "*You've been shot through the heart… You're spending 30 points of Luck? Up you get, then.*" But, when there's magic and *genii locorum* on the loose, you also have to accept that sometimes, physics—and subtlety—just have to take a back seat.

… Or the Police Stuff

The first half of this chapter gives you plenty of information to help structure a crime procedural with a fair degree of accuracy. But sometimes reality can get in the way of a good game. Don't bog the action down in paperwork or bureaucracy. If an investigator group needs resources or access to something or somewhere, this should be granted quickly. Drama trumps realism, every time. Not one of our favourite fictional crime dramas, either in print or on the screen, is an accurate description of day-to-day policing in the real world, and *Rivers of London* is no exception. Once again, it's more important to be consistent than factually exact.

Example: *you have made it clear that in the game universe, fingerprints of innocent interviewees can still be found on file after an old case is closed and the fingerprints have been deemed irrelevant (which, in real-life Britain, is not, in fact, the case). You need this clue to be available for a particular case file. Don't deny the investigators that resource at a later point in the campaign and expect your players not to notice and complain—though you might justify it with, for example, a change in data protection law.*

Police teams in real life tend to conduct inquiries and informal interviews in pairs or even solo, rather than moving round in groups, but, if you have more than two players, don't worry about this particular detail. It's much more important to keep all your players involved in the gameplay.

Pacing the Game

The Metropolitan Police has a very straightforward approach to murder investigations, not for them the detective's gut instinct or the intricate logical deductions of the sleuth savant. No, what the Met likes to do is throw a shitload of manpower at the problem and run down every single possible lead until it is exhausted, the murderer is caught or the senior investigating officer dies of old age.
—Whispers Under Ground

The critical thing with pacing a gaming session is to keep your players engaged and, hopefully, entertained. If they are messing around in character (rather than moving your fabulous plot along) and are thoroughly enjoying being magical practitioners or dogged monster hunters, then this is not actually a problem. Enjoy the ride, and have the plot waiting for them when they're ready to pick it up again.

If a scene is dragging or serving no entertainment purpose, bring it to an end as soon as the important information has been exchanged. Before any formal "Next Scene" announcement, though, it's always a good idea to give your players a heads-up such as, "*Okay, is there anything else you want to ask Mrs Pepperdine or shall we move on?*" so they can tie up any loose ends.

Keep your players engaged with the story. Make sure there is always something for them to do that advances the plot—or, if they hit a temporary dead end, simply skate over any pause: e.g., "*Three days later, you get a phone call from the lab with the fabric analysis results you requested…*"

There are several potential causes of slow patches. In real life, the vast majority of investigatory police work is repetitive and dull—it's following up lists of "actions," taking statements from witnesses, cross-referencing information, and watching hours of CCTV footage. You should not attempt to replicate that in a game! Don't roleplay every witness interview, just the ones that matter—and just the parts of the interview that are important (you don't have to roleplay the entire scene). Boil down the results to a summary in which the requisite clues you want the investigators to catch stand out. Suppose, for example, the players have to knock on every door in a particular street and take statements: it is *not* necessary to name or describe any of these individuals or actually go into conversational detail.

Example: *"You spend the day going from door to door, taking statements from the neighbours. By the end of it, your feet are sore, and you've drunk far too much tea. Those few people who remember Mr Underhill almost all describe him as a quiet man who kept himself to himself." [Pause to see if anyone picks up on the "almost," which they don't this time.] "No one reports seeing him since Wednesday night at about 9 pm."*

Player A: *"Who saw him then?"*
"Mr Underhill's house shares an alley with the neighbour at No. 18, a Mr Vardy. You interview that gentleman in his garage where he's fixing a lawnmower, and note that he's built like a brick outhouse. He says that on Wednesday night at around nine he saw Mr Underhill struggling to put out his wheelie bin for collection and offered to help. Underhill refused and sounded, and I'm quoting here, 'A bit pissed off, pardon my French.'"
Player B: *"Wait. Was this normal for them? Was Underhill usually grumpy?"*
Player A: *"And why was he struggling? Was the bin really heavy or something?"*
And so on. You can reprise the salient points of the interview, or segue smoothly into a roleplay of the conversation and subsequent actions—checking the empty bin, contacting the local council refuse department, etc.—as suits your style of play.

Splitting the Party

At some point, your investigator group is going to split up, and you'll have to converse with only one or two people while the others stay out of the narrative. Keep these interludes fairly brief. Most players won't mind just listening in for a little while, so long as something interesting is happening and they get their own turn later. When you've reached a good moment to stop—maybe the revelation of a clue, or some sort of twist ("*The door bursts open and a man walks in on you!*"), swap back to the other player(s). Dramatic tension keeps the game's energy level high—just think of all those abrupt chapter breaks in crime novels that push you into reading on to find out what happens next!

Missing Clues

There may come a point where the players might run out of actionable clues, and they don't know what to do next. This may be because they've missed some Observation or Research rolls, or because they haven't noticed the clue sitting right there in their player notes. At this point you have several options:

- If it's just a failure to remember a certain detail or make use of information they already have, then you can simply remind or nudge them, or give them an INT roll to have their investigators connect the dots—but, remember, they could still fail that INT roll, and if so, be prepared to give them the clue, but with some added complication (like a pushed roll).
- It's also helpful for Nightingale to conduct regular debriefing sessions, so the investigators can report on how the case is going. This is also an opportunity for them to look back over their notes, both in- and out-of-character, and for Nightingale to ask about lines of enquiry they may have overlooked, or point them at clue connections—though try to be subtle with this (see also **The Incident Room**, page 206).
- If investigators check their notes in-character, you can use the opportunity to introduce critical clues, e.g., "*Three of the witnesses remarked upon the assailant's bright blue eyes. Your suspect's eyes are brown.*"
- If they've failed an Observation roll—well, that's why meticulous photos and samples are taken at crime scenes, and notes/audio/video are made during every interview (see also **Failure (or Weak Success)**, page 106). So, remind the players that they can review the crime scene data to see if they missed something…
- NPCs who have access to crime scene records or other data can bring a clue back to the investigators' attention. This includes scientific specialists but also data entry clerks and the case **Exhibits Officer** (page 206), who is in charge of bagging, labelling, and curating physical evidence, as well as maintaining the records that ensure the legal chain of evidence.
- At worst, missing a clue means the criminals are still out on the streets. The obvious outcome being they commit another felony, perhaps escalating their crimes, which can kickstart the investigation afresh with new clues to replace those which were previously missed.

Props

These are an optional extra. Like other roleplaying games, *RoL:RPG* is a collaborative storytelling game and so can be played simply using the spoken word and maybe the odd sketch map. But many players think more clearly if they have some sort of visual reference point to latch onto. For example, if your players go to the Barbican, don't just say, "*You go to the Barbican Centre. It's a famously ugly concrete complex…*"—show them a photo.

Photos can be useful in other ways, too. Your players may want to search out appropriate pictures online to give an idea of what their investigators look like, so you might like to do the same for key NPCs. It will help make all the different ranking police officers the investigators come across during an important case clearer if you can produce a portrait of each of them from your GM file.

Physical props and handouts add atmosphere if you have the time and resources to create them, as do their electronic equivalent. Depending on your skillset and preference, they can vary from the simple to the elaborate.

Example: *your players find an incriminating letter. You can simply tell them, "The letter makes it clear that Lord Wimbledon has business dealings with Doctor Beresford." Or you could write the letter out (in part or in full) and read it out to them, letting them draw that same conclusion. Or, assuming you are playing in a face-to-face group and not over the internet, you could put the*

letter into a handwriting font, print it, put it in a torn, addressed envelope, and let them decipher it themselves. What about if the investigators come into possession of a mysterious magical key? Providing a drawing would certainly be helpful, or you could use that actual old key you've had stashed in your junk drawer for years. You could even 3D print one if you have the resources and are really ambitious. None of this is necessary, but it adds to player immersion, the sense of realism, and the gaming fun.

Using Tech

'He's out doing a recce on his target,' said Guleed. 'He managed to dig out floorplans on Zoopla, of all places, and now is checking to make sure he'll have all the exits covered.'
—The Hanging Tree

As *RoL:RPG* is a tabletop game, you could—technically—play it on a desert island with nothing more technologically advanced than some dice. But you can use tech to enhance gameplay, if desired.

If your player group likes to get really investigative and has appropriate resources, such as smartphones, let them use internet search engines to do some of their own investigation during the game. If your plot needs them to know who took part in the Battle of Blythe Road in 1900, or where the London Stone is located, or which Celtic god has his head buried beneath the Tower of London, why not let your players look it up themselves instead of having you hand them the information? After all, their investigators certainly have internet access and would be doing exactly that!

You might let your players use an online search engine freely, but be aware that this can be a time sink and a distraction unless you keep your players' eyes on the ball. One potential way to avoid this is to call for a Research roll and, upon success, simply send them the useful URL via phone or chat room.

This technique works well when you're incorporating real-world historical elements into your plots. Obviously, you have to be careful the players don't come across any spoilers—or anything that clearly contradicts your plot. But you've done the real-life research, so why not let them have some of that fun, too? The sense that the magical *Rivers of London* world could be real because it fits so seamlessly with mundane reality is a thrill. And, if they do unexpectedly turn up something that clashes with your own fictional world, Nightingale can always remind them that not everything written in the public records is correct; the Folly has a long history of covering things up.



Let's look at another example where tech can be useful. Say you've done your research in locating where in the real world the victim's house is. You've decided on an actual address and you know what it looks like, so why not let your players also get a look at that address in satellite and 3D street view? It gives them a much clearer idea of what sort of area the victim called home, and probably the victim's class background and lifestyle. If the investigators can spot the building has a side door, they might decide it's better to use that as their entrance. If they swivel around on the 3D map, it might occur to them that the betting shop over the road is an ideal place to go look for witnesses. This heightened "sense of place" can be the bedrock of an *RoL:RPG* session.

Really ambitious GMs have been known to create entire in-character web pages for their players to explore, though that is certainly going above and beyond! There are really no limits to the way you can bring imaginative new elements into your gameplay at any level of tech. Some further examples of using tech and props in game:

- Let your players take that 3D virtual tour of the National Gallery on the official website and search around for that one painting with the vital clue.
- Got smart lightbulbs? Plunge the game room suddenly into darkness when you trap them underground.
- Use ambient music or sound effects to establish atmosphere.
- If you are on email terms with your players, send them clues in the form of pre-prepared reports, messages, or (fake) newspaper excerpts with photos, during or even between game sessions.
- Have audio clips ready to play for voicemail messages, phone taps, and interview tapes the investigators find.
- Cue up a friend to ring the player group at a certain point and roleplay an NPC passing on information.

These are just a few suggestions, but the key point is: don't exclude technology from your game out of hand—instead, harness it to enhance your sessions and storytelling ability. If it doesn't work for you, that's fine, but you won't know until you try.

Dealing with the Unexpected

Occasionally, your players will do something that is completely legitimate, but that you haven't anticipated. And while you've put work into being prepared, don't let that make your plot so stiff that your players feel like they are being railroaded. You need to be prepared *and* flexible.

Ask yourself, "*Can I incorporate the investigators' actions into my storyline without breaking it completely?*" If it's at all possible, that's a better option than simply blocking the characters. Roleplaying is a collaborative exercise and the stories you create together are the best ones. Take what your players have thrown at you and run with it—but maybe not in the way they anticipate. Saying, "*Yes, but…*" is a better strategy than a flat-out "*No.*"

Example: *the players have pulled off an extraordinary series of rolls, meaning their investigators managed to kill an antagonist ahead of your plot schedule. You're the only one who knows his stats as written. Can he be knocked out, but escape later? Can he just be a frontman for a bigger, badder villain? Is magical misdirection or disguise an option? Can somebody have made a "tragic error" and killed the wrong person by mistake? Can you accept the kill, but turn it into a plot twist and make the unforeseen consequences even more challenging?*

Don't be scared to say, "*Okay, I need a moment to think about that,*" and call a comfort break if needed. Or, if the timing is such that you're near the end of a session, leave it on that cliff-hanger until next you meet, with a dramatic announcement of "*TO BE CONTINUED…*"

Issues with Players

Ideally, your players are good-hearted folks who treat you, your game, and each other with courtesy and respect. However, this isn't always the case. Most GMs have encountered obstructive players who, for example, announce that their character is simply going to spend the day drinking in a bar instead of getting on with the investigation. Or those whose investigators turn into gun-crazed psychopaths where their solution to every problem is to shoot it in the head.

Clashes of play style and personality need handling according to your personal relations with the players and their individual psychologies. Your initial discussion about the type of game you all want to play (**Creating Your Character**, page 44) helps set the tone and player expectations, and so can also help avoid difficulties based on differing player styles. Beyond that, a combination of in-character and out-of-character techniques work best. For example:

"Can I ask why you're doing that?"
"You know this is an investigative game, don't you? Looking for clues is a key part of the game."
"You know that that is completely illegal, don't you? You're openly breaking the law, and it will get your investigator confined to his desk, sacked, or imprisoned."

In the immortal words of the Police Association: Engage, Explain, Encourage, Enforce (**The Four Es**, page 71). Try to find out why the problem is happening. If necessary, take a break and listen to the player, and then explain why it's a problem for everyone. Encourage them to co-operate, and only bring in negative consequences to their actions as a final resort. Enforcement can be done in-character, e.g., their police superiors come down on them like a ton of bricks for dereliction of duty or they get hauled up before the relevant Police Standards Department (**Police Oversight**, page 214), but, it is far better to get player co-operation by reminding them how

the game works. Sometimes, the solution might be changing up that player's investigator; perhaps they designed the character with different expectations in mind, and now, seeing how the game is progressing, wish they could be playing a character more suited to the case file. If so, work with them to bring in their new investigator while the old one takes a leave of absence.

Note that sometimes players, especially those new to roleplaying, can be passive or indecisive because they are nervous. They are worried they will "get it wrong" and that it will get their investigator into trouble—or even killed. This is where human-moderated RPGs have the advantage over more unforgiving computer games. You should establish early that there is open dialogue between you and the players. You don't expect them to know everything about the real law or procedure—you certainly don't expect them to know everything their investigator would. They should always be able to drop out of character to ask, "*What are my options?*", "*What would be normal police procedure in this case?*", "*What are my chances of pulling off this action successfully?*", etc. Again, Session Zero is a good time to make this clear, but you can always remind your players whenever you feel the need.

At the other end of the scale is the rarer player who makes other players—or the GM—genuinely uncomfortable through their inappropriate behaviour. This is something you need to address promptly. Players of that sort are probing to see where the social boundaries are, and how much you will allow. If you don't pull them up, they may keep on pushing. This is the time you should remind them that you are running the game, and that if they aren't going to play nice then they are not going to be playing at all. The buck stops with you, and you are in charge (see also **Considerate Gaming**, page 44).

Have Fun

You wouldn't be playing this game if wasn't fun! But the thing to remember is that your players' enjoyment is important, too—more so than the integrity of the fictional world you have lovingly built. Being a GM can be a lot of work and responsibility, so of course you want to get something out of it for yourself. But you can be sure that, if your players spend a whole session being bored, upset, ignored, frustrated, or bullied, it won't matter how much of your heart and soul you poured into creating that case file or campaign, they won't come back for more and your efforts will have all been wasted.

That doesn't mean you should always let investigators have their way with NPCs, or get off consequence-free for their actions, or work everything out without putting effort into it. Overcoming challenges and using their wits and abilities should be part of the fun for them. But, you should always be aware of your players' mood and tailor what you're doing to take it into account. It's a tightrope walk, and it takes practice to get it right. Is a scene taking so long the players have lost interest and started playing with their phones? End the scene, and bring that vital clue back in at a later point. Have they racked their brains about the crime but got frustrated? If you don't use any of the techniques mentioned in **Missing Clues** (page 226), introduce an obnoxious journalist for some comic antagonism, or a pickpocket for a chase scene—you can always go back to the main plot later.

Mutual respect is a prerequisite for a roleplaying game. The players need to respect your role in guiding them through the plot, trusting that you won't arbitrarily kill them, hinder their progress, or waste their time. You need to respect your players, their agency, their enjoyment, and the validation they get from achieving something or defeating an opponent or making an intellectual leap of understanding.

Boundaries

As we discussed in **Considerate Gaming** (page 44), everyone has boundaries—such that, if you cross them, things stop being fun. There are undoubtedly topics you don't enjoy discussing and don't want in your games—but they might not be the same things as the ones your players dislike. Excessive gore and violence are obvious risky areas for some players (**Important: Tone**, page 123), but it can be really difficult to anticipate where these boundaries lie for individuals. For example, you might introduce an NPC who chain-smokes—but one of your players is trying to give up smoking and what you see as an innocent bit of characterisation makes them really uncomfortable.

You don't have to anticipate everything or make your game bland. But don't assume that just because you think a detail is perfectly acceptable in a fun crime-based game, that everyone else will agree. Accept that people have genuine differences, and that an individual's boundaries can shift depending on their life circumstances and mood. Maybe they've had a terrible day being shouted at by their boss—the last thing they need is to get into a game where their Chief Inspector is being overbearing. If you step over a line inadvertently, even through no fault of your own, apologise and back off from the description.

Just to reiterate: an out-of-character discussion with the group before the game starts might save you a lot of problems (**Creating Your Character**, page 44). If you have a player who cannot abide descriptions of animal suffering, for example, you might have to rethink any scenes revolving around certain kinds of demon traps, or make extra sure that the investigator manages to save some victims before they're exploited. However, be aware that asking in advance can put the individual player on the spot. They might not be sure where their boundaries lie, or they might feel too self-conscious to draw a line in the sand before even starting a game. This is where the safety tools we mentioned in **Considerate Gaming** (page 44) really come into their own. They may not be necessary at all for your group, but you still may wish to look at them for some ideas in case the need ever arises.



6

A Rogues' Gallery

THE *RIVERS OF LONDON* novels (and graphic novels!) present a wide array of memorable characters. In this chapter, we focus on some of the most memorable and useful individuals that you, the GM, might use in your games. As well as a few familiar faces, there are details on how fae magic works in *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, as well as some weird and wonderful creatures to help populate your case files.

The various characters' pen portrait descriptions in this chapter are presented from Peter Grant's point of view, while the sections discussing how *genii locorum* and fae bend reality to their liking are presented in game terms, as are each of the non-player characters' (NPCs') profiles.

Profiles and Stat Blocks

Each NPC has a section that describes who they are, how they look and behave, and what their allegiances are. Each character is also presented with what we call their "profile"—the characteristics, skills, and spells that describe what they can do in the game, sometimes also known as a "stat block."

Profiles for humans, creatures, and members of the demi-monde are broadly similar in structure, with one or two variations that account for their special foibles. In each profile, characteristics are presented first, followed by that character's skills and languages. For humans, spells and *signare* come next, if they have them, whereas the demi-monde profiles contain their powers, specific affinity, and *vestigia* (if appropriate), as well as any other relevant notes. A character's skills are given with their common skills first, followed by their expert skills, and, finally, their combat skills. Spells known by a character are grouped by order, and any mastered spells are labelled as such.

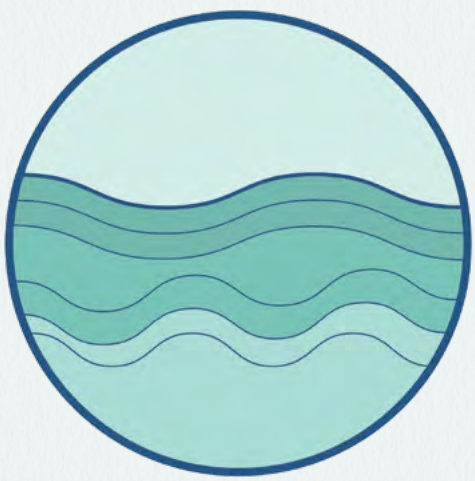
Human Characters

This section contains details on many of the key human characters found in the *Rivers of London* novels. Not all the magic-wielding NPCs in this section have a specific list of spells attached to them—usually because they're from non-Newtonian traditions. In some cases, there is guidance as to what their specialisms are, and we encourage you to use the spell list in **Chapter 4: Newtonian Magic** (page 161) as a source of inspiration for what they can do. In other cases, we've given them a special ability and/or an item that mimics the effects described in the novels—these abilities and advantages are not available to investigators. For the fae and how they do incredible things, see **The Magic of the Demi-Monde** (page 243).



ADDITIONAL RULES

Guidance on creating special abilities for non-Newtonian practitioners can be found in **Creating Non-Newtonian Special Abilities** (page 326).



DC Peter Grant

This is a bit weird, innit—talking about myself, but whatever. I'm just your basic North London boy who got bitten by the policing bug and joined the Met. Things started to change when I tried to take a witness statement from a ghost in Covent Garden Piazza[1]. Then I met DCI Thomas Nightingale, and after that, things started to get *really* strange.

So, TL;DR—I can do magic. You can call me a wizard—although strictly speaking, I'm still an apprentice. I don't fly around on a broom like certain boy wizards, but, if I'm good, Nightingale lets me drive his vintage Mark 2 Jag. I can shoot fireballs from my fingers—which is occasionally handy—but I'm more likely to knock you down with *Impello* or break your concentration with a well-placed water bomb.

So, me, right? My ends—or manor, if you're old fashioned—is Kentish Town in general, and the Peckwater Estate in particular. My dad, Richard "Lord" Grant, is from the East End. He's also the most famous jazz trumpeter you've never heard of. He shot his career up his arm twice—heroin—but is now having a bit of a geriatric come back. This pleases my mum, Rose Mamusu Grant, who's a jazz-mad Fula from Sierra Leone. She's the one who's kept it together all these years and taught me how to clean to a professional standard, as well as tolerate food so spicy that it's dangerous to serve on a paper plate.

I went to Acland Burghley, my local comprehensive school, and had ambitions to become an architect, which didn't work out. Faffed about for a couple of years, became a Community Safety Officer and got the policing bug. Joined the Met, and the rest, as they say, is career development.

Beverley, the love of life, is giving me "the look," which means I should wind things up, and also reminds me that I'm soon to be a Dad. Let's hope a better one than mine.

- **Description:** I'm a 1.83 metre (6 feet) tall, devilishly handsome man of mixed ethnicity in my late 20s. I inherited my mum's hair, which eats afro picks for breakfast, so I generally keep it shaved short with a fade for preference.
- **Traits:** Lesley used to say I was easily distracted. Nightingale worries about me not following order and tradition, but I can assure you, I adhere to the scientific method. This has led to me developing the Yap scale (**Toby**, page 240) and a few innovative spells of my own design.
- **Allegiances:** obviously, there's Nightingale and the Folly, Beverley Brook, Sahra Guleed, and Abigail Kamara (who's actually a half-cousin, if half-cousin is even a thing). Oh, and FBI agent Kimberley Reynolds, of course.

DC Peter Grant, *apprentice practitioner*

STR 60 **CON** 50 **DEX** 40 **INT** 70 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 20 **LUCK:** 50
Advantage: Magical.

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 50%, Navigate 60%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 60%, Stealth 30%; Law 60%, Magic 60%, Tech 40%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English (own) 70%, German 30%, Greek 30%, Krio (own) 35%, Latin 60%.

Spells
Aqua (mastered), *Impello* (mastered), *Scindere* (mastered), Werelight (mastered); Car Killer (mastered), Fireball (mastered), *Impello palma* (mastered), Shield (mastered); Coffin Bell, *Telescopium*; *Clausurafrange, Sīphōnem;* plus all the others pells listed in the **Chapter 4: Newtonian Magic**, up to (but not including) fourth order.

Signare
This is where things get complicated. Nightingale's tick-tock precision is there, but after that, it's all over the place—music, laughter, the smell of chocolate, images of London—and, blimey, is it loud! So loud, in fact, that it hides what spell he's cueing up, meaning an adversary can't make a Magic skill roll to determine what spell he's about to fling at them.



Footnote: [1]*Rivers of London*

DCI Thomas Nightingale

Now we come to my governor, the senior magical practitioner and officer in charge of the Folly. I was about to say he's the most remarkable person I've ever met, but over the last few years that's become quite a contested field!

When I talk about Nightingale's history, I'm talking actual history. Educated at Casterbrook—a boarding school for young gentlemen and future wizards—he quickly proved himself top of the class in practical magic and bottom in theory. He spent the interwar period trouble-shooting for the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office where, as far as I can tell, he went everywhere, had adventures, and then filled in forms explaining them. One day, I plan to get my hands on those forms.

During the Second World War, he fought both in occupied Europe and on the front lines, countering German magical forces. He led the rear-guard action during Operation Spatchcock—the doomed British attempt to liberate the Ettersberg Camp and capture Nazi magical research. This research, now known as "The Black Library," is safely stashed in a secure vault under the Folly. I'm toying with the idea of hanging a sign on the door reading "Beware of the Leopard," but I'm not sure Nightingale would find it funny.

For a long time, the Folly was just Nightingale and Molly. Then I was invited in, and, since then, the place has grown busier and busier. It's hard to say, but I think he enjoys the company. Nowadays, when he's not teaching me and the other apprentices, he enjoys watching rugby on the TV. Oh, and let's not forget the Jag! The man has some taste in motors and drives a classic grey Jaguar Mark 2 with a 3.8 litre XK6 engine.

- **Description:** for a man who was born around 1900, he looks remarkably well. Fact is, since the 1960s, he's apparently been getting younger. No, I don't know how that works, either. But anyway, to look at him now, I'd say he's 180 cm (5 foot 11 inches) tall, with fine features, grey eyes, and short brown hair. How do I describe his fashion sense politely? He's not what you'd call modern—vintage, maybe? He's always well-dressed, usually in a suit, and carrying his silver-topped cane (which, between you and me, is actually his wizard's staff).
- **Traits:** I'd describe him as thoughtful and serious, though his dry sense of humour sometimes breaks through. He approaches problems in a rational and calm manner, but don't let that deceive you—when he needs to, he can throw down against the best of them!
- **Allegiances:** he's known Molly for a long time—and I mean a long time, like since the 1940s. He seems to know everyone, including Father Thames and the other river spirits. In the course of his work, he's made some useful contacts too, including Harold Postmartin and Dr Walid.

DCI Thomas Nightingale, *master practitioner*

STR 50 **CON** 50 **DEX** 40 **INT** 70 **POW** 80
DB: 0 **MOV:** 7 **MP:** 60 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Magical, Steadfast, The Knowledge (London).

Wizard's Staff: Nightingale has a silver-topped walking cane that acts as his wizard's staff (see page 324 for further details on what a wizard's staff does). This staff contains a store of 60 magic points.

Skills
Athletics 50%, Drive 80%, Navigate 70%, Observation 80%, Read Person 80%, Research 70%, Sense Vestigia 95%, Social 60%, Stealth 80%; Art/Craft (Blacksmithing) 70%, Law 90%, Magic 95%, Ride 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 60%.

Languages
Arabic 50%, Brittonic 40%, Danish 40%, English (own) 80%, Greek 60%, German 50%, Latin 70%, Welsh 40%.

Spells
All the spells listed in **Chapter 4: Newtonian Magic**, all mastered, plus a few more we haven't made rules up for yet.

Signare
A clockwork tick, the smell of willow, and a whispering clash like the sound of cymbals—as heavy as a mallet and as sharp and controlled as the point of a needle.



DS Sahra Guleed

Sahra is in her 20s and is a member of the Murder Investigation Team, led by DCI Alexander Seawoll and **DI Miriam Stephanopoulos** (page 238). As a kid, she emigrated from Somalia to England with her family. It's not something she talks about much, and I don't like to pry. We've worked a few cases together, and she's had my back a few times. She's trained in a form of oriental sword skill that combines magic and cold steel—I don't claim to understand how it works, but it's damned impressive. She called herself "the Muslim Ninja" the first time I met her[2], and that was before she started picking up the sword!

- **Description:** a slim young woman of medium height, of Somali descent. She has a hijab for every occasion and tends towards bomber or biker jackets when out of uniform.
- **Traits:** always has a glint in her eye, like she's aware of everything going on around her.
- **Allegiances:** she's a dependable officer and an ally to the Folly. She's also engaged to **Michael Cheung** (page 238).

DS Sahra Guleed, *ninja-in-training*

STR 50 **CON** 40 **DEX** 70 **INT** 60 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Magical*.

Sword: Sahra possesses a **Wizard's Sword** (page 235). This sword contains a store of 10 magic points.

Skills
Athletics 70%, Drive 50%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 30%, Stealth 60%; Law 60%, Magic 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
Arabic 30%, Cantonese 30%, English (own) 60%, Mandarin 30%, Somali (own) 30%.

Spells
None that she's admitted to—yet. Given who her teacher is, any she does know are going to be non-Newtonian and most likely movement-based.

Signare
The sound of ripping silk whenever she wields her sword.

Sahra's version of the Magical advantage is slightly different to that available to investigators and most NPCs, and manifests itself as the **Mystic Art of Fighting (nearby).*

The Mystic Art of Fighting

This magical discipline is not part of the Newtonian tradition. A trained practitioner in the Mystic Art of Fighting can spend 1 magic point to gain a bonus die to any Fighting roll (but not damage rolls), subject to the usual rules on **Multiple Bonus or Penalty Dice** (page 143). When expending a magic point in this fashion, the character's moves should be narrated as looking like the feats we might expect to see in Hong Kong action cinema.

The woman arched in pain and I watched as Guleed, still holding her arm, ran up the side of the Nissan Micra in a way that didn't actually look physically possible and used her whole body weight to bear the nanny face down on to the pavement.
—Lies Sleeping



Footnote: [2]*Moon Over Soho*

The Wizard's Sword

The wizard's sword is crafted in much the same way as the core of **The Wizard's Staff** (page 324), and serves the same purpose as a magic point storage device for anyone who can utilise magic. As a weapon in the hands of a non-practitioner, it is a regular sword, but in the hands of someone trained in the Mystic Art of Fighting (as Sahra Guleed and Michael Cheung are), it is far more effective. A trained practitioner in the Mystic Art of Fighting can spend 1 magic point to gain a bonus die on any damage roll made using their wizard's sword. The sword's base weapon damage is 1.

Harold Postmartin

Postmartin is a proper old-school academic, with a string of letters after his name (DPhil, FRS, MVP, etc.). Oh, and when I said old, I mean proper old. This guy did National Service in Korea (and still has his Enfield No. 2 revolver).



His job is Curator of Special Collections at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. What that means is that he's the archivist of all documents relating to the Folly, from Isaac Newton himself all the way down to yours truly. He can usually be found in his office, hidden beneath the Radcliffe Camera in Oxford. I don't like to fault the man, but I feel like he could maybe update his tech a little; like, he's still using an Amstrad PCW…

- **Description:** Postmartin is a stooped, white-haired, old white man; frail, but with a glint in his eye and a surprisingly firm handshake. Always dressed in a suit and Oxford University tie.
- **Traits:** views students as an unfortunate but necessary evil and is very protective of his books. He also has something of a reputation as a pirate among the British librarian fraternity[3].
- **Allegiances:** integrally aligned with Nightingale and the Folly.

Harold Postmartin, ***curator***

STR 40 **CON** 40 **DEX** 50 **INT** 90 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 4 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Steadfast.

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 50%, Navigate 60%, Observation 80%, Read Person 60%, Research 90%, Sense Vestigia 40%, Social 60%, Stealth 60%; History 80%, Law 60%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 60%.

Languages
Ancient Greek 70%, English (own) 90%, French 70%, German 60%, Latin 80%, Sanskrit 40%, Spanish 50%.

Dr Abdul Haqq Walid

Dr Walid works at University College Hospital, London, and is a world-renowned gastroenterologist and cryptopathologist, as well as personal physician to the Folly. He also shares my interest in the science of magic, and has conducted some interesting research of his own. I think he may have coined the term "Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation"—HTD, for short.

- **Description:** Abdul is a tall (182 cm/6-foot-ish), lively—some might say "spry"—white Scotsman in his 50s, with a prominent forehead, a receding hairline, and ginger hair.
- **Traits:** he speaks with a soft Scottish accent and has a dry sense of humour.
- **Allegiances:** aligned with Nightingale and the Folly.

Footnote: [3]*Tales from the Folly* ("A Rare Book of Cunning Device")



Dr Abdul Haqq Walid, *Folly pathologist*

STR 40 **CON** 40 **DEX** 60 **INT** 80 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Steadfast.

Skills
Athletics 40%, Drive 50%, Navigate 40%, Observation 80%, Read Person 60%, Research 80%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 50%, Stealth 60%; Law 60%, Medicine 90%, Science (Biology) 70%, Science (Chemistry) 50%, Science (Forensics) 70%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
Arabic 40%, English (own) 80%, Latin 40%.

Dr Jennifer Vaughan

A ferociously clever doctor from Newport, Wales, who entered medical school with high hopes of becoming a healer, only to find that the puzzle was more interesting than the person. As a result, she ended up gravitating downwards towards the morgue and a career in pathology. She was brought in to provide Dr Walid with much needed pathology expertise.

- **Description:** a small compact white woman in her early 30s, with clever, brown eyes; her brown hair is cut into an easily manageable and practical style. Rarely seen out of PPE.
- **Traits:** she speaks with the kind of Welsh accent that makes her sound like she's being sarcastic, which most of the time she is.
- **Allegiances:** aligned with Nightingale and the Folly.

Dr Jennifer Vaughan, *pathologist*

STR 40 **CON** 50 **DEX** 50 **INT** 80 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Scary, Steadfast.

Skills
Athletics 60%, Drive 60%, Navigate 30%, Observation 70%, Read Person 60%, Research 60%, Sense Vestigia 40%, Social 40%, Stealth 30%; Medicine 70%, Science (Biology) 60%, Science (Forensics) 40%, Science (Pathology) 70%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English (own) 80%, Latin 30%, Welsh (own) 80%.



Abigail Kamara

When I stupidly made a deal with my teenaged half-cousin Abigail that I would teach her magic if she got an A-star in her Latin GCSE[4], I never dreamt that it would actually happen. And now, a few years later, here she is at the Folly as an apprentice! Abigail is the daughter of Alfred Kamara, who is one of mum's many half-brothers and is not beyond using the family connection to get around me. She's also developed a relationship with the strange talking foxes that popped up recently. I suspect they're up to no good.

- **Description:** Abigail is a young woman of mixed heritage, her dad being from Sierra Leone and her mum being a white Londoner. She's short and wiry, with a narrow, angular face, sharp features, and a penetrating stare. She used to wear her hair in an enormous puffball afro but now has gone for trendy locs—all the better to keep it out of her eyes when she's blowing things up.
- **Traits:** if you've not got on the wrong side of her, she has a playful streak, and may well make cheeky comments and retorts. Otherwise, you'll get The Stare.
- **Allegiances:** aligned with the Folly and the Parliament of Foxes; also has a mysterious side gig that she keeps to herself.



Abigail Kamara, *apprentice practitioner*

STR 40 **CON** 60 **DEX** 40 **INT** 70 **POW** 70
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 15 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Magical.

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 30%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 60%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 60%, Stealth 60%; Magic 60%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English (own) 70%, Greek 30%, Latin 60%, Russian 30%.

Spells
Werelight (mastered); other than that, no one's entirely certain which spells Abigail's managed to learn so, for now, the choice is left to the GM—we suggest choosing at least one other first order and one second order spell from the selection in **Chapter 4: Newtonian Magic**.

Signare
Hasn't yet solidified, but you definitely get a little bit of Nightingale's clockwork orrery mixed with whatever has caught Abigail's interest in the last few months; plus: fox fur, a blast of cold, and something that might be the opening bars of a popular British talent show's theme tune.

Special Agent Kimberley Reynolds

I first met Kim when she was sent over by the FBI to observe a murder investigation[5]. Being on the same case led to her witnessing me using magic and the rest, as they say, is history. She kept in touch after she returned to America, and flagged up that certain people in authority were asking questions about me.

- **Description:** a slim white woman in her 30s, with green eyes and auburn hair, cut in a bob. She dresses very formally in typical FBI fashion (smart trouser suit and a blouse) when she's not wading through London's sewers, often with her gold FBI badge on her belt.
- **Traits:** generally, she is quite down to earth, but can sometimes have an air of superiority.
- **Allegiances:** an ally to me and the Folly, though she does work for a different agency, so there's always some caution in dealing with her.

Footnote: [4]*Moon Over Soho*

Footnote: [5]*Whispers Under Ground*





Special Agent Kimberley Reynolds, *FBI*

STR 60 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 70 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 10 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Fast Reactions, Signature Firearm (Glock 9mm service pistol).

Skills
Athletics 50%, Drive 60%, Navigate 40%, Observation 70%, Read Person 60%, Research 50%, Sense Vestigia 40%, Social 60%, Stealth 40%; Law 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 70%.

Languages
English (own) 70%.

DI Miriam Stephanopoulos

Stephanopoulos is, how do I put this politely, an intimidating presence with the Murder Investigation Team. She doesn't so much speak as bark orders and sneer. She also has a wife called Pam, who lectures at Middlesex Uni, tucked out in the suburbs where they both raise chickens and grow their own vegetables.

- **Description:** a short, stocky, middle-aged white woman with a square face and brown hair cut into an unfashionable flat-top. I think my impression on first meeting her was that she looked like she fought Rottweilers for a hobby. Famous (infamous?) for her evil glare.
- **Traits:** she tends to have an agitated expression on her face, like she's about to start growling.
- **Allegiances:** a steadfast Metropolitan police officer. She knows about the Folly, but isn't a part of it.

DI Miriam Stephanopoulos, *senior detective*

STR 60 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 50 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Scary, Steadfast.

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 60%, Navigate 50%, Observation 70%, Read Person 70%, Research 70%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 60%, Stealth 40%; Law 80%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English (own) 60%, Greek 30%.

Michael Cheung

Michael is the Folly's liaison in Chinatown. His business card—I kid you not—reads "Legendary Swordsman." He's also teaching Sahra Guleed… well, I'm not exactly sure what he's teaching her, but it involves swords and magic. And I don't mean they sit around rolling dice together—I mean real swords and real magic {lol}.

- **Description:** an Anglo-Chinese man in his mid-to-late 20s, Michael is short but broad-shouldered, with an



athletic build. He keeps his black hair cut short but with a long fringe. Tends to dress casually, although Guleed insists he scrubs up well. Usually has his sword somewhere about his person.

- **Traits:** charming (so Guleed says), confident, almost as much of a nerd as me. Almost.
- **Allegiances:** allied with the Folly as our Chinatown liaison. Sahra Guleed's fiancé.

Michael Cheung, *legendary swordsman*

STR 60 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 60 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 20 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Magical*.

Sword: Michael possesses a **Wizard's Sword** (page 235). This sword contains a store of 20 magic points.

Skills
Athletics 80%, Drive 30%, Navigate 40%, Observation 60%, Read Person 50%, Research 40%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 60%, Stealth 70%; Fighting 80%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
Cantonese (own) 60%, English (own) 60%, Mandarin 60%.

Spells
None from the Newtonian tradition, that's for sure, but apparently based on movement.

Signare
Unsurprisingly, seeing as he's the one teaching Sahra, the sound of ripping silk when he strikes.

Michael's version of the Magical advantage is slightly different to that available to investigators and most NPCs, and manifests itself as the **Mystic Art of Fighting (page 234).*

Frank Caffrey

Frank served in the military (4th Battalion Parachute Regiment) and remains a reservist. He works for the London Fire Brigade as a Fire Investigator, but he also works with the Folly. When required, he can call upon a group of men: all ex-military—fit, short-haired, disciplined, and reassuringly terrifying—it's like the Computer's gone wrong and all his clones have turned up at once.

- **Description:** a tough-looking, large, middle-aged white man; stocky, with a broken nose and deceptively mild blue eyes. His hair is cut down to a brown fuzz.
- **Traits:** a man of few words. I'm not sure I've ever seen him actually smile.
- **Allegiances:** Caffrey is often called upon to serve the Folly when we need firepower. Or phosphorous grenades.

Frank Caffrey, *firefighter*

STR 70 **CON** 70 **DEX** 50 **INT** 50 **POW** 60
DB: +1 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —



Advantages: Damage Bonus, Natural Toughness, Steadfast.

Skills
Athletics 60%, Drive 50%, Navigate 50%, Observation 70%, Read Person 60%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 50%, Social 60%, Stealth 70%; Demolitions 70%; Fighting 70%, Firearms 80%.

Languages
English (own) 60%.

Toby

I know this section is headed "humans," but I'm counting Toby as an honorary human—man's best friend and all that.

I adopted Toby during a previous case[6], and he's established a new home for himself in the Folly. I soon discovered that Toby is sensitive to magic, and that he communicates this in the only way he can: by barking. It may sound a bit nuts, but I've codified Toby's reactions into what I know as the Yap scale—the more yaps, the stronger the *vestigia*.

- **Description:** a short-haired, brown and white terrier.
- **Traits:** he's a lively little fellow with a nose for trouble and sausages.
- **Allegiances:** Toby is his own dog, but he is fond of Molly (and me—when I have sausages, at least).



Footnote: [6]*Rivers of London*

Toby, *ghost-hunting dog*

STR 30	**CON** 50	**DEX** 80	**INT** —	**POW** 50
DB: 0	**MOV:** 9	**MP:** 10	**LUCK:** —	

Skills
Observation 60%, Sense Vestigia 60%; Eat Sausages 80%; Bite 60%.

Varvara Sidorovna Tamonina

Born in 1921, in Russia. Varvara is a night witch (*Nochnye Koldunyi*), trained in magical combat by the Red Army during World War II. She was captured in 1943 and transported to Guernsey, where she sat out the rest of the war. After the war, Varvara married and settled down in Wimbledon. In recent decades, she used her magical abilities in the service of dark wizards until Nightingale took her down in an epic boss fight[7]. Since then, she seems to have seen the error of her ways and now assists Nightingale with tutoring the apprentices—especially Abigail.

- **Description:** appears to be a middle-aged white Russian woman with a worn face, faded blue eyes, and hair the colour of dirty straw, currently cut into a business-like bob. Just like Nightingale, though, she seems to be aging backwards and is about a hundred years old, give or take. Tends to go for smart skirt suits these days—quite a transformation from the first time I met her[8].



Footnotes: [7]*Broken Homes*, [8]*Whispers Under Ground*

- **Traits:** she has the steely gaze of someone who has faced death: the kind of gaze that makes you wonder if maybe death backed down first.
- **Allegiances:** Varvara seems to have made the switch from enemy to ally of the Folly. We know she still has some Russian contacts, though she seems reluctant to discuss them[9].

Varvara Sidorovna Tamonina, *Night Witch*

STR 40 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 60 **POW** 70
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 45 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Magical, Scary, Steadfast.

Skills
Athletics 50%, Drive 30%, Navigate 50%, Observation 70%, Read Person 70%, Research 50%, Sense Vestigia 70%, Social 60%, Stealth 70%; Disguise 70%, Magic 70%; Fighting 70%, Firearms 70%.

Languages
English 60%, Russian (own) 60%.

Spells
When it comes to spells, if it's anything to do with ice or dealing with a situation brutally and effectively, she knows it, e.g., Glitter Bomb, Ice Blast, Flying Ice Saw, etc.

Signare
The bite of cold metal, something yeasty like bread, and the smell of wet dog.

Asterid Bivalacqua

Let's just say my first meeting with Ms Bivalacqua was not the smoothest encounter in the world. You know, on account of her sneaking up on me and holding Nightingale's old service revolver to the back of my head[10]. Some sort of test, apparently, which seemed to amuse her and the governor no end.

She's definitely a hedge wizard (not that I'd risk calling her that to her face), and Nightingale uses her as a consultant for all things Vodun. He first ran across her back in the late 1950s[11], but that's another story altogether. Currently lives in Richmond—the suburb of London, not the one in Yorkshire—where she has a very impressive greenhouse.

- **Description:** a slender, old Black woman in her late 70s/early 80s, with white hair in a short, relaxed style. Tends to wear lots of jewellery (chunky necklaces, bangles, and big drop earrings). Her red lips match her elegant nails—quite a feat for such an avid gardener! Oddly, she doesn't appear to be aging backwards like Nightingale and Varvara.
- **Traits:** evil sense of humour and more than capable of taking care of herself. I think you could safely say she doesn't suffer fools gladly.
- **Allegiances:** while she has history with Nightingale and the Folly, she's definitely an independent operator.

Asterid Bivalacqua, *green-fingered OAP**

Old-Age Pensioner.
STR 40 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 60 **POW** 70
DB: 0 **MOV:** 5 **MP:** 22 **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Magical, Scary.

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 30%, Navigate 50%, Observation 70%, Read Person 70%, Research 60%, Sense Vestigia 70%, Social 60%, Stealth 60%; Art/Craft (Horticulture) 90%, Magic 70%, Science (Pharmacy) 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 60%.

Languages
English (own) 60%, Jamaican Patois (own) 60%.

Spells
She's a woman of mysterious power, and her magic is definitely non-Newtonian. If Nightingale knows what she's capable of, he isn't saying. Has an affinity for growing things.

Signare
The burning taste of Scotch bonnet peppers and the fragrance of expensive rum on a warm summer's evening.



Footnotes: [9]*Night Witch*, [10]*Black Mould*, [11]*Action at a Distance*

The Demi-Monde and Other Beings

I stared at him. I didn't believe in ghosts, or fairies or gods, and for the last couple of days I'd been like a man watching a magic show—I'd expected a magician to step out from behind the curtain and ask me to pick a card, any card. I wasn't ready to believe in ghosts, but that's the thing about empirical experience—it's the real thing.
—Rivers of London.

The terms "demi-monde" and "fae" are not strictly defined, and are used to describe those who are somehow touched or changed by magic. This can happen in one of three ways:

- They can be born with it, like **Zachary Palmer** (page 256), who states that his father was a fairy.
- They can seek it out and acquire it, as with Peter Grant and DCI Nightingale.
- They can have it thrust upon them, such as those who are snatched and taken to Fairyland, only to return with magical abilities and a changed look in their eyes—or, darkest of all, those who are altered through magic to be part human, part animal: the **Chimeras** (page 247).

"Fae" is a term for people that have been changed by magic in some way, and who are no longer entirely human—or never were to begin with. Typically, the fae are mischievous and capricious, though not necessarily dangerous. They favour rural over urban settings, and some have a vulnerability to cold iron (**The Effects of Cold Iron**, page 245)—although Peter would, no doubt, point out that everyone is susceptible to cold iron if you poke it hard enough into their vulnerable bits. The High Fae reside in a parallel dimension, known as Fairyland, where they follow their own laws and have their own royal houses. "Demi-monde," on the other hand, is more of a blanket term covering all three groups.

BEN SAYS

Ben's asked us to remind you that there are some normal humans that are also *technically* part of the demi-monde, but not really. You know, like the ones who just sort of wandered into that cool pub by accident, liked the atmosphere, and stuck around. As long as they don't cause any trouble, the real demi-monde are happy to have them about—after all, they provide a handy bit of cover.

On the Naming of, Well... Everything

The Folly, being chock full of gentlemen of the Enlightenment, went forth into the world of magic with the unwarranted confidence of young men on a stag night. They basically stuck a Latin tag on everything from spells to *formae* to fairies—whether the fairies wanted them or not. It's not like they were even consistent. I've found at least three different classification systems in the Folly's library, all with elaborate Latin tags and, I figure, all the scientific rigour of phrenology.

The thing is that *at no point* did it occur to them to ask anyone what it was they called themselves or anything else for that matter. As a result, nobody can agree on the names for anything. To the savants of the Folly, a goblin is a type of fae who is of one-half human blood, one-eighth unseelie fae and three-eighths *folloy*. Want to know what a *folloy* is? So do I.

Just like the mundane world, the demi-monde is just as full of terms that mean different things to different people. One person's *unseelie fae* is another one's "Pale Lady"—although both could get you killed. The Quiet People are also known as the Quiet Ones except to themselves, because, shockingly, they call themselves people. When in doubt, keep your mouth shut, your ears open, and your attitude a little bit humble.

"And for god's sake, don't call a goblin a goblin unless you really, really, like hospital food."
—Peter

The Magic of the Demi-Monde

The members of the demi-monde are varied and strange, and their magic is not the Newtonian magic used by Peter Grant and Nightingale. The more game rules we create for the *genii locorum*, the fae, and other denizens of what we broadly refer to as the demi-monde, the more we risk defining them too strictly and placing limits on what should be unknowable and magical. So, rather than creating a host of new rules, it's perhaps easier to say that those of the demi-monde who aren't—strictly speaking—human, possess the power to break the game's rules instead.

Of course, they don't literally break the rules, but it sounds good, doesn't it? What they possess are three abilities that set them apart from the mundanes. The first of these is **The Glamour** (following); the second is **Luck** (nearby); and the third is a **Thematic Power** (page 244).

The Glamour

Genii locorum and many of the fae have the power to sway human minds to their will. They can command a human with a glance or a word—unless the target is prepared for it.

Once a character has been versed in the effects of the glamour, its power is greatly diminished—sort of like a stage magic trick. Let us explain. The stage magician performs a seemingly impossible wonder, and we, the poor audience members, are completely baffled. In the real world, though, we know that magic isn't real—we know we're being tricked and we love it, because good stage magic is wonderful and intriguing. But, if we're shown how the trick works, it suddenly ceases to command the same sense of awe, even if you appreciate the skill involved.

It's the same with the glamour. There's a part of the primitive human brain that enjoys being subjected to the glamour's effect, the same way most of us enjoy watching stage magic—it's as if there's a primal satisfaction in surrendering to its power. Yet, just as with stage magic, if we're aware of what's happening, our mind registers its influence, and we can attempt to resist it. When the glamour is used on a regular person who knows nothing of its existence, they are permitted a POW roll:

- **Fumble or failure:** the target does as they are bid without question, and they don't ever think to question why they acted as they did.
- **Regular or Hard success:** the target does as they are bid without question, but later wonders what possessed them to act that way. Of course, they soon console themselves with whatever excuse feels the most rational to them.
- **Critical success:** the target is unaffected by the glamour and reacts to the request as if asked by anyone else. They're not aware of anything magical having taken place.

When the glamour is used on a person who's been informed about it and how to resist it, they, too, make a POW roll:

- **Fumble:** the target behaves exactly as bidden, just as someone who is ignorant of the glamour would.
- **Failure:** the target begins to act as requested—perhaps taking a few steps or speaking a few words—but then recovers their self-control. They are aware of the use of the glamour.
- **Regular, Hard, or Critical success:** the target is aware of the use of the glamour, but they are not compelled to act upon it.

GM ADVICE

As always, if the target is an investigator, they can spend Luck points (**Spending Luck**, page 113) to help them resist the glamour's effects if they fail their POW roll. They can also push the roll (**Pushing the Roll**, page 108), but a second failure places them utterly at the wielder's mercy—potentially even leading to them becoming enthralled, like Maksim did following his unfortunate first encounter with Beverley Brook[12].



The Luck of the Demi-Monde

Non-human demi-monde characters have Luck points they can spend to adjust their dice rolls, just like investigators do, only:

- Their Luck is equal to their POW value.
- It refreshes fully every day at a set time.

This means non-human demi-monde characters can spend Luck points freely to achieve acts that appear to either require great skill or defy probability.

The Gift of Luck

Some members of the demi-monde have the power to gift their Luck to others. Mama and Father Thames, for example, can give someone their blessing *providing they pursue a certain goal*. So long as the character works within the confines of their agreement, they may draw upon that pool of Luck points. For example, if a pact is made with Mama Thames, she might grant an investigator a boon—the GM allocates the player a pool of 50 Luck points to represent that. The player may then choose how and when these Luck points are used in the game, but they should always be spent on actions that are aligned with the agreed pact. If the player abuses the gift, Mama Thames may decide to seek some form of vengeance or, at least, recompense.

Footnote: [12] *Night Witch*

Thematic Power

Genii locorum and the fae have a strong connection to some particular sphere—in the case of the rivers, that's an affinity to water, while for the Quiet People, it's earth. Beverley Brook demonstrates her affinity numerous times in the novels, which quite often seems to result in somewhere getting flooded. In game terms, Beverley's affinity to water grants her certain thematic powers. The manifestation of these powers breaks down into two categories:

- **Minor:** something which simply illustrates the character's affinity with that element or power. For example, Lady Ty demonstrating her connection with water by perking up some wilted flowers[13], or when wildflowers sprouted and bloomed on the ground where Father Thames relieved himself[14]. Routine acts don't help to resolve a case file (scenario) or further anyone's agenda; they just add some colour and character to the story.
- **Major:** an act that somehow furthers the plot, helps to resolve a case file, or provides an in-game benefit. For example, when Molly practises haemomancy or Beverley's over-enthusiastic response to the fire in flooding Covent Garden market[15].

- Any demi-monde NPC can perform minor manifestations of their power whenever they wish, but it's best not to overdo it or they lose their impact.
- Any demi-monde NPC can perform one major manifestation of their power once per case file. Performing such acts is demanding, emotionally and energetically, and may also cost them socially.

Such powers are defined uniquely for each demi-monde character in **Other Beings** (page 246), or within a particular case file.



ADDITIONAL RULES

If you want to keep your NPCs on the same footing as your investigators, rules-wise, Luck costs for making minor and major manifestations can be found in **Affinities** (page 318). These only apply to lower fae—the *genii locorum* are in a different league altogether, and the use of their thematic powers in-game should remain purely story-based.

Codes of Conduct

The demi-monde's codes of conduct are mysterious, but it's clear that there's a great deal of obligation and duty among them. Breaking agreements by manifesting their power without permission may lead to all sorts of consequences and complications. For example, Mama Thames and her daughters are under an agreement to keep the Queen's Peace, and they need the permission of an officer of the law if they are to use their magic on London soil. Who knows what might happen if they act without such permission?

Game-wise, this serves to limit the demi-monde's powers, which, in turn, matches the novels, where they only rarely demonstrate the full extent of their abilities.

There is another form of obligation the demi-monde takes very seriously: that imposed by accepting food and drink from another member of the demi-monde. It's always wise when visiting a practitioner, *genius loci*, or any other type of fae to make sure that all refreshments are offered free of such obligation. According to Nightingale, no one is entirely sure what would happen if someone refused to honour an obligation gained in this way—but, equally, no one is prepared to risk finding out one way or the other.

Genii Locorum

Magic can accumulate at a location, seeping into the stone and other elements of the environment. Usually, this simply manifests as *vestigia*, but in some cases, things go a little further. When they do, that location ends up having a spirit attached to it. It may be a minor spirit that inhabits a bookstore[16] or a major spirit, such as those associated with the River Thames.

Genii locorum is a Latin phrase used by people like Nightingale to describe these spirits; the singular being *genius loci*. When speaking of themselves, the actual *genii locorum* prefer to use such terms as spirit, *orisa*, or even god or goddess. They have their own traditions and etiquette, and are very fond of ceremonies and festivals.

Just how an individual becomes a *genius loci* is unclear. Some are born *genii locorum*, such as Chester[17] and Beverley Brook, who sprang mysteriously into existence as children. Others lead a normal life prior to their transformation—one notable example being that of an orangutan who escaped London Zoo in the 1950s, only to become the *genius loci* of Regent's Canal[18]. Some locations slowly take on a personality without it ever assuming a corporeal form. *Genii locorum* are long lived, perhaps even immortal, but they can be killed. The River Lugg, in Herefordshire, was reputedly killed by Methodists long ago[19]. Alternatively, the destruction of the location itself can lead to the death of the spirit associated with it, such as happened to some of Father Thames' sons[20].

It appears that there is a limit to the scale of a *genius loci's* domain. Here in England, the Thames is a major river, but on a global league table, it's really not a major player. The truly major rivers, such as the Volga, the Danube, or the Rhine, don't have a single spirit but are divided into multiple entities, such as the Rhine Maidens[21]. Other rivers around the world similarly have multiple spirits, such as the Ganges, the Mississippi, the Limpopo, and the Amazon. One theory is that there's an inbuilt limit on the power of individual *genii*

Footnotes: [13, 15] *Rivers of London*, [14] *Broken Homes*

Footnotes: [16, 18] *Tales from the Folly* ("King of the Rats"), [17] *The Furthest Station*, [19] *Foxglove Summer*, [20] *Rivers of London*, [21] *The October Man*

The Effects of Cold Iron

As we've already mentioned, certain members of the demi-monde are vulnerable to cold iron. In narrative terms, this means it acts as a deterrent, and the GM may wish to impose a penalty die on a vulnerable character's actions when they are in the presence of large amounts of cold iron, or in direct contact with it (**Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).

- **Vulnerable to cold iron:** the High Fae (including Molly and Foxglove), unicorns, and *genii locorum*.
- **Not vulnerable to cold iron:** chimeras, talking foxes, vampires, and members of the lower fae, such as trolls, the Quiet People, and folk like Zachary Palmer.

Successful attacks made against a vulnerable character with a cold iron weapon gain a bonus die on the damage roll (**The Damage Roll**, page 132). Such a character, when injured by a cold iron weapon, cannot recover until the iron is removed from their body, i.e., they remain on whatever damage condition they ended the combat on. Damage inflicted by a cold iron weapon is untreatable by human medicine, and if the iron remains in the victim's body, it wicks their life energy away until they die. All wounds caused by cold iron should be treated narratively through the power of the High Fae or *genii locorum*, such as when Peter rushes Father Thames' son, Ash, to Mama Thames to save him after an unfortunate accident with some iron railings[22].



locorum, because if the power of such a major river was ever embodied by a single entity, that *genius loci* would transcend this reality. No one knows if that's true, or if it's just a tale.

Genii locorum, like other types of demi-monde, possess magical powers, but their magic is quite different to Newtonian magic (**The Magic of the Demi-Monde**, page 243).

Anyone wishing to spend time at the location associated with a *genius loci*, or who wishes to win their favour, would do well to provide a gift of some sort. Alcohol is usually welcomed, though some may prefer other gifts, such as bananas in the case of Mrs Canal. It's also considered very bad manners for a *genius loci* to turn up on someone else's "patch" unannounced—yet another element of those inscrutable **Codes of Conduct** (page 244).

It should be noted, that when it comes to **Affluence Rating** (page 57), *genii locorum* can choose to live at any level they wish, from poor to rich. The glamour is a wonderful thing!

Footnote: [22] *Moon Over Soho*



Other Beings

This section contains descriptions of several of the key demi-monde characters and creatures found in the *Rivers of London* novels. Where an entry is for a generic type of being, an example profile is included for an average individual of that type. Specific individuals can vary considerably, just as much as people do, so feel free to tinker with the characteristics and skills if you are creating members of the demi-monde for use in a case file of your own.

GM ADVICE

Members of the higher demi-monde—like the *genii locorum*—have a *vestigia* entry as part of their profile, describing the sensation someone gets from them if they succeed with a Sense Vestigia roll. For really powerful demi-monde, i.e., Mama and Father Thames, there's no need for a roll—the power at that level is impossible to miss, even by people who usually don't know what they're sensing. Members of the lower demi-monde, like **Zachary Palmer** (page 256), don't usually have a specific *vestigia* listed—there's just something about them that those who are sensitive know is "other." There are some that do give off their equivalent of a *signare* when they use their thematic powers, though. These members of the lower demi-monde also have a *vestigia* listed as part of their profile.

Beverley Brook

I'm reliably informed that Mama Thames found Beverley floating in the brook one day, down by Kingston Vale dual carriageway. Now here she is, a *genius loci*, living in a house on Beverley Avenue, London. She is studying Environmental Science at Queen Mary University, and is working on her dissertation entitled "The Environmental Benefits of Waterway Reversion." The two of us have been together for a while now—did I mention I'm going to be a dad? Twins apparently; double trouble, my Mum says.

When Beverley is around it's safest to assume that the front two rows may get wet. She has a thing with water, and is prone to stripping off and taking a dip at a moment's notice, which can be very distracting. Oh, and one time she flooded Covent Garden.

- **Description:** Beverley is an attractive Black woman of West African descent. I would say she had a cheeky face, but she'd probably kill me. She has long dreadlocks, and appears to be in her mid-20s. Her skin is smooth, unnaturally flawless, and sufficiently dark that I can't see when she's blushing. Her eyes are upwardly-tilted, like those of a cat; her dark brown irises are flecked with amber and gold around the pupils. Oh, and there's usually a sly smile playing on her luscious lips.
- **Traits:** sometimes she casually demonstrates her power over water, such as thawing frozen food by staring at it[23].
- **Allegiances:** Bev is party to an agreement that requires her to ask permission from the Folly before using her full powers in Greater London. She defers to her siblings (Effra, Fleet, and Tyburn) and Mama and Father Thames.



Beverley Brook, *genius loci*

STR 40 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 70 **POW** 100
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 100
Advantage: Natural Toughness.
Disadvantage: vulnerable to cold iron.

Skills
Athletics 70%, Drive 50%, Navigate 60%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 70%, Social 60%, Stealth 60%; Science (Environmental) 60%; Fighting 40%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English (own) 70%, Yoruba (own) 35%.

Powers
The Glamour, Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Water.

Vestigia
A sensation like rain, the sound of boys playing football in the distance, the smell of suburban roses and newly washed cars, evening television flickering through net curtains.

Footnote: [23] *Lies Sleeping*



Chimera

Chimeras are humans who have been magically altered. These strange creatures are a blend of human and animal, such as monkey, tiger, or leopard—and they kind of look like anthropomorphised animals. For example, one might be covered in fur and have the claws, teeth, and eyes of a cat; Tiger Boy certainly did[24].

Dr Walid explained to me that chimeras possess two types of cells, some with human DNA, some with animal DNA. Nightingale made it clear that they are created through warped, dark magic. As altered humans, they speak and understand their mother tongue, and may also learn other languages.

Chimera, *an example*

STR 60 **CON** 60 **DEX** 70 **INT** 50 **POW** 60
DB: +1 **MOV:** 9 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 60
Advantages: Damage Bonus, Natural Toughness.

Skills
Athletics 60%, Drive 30%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 30%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 50%, Stealth 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
Own (e.g., English, German, etc.) 60%.

Powers
Luck of the Demi-monde.

Dog, Police

Police forces across the world use dogs for a variety of tasks including sniffing out drugs and explosives, finding missing people, and catching fleeing criminals. The most commonly used breed in the UK is the Belgian Malinois, which is like the German Shepherd only smaller and nimbler. Of course, we at the Folly have our very own "police dog" named **Toby** (page 240).

Police Dog, *an example*

STR 50 **CON** 60 **DEX** 80 **INT** — **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 10 **MP:** — **LUCK:** —

Skills
Athletics 70%, Sense Vestigia 30%; Bite 60%.

Father Thames

Prior to becoming a *genius loci*, Old Man Thames was an important Romano-Brit living in Londinium by the name of Tiberius Claudius Verica. In the mid-1800s, the Thames became so polluted as it passed through London that many of his sons (also *genii locorum*) choked and died. In grief and anger, Father Thames forsook the city and moved inland and upriver, where he stayed. From 1966 onwards, the tidal section of the Thames gave rise to fresh *genii locorum* (Mama Thames, Beverley Brook, Lady Ty, and so on), which led to contesting claims over the dominion of the river, with Father Thames claiming ownership and Mama Thames asserting her authority in the light of his absence for over a century.

Today, Father Thames rules the Thames upstream from Teddington Lock, on the west side of London. Many of the tributaries have their own *genius loci*: the Old Man's sons—some old, some new.

His power is great—indeed, he could flood a whole city if he so wished. He has the gift of prophecy, but Oxley warned me off asking him direct questions, as there's often a price attached[25].

- **Description:** these days, he's a short, white man with a pinched face and beaky nose. His bleak grey eyes have a dangerous sparkle and stare at you from beneath his prominent brow. Although he's many centuries old—almost a couple of millennia, in fact—he appears to be a man in his 70s, full of a sinewy vigour. His fashion's dated but he's always well-dressed in a smart country suit, with a bright yellow pocket square, a red waistcoat, and a gold-fob watch. Wisps of white hair protrude from beneath the battered homburg crammed on his head.
- **Traits:** he looks like an old Traveller/Sinti, with smiles and a gift for banter, but one time I witnessed him taking a piss, and the next day that ground was alive with wildflowers.

Footnote: [24]*Moon Over Soho*

Footnote: [25]*Lies Sleeping*

- **Allegiances:** Father Thames and Nightingale have an understanding, and the two sometimes have long talks in some old language that I can't begin to follow.

Father Thames, *Old Man of the River*

STR 60 **CON** 60 **DEX** 50 **INT** 70 **POW** 200
DB: 0 **MOV:** 6 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 200
Advantage: Natural Toughness.
Disadvantage: vulnerable to cold iron.

Skills
Athletics 50%, Drive 30%, Navigate 80%, Observation 80%, Read Person 90%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 95%, Social 70%, Stealth 40%; Fighting 50%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
Brittonic (own) 70%, English (old, middle, and modern) (own) 70%, Latin (own) 70%.

Powers
The Glamour, Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Water.

Vestigia
The promise of beer and skittles, walking home on a moonlit night, a warm fireside, amorous company.



Foxglove

Foxglove was separated from the fae decades ago after being sold by one of the High Fae queens in some mysterious trade deal. Along with others of her kind, she was exploited in London clubs before being isolated and trapped in a pit for 15 years. Then, one day, yours truly ended up in that same pit—it's a long story[26]. Anyway, the two of us escaped and ended up back at the Folly, where it quickly became clear that Foxglove and Molly are bosom buddies.

- **Description:** a tall, slender fae woman, with elongated arms and long-fingered hands. Her slightly inhuman face is long and oval with high, prominent cheekbones. She has a small mouth and chin, and—just like Molly—there are far too many teeth in that mouth. Also, like Molly, she has a cascade of long, gleaming black hair. Foxglove's eyes are large and hazel-coloured, with little flecks of silver and gold in her irises. She tends to wear loose artist's smocks, which are usually spattered with paint from her ongoing artworks.
- **Traits:** the modern world is something of a mystery to Foxglove. She doesn't speak, but expresses herself through her art and loves to paint and draw.
- **Allegiances:** very close to Molly.



Footnote: [26] *Lies Sleeping*

Foxglove, ***High Fae artist***
STR 70 **CON** 50 **DEX** 80 **INT** 60 **POW** 80
DB: 0 **MOV:** 9 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 80
Advantage: Natural Toughness, Speedy.
Disadvantage: vulnerable to cold iron.

Skills
Athletics 70%, Drive 30%, Navigate 30%, Observation 80%, Read Person 60%, Research 30%, Social 40%, Stealth 70%; Art/Craft (Painting) 80%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
She won't say—possibly High Fae?

Powers
Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Magical nullification.

Vestigia
Nothing anyone's been able to put their finger on just yet.

Ghost

When a person dies, an imprint of their personality can be left upon their surroundings. Ghosts gain what little power they possess from the magic stored in their location. Stone is especially good at storing magic; old houses are often built of stone, hence the reason why ghosts are common in such places. Over time, though, this store of magic fades and any associated ghost tends to degrade. Usually, it takes at least 30 years of magic build-up before you get a ghost[27].



Ghosts vary in intensity. I grade them on the Annie scale: one Annie is little more than the feeling that someone is stood behind you; ten Annies and they appear as real as you or I. And if you want to get a ghost's attention, give them a werelight to feed on!

There are three types of ghost:

- **Loopers:** these are the most common. They're like a short recording being played on a loop. The recording may be seconds or hours in length.
- **Entities:** these ghosts appear to act like a real person, and may show a level of comprehension in their interactions.
- **Simulacra:** these are somewhere between loopers and entities, and can be likened to characters in a computer game—they possess a limited range of actions and speech, but these soon become repetitive.

Then there are the things that some people mistake for ghosts, such as revenants and "poltergeists." Revenants are spirits out for revenge, and they can feed on ghosts. What people call poltergeists sometimes have other explanations—they may be a possessed item or even a non-corporeal *genius loci*[28]. It also takes at least 100 years for something as exotic as a genuine poltergeist to develop, so the age of the building being haunted can be a handy guide as to what is or isn't actually going on.

Ghost

Ghosts do not have statistics. They are little more than illusory recordings that you can talk to. If it has statistics and claims it's a ghost, it's lying.

High Fae

The High Fae are flesh and blood, but not like me and you. They are tall and thin, with long delicate faces and black eyes (though they can sometimes be other colours, like Foxglove's). It's all-natural fabrics and natural designs with them—William Morris would've loved it. And they have an affinity with all of nature—plants and animals, and also some other-worldly animals like unicorns.

The High Fae don't coexist with us on the material plane. They live in a world apart from ours—I suppose you'd call it Fairyland. You have to see it for yourself to understand it, and even then, it's difficult. It's like each world is a layer on the screen, and the opacity setting of the layers can be altered up or down. We normally only see our layer, but there's another one lying just out of sight[29].

Footnotes: [27] *Tales from the Folly* ("A Rare Book of Cunning Device"), [28] *Tales from the Folly* ("The Cockpit"), [29] *Foxglove Summer*

They're quite able to defend themselves—I've seen them carrying bows and arrows, and flint-tipped spears. Some wear armour made of overlapping, polished stone scales. However, as Polidori points out, they are vulnerable to cold iron.

High Fae, *an example*

STR 60 **CON** 80 **DEX** 70 **INT** 50 **POW** 100
DB: 0 **MOV:** 9 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 100
Advantages: Natural Toughness, Speedy.
Disadvantage: vulnerable to cold iron.

Skills
Athletics 60%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 40%, Research 30%, Social 50%, Stealth 60%; Ride 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 60%.

Languages
High Fae (own) 60%, English 40%.

Powers
The Glamour (the royal ones, at least), Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Nature.

Vestigia
Sun-dappled leaves, the smell of damp wool, a flash of arrogance and condescension.



Horse

As a kid, I thought I'd seen horses at the city farms; turns out they were ponies—police horses are like Godzilla compared to them! (Though far less vicious and unstable than Godzilla. And the ponies.) Of course, being a mounted police officer takes years of training—the closest I'll ever get is if I employ some ragamuffin to follow me around clip-clopping a pair of coconut halves together.

Police Horse, *an example*

STR 180 **CON** 80 **DEX** 70 **INT** — **POW** 50
DB: +2 **MOV:** 12 **MP:** — **LUCK:** —
Advantages: Damage Bonus, Natural Toughness.

Skills
Fighting 60%. Uses the rider's Ride skill for general manoeuvres.

Lady Cecelia Tyburn Thames

Usually known as Ty, or Lady Ty (if you've got any sense), she's the eldest of Mama Thames' daughters, and the goddess of the River Tyburn. She makes no secret of the fact that she read History and Italian at Oxford, though she's a little less forthcoming about crossing paths with the Little Crocodiles Dining Club (a private club made up of apprentice practitioners back in the 1990s)[30]. Ty now works as a civil servant; she serves in numerous political organisations, and has contacts in the civil service, business, and the government. She's pretty loaded too, and lives in



Footnote: [30]*Moon Over Soho*

Mayfair with her husband, George McAllister-Thames, and two teenage children: Stephen and Olivia.

Her predecessor, Sir William of Tyburn, was one of Father Thames' sons. William died in the mid-19th century during the Great Stink, a period of dreadful water pollution. As *genius loci* of the same location, Ty shares some of Sir William's memories. She can also do something like what Molly does, like that one time she sent me on some sort of vision quest[31].

- **Description:** a handsome Black woman with dark eyes and a straight nose (I'd call it "media-friendly," just not to her face), Lady Ty appears to be in her late 40s. Although lighter-skinned than her sister, Beverley, she has the same black, slanted cat-shaped eyes as her sister and mother.
- **Traits:** aloof would be a polite word for it. She's keen to have things run her way, and is somewhat resentful of the Folly's intervention in the dealings of the demi-monde.
- **Allegiances:** I think of her as an occasional ally, but one that must be handled with extreme care.

Lady Cecelia Tyburn Thames, *genius loci*

STR 40 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 70 **POW** 120
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 120
Advantages: Natural Toughness, Scary.
Disadvantage: vulnerable to cold iron.

Skills
Athletics 60%, Drive 40%, Navigate 60%, Observation 70%, Read Person 80%, Research 60%, Sense Vestigia 90%, Social 80%, Stealth 60%; History 80%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English (own) 70%, Italian 80%, Yoruba (own) 35%.

Powers
The Glamour, Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Water.

Vestigia
The rope, the crowd, and the final drop into oblivion; the smell of cigars, horses, furniture polish, Stilton, and Belgian chocolate.

Mama Thames

If you ever find yourself knocking on the door of an old warehouse in Wapping, have a care. I know a bloke who did that a few decades back, and he's been there ever since. Mama Thames can have a strong influence over people. I was going to say I was prepared for it, but I'm not sure you can ever be fully prepared for that rush of power when it washes over you.

The woman who would become Mama Thames immigrated to the UK in 1957 from Nigeria to study nursing. Following an unhappy love affair, she found herself on London Bridge, thinking about throwing herself off. The River Thames came to her rescue and offered her the option of becoming a *genius loci* instead.

Her relationship with Father Thames is one of territorial rivalry over the river whose name they share. She is "mother" to a number of *genii locorum*, notably Beverley Brook and Lady Ty, and also Black Ditch, Brent, Crane, Effra, Fleet, Lea, Nicky, Olympia, and Chelsea. She also claims to own all musicians in London. Her power comes from the sea and the ports, and her glamour is about as irresistible as the tide.

- **Description:** an apparently middle-aged Black Nigerian woman, Mama Thames has a generous figure and perfect skin. Her face is unlined and is as dark as Beverley's, but rounder; her lips are full and dark, and she has the black, upwardly tilting, cat-shaped eyes inherited by her daughters. Her long hair is usually braided, styled by her coterie, and she tends to dress in Austrian lace.
- **Traits:** she smiles in a matronly way, and when she speaks, everyone listens.
- **Allegiances:** Mama Thames has an agreement with Nightingale not to interfere with Folly business (this sometimes rankles with Lady Ty).



Footnote: [31] *Lies Sleeping*

Mama Thames, *Goddess of the River Thames*

STR 40 **CON** 60 **DEX** 50 **INT** 70 **POW** 200
DB: 0 **MOV:** 7 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 200
Advantage: Natural Toughness.
Disadvantage: vulnerable to cold iron.

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 30%, Navigate 60%, Observation 90%, Read Person 80%, Research 50%, Sense Vestigia 95%, Social 80%, Stealth 40%; Medicine 60%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English 60%, Yoruba (own) 70%.

Powers
The Glamour, Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Water.

Vestigia
Salt water, coffee, diesel, bananas, chocolate, fish guts.

Molly

Molly is something of an enigma. She was rescued from a stage magician in 1911 and brought to the Folly[32]. She has remained there of her own volition ever since. As a member of the fae, she doesn't show her real age, but she looks maybe mid-20s. She can understand English, but doesn't speak—though she does hiss occasionally. Since I moved in, she seems to have taken an interest in the world outside the Folly through social media and direct messaging.

Molly doesn't so much walk as glide, and she can move at great speed when she wants to. Also, she can perform haemomancy; that's divination through blood. If she feeds on a person's blood, she can increase their sensitivity to *vestigia*, extending it outward by several miles. I can tell you from personal experience that this carries dangers for the subject, not least of which is Molly can get a bit carried away while feeding—but there are other dangers of swimming among the city's *vestigia*—one can meet ghosts there, and some "ghosts," let me tell you, can be proper dangerous.

- **Description:** a small slim woman dressed like an Edwardian maid, in a starched uniform of black skirt, white bib, and white cotton blouse. She has a long, narrow, angular face, very pale skin, and black, almond-shaped eyes. Her long, black hair falls to her waist from beneath her maid's mob cap. She's looked like this for at least 70 years.
- **Traits:** she never speaks, but sometimes hisses. There's something disturbing about her silent presence, whether it's her strange eyes, the way she glides about, or the number of sharp small teeth that fill her wide mouth.
- **Allegiances:** Molly is an integral part of the Folly, and has a longstanding and strong bond with Nightingale. More recently, she's become very fond of Toby. She's also very close to Foxglove.

Molly, *Folly housekeeper*

STR 70 **CON** 50 **DEX** 80 **INT** 60 **POW** 80
DB: 0 **MOV:** 9 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 80
Advantages: Natural Toughness, Speedy.
Disadvantage: vulnerable to cold iron.

Skills
Athletics 60%, Drive 30%, Navigate 30%, Observation 85%, Read Person 60%, Research 50%, Sense Vestigia 80%, Social 50%, Stealth 80%; Art/Craft (Cooking) 60%, Art/Craft (Housekeeping) 70%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
Comprehends and can write English; speaks only in hisses.

Powers
Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Blood (haemomancy).

Vestigia
Nothing that Peter could remember.



Footnote: [32] *Moon Over Soho*

Quiet People

You've probably heard of mole-men and morlocks—well, I'm not sure about them, but the Quiet People are definitely down there, possibly under your feet right now. One of the groups Zachary Palmer refers to as having been born "different," they went underground a long, long time ago, and live in a strange subterranean community below London. That's not the only thing that's different about them, either. Sgt Kumar once jokingly asked me if there were people who could "bend" earth; I stupidly told him there weren't—how wrong was I?

The Quiet People are sometimes referred to as "whisperers" on account of them favouring darkness and quiet communication. Recently, Zachary Palmer has been working as their guide to the upper world, taking them to pubs and introducing them to pop music. Quiet pop music, obviously. To be honest, they do look a bit like the kind of people that hang around in late-night jazz clubs, wearing shades and not saying much. They're led by a chap named Matthew Ten-Tons. Oh, and they keep pigs—really fat albino ones[33].

- **Description:** long, pale faces, large eyes, and a strange round-shouldered posture. Other than that, they come in all shapes and sizes, and the most common hair colour is light brown. Most of the male ones I've met tend to wear hoodies and shades.
- **Traits:** pretty secretive, for obvious reasons, and they don't appreciate people poking their noses into their business. Also, pretty friendly and curious, once you get to know them.



- **Allegiance:** largely keep themselves to themselves, but currently attempting to acclimatise the younger generation to above ground living, one way or another. Close ties with Zach Palmer. On the Folly's radar—and Lady Ty's.

Quiet Person, *an example*

STR 70 **CON** 60 **DEX** 70 **INT** 60 **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 50

Advantages: Natural Toughness, The Knowledge (Beneath London).

Disadvantages: sensitive to bright light and loud noises (penalty die to Observation rolls in bright and/or noisy locations).

Skills
Athletics 50%, Drive 10%, Navigate 60%, Observation 60%, Read Person 40%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 50%, Stealth 60%; Art/Craft (Pottery) 60%, Mechanical Repair 50%; Fighting 50%, Firearms 40%.

Languages
English (own) 60%.

Powers
Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Earth.

Other
Bonus die to Observation rolls in quiet and/or dimly-lit locations.

Vestigia
A momentary blast of heat, the smell of the pigsty.

Talking Foxes

Foxes are a common sight in many British cities these days, especially London, and mixed in among them are their larger talking cousins. A quarter bigger and a third heavier than your common or garden *Vulpes vulpes,* these foxes have modified throats and can articulate language with the same facility as a human being. They also exhibit human levels of intelligence and are self-organising along mysterious lines. Abigail says that they think they're spies and are fighting a clandestine battle against a something they only refer to as Uncle Oboe[34].

They can be playful, friendly, and helpful when it suits them, or really annoying and obstructive when the mood takes them—no wonder they get on so well with Abigail.

There have been sightings of talking foxes as far afield as Herefordshire, Wales, and Scotland. It's possible they've

Footnote: [33] *Whispers Under Ground*

Footnote: [34] *What Abigail Did That Summer*



migrated to Europe and North America as well, but no confirmed instances have been reported yet. London's foxes certainly understand English and speak their own idiosyncratic version of it, full of spy jargon.

Talking Fox, *an example*

STR 30 **CON** 60 **DEX** 70 **INT** 60 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 9 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 60
Advantages: Natural Toughness, The Knowledge (home city).

Skills
Athletics 70%, Navigate 70%, Observation 80%, Read Person 40%, Research 40%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 30%, Stealth 80%; Find North-east 100%, Hunt Cheese Puffs 80%; Bite 50%.

Languages
Other (e.g., English, German, etc.) 60%, Own 60%.

Troll

Trolls are a type of fae who favour living on riverbanks or under brick or stone bridges. To look at, your average troll is indistinguishable from any other homeless person. Some do interact with humans—as a matter of fact, I know one who works as a PE teacher at a comprehensive school in Reading. Then there's Nathaniel, who can be found living under Richmond Bridge[35]. Trolls are known to speak the local language wherever they're found. It's not known if they have a language of their own.



Troll, *an example*

STR 70 **CON** 70 **DEX** 30 **INT** 40 **POW** 80
DB: +1 **MOV:** 7 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 80
Advantages: Damage Bonus, Natural Toughness.

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 30%, Navigate 50%, Observation 50%, Read Person 50%, Research 30%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 60%, Stealth 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
Own (e.g., English, German, etc.) 60%.

Unicorns

These things are large and powerful—the size of a very solid cart horse, except your average cart horse doesn't have a horn in the middle of its forehead. And, when I say a horn, I mean one that looks suspiciously like a narwhal's, only a good bit shorter (half a metre/yard) (yes, I know the narwhal's horn is actually a tooth, but you get what I mean).

Unicorns are usually invisible to the human eye—in our world, at least—but become visible when fed on magical energy (such as a werelight)[36]; they're definitely visible if you happen to end up in Fairyland, though[37]. Their temperament is volatile at best. I'm sure they can be cute and cuddly, but the ones I've witnessed have pretty much all been violent and aggressive. They're closely affiliated with the High Fae, and like them, are vulnerable to cold iron.

Footnote: [35] *Rivers of London*

Footnotes: [36] *Foxglove Summer*, [37] *The Fey and the Furious*



Unicorn, *an example*

STR 200 **CON** 70 **DEX** 60 **INT** 10 **POW** 90
DB: +2 **MOV:** 12 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 90
Advantages: Damage Bonus, Natural Toughness.
Disadvantage: vulnerable to cold iron.

Skills
Athletics 60%, Sense Vestigia 70%; Fighting 60%.

Languages
Unicorns certainly understand spoken English. Whether they take any notice of you is a different matter altogether.

Powers
Invisible to humans when in our world (unless in the presence of magic), Luck of the Demi-monde.

Other
Can be ridden, but requires a successful Ride roll to convince the creature to let a rider mount it. Unless the rider is used to handling unicorns, it also requires a successful Ride roll to stay in control in situations where a normal horse wouldn't require a skill roll.

Vampires

All vampires were living creatures—once. Nightingale refers to them as parasites. Dr Walid has studied them and has found extremely high levels of hyperthaumaturgical degradation when looking at cross sections of their brains. Rather than sucking blood like the vampires you might be familiar with, the real ones feed on magical potential, both from the environment and the living. You can tell they're about by the intense cold they emit.

Vampires can look like anything—think of them as mindless, shambling disease vectors, not smart enough to use tools or weapons (thankfully!). The human ones have unnaturally smooth skin, pallid lips, and tend to look very ragged. Even bits of a vampire can cause you all sorts of problems, and there are several historical examples where someone decided to try weaponizing them[38].

On my first vampire encounter, Nightingale and I used phosphorous grenades to dispatch a nest of them in a house in Purley. Frank Caffrey was there with his firefighters; he knows the score. In fact, tracking down a vampire's nest and waiting for them to go to sleep is by far the safest way of dealing with them—otherwise, you're looking at deploying sandbags, flamethrowers, and yet more phosphorous grenades in front of Joe Public, which can be a little tricky to explain.



Vampire, *a human example*

STR 80 **CON** 80 **DEX** 50 **INT** 20 **POW** 70
DB: +1* **MOV:** 8 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 70
**See Special.*

Advantages: Natural Toughness, Damage Bonus.
Disadvantage: vulnerable to intense heat (flamethrower, phosphorous grenades).

Footnote: [38] *Lies Sleeping*

Skills
Athletics 30%, Navigate 60%, Observation 60%, Read Person 30%, Sense Vestigia 60%, Social 30%, Stealth 60%; Fighting 60%.

Languages
Own (e.g., English, German, etc.) 20%.

Powers
Luck of the Demi-monde.

Vestigia
Not as such, but *tactus disvitae*—the smell of antilife, a deep bone-numbing cold.

Special
Every time a vampire successfully inflicts damage in combat, the target also loses 1D6 magic points. If a vampire manages to inflict either a mortal wound or a fatal blow, the character instantly loses all of their remaining magic points on top of the usual outcomes.

The base spell damage of the Fireball spell is increased to 2 when used against vampires (boosted damage increase remains the same: 1 damage per additional magic point above base cost). Treat flamethrowers as inflicting Deadly rather than Severe damage when deployed against vampires (**Table 7: Other Forms of Damage**, page 149). Likewise, treat the Terminal damage of a phosphorous grenade as Splat damage. All other weapons inflict zero damage against vampires (no damage roll required). Only fire completely destroys a vampire; any other method of disposal risks transmission or bits of vampire falling into the wrong hands.

Anyone killed by a vampire risks becoming one as the infection is passed on. At the point of death, if the character fails a CON roll, they join the unliving—unless someone takes great care to burn their body.

Zachary Palmer

Zachary traces his fae blood to his father, who, he states, was a "fairy." Growing up, Zach spent some time in St Mark's Children's Home. He's very knowledgeable about the demi-monde of Britain, and can be called on for such tasks as locating a goblin market. He is, however, conscious of his loyalty to the demi-monde; as I've found to my cost, his information is sometimes unreliable or comes at a price—usually in the form of food and/or drink. Oh, and he has a way with locks, and can somehow open them with little problem.

- **Description:** a tall, slim, white man who appears to be in his early 20s. Zachary has a big mouth and a thin, unshaven face, topped with a mop of brown hair. Usually seen wearing a grubby grey hoodie that's going at the elbows.
- **Traits:** Zach is a bit of a lad; cheeky and evasive—the kind of person that if you lent something to him, you'd never be quite sure if you'd see it again. His relationship with truth is very flexible, and he's keen on slang, such as "the Isaacs" (Folly practitioners). Oh, and don't get me started on how much food he can put away!
- **Allegiances:** he might be considered a police informant, though he's not always reliable. He's well known by the Quiet People and is currently acting as their above-ground guide and liaison officer.

Zachary Palmer, *"goblin boy"*

STR 50 **CON** 60 **DEX** 80 **INT** 60 **POW** 80
DB: 0 **MOV:** 9 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 80
Advantages: Natural Toughness, Speedy.

Skills
Athletics 70%, Drive 30%, Navigate 60%, Observation 30%, Read Person 60%, Research 40%, Sense Vestigia 70%, Social 60%, Stealth 80%; Locksmith 60%; Fighting 60%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English (own) 60%.

Powers
Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Locks.







7

Welcome to London

LONDON, CAPITAL CITY of the United Kingdom and home of the Society of the Wise, better known as "the Folly"—the heart of Newtonian magic in the UK, at least as far as policing is concerned! This chapter aims to give the Game Moderator (GM) and players—and their investigators—an overview of the Folly's history and associations, as well as of magical London. It is presented as an induction session given by Sergeant Anthony Finnegan, one of the Folly's recently recruited members of staff[1], aimed at getting new officers and civilian associates up to speed.

The GM can use the following sections directly as an in-character introduction for their investigators to the workings of the Society of the Wise and its headquarters, or they can paraphrase and adapt the material provided for their own purposes, such as when presenting case files. The GM is free to use the information as they will: it could be shared verbally, via player handouts, or even as computer-screen presentations during character generation or in the course of starting case files. Scattered throughout the following sections, you'll also find "case seeds," which suggest potential plot ideas and show how a GM can use the information provided in this chapter to design case files of their own.



ADDITIONAL RULES

For more on creating your own case files, see **Writing a Case File** (page 336).



GM ADVICE

This chapter contains spoilers—potentially lots of them. While we've tried to draw a veil over some of the biggest surprises to be found in Ben's stories, if you haven't read all the books and graphic novels, you may wish to check which sections have footnotes to identify the ones you might want to avoid—for now, at least.

Also, there are a few acronyms in the text—if you need help understanding what they mean, don't forget **Table 12: A Glossary of Common Police Acronyms and Slang** (page 214).

Induction

Right. Morning all. Welcome to the Folly, the official home of English Magic since 1775, and maintainer of the Queen's Peace in the realm of the supernatural since before the Metropolitan Police Service was founded. My name is Sergeant Anthony Finnegan, and **DCI Thomas Nightingale** (page 233) has asked me to give you this introduction. First, there's a lecture on the history of magic in the United Kingdom, the types of practitioner you might encounter, and some of the other agencies we routinely deal with. After that, I'll take you for a tour of the building. Then it's back to the briefing room for an overview of London as it pertains to Falcon business, or "weird bollocks," as DCI Seawoll calls it. Even if you know London like the back of your hand, you can still learn something new every day.

The History of Magic in the UK

Magic dates back to the dawn of humanity. Shamans in ancient times led rituals to protect their tribes or ensure good hunting, while medieval witches might have known a trick or two passed down through their family. There were secret groups like the **Sons of Weyland** (page 262) with magical specialties connected to a trade, and alchemists trying to turn lead into gold. In the 17th century, Sir Isaac Newton discovered the principles that let magic be performed successfully and safely. He wrote three *Principia*: the first, *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*—or *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, published in 1687—was on mechanics. The second: *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Artes Magicis*, laid out the principles of magic as they are still taught and used by the Society of the Wise, aka the Folly (**Chapter 4: Newtonian Magic**, page 161). His unpublished third book, *Magni Operis Principia Chemica*—or *Chymical Principles of the Great Work*—got stolen in 1719 by Jack Shepherd[2].

Footnote: [1]*False Value*

Footnote: [2]*The Hanging Tree*

The Society of the Wise

The Newtonian practitioners who formed the Society of the Wise originally met at a floating coffee house on the River Thames called "The Folly," moored outside Somerset House. They were little more than a dodgy secret society, but had the favour of Queen Caroline, who helped form **La Société de la Rose** (page 263). Originally, both men and women could be members, but when the Society moved into an actual folly (a fake medieval tower) on the grounds of the Earls and Dukes of Bedford's London estate, the membership elected to change, and become male only. A more "respectable" but less inclusive club. Thus, fellows of the Society may use the initials "FSW" (Fellow of the Society of the Wise) after their name. Sir Victor Casterbrook was the first recognised Society president and is the only person apart from Sir Isaac with a bust in the atrium.

At the end of the 18th century, Francis Russell, the fifth Duke of Bedford, sold off his estate and created Russell Square, surrounded by posh Regency gaffs. He let the Society move to a new club house in the south terrace, but they kept the old name.

Historically, the Folly wasn't all that organised. It was part gentlemen's club and part secret and unofficial arm of the British establishment. Fellows served in an ad hoc way: doing research, working for the Home Office, or helping the Metropolitan Police via a variety of arrangements or agreements. To facilitate this, volunteer wizards were sworn in as constables, with everything that entails (**Constable**, page 197). They were listed on Scotland Yard's rolls as inspectors, but with their salaries paid by the Folly, so the Society could keep some degree of control. These agreements are still an aspect of our work—they can make an officer's job difficult, but when you're dealing with deities and the demi-monde, they're a necessary evil.

The Society of the Wise was at its height in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and insisted that no one could practise magic in the UK without its permission. Many ignored that, and the Folly ignored them if they weren't a problem, especially if they were women. Things changed with World War II (WWII), when most of Britain's wizards died at **Ettersberg** (page 262), after which DCI Nightingale became Britain's last official wizard. It was believed magic had declined so much that no more were needed. In 1953, the guvnor formalised the Folly's relationship with the Met, joining as a Detective Inspector—later DCI. The Folly, in its aspect as a policing body, was incorporated into the Met's structure, with the building leased as a police station. DCI Nightingale is answerable only to the Commissioner and, beyond them, the Home Secretary.

Officially, the Folly is the Met's Special Assessment Unit (SAU) , although we were "Economic and Specialist Crime Unit 9" up until a few years ago. What we're actually charged with is dealing with the supernatural within the United Kingdom. Police officers are generally a sceptical bunch, and many of them are more comfortable using the term "Falcon"—the name applied to operations within the Folly's remit—rather than accepting magic exists. Our call sign is Zulu Foxtrot.

When a series of strange murders were committed in 2012 by London's spirit of riot and rebellion, aka Mr Punch[3], DCI Nightingale recruited then-PC **Peter Grant** (page 232) as his apprentice. As the rumours concerning the decline of magic weren't accurate, the Folly is now expanding and recruiting officers and consultants in accordance with the recently sanctioned Folly Expansion document, which is why you're here listening to me.

We also identify other practitioners, and there's a steadily growing list of nominals, aka suspects, that needs checking. Remember, the existence of magic isn't officially recognised, and it isn't illegal to cast spells. The Witchcraft Act 1735 was replaced with the Fraudulent Mediums Act in 1951, and even that was repealed in 2008. If someone has a complaint against a psychic or sorcerer for being a fraud, it comes under general consumer protection these days. Genuine practitioners we've identified who aren't otherwise criminals are asked to swear an oath and undertake training for their own safety. Do magic wrong, and it can damage your brain (**Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation**, page 177). And we don't want any of that, do we?

County Practitioners

Before the war, every county had an official County Practitioner (CP) who looked out for supernatural problems. Their daily records were sent to the Folly once a year and then filed, often without anyone actioning anything. Let's just say they did a variable job. Some were meticulous, some slapdash, some got carried away with pet projects, while some—like George Buckland (1742–1815)—got up to no good. Buckland was the first Society member to face a disciplinary tribunal, probably for unethical practices involving ghosts—not that it stopped him or his descendants. Then-PC Grant found ghosts trapped in **Rose Jars** (page 326) in the basement of his old house, in Chesham[4]. We took the now-empty jars for safekeeping. The CP files could reveal other old pet projects that've turned feral (**A Pet Project**, nearby).

Hedge Witches and Wizards

The term hedge witch or hedge wizard generally means a magical practitioner without Folly training, or a Society member who has formally retired and "rusticated" to the country. It used to be slang for any country-dwelling witch or wizard, but there are plenty in London these days. For example, George Nolfi of Wimbledon—of the werelight party trick fame[5]—who learned the spell from his mum.

Footnotes: [3]*Rivers of London*, [4]*The Furthest Station*, [5]*Broken Homes*

Others develop magical abilities on their own, sometimes due to neurological conditions, like Mrs Edna Phillips, the occasional car-killer of Cable Street[6]. The Folly has files on rusticated Society Fellows, like Hugh Oswald, who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after WWII and retired to Herefordshire to keep bees[7].

When I say files, I mean old manila folders. If you want to know what they say, you have to dig it out the old-fashioned way; there's none of this computer search malarky—yet. You may be assigned the transferral of this information to DC Grant's new standalone database as one of your duties.

Case Seed: A Pet Project

Someone has bought and restored a former County Practitioner's home, which has lain derelict for ages. Since moving in, every night they have been woken by tapping on the window. Opening the curtains, they see a huge rook outside. They've tried ignoring it, but now rooks are gathering in increasing numbers. Is this an ordinary phenomenon, or did the long-dead practitioner bind a spirit in bird form as his familiar, in a contract to serve the master of the house until dismissed? If so, is it now an angry supernatural threat?

The Special Collection

Oxford, 52 miles—sorry, 84 kilometres—upriver from London, is home to one of England's most famous universities, with gleaming spires, academia's top brains, and the UK's most impressive collection of magical books. Although Newton was a Cambridge man, his magical papers are at Oxford.

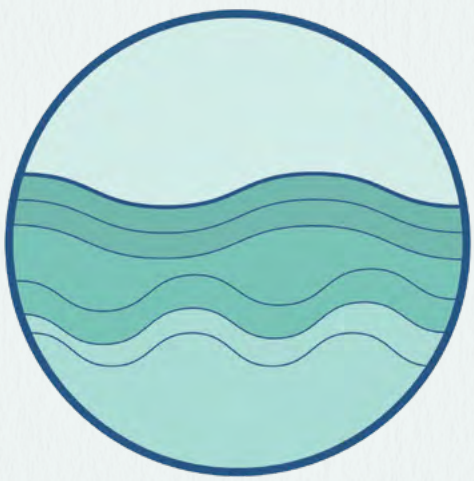
Harold Postmartin (page 235), DPhil, FRS, Curator of Special Collections at Oxford's Bodleian Library, is the Folly's archivist, curating our rarest books and manuscripts, as well as keeping track of the unwritten agreements that constitute English magical law enforcement. The Special Collection is in the university's Radcliffe Science Library, stored underground in climate-controlled rooms, behind a metal door with a swipe-card-and-number security system. The index is on an unhackable stand-alone obsolete computer. Every book is uniquely marked. Dr Postmartin enjoys challenging new recruits to crack his identification code.

Casterbrook

The Casterbrook boarding school lies on the Ambrose Estate, near the village of Stokenchurch, Buckinghamshire[8]. It taught magic to boys, mainly those from professional family backgrounds, training them as Fellows of the Society. The school was requisitioned during WWII but, afterwards, there weren't enough pupils or teachers for it to reopen. DCI Nightingale has keys to the main gate and building. There's not much left inside, except the names of the honoured dead; wizards who died serving their country—many at Ettersberg—carved on the wall of the school hall by Nightingale. The Folly owns the estate, which is part of our property portfolio—that means we have a healthy operational budget, unlike most Met departments. Money from estate farm rents also pays for maintenance of the Casterbrook building, Ambrose House.

Case Seed: It's in the Trees

A tenant farmer contacts the Folly complaining that something is killing his cattle. It comes from the woods at night, mostly. He's tried hunting it, but "*it don't seem natural*." Did a Casterbrook pupil or teacher leave something monstrous to grow in the estate grounds, or is it a normal wild beast?



Footnotes: [6]*Tales From the Folly* ("The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Granny"), [7]*Foxglove Summer*

Footnote: [8]*Moon Over Soho*

Sons of Weyland

From the north of England, the Sons of Weyland claim to be the first true magic practitioners. Their craft is smithing; that is, binding magic into metal. They know horse lore, too. Many travelled around the ancient horse fairs where they had connections with old families and the old ways of the land. Some still possess such connections, although such folk are dwindling in numbers. The Sons of Weyland were willing to train Society Fellows who put in the hard graft necessary to win their approval[9]. DCI Nightingale is one.

Ettersberg

In the latter days of WWII, British Military Intelligence discovered the Nazis were conducting horrible magical experiments on live prisoners: men, women, and fae. The research data was stored in 100 filing cabinets—the so-called Black Library[10]—in a bunker near a town called Ettersberg. Folly wizard David Mellenby thought the library could help his research into the science of where magical power comes from, so he devised Operation Spatchcock to acquire the data and stop others getting it. On January 19th 1945, Britain's wizards secured the cabinets, but at a terrible cost.

Although Hugh Oswald escaped with the cabinets—thanks to then-Captain Nightingale magically blowing up two Tiger tanks while covering the extraction—three out of every five British wizards of military age died as a result of the battle: 2,396 people in all. Mr Mellenby survived, but later shot himself in his lab at the Folly. Most of those still alive were too ill to continue practicing, or broke their staffs and retired. Nightingale remained active with a couple of elderly wizards, who are both now dead. He assumed magic was a spent force, and so it seemed at the time. However, magic bubbled under the surface, and continued to be practised by the demi-monde, other organisations, and the criminal underworld.

Other Organisations

The Folly isn't the only magic society in existence, though it is the only officially recognised one. There are a few others it would be sensible for you to be aware of.



Footnotes: [9]*Broken Homes,* [10]*Foxglove Summer*

Little Crocodiles

Professor Geoffrey Wheatcroft, DD, DPhil, FSW, got his staff in 1939. After the war, he retired to a theology teaching post at Magdalen College, Oxford, but in the mid-1950s he formed a male students' dining club called the Little Crocodiles, where he secretly taught magic[11]. Most students didn't take it seriously and learned only the basics, but one—Albert Woodville-Gentle—achieved what DCI Nightingale calls "mastership." In the 1960s and '70s, Woodville-Gentle committed numerous atrocities, including creating cat-girls and tiger-boys for the Garden of Unearthly Delights club in Soho[12] (**Soho**, page 272). He magically concealed his features, earning himself the nickname "the Faceless Man," and helped train the man who took over his legacy around the turn of the millennium, who we call Faceless Man 2.

La Société de la Rose

Women trained as magical practitioners in Queen Caroline's court. They were taught by Phillip Boucherett, a former protégé of Sir Isaac Newton, and continued to learn the forms and wisdoms in the salons of 18th century intellectual Elizabeth Montague[13]. They called themselves *La Société de la Rose*, or the Society of the Rose, which developed separately from the male preserve of the Society of the Wise.

Magic was then taught mother to daughter by society members. Current members include Lady Helena Louise Linden-Limmer and her adopted daughter Lady Caroline. Lady Helena is an expert on healing techniques. She taught them to Albert Woodville-Gentle in London in the 1960s, and was understandably horrified to discover how he'd used them. In 2014, the Society of the Rose worked with the Folly to recover Newton's stolen alchemical manuscript. Lady Helena and Lady Caroline got the book, and our two societies remain on good terms. Lady Caroline prefers to call herself a witch or sorceress rather than a practitioner.

Case Seed: The Wise Woman

A woman has put in a complaint that a sorceress she consulted for magical services to get her errant husband back took her money, but her husband has now gone completely missing. Is this a case of a scam by a fake psychic, or is the sorceress a member of the Society of the Rose, who felt she was doing the woman the greatest favour by ensuring her rotten husband was gone for good?

The Paternoster Society

The Paternoster Society poses as a historical society with a particular interest in London and Arthurian legends. Publicly, it funds archaeological digs. Privately, however, its members are unofficial magical practitioners. Some trained at Oxford, including the now-deceased John Chapman. Members rent a side annexe at St Paul's Youth Hostel, on Carter Lane, next to St Paul's Cathedral. Its rooms are an imitation of the Folly, with antique furnishings and a portrait of Sir Isaac Newton. A cabinet once held a sword discovered by 18th century antiquarian William Winston Galt, allegedly in a cellar at Paternoster Row. It was identified by Camilla Turner of Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) as being 5th century Saxon[14]. The society like to think it's King Arthur's Excalibur. Tracing other members of this group is on our action list.



Footnotes: [11]*Whispers Under Ground*, [12]*Moon Over Soho*, [13]*The Hanging Tree*

Footnote: [14]*Lies Sleeping*

The Folly

Now for a tour of our building. It's somewhat grander than the usual section house, I think you'll agree. You might have spotted the words "*Scientia Potestas Est*" and a cartouche of the Folly's coat of arms above the front door. That's Latin for "knowledge is power;" good advice for any thief-taker, wizard or not.

Ground Floor

Up until now, you've been in what was the visitor's lounge (1), off the entrance lobby on the ground floor. That's the first floor to you Americans. It's now used as the briefing room, and the antique furniture got replaced with metal desks. On the walls you can see portraits of Sir Isaac Newton, Queen Caroline, and the fifth Duke of Bedford, as well as the whiteboard.

There aren't any computers here or anywhere else inside the main building as magic sands their chips (**Spells and Technology**, page 176). Anything with a microprocessor is at risk of sanding in here, with the exception of the custody suite—most of the time. Valves, though—they're fine. The Folly has wards to protect the building from external magic and the like; they were renewed in 1940 after the Post Office installed the phones, then again recently after the basement was converted into the custody suite. Opposite is one of the old smoking rooms (5). Remember: no smoking indoors these days.

Beyond the entrance lobby is the atrium (7). It's the poshest room in the building, with pillars, balconies around the upper galleries, a domed glass roof, and a big bust of Sir Isaac. It's also the warmest room, apart from the kitchen, in winter.

Doors on the right lead to the dining room (13) and the mundane library (6). The ladder on brass rails isn't just to reach the top stacks of the bookshelves. It leads to a concealed door onto the mezzanine above. Remember what I said about no computers? The library index system is card based, arranged by subject, with a master index arranged by title. This is kept up to date with book details and records of magical things, including ghost sightings. The lecture hall (11) is at the back, with what was once the ladies' gallery. Beyond that's a back door to the mews; go there if you need a ciggy. The WCs are on the atrium's left.

There're two sets of stairs—and secret passages. Three wall panels off the atrium are actually concealed doors to servants' corridors. The doors have spyholes, and the corridors are narrow, bare brick, and just single lightbulbs, which says everything about how wizards viewed the working classes back in the day.

Basement

Below ground, there's the original kitchens and sculleries, kept as Molly, our cook and housekeeper, likes them. **Molly** (page 252) has her own space down here, but it's private, so keep your noses out if you don't want them bitten off by **Toby** (page 240). He has previous[15]. Molly's privacy, among other things, is why we leave the basement off the plans—we don't want outsiders poking around down here.

The bits of the basement I've seen most have recently been modernised to bring them up to current police standards. The vintage gym and shooting range were converted into a brand-new PACE-compliant custody suite, where us custody officers have our desk. A steel door from the rear entrance (14) opens onto a vestibule, then more steel doors throughout. We have six state-of-the-art cells, with toilets, a search room, a medical examination suite, an exercise room, and showers. Our interview room is deliberately sparse. It has three metal chairs bolted down, facing three more bolted chairs. Being able to watch body language is useful when interviewing practitioners. The middle chair is 2 inches—sorry, 5 cm—forward of those either side to make the subject feel more exposed.

At the north end of the suite, with windows to the front, is Foxglove's art studio, and her private space. If you think that's an odd place for an art studio, it's deliberate. **Foxglove** (page 248) is a fae who generates a field that negates magic. The Magical Suppression Area, or MSA, stops practitioners in the cells from casting spells, which is nice.

There's a maze of old brick-lined corridors in the basement, leading to former servant quarters, store rooms, and other things. They're not much used: dimly lit and full of cobwebs mostly. This one here, to the left, that looks like it ends in a plain wooden door, is out of bounds unless DCI Nightingale says otherwise (**Secure Storage**, nearby).

The Folly has an agreement that it can confiscate dangerous magical items. Some of these are kept down here. If they aren't too dangerous, they're kept in storerooms with some magical dampening, from cork insulation to greenwood panels to Faraday cages. One holds the Book of Cunning Device[16], a sort of sentient book-cum-musical instrument that

Secure Storage

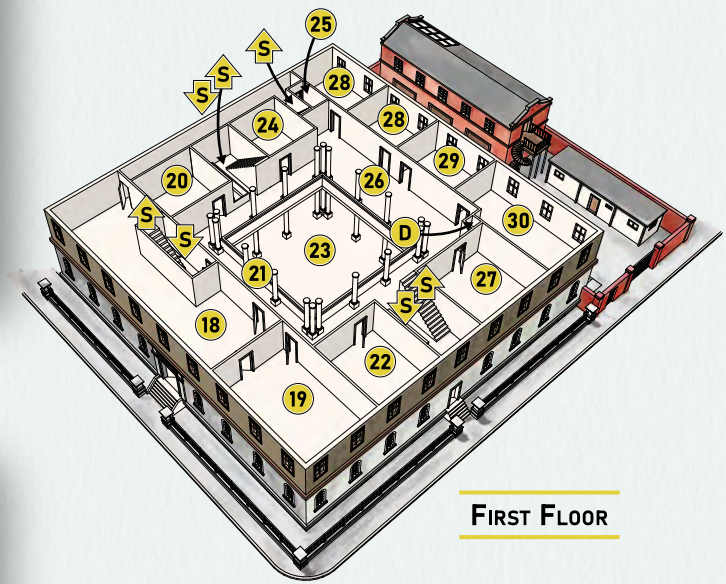
Beyond the plain door is a short corridor and then a grey, steel door without visible handles or locks, incised with overlapping circles, which opens by magic. The room beyond is secure storage containing the Black Library, the Mary Engine, and other dangerous magical things. As Sgt Finnegan says, it's out of bounds to everyone without DCI Nightingale's express permission.

Footnotes: [15]*Rivers of London,* [16]*Tales from the Folly* ("A Rare Book of Cunning Device")

The Folly

First Floor

18 Magical Library
19 Reading Rooom
20 Records
21 North Colonnade
22 Senior Reading Room
23 Atrium
24 Billiard Room
25 Storage
26 South Colonnade
27 Small Dining Room
28 Teaching Lab
29 Study
30 Breakfast Room



First Floor

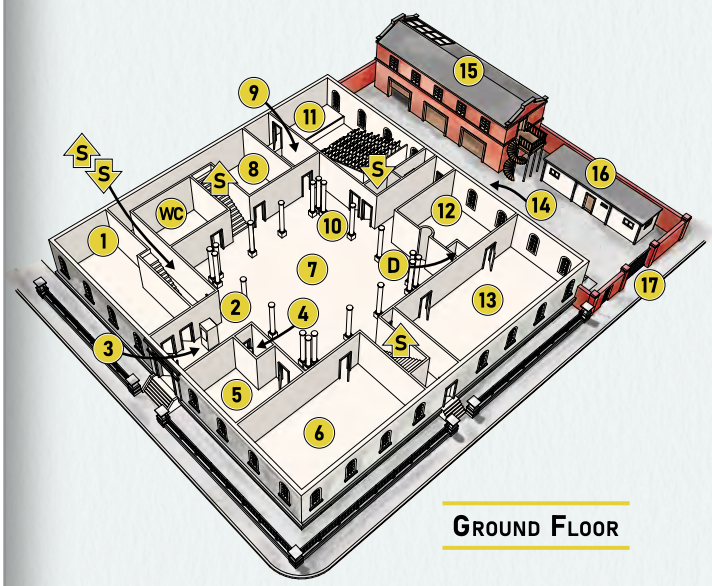
Ground Floor

1 Visitor's Lounge
2 North Colonnade
3 Lobby Booth
4 Switchboard
5 Smoking Room
6 Mundane Library
7 Atrium
8 Storage
9 Preparation Room
10 South Colonnade
11 Lecture Hall
12 Private Dining Room
13 Dining Room
14 Entrance to Basement
15 Coach House
16 Portakabin
17 Gates to Courtyard

S Stairs Up
S Stairs Down
D Dumb Waiter
WC Water Closet

0 9 meters
3 6

0 30 feet
5 15



Ground Floor

DC Grant trapped at the British Library. Given the chance, it likes to go for a wander or fly off using its cover as leathery wings. One action on the to-do list is checking the state of the magical dampening in minor storerooms. Another is taking the Book for walkies (**Case Seed: Walkies**, following).

Case Seed: Walkies

The investigators are asked to take the Book of Cunning Device for a walk around the Folly for exercise. It isn't allowed outside the building. At first, the book seems easily controlled, but if they take it into any room containing other books, it gets excited and skitters up the shelves, dumping tomes on the investigators' heads. After they have spent some time trying to catch it, the Book finds what it was seeking: an old volume that, when opened, is obviously infested with bookworms. The Book has been trying to warn the investigators of a serious threat to its less communicative siblings. How will the junior Folly members deal with that? And are those bookworms more than mundane larvae?

Rear Mews and Coach House

You can get out to the courtyard mews at the back via the atrium, the basement, and the steel door in the custody suite. The mews is the vehicle entrance, with a wide gate onto Bedford Place (17), complete with an intercom system. Next to that is the pedestrian entrance, which leads to the access ramp to the custody suite's door. On the other side of the courtyard is the old coach house (15). The bottom floor is a large garage where we park the pool car. DCI Nightingale's Jag and the other vintage vehicle—allegedly the most haunted car in Britain[17]—in there are off limits. The wrought-iron spiral staircase leads to the coach house's attic. It used to be some sort of artist's studio back in the day, but now DC Grant calls it "the tech cave," because it's outside the magical no-tech zone. You can use laptops there, and watch telly. The ottoman couch and chaise longue are comfy, and the fridge usually has beer. We keep half a dozen Airwave handsets on a charging rack up there, and there's a HOLMES 2 terminal as well. We put a Portakabin (16) in the courtyard when extra IT staff are needed—it plays havoc with the parking, but what can you do?

Mezzanine and First Floor

There's a mezzanine level between the ground and first floors, but it isn't much used, which is why you'll not find it on any plans of the Folly. Anyone studying at the Folly will be spending a lot of time in the labs (28) and classrooms on the first floor—that's the second floor in American. This first lab looks like an old-fashioned school science room, but the scorch marks in the benches are nothing to do with Bunsen burners. The sink and fire extinguisher are in the corner, there. Beyond the study (29) is the breakfast room (30). The picture on the wall, by our resident artist Foxglove, is called "American Woman with a Notepad and a Small Annoying Dog." You might recognise FBI Agent **Kimberley Reynolds** (page 237), and Toby, the Folly's *vestigia* hound. There's also a small dining room (27): old wizards did a *lot* of eating. The first floor has the magical library (18), lined with glass-fronted mahogany bookcases, and two reading rooms (19, 22), with green leather armchairs—very comfy for a quiet kip after all that eating. Lastly, this floor has the records office (20) and a billiard room (24).

Second Floor

Back in the day, most Folly wizards had rooms on the second floor (39). There's also another smoking room-cum-parlour (41) and a refectory (40). Yes, more eating. DC Grant's room was up here, and you'll have been allocated one if you're staying on site, but most are unused. Some are locked, including one that belonged to Mr Mellenby. Rare books are in the room over there (35). In this corner is the smithy (32): a metal workshop with a forge and anvil.

Third Floor

Important wizards had their suites on the third floor (55). The Master's suite (44) is at the front, as well as his office (46). There's a posh lounge for the senior members (56)—not much used now—and a glass-roofed arboretum (47) that extends up into the attic.

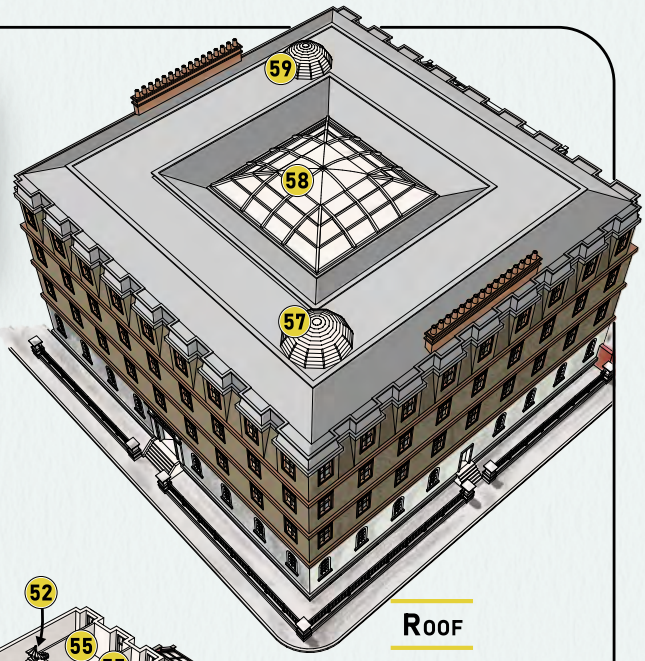
Attic

Tucked up in the roof space is the attic; it includes additional bedrooms for junior practitioners and servants—not slept in since 1945. There's also an observatory (59) with a small glass dome. Foxglove sometimes likes to sleep up there.

Footnote: [17]*Body Work*

Roof

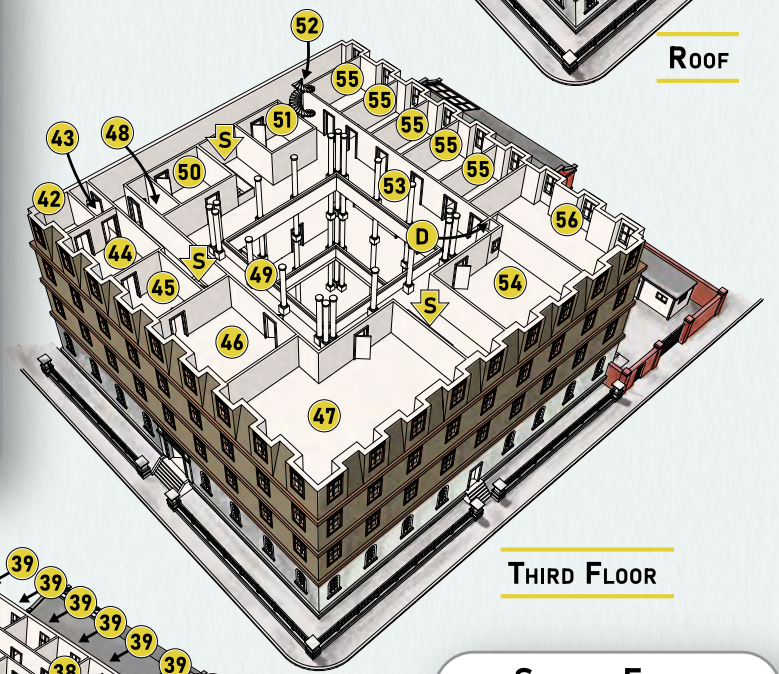
57 Arboretum Skylight
58 Top of Atrium
59 Observatory



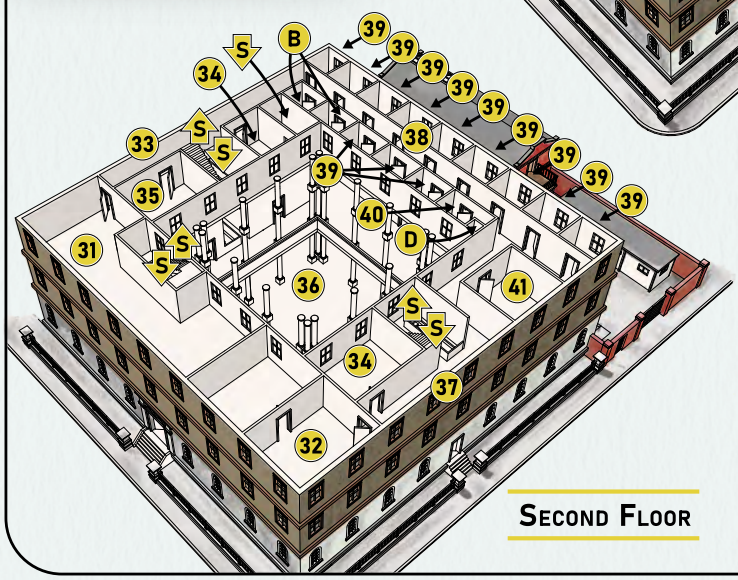
Roof

Third Floor

42 Master's Bathroom
43 Dressing Room
44 Master's Suite
45 Parlour
46 Master's Office
47 The Arboretum
48 Master's Man
49 North Colonnade
50 Equipment Storage
51 Valets' Lounge
52 Stairs to Observatory
53 South Colonnade
54 Senior Dining Room
55 Senior Member's Suite
56 Senior Lounge



Third Floor



Second Floor

Second Floor

31 Gallery
32 Forge
33 East Corridor
34 Storage
35 Rare Books
36 Atrium
37 West Corridor
38 South Corridor
39 Bedroom
40 Refectory
41 Smoking Room

B Bathroom

Teatime

Molly serves tea and cakes in the atrium at break time, or in the breakfast room if we're busy. Everything stops for tea, just like it must've done for those old wizards. If you don't fancy eating in, Russell Square has an excellent park café.

Police Stations and Other Facilities



Now we're back in the visitor's lounge, let's continue with the rest of your induction. The Folly is an operational police station investigating Falcon cases. Here are some of the other stations and departments we deal with.

> **GM ADVICE**
>
> The numbers in brackets after a location's name refer to the **Map of Central London** on pages 270–271.

Belgravia Police Station (5)

The Westminster Murder Team is based at Belgravia Police Station (AB) on Buckingham Palace Road. We've often worked with DCI Alexander Seawoll, the team's Senior Investigation Officer, and his colleague **DI Miriam Stephanopoulos** (page 238). DC Grant used to share a desk at AB's Outside Inquiry Office with **DS Sahra Guleed** (page 234) and DC David Carey when working with AB on Falcon cases. DS Guleed is now a member of the Folly team.

Although the Folly has since acquired our own special custody suite for magical practitioners, two cells in Belgravia's custody suite were modified by fitting enchanted strips of iron inlaid with copper filigree on the doors, hidden under blue paint. If you want to chat with officers outside the station, the AB local is a Victorian pub over the road.

Charing Cross Police Station (4)

Charing Cross Police Station (CX) is on Agar St, Westminster, and is where officers Grant and May were probationary constables after leaving Hendon Police College. Young officers from CX are regularly on the beat around Covent Garden (1). That's how then-PCs Grant and May first encountered the deceased actor Nicholas Wallpenny[18], and, ultimately, why you're listening to me prattle on now.



Footnote: [18] *Rivers of London*

Kentish Town Police Station

Situated on Holmes Road, in Kentish Town (EK), this station is close to Hampstead Heath. Our contact there is DC Karen Jonquiere, or Kay. She has had special training in interviewing children and teens, and was involved in a Falcon case involving local youths[19]. **Abigail Kamara** (page 237), DC Grant's half-cousin, has had most contact with her.

Walworth and Southwark Police Stations

South of the river, Walworth Police Station (MS) at Manor Place runs the East Walworth Safer Neighbourhood Team, which was investigating drug dealing from **Skygarden** (page 273). Sergeant William Daverc liaised with the Folly to get officers Grant and May into the tower as residents during their investigation[20]. He's still a good contact, although he's now at Southwark (MD), on Borough High Street.

Bromley and Dulwich

Bromley town centre's police station (PY) is a new red-brick purpose-built building on the High Street. Bromley Murder Investigation Team is headed by DCI Maureen Duffy, who has worked with the Folly in the past (**Bromley**, page 282). Also in South East London, in Dulwich, is the Met's Operational Technology Support Unit.

New Scotland Yard (6)

Several buildings in Westminster have had the name Scotland Yard: symbolising British policing, and the Metropolitan Police Service's official headquarters. The original London police force HQ was in Great Scotland Yard, Whitehall, from where it got the name. In 1890, New Scotland Yard was built on the Thames Embankment. It moved to a tower block on Victoria Street in 1967, then returned to the Victoria Embankment in 2016.

The Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service is based there. They are fully informed about the Folly's workings and have authority…" over our police operations. You also need the Commissioner's approval before you can be sworn into the Society of the Wise. The Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Police, Richard Folsom, is an acolyte of **Lady Ty** (page 250), who has persistently wanted to get more control over Folly matters. Resisting that, while not antagonising Lady Ty or Folsom, requires diplomacy. You have been warned.

Empress State Building

The Empress State Building (ESB) in West Brompton, West London, houses Metropolitan Police offices where high-level meetings take place regarding ongoing cases, including those of Falcon relevance. Counter Terrorism Command has space there, as has the Directorate of Professional Standards (DPS; **Police Oversight**, page 214). ESB is also an assessment centre for prospective police officers.

National Crime Agency

Operation Fretwork[21] was run by Officer Alona Silver of the National Crime Agency (NCA) through a Specialist Unit based in the Exchange, Hornchurch, East London. DC Grant worked with her in the past on a street racing-related smuggling ring[22].

British Transport Police, London

The British Transport Police's London headquarters are in Camden, and Sgt Jaget Kumar is their guy in charge of keeping track of "weird shit," as he calls it. His role in this respect isn't official, obviously, but he's our liaison there. It seems the London Underground has more than its fair share of weirdness, particularly ghosts, but, as we now know, the **Quiet People** (page 253) as well. We also work with patrolman David Lambert, who has the right training to lead people onto the tracks, should the need arise.

Iain West Forensic Suite

This forensic suite opened in 2008 and is used almost exclusively for post-mortem examinations in cases of suspicious deaths. If you're on a murder investigation, you'll likely have to go there. Best not have one of Molly's breakfasts first. It's based at Westminster Public Mortuary (13) on Horseferry Rd, Westminster. **Dr Abdul Haqq Walid** (page 235) and **Dr Jennifer Vaughan** (page 236) handle the "special" cases, including cryptopathology, although they're more usually found at University College Hospital (15).

A London Orientation

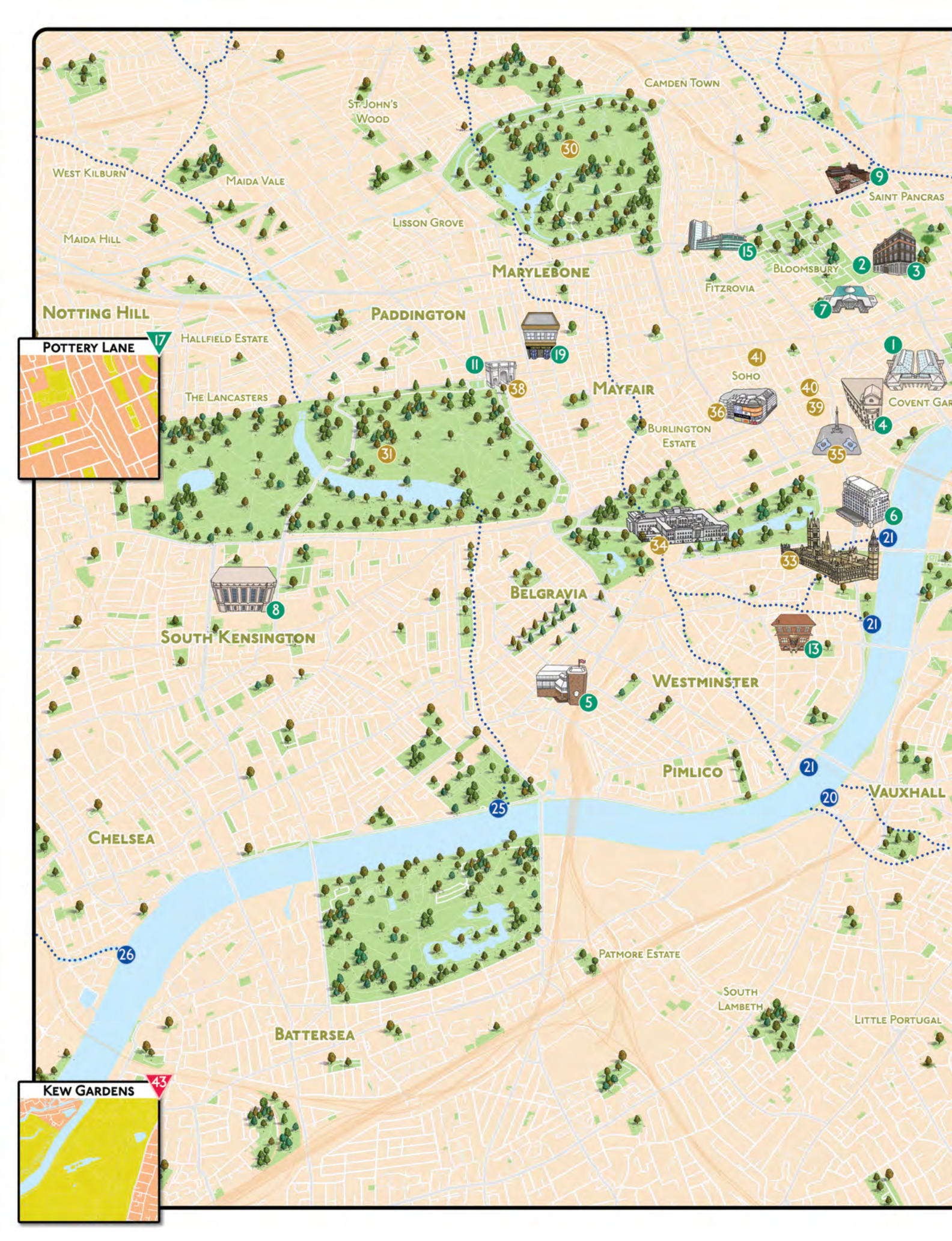
London's more than just a collection of buildings and a bunch of humans living, working, and breaking the law. London's also what lies beneath the surface and the history that made it, as well as the rivers running through it. Plenty of those things are just as alive, active, and lawbreaking as the humans. This part of your orientation deals with the parts of London that've seen the most Falcon activity.

Bloomsbury

The Folly is in Bloomsbury, which is famous for its literary and intellectual types. Just along from Russell Square (2), you'll find the British Museum (7)—BM for short. When DCI Nightingale was deciding what to do with the "Drinking Bell" (**Covent Garden**, page 272), DC Grant suggested offering it to the BM. It wouldn't be the first magical item they'd got their hands on—go and look at the Battersea Shield (**The Thames**, page 277) next time you're on a break. However, things sent to the BM don't always stay under lock and key—they're still looking for a mummy that went missing in 1933, for instance. It was reported stolen, but DCI Nightingale believes it just wandered off. It might

Footnotes: [19]*What Abigail Did That Summer*, [20]*Broken Homes*

Footnotes: [21]*False Value*, [22]*The Fey and the Furious*


Camden Town
St. John's Wood
West Kilburn
Maida Vale
Lisson Grove
Maida Hill
Marylebone
Saint Pancras
Bloomsbury
Fitzrovia
Notting Hill
Paddington
Pottery Lane
Hallfield Estate
The Lancasters
Mayfair
Soho
Burlington Estate
Covent Gar
Belgravia
South Kensington
Westminster
Pimlico
Vauxhall
Chelsea
Patmore Estate
South Lambeth
Little Portugal
Battersea
Kew Gardens



CENTRAL LONDON

LONDON TOUR

COVENT GARDEN	1
RUSSELL SQUARE	2
THE FOLLY	3
CHARING CROSS POLICE STATION	4
BELGRAVIA POLICE STATION	5
NEW SCOTLAND YARD	6
BRITISH MUSEUM	7
SCIENCE MUSEUM	8
BRITISH LIBRARY	9
MUSEUM OF LONDON	10
TYBURN TREE	11
LONDON MITHRAEUM	12
WESTMINSTER PUBLIC MORTUARY	13
MAMA THAMES' HOME	14
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE HOSPITAL	15
TATE MODERN	16
POTTERY LANE	17
SKYGARDEN	18
THE CHESTNUT TREE PUB	19

THE LOST RIVERS

THE EFFRA	20
THE TYBURN	21
THE FLEET	22
THE WALBROOK	23
THE NECKINGER	24
THE WESTBOURNE	25
COUNTER'S CREEK	26

CITY SIGHTSEEING

RIVER THAMES	27
TOWER BRIDGE	28
LONDON BRIDGE	29
REGENT'S PARK	30
HYDE PARK	31
TOWER OF LONDON	32
THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT	33
BUCKINGHAM PALACE	34
TRAFALGAR SQUARE	35
PICCADILLY CIRCUS	36
ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL	37
MARBLE ARCH	38
LEICESTER SQUARE	39
CHINATOWN	40
SOHO	41
ELEPHANT AND CASTLE	42

CAPITAL CONNECTOR

KEW GARDENS	43
VALE OF HEALTH, HAMPSTEAD HEATH	44
HAMPSTEAD HEATH	45
HIGHGATE CEMETERY	46
PECKWATER ESTATE	47

SCALE: km 0 1 2 3 mi 0 1 2

have hopped on the last train out of the now disused British Museum Tube Station, which closed that same year.

Opposite the BM is University College London (UCL). It's London's top university and home to the Harry Price Library of Magical Literature, left to it by the famous ghost hunter in 1948. It's not the Bodleian, and you'll need to wrangle a reader's pass, but it's only two minutes' walk away. The British Library (9) moved out of the British Museum to St Pancras in 1998, roughly a 15-minute walk from here. We have history there, as you already know[23].

Abigail's brother, Paul, has a serious condition and spends most of his time at Great Ormond Street Hospital, which is also in Bloomsbury. She doesn't talk about her family situation much, but if you see her looking tired or worried, be understanding.

One important point about the Folly's location is that Bloomsbury, where the north London borough of Camden meets Central London's West End, is outside the borough of Westminster, where Lady Ty, goddess of the Tyburn, has the most influence. She'd like to extend that influence, but the Folly has so far resisted.

Case Seed: The Lost Mummy

Tourists reported seeing a mummy walking around the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology in the University College London. Petrie staff say none of their mummies are missing. Research shows UCL Egyptologist and witch Dr Margaret Murray (1863-1963) warded the Petrie's cabinets to stop anything escaping. Was this sighting a student prank, or was the British Museum's lost mummy visiting relatives? If so, what are its plans?

University College Hospital (15)

University College Hospital (UCH) is a massive teaching hospital in Bloomsbury. It's part of UCL and has state-of-the-art facilities, with general wards as well as specialist units, including that of gastroenterologist Dr Walid, who has been the on-call doctor for the Folly for many years. He was recently joined there by Dr Vaughan, who is a specialist pathologist. That's where you'll go if either of them think you need checking for hyperthaumaturgical degradation or any other magical malady.

Covent Garden (1)

Covent Garden is a Falcon hotspot. Charing Cross polices pickpockets targeting distracted tourists, but it was the Folly who dealt with Mr Punch, London's spirit of riot and rebellion, when he caused mayhem there a few years ago[24].

Covent Garden used to be London's main fruit and veg market—now a craft market—but it's also famous for its theatres, which weren't always as respectable as they are now. The Royal Opera House, formerly the Theatre Royal, is at the east end of the piazza. We've just about been forgiven for what happened there back in 2012.

Henry Fielding, magistrate and founding father of the Bow Street Runners, lived next to the theatre in the 18th century. Where his house stood is now a props store, home to the ghost of Colonel Sir Thomas de Veil, Bow Street's first magistrate. You may need to go see him if you want a ghost warrant. Sir Thomas isn't the only Opera House ghost, mind you. Abigail intends cataloguing them.

St Paul's Church, built by Inigo Jones in 1638, is at the west end of the piazza. It's called the Actor's Church because local thespians are buried in the grounds. As well as being instrumental in the recruitment of DC Grant into the Folly[24], it—or rather, its bell—was, in 2015, the focus of Faceless Man 2's attempt to rewrite reality[25]. There's also a Punch and Judy Tavern in Covent Garden, where Oxley, one of Father Thames' sons, and his wife, Isis, drink when they're in town.



GM ADVICE

If you're wondering why there's no mention of the *genius loci* who inhabits the basement of a certain Covent Garden business, that's because we've adapted its short story[26] into an introductory case file: **The Bookshop** (page 285).

Soho (41)

Albert Woodville-Gentle, the original Faceless Man, operated a gruesome venture called The Garden of Unearthly Delights, on Soho's Brewer Street—nicknamed the Strip Club of Doctor Moreau, as it trafficked in chimeras: human-animal hybrids (**A Rogues' Gallery**, page 247). His successor took it over until a Falcon raid in late 2012 shut it down[27]. Faceless Man 2 also had a secret base below Dean Street, reached via the back of a shop. It's possible both Faceless Men had other lairs around Soho, holding any manner of horrible secrets. These need to be traced.

Back in the mid-20th century, Soho was a hub for vice, organised crime, and police corruption, but that's mostly been cleaned up. The area's now full of media companies and legit bars and clubs, but still has a few places with ties to their seedy past. Some trade on nostalgia: The Mysterioso, on Bateman Street, is a basement jazz club that tries to recreate

Footnote: [23]*Tales from the Folly* ("A Rare Book of Cunning Device")

Footnotes: [24]*Rivers of London*, [25]*Lies Sleeping*, [26]*Tales from the Folly* ("The Cockpit"), [27]*Moon Over Soho*

a bygone style. There's usually a long queue to get in, and the management, Stan and Don, employ rough bouncers.

The area attracts a mixed and bohemian crowd. The French House wine bar on Dean Street is aimed at artists, writers, actors, and other entertainers; no phones, music, or TV are allowed. The Groucho Club on Dean Street is private and exclusive—you have to be someone in the publishing, media, entertainment, and arts industries to be a member, and there's always paparazzi gathered outside. The Pale Lady, a supernatural colleague of Faceless Man 2, bit off a punter's penis in the gents' lavatory back in 2012, and her teeth weren't in her mouth…

Just so you know, there used to be a very unusual type of vampire over in Soho. Standard procedure with vampire nests is to burn them with incendiary grenades and blame a gas explosion. We normally call in **Frank Caffrey** (page 239), the Folly's Fire Brigade liaison, based at New Cross Fire Station, in south London. In this case, the vampires killed themselves at the Café de Paris once they realised what they were. Seems that was where they got infected, listening to jazz when the place was blitzed by a bomb in the war.

Leicester Square (39) and Chinatown (40)

Leicester Square is the heart of Westminster's West End, which means cinemas, theatres, restaurants, bars, clubs, and shops. The now-closed Trocadero Centre was off one of its corners. In Victorian times, the five-storey building was a music hall. It was then a restaurant and waxworks before becoming an entertainment complex with arcades and a horror-themed live theatrical experience. DC Grant attempted to arrest the Pale Lady there[28]. The site's now boarded up and long empty, which is deeply suspicious to my mind.

Chinatown borders on Leicester Square. **Michael Cheung** (page 238), aka the Legendary Swordsman, is the area's latest representative in a magical context. His predecessor, Simon Wong, had been around since before the 1970s. Mr Cheung is also DS Sahra Guleed's martial arts trainer. The Folly has an agreement with Chinatown, which takes responsibility for the peace within its area. Wong Kei, on Wardour Street, is the usual place for meetings between the Folly and Chinatown's representatives. It's a large Chinese restaurant famous for its good cheap food and rude wait staff. Popular with tourists and locals, you can get a table late at night without a reservation if you don't mind sharing with strangers.

Charing Cross Road

Charing Cross Road, running north from Leicester Square, was once London's centre for the book trade, and still has bookshops aplenty. Cecil Court, a Dickensian alley just off it, is where burglar George Trenchard tried to flog a stolen magical book to first editions specialist Colin and Leech in 2013[29]. Luckily, they alerted us. Other shops in the area, like Watkins in Cecil Court, Atlantis by the British Museum, and Treadwell's near UCL, specialise in magical books. Their stock's more folkloric stuff, but they'd recognise a Newtonian tome if offered one.

Case Seed: The Key

An esoteric bookshop contacts the Folly. They bought a box of old books, including magical tomes, via a house clearance after an old man died. One book had been hollowed out inside and contained a small key. Its *vestigia* (Vestigia, page 161) is burnt tallow, dried blood, and a musical box melody. What mystery does the key unlock?

Skygarden (18) and Elephant and Castle (42)

One of south London's most iconic buildings, Skygarden Tower—part of the listed Skygarden estate in Elephant and Castle—came down in 2013[30]. Designed by German architect Erik Stromberg, you could see its concrete spike for miles. A bowl in the centre of the housing estate once contained a garden; in it was a huge London plane tree with its own nymph, Sky.

Stromberg intended the estate to be an ideal community, but, in the 1980s, riots made it a violent no-go area, especially for the Met (**Walworth and Southwark Police Stations**, page 269). Many believe County Gard's illegal demolition was a land grab, but it was really a bid for magical power. The tower's core had been devised as an industrial magic-lighthouse powered by the residents' *vestigia*—a *Stadtkrone*, or city crown. The *Stadtkrone* lit up once, just before the tower collapsed.

The Skygarden site is still a crater surrounded by hoardings, due to legal wrangling over who owns the land and arguments between locals and Southwark Council over what's wanted there. Council security tries to prevent unauthorised entry, but Nicky, goddess of the Neckinger (24), has inspired local druids to set up an eco-protest to stop redevelopment and save the garden as a public park. They have a camp by Elephant and Castle roundabout. DCI Nightingale thinks Sky's lost tree might reseed, with saplings growing on the site, perhaps carrying the nymph's spirit—although such biological effects can take years or even generations to manifest. Initial Folly assessments, with Toby's help, indicate lots of residual *vestigia*, making it a hot spot for magic.

Footnote: [28]*Moon Over Soho*

Footnotes: [29, 30]*Broken Homes*

Stromberg lived at West Hill House, a fake Le Corbusier-style mansion in Highgate, north London. He was a member of the German version of the Folly, but came to London before the war. He was fascinated with industrial uses of magic, and kept an eye on his experiment at Skygarden through a telescope on his roof terrace. It's possible this house still holds a few secrets relating to his theories.

Case Seed: Skygarden Souvenirs

A lead from the demi-monde says a small floating plastic object is to be auctioned at an upcoming nazareth (**Demi-monde Pubs and Nazareths**, page 283). There are also reports of kids trespassing on the Skygarden site and claiming to have found things floating in the air. Are these connected, and is there any danger?

Notting Hill

As well as hosting the country's biggest Afro-Caribbean carnival each year, Notting Hill, in West London's Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, is full of expensive houses. Gentrification began in the swinging 1960s when pop stars and movie directors moved there; a far cry from Victorian times, when Notting Hill was a grim industrial area bordering on grim farms, known as the Potteries and Piggeries. The Beale family of railway tunnel builders lodged off Pottery Lane (17); they were typical inhabitants until they got the secret recipe for Unbreakable Pottery—like magical Coade stone—from the Quiet People.

Portobello Road, in Notting Hill, has had a famous antique market since the 1940s where you can buy all sorts of goods, from rip-off tat to, occasionally, magic stuff. Art student James Gallagher bought an Unbreakable Pottery bowl from a stall there. That started his fascination with its magical properties, which ultimately led to his murder back in 2012[31]. James' housemate was the demi-monde go-between **Zachary Palmer** (page 256).

Case Seed: Blue Beads

Abigail says a girl at Great Ormond Street told her she had been hospitalised since her blue bead necklace went missing in Portobello Road Market. One minute she was wearing it, the next it was gone. She claims the beads were a magical charm that helped her breathe, despite a serious chest condition.

Research shows a common early 20th century folkloric belief that ordinary blue glass beads protected against bronchitis. Very few were genuinely magical. A trip to Portobello Road reveals ordinary necklaces on stalls, but one trader spotted Zachary Palmer with a set of blue beads on the day of the loss. Zach can be traced to a demi-monde pub, and claims he found the magical beads on the ground. He has given them to a Quiet Person child with a serious breathing condition. What do the investigators do?

Underground London

You'd be surprised how much of London is below ground. Some is public, including most of the London Underground railway network; some is private, like cellars; some you need permits to access, including the sewer system, disused tunnels and stations, wartime bomb shelters and, of course, underground rivers. There's archaeology under our feet, too. Some of underground London is deliberately hidden, of course, like the Quiet People's home. Folly personnel have only seen a couple of rooms inside that. One was a low-ceilinged living room with ceramic walls and empty picture frames—any inquisitive copper would like to know what was in them, and why they're empty. Then, there's a larger room with a big Victorian table that their leader, Matthew Ten-Tons, and his daughter Elizabeth, use for meeting others, which occasionally means us.

Above ground, not everything is as it seems. The first Underground trains were steam powered, so tunnel roof sections were left open for ventilation; some hidden behind fake house facades, including one at 23–24 Leinster Gardens, Bayswater. Another, in nearby Moscow Road, is officially owned by Beale Property Services, and is used as a goods drop point for the Quiet People.

Inside Moscow Road is a trapdoor down to the railway tracks. Between that and Bayswater Station, there's a secret door leading to the hidden ways network, which the Quiet People use to get around London. This includes secret tunnels

Footnote: [31] *Whispers Under Ground*

as well as the Underground, the sewer system, old Post Office (GPO) tunnels, and WWII deep-level air raid shelters. The one at Holland Park has been converted into a demi-monde nightclub—Olympia and Chelsea, goddesses of Counter's Creek (26) and the River Westbourne (25), are regulars. Exits to ground level are via spiral stairs and through Holland Park tube station, as well as down to the Notting Hill warren.

As James Gallagher once said, the city goes "all the way down." The Folly doesn't yet know how far. We do know the Quiet People raise pigs underground as well as making that Unbreakable Pottery through some sort of magical process. The Quiet People also frequent a secret demi-monde pub below Oxford Street, accessible via a Crossrail service tunnel. We know the Folly is only aware of a fraction of the Quiet People's hidden ways—there must be much more we've yet to learn about. Some members of the demi-monde use these passages, too—including Zach. Keeping track of Zach is an action you might get allocated. He's a useful source of information, as well as a liability.

Any exploration of the Underground has to be done with British Transport Police permission. As I've already mentioned, Sgt Kumar is the Folly liaison officer for that, while Allison Conte is our Thames Water contact when it comes to sewer access.

The City of London

Historically, London's two power centres were Westminster (33), where the Tyburn (21) reaches the Thames, and the City of London, aka "the Square Mile," where the Fleet (22) and Walbrook (23) run. The area within the old City walls is still somewhat separate from the rest of the capital and has its own police force.

Officers Grant and May traced the elderly—and now dead—Albert Woodville-Gentle to a flat on the 30th floor of Shakespeare Tower in the Barbican complex, which is a concrete arts venue and home to the Museum of London (10) as well as apartment blocks.

Woodville-Gentle and his successor as the Faceless Man weren't the only unregulated practitioners in the City. Patrick Gale, a senior partner at law group Bock, Loupe and Stag, came to the Folly's attention after his junior colleague, Tony Harden, died of brain necrosis[32]. Gale admitted to officiating at solstice rituals at the Bloomberg building,[33] the site of a former Roman temple to Bacchus, Roman god of wine. Turns out, he'd also taught magic to some colleagues. After a word from DCI Nightingale, Gale claims to have stopped breaching the peace, and is now working with the Folly on an agreement basis. DCI Nightingale is training Gale and his former apprentices—under oath and a non-disclosure agreement—at Talacre Community Sports Centre. Gale's still on our radar as a potential problem, though.

The Bacchus temple had earlier been dedicated to the solar-deity Mithras. The Mithraeum (12) stood on the banks of the Walbrook (**The Walbrook**, page 281), which was Temple Central in Roman days. Isis—not Oxley's missus, the other one—had a sanctuary there, too. The Mithraeum's not some trap-infested maze, though. It's just an ancient cellar with an altar; now open to the public under Bloomberg's offices on Queen Victoria Street.

Smithfield, Violent Deaths, and Pacificatus

Smithfield Market was London's main meat market for a millennium, but closed in the 1960s. It was also London's main public execution site long before the Tyburn tree, especially for heretics and rebels. Scottish freedom fighter William Wallace was executed there in 1305. Lord Mayor of London Sir William Walworth killed Wat Tyler, leader of the Peasants' Revolt, there in 1381. The River **Fleet** (page 280) runs past it, now underground, but historically that was a place to illegally dispose of corpses, with 13 bodies being pulled out in one year in the early 19th century.

Violent and sudden death, especially battles, massacres, or executions, can produce dangerous entities, such as revenants (**A Rogues' Gallery**, page 249). The Sons of Weyland developed a way of dispersing negative energy from mass slaughter, called *Pacificatus*. It was used at Smithfield in the 19th century when railway sidings were built, capped with a bronze statue of Peace by John Birnie Philip. The sidings are now an underground car park. There are other *Pacificatus* installations, but we don't know where they all are. Locating them is on our action list.

The Rising Sun, in Smithfield, is a pub on the fringes of the demi-monde. It has a grisly history, as 19th century body snatchers John Bishop and Thomas Williams supplemented the corpses they'd dug from graveyards by following drunks out of the pub, murdering them in dark alleys, and then selling them to anatomists.

Graveyards are normally peaceful, as their inhabitants died elsewhere, but plague pits can be an exception. New Street, once called Hand Alley, is on the site of a 1666 plague pit where evidence suggests victims were thrown in while still breathing. There are urban legends of things trying to climb out again. New Street is opposite Liverpool Street station, just around the corner from the City of London Police station on Bishopsgate. When things are on City of London Police ground, they usually ask us in, but without *vestigia* training, officers don't always spot a Falcon case until it bites them. Quite literally, in some instances. SC Geneviève Nguyễn is the Folly's City of London Police Liaison Officer; she also deals with fraud cases.

Footnotes: [32] *Detective Stories*, [33] *Lies Sleeping*

Newgate Prison

Newgate Prison was another City site of historic death and suffering. The Central Criminal Court, at the Old Bailey, now stands there, but a bit of the old prison wall is in Warwick Lane, between the court and St Paul's Cathedral (37). Newgate's deepest cells stretched under the road and into the cellars of what is now the Viaduct Tavern. The landlords make a bit of money running public ghost vigils. There's also a legend that, at the time of Henry III, a scholar was thrown into Newgate for sorcery, but was cannibalised by starving prisoners. He cursed them with his dying breath, summoning a black dog that hunted and devoured his killers. Another urban legend claims it's still sometimes seen.

Old Street: Silicon Roundabout

Old Street Roundabout, just north of the City of London, got nicknamed "Silicon Roundabout" because of the tech firms that've sprung up there in sparkly new high rises. The roundabout's subway leads to Old Street Tube Station and a dingy underground arcade that's a remnant of the area's run-down past. It has subsequently made an effort to turn its cramped shops, noodle bar, and make-shift nightclub into something DC Grant calls "cyberpunk."

DC Grant worked undercover for a spell at Serious Cybernetics Corporation, the brainchild of former Silicon Valley computer genius Terrence Skinner[34], located in the building on the corner of Tabernacle Street and Epworth Street. Skinner had managed to lay his hands on a Mary Engine: a dangerous magical construct capable of who knows quite what; it is now stored at the Folly where we can keep an eye on it. Skinner was never charged, but DC Grant thinks he's acquired a taste for the demi-monde. There's more to investigate from that case, you mark my words.

Hampstead

There's a derelict house off East Heath Road in Hampstead (45) that we regularly check on, just to make sure it's still a crumbling ruin, and the power of a dangerous *genius loci* is still safely draining[35]. Hampstead doesn't have many derelict houses. It's one of the wealthiest parts of London and borders on a vast hilltop heathland between two branches of the River Fleet (**The Fleet**, page 280). The Folly has some animal-related contacts up on the heath. A group of intelligent talking foxes, with a den under Gospel Oak Station, watch for anything odd in the area. They have their own agenda though, which we'd like to discover. There's also a character



Footnotes: [34] *False Value*, [35] *What Abigail Did That Summer*

called the Cat Lady, who can usually be found sitting on a park bench with a large shopping trolley, feeding the strays. She's observant, and seems to have magical awareness, but we need to learn more about her, too.

The Rivers of London

Most people realise it was the Thames that made London the capital. For centuries, the location of the Thames enabled trade and travel more easily than by land. But the Thames and her tributaries have an even greater influence over London than most suspect. I'm now going to describe the rivers of London and their areas of magical importance, as you'll no doubt be running up against them at some point. First and foremost: the Thames herself.

The Thames (27)

London would not exist without the Thames. He's the reason the Romans founded Londinium in 50 CE, although people lived on the banks and worshipped the river long before that. He provided water, food, building materials, and boat travel. If you're wondering why I'm saying "he" rather than "she," that's because the river has two powerful *genii locorum*. **Father Thames** (page 247) was the original one, but he moved upriver in the 19th century and now only rules above Teddington Lock, where the tidal stretch ends. **Mama Thames** (page 251) came much, much later and is the acting goddess of the river in London. The pair are currently on good terms, but that hasn't always been the case. Keeping the peace between them is a Falcon matter.

Other spots on the river of Falcon interest include Richmond Bridge, home to the troll Nathaniel. He moved there from Hungerford Bridge, and we like to keep an eye on him. As well as being a collection of plants from all over the world, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew (43), are a top botanical research institution. Should you come across weird flora, that's where to go. But note, the scientists there treat Folly staff with some suspicion after an "incident" no one likes to talk about…

The Bull's Head pub, Chiswick, was used in the 18th and 19th centuries by traditional barge captains to discuss crews, cargo, and river lore. There are a few old-time barge folk still there. Just down the river at Barnes, a New Orleans'-style pub also called The Bull's Head attracts the demi-monde, and hosts jazz evenings. Folk tales relate that both pubs were named after a local legendary beast, possibly of fae ancestry.

Hammersmith's now a big commercial area in West London, but DCI Nightingale has actioned checking for connections with the Sons of Weyland. It had the name Hamersmythe as far back as 1294, and had the most famous forge and smithy on road and river routes out of London, but we now don't know where it stood.

Case Seed: Forging Connections

Reports of interference overnight at an archaeological dig at Furnivall Gardens, Hammersmith, could be a Falcon matter as a witness reported seeing a huge, incredibly muscled woman walking away from the site late at night with a hammer slung over her shoulder. Investigators can find the witness at the Dove pub—which has the world's smallest bar—in a tiny riverside alley that is the only remainder of the earlier village. Who was the woman? Did she interfere at the dig or protect it?

Wandsworth, South London, gets its name from **The Wandle** (page 282), which reaches the Thames at Battersea. The Battersea Shield, a stonking ancient Celtic item with intricate designs that even the British Museum describes as magical and protective, gets its name from where it was dredged up in 1857. It was thrown into the river as an offering long before the Romans arrived. The original is in the BM (**Bloomsbury**, page 269), with a copy in the Museum of London. A few ancient offerings, along with common clay pipes and oyster shells, still get found by mudlarks with permits to search the shoreline at low tide. Others get picked up illegally and not reported. That's an infringement of the law, and sometimes it's a Falcon matter.

The Chelsea Physic Garden was founded by the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries in 1673, where healing herbs such as willow, meadowsweet, and eyebright grew by the Thames. Nowadays, Chelsea is full of expensive houses and boutique shops, watched over by the goddess of Chelsea Creek and her twin sister, Olympia, of Counter's Creek. The garden's still there, though, full of herb lore.

In central London, the river passes Pimlico and Westminster along the Victoria Embankment to the City on the north bank, and Southwark on the south. London Bridge (29) links the City with Southwark. The current bridge is a descendant of the first timber river crossing built by the Romans. One of the first acts on that bridge was an imprisonment with a long sentence, involving our old friend, Mr Punch, and the priest who would become Father Thames. Punch was released in 2015 under an agreement with DC Grant, but he's still probably London's most dangerous spirit.

In Elizabethan London, Southwark was an outlaw borough outside the City walls, and outside its jurisdiction. Theatres, bear baiting, and brothels flourished. In the 19th century, it was an area for industries unwanted north of the river, including power stations. Southwark power station is now the Tate Modern art gallery (16). Sometimes modern art is also magical art, as DC Grant found during his investigation of James Gallagher's murder[36]. The South Bank is now a tourist destination with arts venues, including the Royal Festival Hall and National Theatre. Bernie Spain Gardens, a small park just along the South Bank, has been used by Mama and Father Thames for their Spring Festival, when the Court of the Thames is in session. The court is veiled in a magical mist, so only those invited can find it, but it needs Falcon policing.

Downriver from Tower Bridge (28), Mama Thames lives in luxury converted warehouse apartments (14) between the Tower of London and Shadwell Basin in East London, on the other side of the slipway from the Prospect of Whitby pub. If you visit her, take an offering; the bigger, the better. By the way, Dead Man's Stairs at Wapping is a place where corpses are still often washed up. Wapping is also where the Metropolitan Police Marine Policing Unit, or Thames River Police, are based. They have legal jurisdiction over the Thames, but consult with the Folly on Falcon matters.

On the north bank, the Thames winds on past the new financial district of Canary Wharf and the Isle of Dogs. On the south, at Rotherhithe, a point in the river is known as Cuckold's Point. One historic and annual custom involved horns being fixed to a pole, with men dressed as women and women as men, all wearing horns, who would process through Greenwich to Charlton for a festival of a sexual nature. The Horn Fair stopped in the 19th century, but has recently been renewed—and requires policing. The festival site is close to the Thames Barrier, which protects central London from flooding by storm surges.

Case Seed: Magic Bus

In 1952, a double-decker bus jumped the gap of Tower Bridge (28) as it was opening. Driver Albert Gunter, who had been caught out by a faulty signal, was hailed a hero for saving all his passengers' lives. Now, that vintage bus has been reported stolen. It is deemed a Falcon operation as the current owner, an avid London Transport enthusiast, insists the missing pride of his collection is magical. But is it, really? Or is this a publicity stunt for the owner's new city-tour business?

Case Seed: The Drowned Sailor

The body of a drowned sailor is found on the Thames foreshore. His eyeballs have been removed and in their place are pearls. He is wearing a backpack containing a copy of TS Eliot's apocalyptic poem, *The Waste Land*. The Spring Tide, or King Tide, is in 48 hours. Storms are forecast. Is this part of a ritual to flood London? Who is behind it?

The Tyburn (21)

The Tyburn begins high in Hampstead and reaches the Thames at Pimlico, running almost entirely underground. Its name comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for boundary; it marks the edges of London's West End, but most think of the Tyburn Tree gallows (11). Lady Ty, goddess of the river, prefers to be associated with power and money. She has a big house on wealthy Fitzjohn's Avenue. Her water's source, the Shepherd's Well, feeds a marble fountain in her garden. All Folly-assigned officers are advised to stay well away from it, if they know what's good for them.

Lady Ty's daughter, Olivia, describes the river's route as a "posh line." St John's Wood, where Olivia lives, was once actual woods, owned by the Knights of St John. A hundred years ago, it was nicknamed "wicked St John's Wood," and author Dennis Wheatley set his novel, *The Devil Rides Out* there. The book's fiction, but Folly records show we have dealt with unethical resident practitioners there in the past who may have left unpleasant legacies.

The Tyburn runs beside Primrose Hill—where revivalist druids have celebrated the solstices since 1792—then over the Grand Union Canal (**Grand Union Canal**, page 282) in an iron pipe, and into Regent's Park boating lake (30). DC Grant's father, Richard Grant, aka the jazz musician Lord Grant, plays at a festival at The Hub café there each summer.

The river has crossed the Circle Line in a Victorian pipe at Baker Street Station since the first Underground station opened in 1863. It then crosses Oxford Street—once Tyburn Road—into Mayfair, where Lady Ty's main address is a Regency terraced house on Chesterfield Hill. The "posh line" continues to Knightsbridge. Note that Harrods department store has requested Folly officials contact the manager before

Footnote: [36] *Whispers Under Ground*

going back there, after an incident involving DC Grant[37]. Also posh is St James's, known for prestigious art dealers, galleries, and auction houses, including Christie's on King Street. The Met rents space there for stuff on London's Stolen Art Directory.

The London Library, at 14 St James's Square, also needs a polite approach after DC Grant water-bombed rare books while attempting to apprehend a suspect[38]. The river flows under Buckingham Palace (34)—I'm relieved to say DC Grant hasn't yet managed to annoy the Queen—and then divides. The northern branch flows around the outline of ancient Thorney Island—once an eyot (river islet) in the Thames, and now the heart of Westminster and the centre of government. Below ground, the Tyburn's waters surround the Houses of Parliament (33) at the Palace of Westminster.

The southern branch, once called the Tachbrook, outflows at Pimlico by Vauxhall Bridge. If you go down the manhole on Tachbrook Road into the sewer, you'll find a plaque with a Latin inscription that translates as "*Our mother deity of bounty and beauty,*" along with a patch of wall that's moderately clean of excrement. That was put there by DC Grant, along with several other offerings, when requesting a favour from Lady Ty. The rivers always expect something big in return for a favour.

Hyde Park, Tyburn Gallows, and the Chestnut Tree

About 250 years ago, the Tyburn Gallows (11) stood close to what's now Speaker's Corner, on the north-east edge of Hyde Park (31). The condemned were allowed to proclaim their final words there. It's now somewhere people can give public speeches, enshrined in law since 1872. The gallows were in the old village of Tyburn, tied to the river by name and association, very close to where Marble Arch (38) now stands. In a nearby alley is The Chestnut Tree (19); a demi-monde pub with no exterior sign. The door frame is said to be made from the wood of a tree that grew out of the wall behind the bar; its dead branches still spread across the saloon's ceiling. The pub's old name was The Tyburn Tree and was where the condemned stopped for their last drink—and last bequests—before meeting the hangman.

As you might expect, the pub became a repository of things left and unclaimed. The pub was, up until quite recently, owned by one of the second Faceless Man's many front corporations. He used a back room to store magical items and books. That's been emptied; the books are in the Folly library, and you don't need to worry about where the rest are. There are other storage rooms, and possible hidden caches, but the Folly can't search them without permission or a warrant. Neither of which we're likely to get as Lady



Footnotes: [37]*The Hanging Tree,* [38]*False Value*

Ty acquired the pub's freehold—although you could always try negotiating with her. The Chestnut's manageress is the part-fae Wanda Pourier; get on her good side, as she can be a useful source of information. The pub offers evening live music and real ale to the demi-monde, but the lunchtime crowd includes business people. There are rumours of a secret exit from the pub to Hyde Park's underground car park.

Hyde Park is the largest of four Royal Parks linking Kensington Palace Gardens to Buckingham Palace. The Serpentine lake there was once fed by the Westbourne river and Tyburn Brook, but since the 2012 Olympics, the water now comes from boreholes. At the south-eastern edge, six busy roads converge at Hyde Park Corner, overlooked by London's most expensive block of flats: One Hyde Park. It was the focus of a major Falcon operation into a suspicious death at an illegal rave, as well as a search for Newton's stolen manuscript[39]. Both cases are now resolved.

The Fleet (22)

The Fleet shares a Hampstead watershed with the Tyburn, but runs through areas both wealthy and poor via Victorian sewer tunnels to the Thames at Blackfriars. The river rises in a part of Hampstead Heath (**Hampstead**, page 276) that used to be a malarial swamp called Hatchett's Bottom, although some bright spark in the Regency renamed it the Vale of Health (44). It's a strangely isolated suburban village that keeps ties with old traditions. Showmen park their fairground rides for the winter at its edge; Henry "Wicked" Collins is our contact there.

The showmen live on the fringes of the demi-monde and keep ancient wisdom alive, including propitiating the goddess of the Fleet every midsummer to stop the area reverting into a fever-carrying bog. They hold a fair, with music, and offer local ale where the Fleet trickles above ground into Vale of Health Pond. Local folklore has it these midsummer rites once had their counterpart at midwinter, but they involved the Hatchett Man and a blood sacrifice rather than beer. Folly records don't say who or what the Hatchett Man was, or if he exists outside stories, but children like to scare themselves over what will happen if this bogey-man comes for them. We've had reports of metal detectorists searching for his axe.

The goddess of the Fleet holds her summer court by the Ladies' Bathing Pond on Hampstead Heath (45). A river tributary is Highgate Brook, which runs not far from Spaniards Inn, a demi-monde pub on the Highgate side. Its course goes through Tufnell Park and can be seen in a pipe next to a footbridge near Tufnell Park station. DC Grant, Abigail, and several of Fleet's children attended



Footnote: [39]*The Hanging Tree*

Acland Burghley Secondary School, Dartmouth Park Hill, in Tufnell Park, at various times. The comprehensive school, flanked by council estates—including the Peckwater Estate (47)—has now received special status as an arts college. Railway cuttings behind the school lead to a graffiti-daubed tunnel haunted by spray can-wielding ghost, Macky[40].

The Fleet's sources join at Kentish Town. This end of the borough of Camden has council—what you Americans would call "social"—housing, interspersed with Victorian terraces. However, Camden Town has been a counterculture magnet since the mid-20th century, with punk, goth, rock, and jazz venues including the Electric Ballroom, the Roundhouse, and the Arches jazz club. There's a market and arty shops in former warehouses at Chalk Farm Lock, part of Camden's sprawl, as well as pubs offering entertainment. One of the oldest pubs in Camden is The World's End, with the Underworld music venue in its basement. It was once called Mother Redcap, after a 17th century witch who lived in a cottage on the site. In the 19th century, the pub was the last stop for beer and company before leaving London by road or the Regent's Canal.

The Fleet briefly shares the same route as the Regent's Canal, but below it, before heading down through St Pancras—home to the British Library (9) and Kings Cross—towards the City. For centuries, industry and poor housing built up along the Fleet's banks, and the river became a notorious open sewer by the 18th century. Sections were covered until hardly any of it remained visible.

At one point, the river runs alongside Mount Pleasant sorting office, on the site of the infamous Coldbath Fields Prison, which incarcerated vagrants and political conspirators—the poet Coleridge compared it to Hell. The name "Mount Pleasant" was intended to dispel that image. The Post Office's old railway, which let mail cross the city underground, is below it. There were stories—probably urban legends—of letters arriving via the mail rail that bore the names of those doing the sorting. They contained incitements to commit acts of sabotage and sedition, long before American slang coined the phrase "going postal." The railway closed in 2003, but found new life as a heritage ride and corporate entertaining spot[41].

The river's course runs through the western side of the City of London, past Smithfield Market, where butchers' waste mixed with its noxious waters in the past (**Smithfield, Violent Deaths, and Pacificatus**, page 275). In the City, the river gave its name to Fleet Street, for a long while the home of newspapers, publishing houses, and the print trade. That's the association the river goddess likes to cultivate. She still has strong connections with the press and other forms of media, including broadcasting and the internet.

Where the Fleet joins the Thames was once London's busiest docks, but is now where commuters alight at Blackfriars station, on a bridge. You can see the Fleet flowing into the Thames under Blackfriars Bridge. In 1982, the body of Italian banker Roberto Calvi was found hanging below it, right by the Fleet drain. That crime remains unsolved.

The Walbrook (23)

The Walbrook runs through the eastern side of the City of London, below ground since the 15th century. The Romans built loads of temples on its banks, as I mentioned earlier (**The City of London**, page 275). It gets its name from the fact it breached the City walls, probably near Moorgate. It goes under Broadgate Circle and Finsbury Circus Garden—London's oldest public park, dating to 1606—and joins the Thames at Walbrook Wharf.

Its source is just outside the City walls, near Shoreditch High Street. Lulu, goddess of the river, runs a flat-roof pub called The Goat and Crocodile opposite the station, with a demi-monde clientele[42]. The building is post-Blitz, but its sign is old, and possibly magical. DC Grant reports that the *vestigia* there is burnt earth, incense, and an outdoor market. The front of the pub has recently been repaired after another of DC Grant's little run-ins.

Case Seed: River Head

The decapitated body of a metal detectorist is found beside Vale of Health Pond on the morning of the midwinter solstice. Is this the work of the Hatchett Man, a copy-cat, or a coincidental brutal murder? Where is the victim's head? After reading the news, Camilla Turner of MOLA contacts the Folly to say the **Paternoster Society** (page 263) had at one time been asking about ancient Celtic practices of removing enemies' heads to offer to their gods in exchange for magical power. Is the Paternoster Society involved?

The Effra (20)

The Effra runs from Norwood in south London to Vauxhall via Brixton, which is a huge multi-ethnic community including many people of Afro-Caribbean ancestry. It has a warren of independent shops under the railway arches, including one selling herbs to practitioners of magical traditions from the

Footnotes: [40]*Whispers Under Ground*, [41]*Tales from the Folly* ("King of the Rats")

Footnote: [42]*Lies Sleeping*

African diaspora. There's a large street market and even larger nightlife, being full of clubs and music venues. The goddess of the river is a huge fan of dance music. Brixton, and much of the route of the Effra, was at one time full of industry rather than nightclubs. Faceless Man 2 used a former factory off Coldharbour Lane, in Brixton, for part of his operations.

Beverley Brook

Beverley Brook rises in Worcester Park, South West London, and joins the Thames at Barn Elms. A lot of the river is above ground in parks, recreation grounds, and golf courses. The goddess of the river lives on Beverley Avenue, Wimbledon. Ms Brook is now DC Grant's partner and has sometimes assisted with investigations, but I shouldn't need to warn you about conflicts of interest in any dealings with the rivers and other *genii locorum*.

The Wandle

Still with many areas above ground, the Wandle rises in Croydon and joins the Thames at Battersea in Wandsworth. The riverbanks have long been associated with the cloth and clothing industry, and the current goddess, Wanda, was discovered in a basement full of fabric in the 1960s, after the river beside the house burst its banks[43]. The man who lived there was in the fashion trade, although he was also known to the police as having black-market connections. He adopted baby Wanda and raised her as his daughter. The pair now run a boutique, just called "The Shop," which offers cutting-edge fashion. Its customers include stylish members of the demi-monde. The Shop shifts premises more than is natural, but always stays close to the river. You might get sent to check its latest location.

Other Tributaries

The Westbourne (25) is another river with a Hampstead source. She flows through Hyde Park and was the original source of the Serpentine lake, created under the orders of Queen Caroline. She joins the Thames at Chelsea, which is the name the goddess prefers.

Counter's Creek (26) begins just west of Ladbrook Grove and flows to Chelsea Creek through Olympia. The Brent rises in the Borough of Barnet in northwest London, and joins the Thames at Brentford. The Lea flows through the Lea Valley to the Thames and is the least urbanised of London's rivers.

Grand Union Canal

The Grand Union Canal runs from London to Birmingham. The Regent's Canal is part of that. The spirit of the waterway is an orangutan who escaped from Regent's Park's London Zoo, and who now lives in a house on St Mark's Terrace. There's some ongoing dispute between her and Mama Thames, but the Folly doesn't have the full details. "Mrs Canal" often knows more about what's going on in Regent's Park than Lady Ty, and was helpful when we were investigating Terrence Skinner, who lives in a penthouse on Park Road overlooking the park. In return for information, the goddess appreciates offerings of bananas and promises of greener living. She's usually accompanied by her follower Melvin, who she took responsibility for after an unfortunate incident at a Mount Pleasant corporate entertainment event. Also under her protection is an elderly ex-marine called Marcia, who lives on a canal boat near Camden Lock and grows "magic weed" underwater. The weed has been deemed not Falcon-actionable. The Unbreakable Empire Pottery Company has a warehouse with loading gates on the canal's towpath.

Greater London

London is a huge city, which has sprawled out in rings of residential areas, engulfing smaller towns and villages. Most people live in the outer boroughs, commuting into town for work or pleasure. Falcon investigations can take us out to the suburbs, and you are more likely to find a vampire nest in a 1950s semi-detached house than in a Soho nightclub.

Bromley

Bromley is on the border between South East London and Kent, and is one of the outer boroughs we've had dealings with. Professional safe-cracker George Trenchard[44] also had a legitimate locksmith business in Bromley, before coming to an unfortunate end in his terraced home. One small-time drug dealer's face was found magically moulded into a tree on the edge of the borough after he ran afoul of the wrong people; said drug dealer was also known to frequent the Glitrrz nightclub on Bromley High Street. DC Grant sometimes plays games at Paradice Board Games Café in Bromley's old mall, but that's not yet a crime.

The Ravensbourne is the local river. Folly records are out of date on whether it has any supernatural inhabitants. The source is at Caesar's Well in Keston. The route—mostly below ground—goes through Bromley, Lewisham, and Greenwich, joining the Thames at Deptford. Places along it have been associated with rebellions, including Wat Tyler's 1381 Peasants' Revolt. It's on the action list to check.

Epping Forest

London isn't just a built-up city. Epping Forest, on the border of London and Essex, is ancient woodland. Although it's outside the City of London, it's managed by the City of London Police. Zach mentioned seeing a unicorn in Epping Forest, which would indicate fae activity. Watch how you tread—according to DC Grant, those things are not to be messed with (**Unicorns**, page 254).

Footnote: [43]*Tales from the Folly* ("A Dedicated Follower of Fashion")

Footnote: [44]*Broken Homes*

Demi-Monde Pubs and Nazareths

Certain pubs, including The Chestnut Tree (19) at Marble Arch, The Goat and Crocodile in Shoreditch, and Spaniards Inn in Highgate, cater for the demi-monde, who include practitioners, fae, and other magical beings, as well as people with an interest in the weird. Some, like The Rising Sun in Smithfield, are on the fringes of the demi-monde, while others, like a shebeen—you know, an unlicenced pub—on a Hillingdon tower block's roof or the secret pub-with-no-name under Oxford Street (**Underground London**, page 274) are deep inside it.

Even more elusive are the nazareths, formerly known as goblin fairs. These are pop-up markets for London's supernatural community, as well as for socialising and meetings under truce. The Folly's records show nazareths go back at least to 1534, with one annually at St Bartholomew's Feast on August 24th. Locations change, but are often empty houses, disused industrial sites, and warehouses. If you don't know already, a nazareths' rules are:

- No glamours, masks, or helmets.
- No weapons.
- *Pax Domus*, or "House Peace," meaning no fights.

It's a shadow market economy. The legality of things bought and sold at a nazareth is often as dubious as their provenance. Police are not welcome, especially those from the Folly. They call us the "Isaacs" after you-know-who. We leave them alone unless invited or there's a pressing need: then it's best to send in someone unknown. You might fit the bill.

Conclusion

Right, you lot—that's just a brief look at London from a Falcon viewpoint. Our city is huge, ancient, and magical, with far more going on than I can cover in this short briefing. Learning about that is what makes this job so interesting. Good luck in all your investigations. And don't forget, tea in the atrium in five minutes…





8

The Bookshop

'It's not easy being a bookseller,' said Warwick Anderson—bookseller.
—"The Cockpit"

THIS INTRODUCTORY CASE file is for one to four investigators and is designed to take around two hours to play. It is set in a bookshop in Covent Garden, London, and aims to introduce players to the workings of the Folly, as well as helping them to become familiar with the rules of *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*. Throughout this adventure, you'll find plenty of guidance on how the rules work, along with additional support in the form of Game Moderator (GM) notes, like the one following.



GM ADVICE

This scenario is ideal for one to four investigators, as it is a small and low-key affair. While it is possible to play with up to six investigators, we don't recommend it if this is your first time running *RoL:RPG*. Advice for running games with more than four players can be found in **Player Group Size** (page 222).

If you are going to play through this case file as an investigator, then stop reading now! The information herein is for the GM's eyes only, and the GM is advised to read through the whole adventure at least once before running it for their players. When reading it through, it can be useful to have a notepad to hand so that you make notes of the key and important events, which can then act as an aide-mémoire when running The Bookshop with your players (see also **Running a Game**, page 220).

The Bookshop is a somewhat unusual adventure; like the solo adventure at the beginning of this book, it's based on one of Ben's short stories, "The Cockpit."[1] In the *Rivers of London* timeline, the story takes place between the events of *Whispers Under Ground* and *Broken Homes* (December 2012 and March 2013), while *RoL:RPG* is nominally set in 2016, a little after the events of *False Value*. But we're going to pull it out of the timeline and put the investigators in Peter Grant's and Lesley May's shoes, in the same way your solitary investigator took on Peter's role in "The Domestic"[1]. Why? Because "The Cockpit" has a single key location and a single antagonist, making it straightforward to run and play through. It's also a good example of how you can use the *Rivers of London* books as inspiration for your own case files (**Using the Source Material**, page 336).

GM Background

Stonewaters Bookshop is only a stone's throw from the piazza at Covent Garden, the scene of a most unfortunate series of incidents not that long ago[2]. Last night, something very strange happened in the bookshop's basement: an apparent poltergeist attack! Both the shop's manager, Saffron Jackson, and DCI Thomas Nightingale would like answers, and it's up to the investigators to find them.

The bookshop is no ordinary bookshop, of course. In the 18th century, the building's ground floor was home to one of London's most famous cockfighting rings. Potent *vestigia*—a combination of the power released at the birds' moment of death and the intense emotions of the spectators—seeped into the fabric of the building. That latent magical energy hung there, undisturbed, for well over 100 years. And then, for some reason, it began to metamorphose.

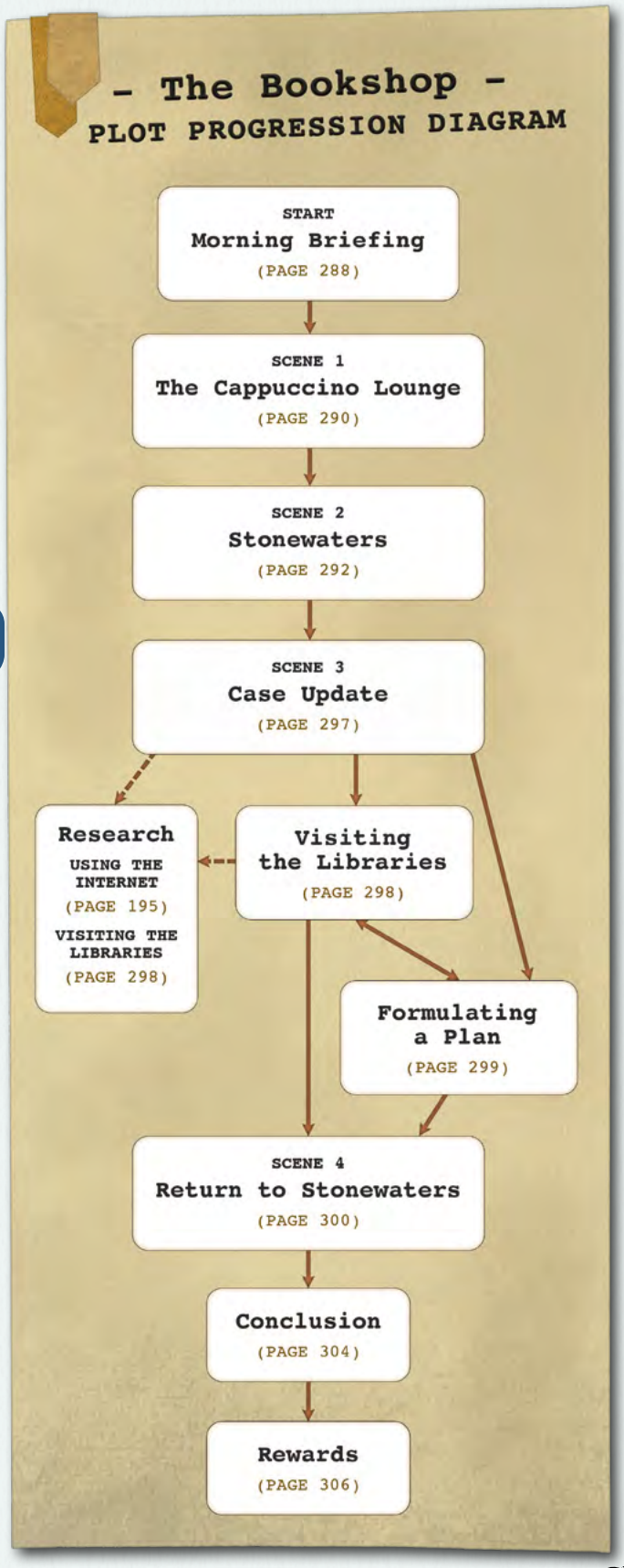
But why? The basement was, until just over a week ago, home to the children's book department. The concentrated reservoir of *vestigia* contained within the shop interacted with the power of the children's imaginations that had been fired up by all the books they either read or that were read to them, especially during the shop's weekly Saturday morning children's story time session. As a result, the *vestigia* evolved into something new—not actually a poltergeist, but rather an infant *genius loci*! One that, now the children and their stories have moved elsewhere, is feeling rather petulant and abandoned. And, like all small children who feel they are being ignored, the newly-formed spirit of books and reading is acting out to get some attention.

Introducing the Investigators

Thanks to its origins, this is a slightly unusual case file, so the players may wish to create "practice" investigators for it, i.e., ones they may not end up using again. This allows the players to get

Footnote: [1]*Tales from the Folly*

Footnote: [2]*Rivers of London*



the hang of building an investigator without being committed to keeping them for the long term—although it's perfectly fine if they do want to keep their new investigators once the adventure is over! Alternatively, the players can use the ready-to-play (pre-generated) investigators in **Appendix A** to see how characteristics, skills, advantages, and spells work in play before creating investigators of their own for their next case file.

If the players do decide to create their own investigators, it is recommended that at least one of them chooses the Police Officer occupation. Other useful occupations include Architect, Author, Chancer, Lecturer, Librarian, and Parapsychologist. If they are practice investigators, we suggest skipping the Backstory step of character creation (**Create a Backstory**, page 56), unless that helps the players get a handle on who their investigators are. All the investigators should be new recruits to the Folly, and at least one investigator should have the Magical advantage and the Magic skill. Use the following bullet points to help guide the players when they create their investigators:

- The following expert skills should prove very useful: Art/Craft (Architecture), History, and Occult.
- The following expert skills may be useful, but are not essential: Computer Use and Tech.
- The most useful spell for an investigator to know for this case file is: Werelight.

GM ADVICE

Even if none of the investigators have the expert skills mentioned here, one of them can always try their Luck when that particular skill is required (**Trying Your Luck**, page 114). For an example of how this works in this case file, see **Stonewaters** (page 292).





Dramatis Personae

This section provides descriptions for the key non-player characters (NPCs) who are involved in this case file. These include what they look like, their motivations, and the role they play in the adventure. These entries don't include their game profiles, which are instead gathered together at the end of the scenario in the **Cast** section (page 307) for quick reference when needed—we suggest the GM copies or prints out these gathered profiles for ease of use, meaning less page flipping when running the case file. Note that DCI Nightingale's game profile can be found on page 233 of **A Rogues' Gallery**, should you need to refer to that.

Warwick Anderson, *age 29, frightened bookseller*

Anderson is the unlucky victim of a most unusual workplace assault. He works in the bookshop as a sales assistant.

- **Description:** a white man of average build and appearance, with spiky, rather mad-looking, blond hair—"tousled" would be a kind description. Dressed in beige chinos and a red and white checked shirt, with a button-down collar.
- **Traits:** a firm believer that customers are a necessary evil, especially as they have a habit of getting in the way of restocking the shelves. He's still somewhat shaken by what happened last night and determined not to return to the bookshop until the "poltergeist" is taken care of.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** the investigators' principal witness and source of information about exactly what happened in the basement.

Saffron Jackson, *age 36, bookshop manager*

Ms Jackson runs this busy, central-London bookshop, a task that involves organising the shop's displays to maximise sales, staff training and development, and delivering efficient customer service—which usually boils down to deciphering vague book descriptions from customers or giving them directions to the theatre round the corner.

- **Description:** a tall, slender Black woman with a long face and relaxed hair cut into a pixie bob. Dressed in a crisp, ivory-coloured blouse, smart suit trousers, and patent leather Oxford shoes.
- **Traits:** business-like and professional, but rather concerned by what's happening in the basement, not least because of the stock damage it's caused.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** can grant the investigators access to the bookshop after hours.

Ernie, *ghost-hunting dog-in-training*

Another annoying, yappy little dog, but a Yorkshire Terrier rather than whatever Toby is. Ernie's owner, Mr Fitzroy, lives a few doors up from the Folly; he's an elderly gentleman and quite happy for "those nice young people" (i.e., the investigators) to come and take his dog out for him whenever they feel the need.







- **Description:** a small, short-haired Yorkie with a black and tan coat. Occasionally grubby, if he's been rummaging through the dustbins.
- **Traits:** fast, cantankerous, and wily, but willing to behave if suitably bribed with sausages (artisan or otherwise).
- **Roleplaying hooks:** while not as adept as Toby in the ghost-hunting department, Ernie makes a half-decent substitute. Besides, taking him for "walkies" helps an elderly neighbour.

The Spirit of Books and Reading, *lonely genius loci*

This *genius loci* is the cause of Stonewaters' current "haunting."

- **Description:** a non-corporeal spirit, initially identified through its tendency to throw things about.
- **Traits:** lonely and petulant.
- **Roleplaying hooks:** too newly formed to have developed the skill to use **The Glamour** (page 243) to make people do its bidding; the investigators need to find a way to placate the infant *genius loci* before someone gets seriously hurt.

Start: Morning Briefing

Once all your players have their investigators ready, you can begin the game. Make sure everyone is ready to start and has dice and pencils to hand.

Sunday, 8:00 am: DCI Nightingale has called the investigators to meet him in the former visitor's lounge, now the briefing room (**1** on the map of the Folly, page 289). The GM should read aloud or paraphrase the following to set the scene and establish what the case file is about:

"Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining me. Earlier, I received a telephone call from our colleagues at the Charing Cross Primary Crime Unit. There was an incident late last night at Stonewaters Bookshop on New Row that they believe will be of interest to us. One of the booksellers, a Mr Warwick Anderson, was assaulted at approximately 12:30 am while rearranging a display in the bookshop's basement. Mr Anderson, though somewhat concussed, managed to telephone the emergency services. The call handler sent a response team to the bookshop, where they had to force an entry in order to render assistance.

"Our colleagues from Charing Cross carried out a search of the premises while Mr Anderson was being seen by the attending paramedics. They found no alarms tripped and no evidence of a break-in, nor of anything having been stolen. However, there were obvious signs of a disturbance in the basement matching the description given to them by the victim.

"I would like you to interview Mr Anderson to establish his recollection of events. He is awaiting you at the Cappuccino Lounge, also on New Row. Then, I would like you to visit the bookshop and carry out an inspection, including an Initial Vestigium Assessment, to determine whether this is, indeed, a Falcon case. Ms Saffron Jackson, the store's manager, will be on hand to escort you. The bookshop usually opens at 11:00 am on a Sunday, and, by all accounts, Ms Jackson is keen to resume business at the earliest possible convenience.

"Report back here to me once you have completed your initial inquiries. I await your findings with interest."

And with that, Nightingale nods his farewells to the investigators and leaves the room. As this is probably the investigators' first case together, the GM should encourage the players to introduce their characters before they head off to Covent Garden. If the bookshop is to open on time, they have less than three hours to carry out their preliminary inquiries, and the clock is ticking... They better get a move on!

GM ADVICE

In most case files, the investigators have free rein over where they go, to whom they talk, and when, without having to report back to Nightingale after each step. But, as this is most likely their first Falcon investigation, we've taken the liberty of being a little more proscriptive. In addition, having the players report back in this way tells you exactly what clues they've picked up on and what theories they've developed. It also highlights any misunderstandings that may have arisen, meaning you can use Nightingale to get them back on the right track. See also **Case Update** (page 297).



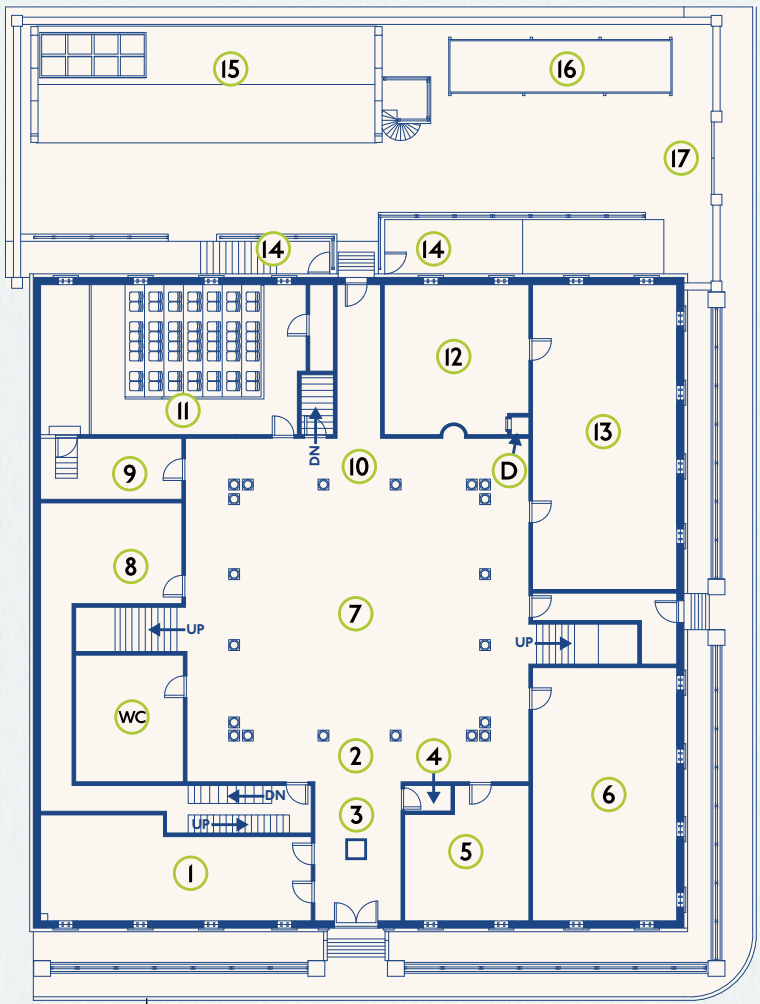
The Folly

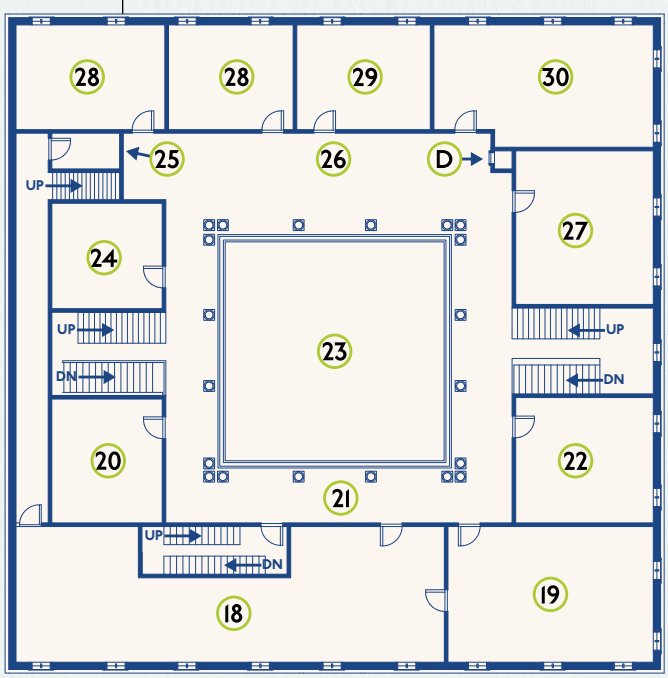
Ground Floor

1 Visitor's Lounge
2 North Colonnade
3 Lobby Booth
4 Switchboard
5 Smoking Room
6 Mundane Library
7 Atrium
8 Storage
9 Preparation Room
10 South Colonnade
11 Lecture Hall
12 Private Dining Room
13 Dining Room
14 Entrance to Basement
15 Coach House
16 Portakabin
17 Gates to Courtyard
D Dumb Waiter
WC Water Closet (Toilet)

First Floor

18 Magical Library
19 Reading Rooom
20 Records
21 North Colonnade
22 Senior Reading Room
23 Atrium
24 Billiard Room
25 Storage
26 South Colonnade
27 Small Dining Room
28 Teaching Lab
29 Study
30 Breakfast Room







Preliminary Inquiries

Once the investigators have introduced themselves to the other members of their team, it's time for them to make their way to Covent Garden to interview Warwick Anderson and then visit the site of the alleged Falcon incident.

The Cappuccino Lounge

The coffee shop lies approximately 20 metres/yards away from Stonewaters Bookshop, on the same side of the narrow street that forms New Row. Sitting inside, clutching a glass cup of what looks like the eponymous frothy coffee, is Warwick Anderson. He is accompanied by a uniformed officer out of Charing Cross Police Station—PC Singh, according to his name badge; if asked, his given name is Karnam. Anderson looks exhausted and somewhat rumpled; his blond hair is all mussed up into wayward spiky bits, although that may just be the way he styles it. He also keeps glancing nervously over his shoulder. He relaxes slightly, though, when PC Singh acknowledges the investigators' arrival.

Interviewing Warwick Anderson

After you have set the scene as described above, the investigators have the opportunity to learn exactly what happened last night from the sole witness. As this is the first time the investigators have met Anderson, the GM should encourage them to show him either their police warrant cards (**The Warrant Card**, page 211) or their Folly consultant's ID cards (**The Folly Consultant's Card**, page 60) to establish their credentials.

When the investigators begin questioning Anderson, the GM should give the players **Handout: Bookshop 1**, which contains his witness statement. Allow the players time to read it and absorb what it says, or alternatively, the GM could ask one of the players to read it aloud to everyone.

The investigators, having taken Anderson's statement, may wish to ask some follow-up questions. Use the following to help guide your answers:

- If asked about the cookery books, he explains that due to the public's apparently insatiable appetite for celebrity chefs, his manager, Saffron Jackson, decided to expand that section, and that's why he was rearranging things last night. He adds that a couple of other book sections have moved recently as well.
- If asked which other sections have been relocated, he says that the art and children's sections swapped places last week. *"Saturday Story Time is really popular, and people couldn't get their prams up and down the stairs very easily. We don't have a lift because it's a listed building, so Saffron decided to move it to the ground floor."*

Handout: Bookshop 1

Warwick Anderson's Statement

I was working in the basement. It was around midnight, give or take, moving the celebrity chef books to the other end of the cookery section, when I was hit in the back by something. I turned around to find Banksy's *Wall and Piece* at my feet—the paperback, not the hardback, or else that would have really hurt.

Thing is, I was supposed to be the only one in the shop. There was no sign of anyone who could have thrown it, so I'll admit, I was spooked. I went upstairs to take a look around and make sure no one had broken in, but all the doors were locked, and I couldn't see anyone. I was feeling a bit annoyed by this point, so I gave up looking and went back to reshelving the books.

Next thing I know, I get hit on the head by a soft toy, like the ones we keep at the till points. I was just about to turn around and catch whoever threw it red-handed when a ton of books smashed into me from the art section and flattened me. A couple of the really big Taschen art books caught me in the back of the head, but I managed to stagger to the phone at the downstairs till and dialled 999.

It's all a bit hazy after that, but someone helped me up to the ambulance, where they told me I had a mild concussion. I went home, then I got a call asking me to come back in so I could be interviewed by some special crimes unit—you lot, I'm assuming? I told them there was no way I was going within 500 metres of that place, but eventually, they convinced me to meet you here instead.

- If asked if there's anything special about the building, besides it being listed, Anderson admits that he doesn't think so. *"It's a bit of an odd shape, but that's because the original owners bought two small shops on Garrick Street and one on New Row, then knocked them together and fitted out the basement. It's a total nightmare when it comes to shoplifters—lots of dead space."*
- If asked how old the building is, Anderson replies, *"I think parts of it date from the 18th century, but I couldn't swear to that."*



GM ADVICE

Don't worry if the investigators don't pick up on the fact that the children's section has moved recently; there is another opportunity for them to discover this important piece of information when they speak to Stonewaters' manager (**Interviewing Saffron Jackson**, page 294). The same is true about the bookshop's age and shape—they'll see that for themselves in a few minutes.

A Surprising Development

As the investigators ready themselves to leave, Anderson blurts out, "*You know what I reckon? I reckon it was a poltergeist!*"

If any of the investigators has the **Magic** skill, the GM should ask those players to roll percentile dice and compare the result to their Magic skill value. Investigators with the expert skill, **Occult**, can also make a skill roll.



GM ADVICE

Why roll for some things but not others? Because a lot of the information Warwick Anderson has is essential to getting the case moving, so you don't want to keep it from the investigators. However, some does require a little more knowledge and understanding, hence the Magic/Occult skill roll request.

- If the investigator achieves a **Regular** success (equal to or below their full skill value), they not only know that poltergeists are a type of ghost, but also that ghosts don't normally throw things around or try to hurt people, and if they do, it's pretty serious—in fact, it may not be a ghost at all, but something much more concerning.
- If the investigator achieves a **Hard** success (equal to or below half of their full skill value), they know that it takes at least 100 years for a genuine poltergeist to develop—so if Anderson is right about the building's age, then a poltergeist isn't beyond the realms of possibility.
- If no one succeeds, the players could spend **Luck** points (on a one-for-one basis) to adjust the roll into a success (**Spending Luck**, page 113).
- Alternatively, if they really want to, they could choose to **push** their rolls, i.e., describe what their investigators are doing so they can make the skill roll again; for example, taking a deep breath and mentally running through everything they know about ghosts. There will be consequences if they fail a second time, though—if this is the case, perhaps they convince themselves that it could *only* be a poltergeist and nothing else (**Pushing the Roll**, page 108), or alternatively, they somehow cause offense to Anderson, who refuses to answer more of their questions.
- If no one succeeds and no one chooses to spend Luck or push their skill roll, the investigators can overcome this by doing some research on poltergeists back at the Folly (**Visiting the Libraries**, page 298).

GM ADVICE

Remember, flat-out failing an investigative roll, like this one, is no fun. It's always better if you treat a failed dice roll as a "*Yes, but...*" or a "*No, but...*" situation (**Failure (or Weak Success)**, page 106); for example, while the investigators might not get all the information, they get just enough to keep their inquiries on track—or it just takes them a longer time to find all the information they're after. In this case, although the investigators don't recall much about poltergeists, the "*No, but... you can do some research*" answer opens a potential line of inquiry, one they can follow up on later (**Case Update**, page 297).



Next Steps

There is nothing more Warwick Anderson can tell the investigators—it's time for them to visit the scene of the crime (**Stonewaters**, following).



Stonewaters

As the investigators approach the bookshop's New Row entrance, they can see that one of its glass panels has been replaced by a length of plywood—evidence of how the response crew got inside last night.

- A successful **Art/Craft (Architecture)** or **History** roll identifies that the shop front appears to be Georgian—though not as grand as the Folly, by any means. Given how old it is, the building is probably also listed, meaning that its owners are very limited when it comes to making alterations.
- If the investigators asked Warwick Anderson about the bookshop's history, this confirms his suspicions about parts of the building dating from the 18th century.

If none of the investigators has the Art/Craft (Architecture) or History skill, one of them can try their Luck. To do this, they spend 10 Luck points, roll their percentile dice, and compare the result to their **INT** characteristic instead of the asked-for expert skill (**Trying Your Luck**, page 114). If they achieve a Hard or a Critical success, they learn that the building is Georgian and, most likely, listed. If they want to, the player can now spend another 10 Luck points to gain either Art/Craft (Architecture) or History (their choice) as a new expert skill for their investigator.



GM ADVICE

Remember: a Critical success is when the player rolls 01.

If the investigators peer through one of the adjoining windows, towards the rear of the building they see a tall Black woman busying herself by a till. The doors are locked, but tapping on the window gets the woman's attention. She walks calmly to the doors, points at her watch, and mouths: "*Sorry! We don't open 'til 11.*"

Flashing their warrant or Folly consultant's cards through the window at the woman prompts a mouthed apology. She unlocks the door and ushers the investigators inside, introducing herself as Saffron Jackson, the bookshop's manager.

- A successful **Read Person** roll notes that Ms Jackson seems relieved to see them, but also slightly irritated.

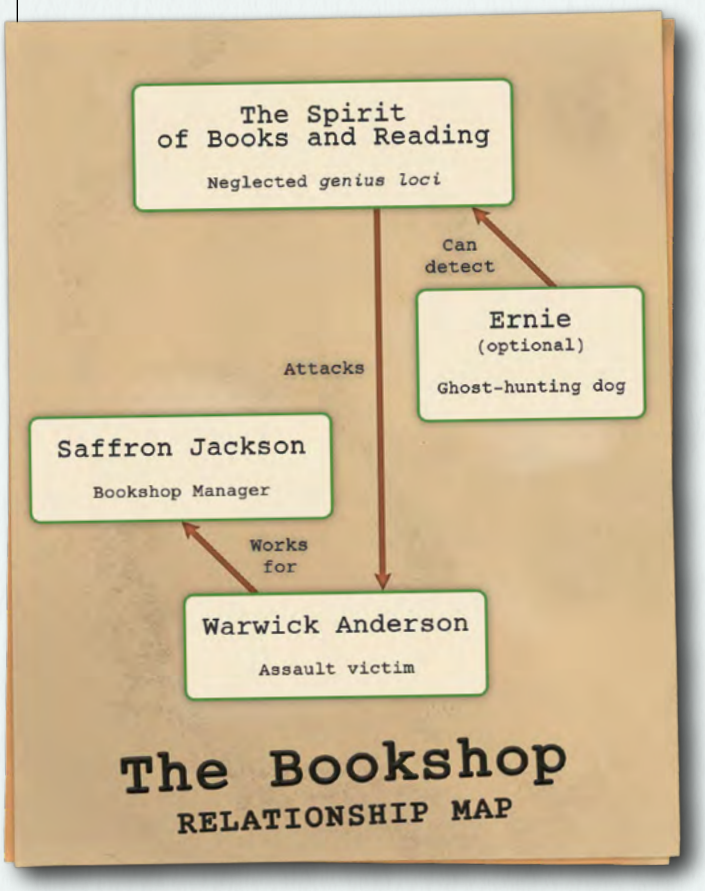
She asks the investigators if they've spoken to Warwick Anderson, and if he's alright. "*He'd gone by the time I got here,*" she explains. As the investigators enter the bookshop, the GM should ask them to make an **Observation** skill roll.

- A **Regular** success spots a large, apparently glazed dome set into the ceiling over the till.
- A **Hard** success spots a convex mirror mounted above the left-hand door, presumably to cover one of the dead spots Anderson mentioned.
- Players can choose to spend **Luck** or attempt to **push** the skill roll to turn a failure into a success. Failing the pushed roll might result in the investigator walking into a display and knocking it over, making a fool of themselves in the process.

GM ADVICE

This Observation roll is worth encouraging the players to spend Luck on (or push) to achieve a Regular success, as the dome—or, rather, what's associated with it—is important to what's happening in the bookshop. They don't need a Hard success, although if they do spot the mirror over the door, it should give them the hint that there are likely to be other security devices elsewhere in the building (**The Basement**, page 296). Remember, as GM, you should always play fair, and shouldn't encourage your players to spend Luck on rolls—or push them—if they don't help to move the story forward or gain the investigators an advantage of some sort.





Stonewaters Bookshop



Interviewing Saffron Jackson

If the investigators ask Ms Jackson about what happened the night before, the GM should give them **Handout: Bookshop 2**, which contains her witness statement. As with Handout: Bookshop 1, the GM could ask one of the players to read it aloud or give the players time to read it for themselves.

As with Warwick Anderson, the investigators may have some questions they wish to ask Ms Jackson as she leads them through the shop:

- If asked about which book sections have been relocated, she confirms that the children's and art sections recently swapped places. "*Saturday Story Time's so much easier now that we don't have to worry about getting prams up and down the stairs.*"
- If asked about the dome over the till, she says she doesn't know anything about it. A successful **Art/Craft (Architecture)** or **History** roll suggests that the bookshop's central section may have once been part of a hall or ballroom, and the dome is a relic of that.
- If asked about any other odd occurrences, she shakes her head. "*No, nothing. Never heard any ghost stories about the building, and people usually love to gossip about that sort of stuff.*"

Exploring the Ground Floor

Just as Warwick Anderson mentioned, the bookshop is a very strange shape: the entrance from New Row leads to the central section, which lies in the wedge-shaped gap between the buildings fronting onto New Row and Garrick Street. Just beyond the central section's halfway point, a spur containing the travel section leads to one of the Garrick Street entrances and, just beyond that, a set of glass-sided stairs leads down to the basement. Finally, another spur leads to the second Garrick Street entrance; this is where the children's section is currently located.

Conducting an Initial Vestigium Assessment (IVA)

As the investigators pass the main till and the dome above—or if they say they are carrying out their Initial Vestigium Assessment (IVA), as Nightingale requested—the GM should ask everyone to make a **Sense Vestigia** skill roll. Books absorb *vestigia* pretty much the same way egg-box shaped foam padding absorbs sound, so the *vestigia* here is dampened, making it weak and harder to detect (**Vestigia Strength**, page 161). As always, an investigator can choose to spend Luck or push the roll to achieve a success, or upgrade a Regular success to a Hard success.

Handout: Bookshop 2

Saffron Jackson's Statement

I got a phone call in the early hours from a police officer asking me to come to the bookshop to take care of the door. They said they'd had to break the glass to get inside to see what had happened to poor Warwick. They left shortly after that because it was all kicking off in the piazza; a fight outside a bar, or something—I don't know.

Next, I called the maintenance company to send someone over to board up the door and clean up the glass. Once the maintenance guy got here, I checked around to see if anything was missing. It didn't look like it, but it's a bit hard to tell in all that mess downstairs. I've not touched anything down there because one of the officers told me not to until you'd been to see it.

So, if you'd like to follow me, I'll take you to the basement. I don't want to tell you how to do your job, but I'd really appreciate it if you could hurry it up—I'd like to get everything all squared away again before opening time.

- If an investigator achieves a **Regular** success, they detect something that smells very much like a slaughterhouse combined with rotting straw.
- If an investigator achieves a **Hard** success, they detect the smells, but also hear shouting and experience a feeling of excitement, desire, and disappointment.
- If an investigator fails the roll and chooses not to spend **Luck** or **push** it, they instead get the standard background *vestigium* of central London (pain, joy, sweat, tears, and something that sounds very much like a sheep bleating forlornly).
- If an investigator **fumbles** the roll (i.e., rolls 100 on their percentile dice), no matter how they try, they can't pick up on anything at all—it's almost as if all the magic has been sucked out of the building.
- If the investigators attempt an IVA anywhere in the shop—except when beneath the dome or in the basement—all they get with a successful Sense Vestigia roll is the central London background.

Using the Internet

Either as a result of their Sense Vestigia roll or out of general interest, the investigators may wish to use their mobile smart devices to see if they can find anything on the internet about the dome or the building. If they do, the GM should ask the players to make a **Research** roll:

- A **Regular** success brings up little more than the bookshop's web page and the fact that it's a listed building, dating from the Georgian era. They find nothing about the dome or anything else about the location's history.
- A **Hard** success reveals that, during the Georgian era, the site was home to a famous cockfighting ring—one of *the* most famous in London, in fact. The dome may be associated with that, but no one is 100 percent certain (it is, in fact, the only visible internal fitting left from the building's cockfighting days, hence its significance).
- A **failure** only finds the bookshop's website, which conveniently lists its opening and closing times.

If the investigators discover the link between the building and cockfighting, a successful **Research** or **History** roll reveals the information contained in **Handout: Bookshop 3**—give the players this handout when appropriate. If they

Handout: Bookshop 3

▸ Cockfighting

Cockfighting was once a highly popular—and very lucrative—spectator sport in London and elsewhere in the UK. Historically speaking, its roots go back over 6,000 years, though it first became really popular in England during the Tudor era. By the 18th century, the blood sport was at its height, with all levels of society indulging in the heavy betting that accompanied each match. Upper class venues, like the Royal Cockpit (whose last remaining traces are Cockpit Steps by Birdcage Walk), charged a hefty admission fee to keep the riffraff out.

It took around two years to fully train a fighting bird. Due to the amount of money required for that training, and the size of the wagers on fight days, this blood sport was tightly regulated—more so than any other sport at the time. It was finally banned in England and Wales in 1835 under the Cruelty to Animals Act.

need it, the GM may also grant the investigators an **INT** roll for them to make the link between cockfighting and the bookshop's strange *vestigia*.



GM ADVICE

Remember, the Research skill is for hunting down stored information, physical or virtual—for example, on the internet, in a library, or in a bookshop! The Observation, Read Person, and Social skills are for spotting clues and winkling information out of people—whether they realise it or not!



GM ADVICE

Again, don't worry too much if the investigators don't discover the link to cockfighting just yet—they can carry out further research back at the Folly if needed.

The Basement

Down the stairs lies the basement. Its main section runs beneath part of the upstairs' central section. On the far wall, a security door leads out to a staff area. Two spurs mirror those on the ground floor; both have fire exit doors leading into a stairwell that emerges on the ground floor opposite the main stairwell.

At the bottom of the stairs, to the right, is a till point—this must be the one Warwick Anderson used to call the emergency services. Just beyond the till, between it and the door to the staff area, lies the cookery section. The art section is located directly beneath the travel section.

- As they reach the till, the GM should ask the investigators to make an **Observation** roll; they gain a bonus die to the roll if they noticed the mirror above the entrance upstairs (**Stonewaters**, page 292). If an investigator succeeds at the roll, they spot the CCTV camera, mounted to cover a dead spot behind the till.

GM ADVICE

If a player gains a bonus die to add to their investigator's skill roll, they roll three percentile dice instead of the usual two: two "tens" dice and one "units" die. They then compare the numbers on the two tens dice and use the one that would give them the **best** overall result (i.e., the lowest result). For example, if a player rolled 70 and 20 on their tens dice and a 4 on their units die, the two possible results would be 74 and 24; they would "keep" the 24, as that is the best (lowest) result, and use that to see if they'd succeeded at their skill roll. See **Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111.

- It takes a successful **Social** roll to convince Ms Jackson to let the investigators see the CCTV recording—remember, police officer investigators who have shown her their warrant card gain a bonus die to this roll. As always, players can choose to spend **Luck** or **push** the roll to achieve a success, although a fumble or a failed pushed roll means Ms Jackson won't let them see the footage without a warrant. If the investigators manage to gain permission to see the CCTV footage, see **Caught on Camera** (page 297).

There is a large, disorganised pile of books in the middle of the cookery section. The mess appears to have originated from five shelves in the art section. To have thrown them, someone would have had to sneak round behind Anderson without him noticing—extremely tricky, but not completely impossible if he was engrossed in his work. The main problem with this theory is: where did they hide when Anderson searched the shop? And how did they throw so many books at once? The GM should allow the investigators an **INT** roll to realise these points if their players don't think about it.

- If the investigators have not yet carried out an IVA downstairs, ask them to make another **Sense Vestigia** roll before they leave the basement. As under the dome, a **Regular** success detects the smells of a slaughterhouse and rotting straw, while a **Hard** success reveals all the elements of the building's *vestigia*—as detailed in **Conducting an Initial Vestigium Assessment (IVA)** on page 294.

Cooking Up a Spell

If the investigators wish to cast a spell while in the basement, they can—although they might not want to do so in Ms Jackson's presence! It costs a number of magic points equal to the spell's order to cast its basic (unboosted) version. For example, if an investigator wants to cast **Impello** (page 178), it costs 1 magic point because it is a first order spell. The GM then asks for a **Magic** skill roll to see if the spell is cast correctly. Remember, if the spell is mastered, the roll gains a bonus die (**Mastering a Spell**, page 171), and investigators can spend **Luck** or **push** the roll if it fails. The following applies to every spell except **Werelight**—for the effect of that spell, see **Casting Werelight**, following.

- If the Magic roll is any kind of success, the spell works exactly as expected.
- If the Magic roll fails, the spell does something a little strange: for example, *Impello* barely lifts even the smallest item; Snapdragon produces an almost silent, dull flash, and so on.

- If the Magic roll is fumbled, or an investigator pushes the roll and fails again, there's a popping and fizzling sound as they destroy the microchips in both the store's till and CCTV camera, as well as those in any powered mobile devices in the basement.

Casting Werelight

Any investigator with the Werelight spell knows that all ghosts find them irresistible (no roll required), so if they suspect there may be a poltergeist in the basement, this would be an ideal way to test that hypothesis.

- If an investigator successfully produces a basic (unboosted) werelight, it changes colour from milky white to crimson and slowly fades away; however, no ghostly figure appears. There's definitely something in the basement feeding on the werelight, but it doesn't seem to be a "normal" ghost.
- If an investigator has mastered Werelight, they can boost it in one of two ways: they can spend a total of 2 magic points when first casting the spell (**Boosting a Spell**, page 176), or they can spend an additional magic point to refresh their fading (unboosted) werelight. If they do, refer to **Feeding Time** (page 302) for what happens next—the GM should adjust that section as necessary to reflect the difference in the time of day and who is present.
- If an investigator fumbles or fails a pushed spellcasting roll for a boosted or unboosted Werelight, or if multiple investigators cast Werelight in the basement, refer to **Feeding Time** (page 302).

Regardless of which spell someone casts, they feel a faint tickling sensation, like feathers being brushed across their skin. That's most unusual and is undoubtedly linked to whatever's going on down here.



GM ADVICE

You may need to remind your players about the connection between ghosts and werelights if they're not familiar with the *Rivers of London* setting. It's perfectly fine for you to do this, as it's something their investigators would know, having been taught this when learning the spell.

Caught on Camera

If the investigators convince Ms Jackson to show them last night's CCTV footage, she leads them through the basement door into a plain, grey corridor, past the storeroom and staffroom, and into her office. After fiddling with her keyboard for a moment or two, she turns her computer monitor towards the investigators and shows them the recording. The footage's time stamp reads 12:30 am.

- Warwick Anderson appears on the far left of the screen, almost out of shot. Because of the camera's position, the books appear suddenly, entering the frame in mid-flight, shortly before hitting him. The force of their impact pushes him further into the frame as well as knocking him down. Warwick then pulls himself up and staggers drunkenly towards the till, disappearing out of shot again.

Although the footage gives no indication of who—or what—moved the books, anyone with the Magic skill realises that it probably wasn't as a result of a spell being cast, as the camera is still working—use of that much magic would undoubtedly have fried its microprocessor (**Spells and Technology**, page 176).

Next Steps

Provided the investigators haven't had a spellcasting mishap (**Cooking Up a Spell**, page 296), there is nothing else of interest in the bookshop for the moment. They should now return to the Folly to report their findings to DCI Nightingale and determine what to do next.

If the investigators wish to arrange a return visit to the shop tonight—so they're present in the bookshop around the same time Anderson was attacked—the GM should ask for a **Social** skill roll to convince Ms Jackson, with a bonus die for any police officer investigators who have shown her their warrant card. If they are successful, Ms Jackson arranges to meet them after closing time (8:00 pm) so she can show them how to lock up and operate the alarm system.



GM ADVICE

The investigators might not think to ask to come back to the store at night after their initial search of the bookshop. Don't worry, if they later think to do so, they can easily ring Ms Jackson to arrange a return visit.

Case Update

As promised, DCI Nightingale is waiting for the investigators back at the Folly, only this time he meets them in the atrium (7) for elevenses (morning tea and biscuits). After Molly has delivered the refreshments and glided back to the kitchen, Nightingale listens patiently to the investigators as they give him their progress report. Ask the players to recount their experience and findings so far; they can either all do this or nominate someone to speak for the group. Once they have finished updating him, Nightingale asks them what they think their next steps should be.

- Depending on what the investigators learned at New Row, this could include researching poltergeists, the building's history, or cockfighting (**Visiting the Libraries**, following).
- It should also involve the investigators coming up with a plan to work out what's in the basement (**Formulating a Plan**, page 299). If the players haven't already begun to discuss what they want to do next, have Nightingale prompt them with, *"I want you to decide what you need to do to resolve the problem in the bookshop. Put your heads together and come up with a plan."*

GM ADVICE

Don't be afraid to use Nightingale to clarify anything the investigators are confused by—although, he's not there to do all the hard work for them! The same goes if they're struggling to work out what to do next. In the *Rivers of London* novels, when Peter Grant needs a nudge, it's often DCI Nightingale or someone similarly senior (like Dr Walid) who provides it. They've been in the business longer than Peter, and they know what to look for and how to interpret anomalous data. There's no reason for them not to do the same for your investigators as well, when the need arises.

Visiting the Libraries

Thanks to the Folly's extensive archives, the mundane library on the ground floor (6) is the ideal place to dig out more information on Stonewaters Bookshop, if the investigators haven't already uncovered it (**Exploring the Ground Floor**, page 294). The GM should ask investigators searching the mundane library to make a **Research** roll:

- A **Regular** success reveals the bookshop's and its dome's links to cockfighting (as per the information in **Using the Internet**, page 295), along with the information in **Handout: Bookshop 3**. It takes two hours to locate this information.
- A **Hard** success or better uncovers the relevant information after just an hour of searching.
- A **failure** reveals the same information, but it takes four hours to discover it.
- A **fumble** suggests the investigator was distracted by something they found while researching the building, and lost all track of time and thus, they fail to find anything of value.



Consulting the Magical Library
The magical library on the first floor (18) is better suited to researching ghosts and poltergeists. The GM should ask investigators searching the magical library to make a **Research** roll:

- A **Regular** success reveals that ghosts don't normally try to hurt people, as well as how long it takes for a poltergeist to form (around 100 years). It takes around two hours to locate this information.
- A **Hard** success or better uncovers the relevant information after just an hour of searching.
- A **failure** reveals the same information, but it takes four hours to discover it.
- A **fumble** suggests the investigator was distracted by something they found while researching ghosts, and lost all track of time and thus, they fail to find anything of value.

If the investigators prefer to use the internet for their research, they'll need to do so in the coach house (15). If using the **Research** skill there to find information, refer to the results detailed in **Using the Internet** (page 295); the investigators also find some general information about ghosts not usually hurting people.

Formulating a Plan

By now, either through what they learned on-site at the bookshop or with the addition of some time spent conducting research, the investigators should have learned the following:

- The attack on Warwick Anderson seems to have originated in the bookshop's art section.
- It would have been almost impossible for a person to have carried out the attack without them being noticed.
- Anderson believes he was attacked by a poltergeist, but this is not normal behaviour for that type of ghost.
- It's unlikely a spell was involved, as the till and the CCTV camera were both still working.
- Besides the attack, the only recent event of any note in the bookshop was the swapping over of the art and children's sections.
- There is an unusual *vestigia* in the bookshop that stands out from the central London background. (The investigators may or may not know that it is present both under the dome and in the basement, depending on how successful their IVAs were.)
- This *vestigia* is probably derived from the building's use as a cockfighting ring in the 18th century.
- If an investigator cast a basic Werelight while in the basement (**Cooking Up a Spell**, page 296), they also know that whatever is down there probably isn't a poltergeist.

While all of this is useful information, it still doesn't answer the question: what attacked Warwick Anderson and why? Hence the need now for the investigators to formulate a plan for their next steps.

Strategies

Sir Isaac Newton may not have recognised the term "the scientific method," but he would certainly have understood its principles: observation, research, hypothesis, testing, analysis, and conclusion.

- So far, the investigators have carried out the first two steps (observation and research) and may even have developed a hypothesis about what's happening, particularly if they cast Werelight and saw the colour change. What they need to do now is return to the bookshop to test their theories.
- If the investigators don't have a hypothesis to test, they need to carry out further research in order to develop one—again, the bookshop is the most logical place to do this. Apart from anything else, it could allow them to observe the phenomenon for themselves!
- If asked for his opinion, Nightingale suggests a return to the bookshop is the right thing to do to confirm that this is a genuine Falcon incident. He suggests they do so at night, around the time the original assault happened (12:30 am), thus maximising their chances of seeing something.

They Didn't Cast Werelight?
If the investigators didn't cast Werelight while in the basement and have yet to see any direct evidence of spooky goings on, the GM should ask investigators with the **Magic** or **Occult** skills to make a dice roll for those skills. If they achieve a Regular success or better, they realise that what they need is a ghost-hunting dog. Toby isn't available as Peter Grant is off dealing with another case, but there's always Mr Fitzroy's Yorkshire Terrier, Ernie (**Dramatis Personae**, page 287). Thus, the investigators recall that Mr Fitzroy has a dog that might be just the thing to help them out. When they approach Mr Fitzroy, he is mildly surprised at the request to take Ernie out so late but is nevertheless quite happy for the investigators to borrow him for the evening.

Arranging an overnight vigil in the bookshop requires a phone call to Ms Jackson, if the investigators haven't already set up a return visit. She asks them to meet her at the bookshop a little after closing time (8:00 pm).

Next Steps

All that is left for the investigators to do is gather anything they wish to take with them for their ghost-hunting expedition, such as camping chairs and something to read or listen to, as well as provisions.

- If asked, Molly provides sandwiches—the GM should ask the players for a group **Luck** roll to see what the contents are (ask the player whose character has the lowest Luck score to make the roll, per **Luck Rolls**, page 113). If the roll is successful, some are cheese while the rest are ham; if the roll fails, they are all brawn and piccalilli.
- If the investigators accidentally destroyed the bookshop's CCTV camera (**Cooking Up a Spell**, page 296), they may wish to purchase some surveillance equipment to set up a replacement. There's no need for the investigators to make a dice roll for this—they're in London, so someone somewhere will have what they need.

As 8:00 pm approaches, it's time for the investigators to head back to Covent Garden.



GM ADVICE

Remember, with a group roll, the player with the lowest characteristic or skill value is the one who makes the skill roll, and its results affect everyone present. So, for a group Luck roll, the player with the lowest current Luck value is the one who makes the roll. And don't forget, you can't spend Luck points on a Luck roll!

Return to Stonewaters

When the investigators return to New Row, they find Ms Jackson hovering by the boarded-up front door. If Ernie the dog is with them, she gives him a very suspicious look, but as long as the investigators assure her he's house-trained (he is, although he needs frequent bathroom breaks), she lets them in. After showing them how to activate the alarm system and lock up—in case they finish up before she comes back at 8:00 am the following morning—she leaves.

The GM should ask the investigators where they wish to set up watch, and if they're going to do anything specific while they wait for a manifestation. You might like to use the **Player Version Map of the Bookshop** (page 369) to help get everyone orientated in terms of where the various investigators position themselves.

- If the investigators make camp in the basement, go to **Down Among the Books** (page 301).
- If they decide to set up in the staffroom or in Ms Jackson's office, refer to **Action at a Distance** (following).
- If the investigators carry out a search of the building before settling in to rule out anyone besides themselves being on the premises, they should make an **Observation** roll. A success of any kind confirms that they are completely alone.

GM ADVICE

It is possible the investigators might decide to split up, with some stationing themselves downstairs while the rest hang around in the staff area watching the CCTV of the whole store. If they do, follow the advice in **Splitting the Party** (page 226), swapping between the two groups at an appropriate moment so that everyone remains engaged in the adventure.



Action at a Distance

What the investigators see if they decide not to position themselves in the basement depends on where they are: **The Manager's Office** (following) or **The Staffroom** (page 301).

The Manager's Office

If the investigators await the poltergeist's appearance in Ms Jackson's office, they can watch the CCTV camera's live feed—assuming the camera is still working, of course.

- Enterprising investigators who make a visit to the basement before settling in can alter the camera's angle to get a better view with a successful **Tech** skill roll.



- Similarly, investigators who know their way around a computer can reprogramme the camera's angle from Ms Jackson's computer with a successful **Computer Use** roll.
- If the investigators bought new surveillance equipment after destroying the bookshop's CCTV camera (**Cooking Up a Spell**, page 296), a successful **Tech** roll is needed to install it correctly. If they lack the skill, they could try their Luck using either their DEX or INT, whichever is highest (**Trying Your Luck**, page 114). A failure indicates they haven't located the equipment in the best position but will still see something, while a fumble indicates an intermittent signal that fails just before things get interesting.

All is quiet until around 11:30 pm. Ernie, if present, suddenly starts barking furiously, having spent most of the evening fast asleep, apart from his occasional bathroom breaks. Those watching the camera feed see dozens of books float serenely into view and arrange themselves neatly into four equal piles on the floor.

- A successful **Occult** or **History** roll recalls a similar book stacking event that took place in the British Library in 1896, which was linked to poltergeist activity.

If the investigators head down to the basement, with or without Ernie, go to **Kaboom!?!** (page 302). If they decide to stay in the manager's office, 30 minutes later, another four piles of books appear in exactly the same manner. If that still doesn't tempt them to go to the basement area, after another 30 minutes—at around the same time Warwick Anderson was attacked the night before—all the remaining books in the basement leap from their shelves and collide in the middle of the room—go to **An Unholy Mess** (page 304).

The Staffroom

If the investigators set up in the staffroom, they have easy access to the tea and coffee making facilities—i.e., the kettle, tea bags, instant coffee, and mugs, plus milk in the staff fridge—as well as the microwave. There are also more chairs in here, though none quite so swish as Ms Jackson's personal office chair.

- If the investigators brought their own surveillance equipment, they could set things up so they can watch it from here with a successful **Tech** roll. See **The Manager's Office** (previous) for the consequences of a failed or fumbled roll.

At 11:30 pm, Ernie, if present, starts barking furiously, indicating that something is happening. If the investigators are watching their own camera feed, they see four piles of books gently form before their eyes. A successful **Occult** or **History** skill roll reminds the investigator of the 1896 British Library poltergeist/book stacking incident.

If Ernie is not with the investigators, and if they have not set up their own surveillance camera, then at 12:30 am, the GM should ask the players here to make an **Observation** roll. Those who achieve a Regular success or better hear a crash from the basement—the infant *genius loci* has lost its temper and started flinging books around to get their attention—go to **An Unholy Mess** (page 304).

Down Among the Books

The basement is eerily quiet when the investigators re-enter it. There is no trace of the attack on Warwick Anderson, as all the undamaged books have been replaced on their shelves. If the investigators undertake another IVA, they receive the same information they did previously (**Conducting an Initial Vestigium Assessment (IVA)**, page 294).

Unless the investigators decide to cast a spell (**Feeding Time**, page 302), the hours drag on with no sign of any poltergeist activity. If they have Ernie with them, he needs taking out for a bathroom break shortly after 11:00 pm—once he is removed from the basement, things start to happen—go to **The Yap Factor** (page 302). Alternatively, if, at any point, everyone leaves the basement, the "poltergeist" becomes active—go to **Flight of the Folios**, following.

Flight of the Folios

The moment the last investigator leaves the basement, either by stepping off the staircase onto the ground floor or by heading through the door into the staff area, the GM should ask the investigators to make an **Observation** or a **Sense Vestigia** skill roll. Which skill they use is up to the player, but they might want to compare their skill values to see which one is highest—the higher the value, the more likely they are to succeed. If both skills have the same value, the GM can ask what sort of information the investigator would like to learn: something magic-related (Sense Vestigia) or something about what's happening around them (Observation)?

Observation Roll

- If a **Regular** success, the investigator hears strange rustling noises coming from the basement.
- If a **Hard** success, the noises sound uncomfortably like books moving about under their own steam.

Sense Vestigia Roll

- If a **Regular** success, the investigator detects a sudden surge in *vestigia*—not the type they detected earlier, but rather the smell of blood, the taste of plasticine, and the sensation of crossed legs and chicken feathers. It must

be strong for the investigator to have detected it over the dampening effect of all the books.

- If a **Hard** success, the investigator not only detects the surge, but also realises that there is something powerful in the basement. It doesn't feel like a ghost, though—it feels like something… *else*…

How rapidly the investigators return to the basement determines what they see next. If they're quick, they see books floating gently across the basement from the art section and adding themselves to four neat piles in the middle of the cookery section. If they take their time—for example, because they go to fetch their colleagues—they find the stacked books already in the cookery section upon their return.

As described in **The Manager's Office** (page 300), a successful **Occult** or **History** roll calls to mind a similar incident at the British Library in 1896. While it's not as if no human being would stack books like this, if the investigators have searched the building, they know there's no one else here—never mind that they may have also watched the books float themselves into position!—go to **Kaboom!?!** (nearby).

The Yap Factor

If Ernie was downstairs with the investigators, the moment he's taken out for his 11:00 pm bathroom break, the GM should ask everyone still in the basement for an **Observation** or **Sense Vestigia** skill roll:

- A successful Observation roll spots the books the moment they start floating out of the art section, although it doesn't take long for everyone else present to notice what's happening.
- Results for the Sense Vestigia roll are as previously described in **Flight of the Folios** (previous).

The books gently wing their way past the investigators and form themselves into four neat piles. If they haven't already made the connection, allow an **Occult** or **History** roll to recall what happened at the British Library in 1896. Interestingly, the books show no signs of violence towards any onlookers—go to **Kaboom!?!** (following).

Kaboom!?!

What happens next depends on the investigators:

- If, having examined the four piles of books, the investigators decide to leave the basement again, the *genius loci* tries to attract their attention with another pile of books at midnight, and then explodes everything at 12:30 am—go to **An Unholy Mess** (page 304).
- If the investigators decide to cast Werelight to tempt out the "poltergeist," go to **Feeding Time** (following).
- If the investigators have Ernie with them, the Yorkshire Terrier begins yapping and snarling, as if his life depended on it, the moment he enters the basement. Startled by the angry furball, the *genius loci* panics and throws everything at the investigators—go to **Ouch!** (page 303).

Feeding Time

If the investigators haven't yet cast a spell in the basement, now is the time to do so. If Anderson's attacker is a genuine ghost of some sort, then those who know the Werelight spell also know they should be able to use it to coax the ghost out.

As described in **Cooking Up a Spell** (page 296), a successful **Magic** roll produces a gently glowing, milky white werelight if the spell is unboosted (i.e., the investigator only spends 1 magic point to cast the spell). The colour rapidly changes to a dark crimson and the light begins to fade, suggesting something is feeding on the magical energy—but nothing appears. There's obviously something down here, but it isn't a ghost.

If the investigator has mastered Werelight, they can spend an additional magic point to keep their existing werelight going. Alternatively, to immediately boost the spell, they could spend 2 magic points when making their Magic roll. A boosted werelight flares bright white and then rapidly shrinks down to a tiny, sapphire-blue star before winking out completely. As it does so, the caster has the distinct impression of blood, plasticine, crossed legs, and chicken feathers.

- As before (**Cooking Up a Spell**, page 296), if an investigator **fumbles** or **fails** a pushed roll when casting Werelight, or if more than one investigator successfully casts Werelight in the basement, the effect is the same as a successfully boosted werelight.
- Casting any other spell besides Werelight fails to produce such an explosive effect—as long as the investigator doesn't fumble their Magic roll or fail a pushed casting roll. At night, not only does this sand the electronics in the basement, but it also provokes the *genius loci* into action.

Any other investigators present should make a **Sense Vestigia** or **Observation** skill roll:

- A successful **Sense Vestigia** roll identifies a strange presence—a powerful one, but not a ghost; even with the books' dampening effect, the investigator senses its *vestigia* very clearly: the smell of blood, the taste of plasticine, and the sensation of crossed legs and chicken feathers.
- A successful **Observation** roll spots that books all over the basement are rattling ominously on their shelves…

If everything has exploded, or the investigators attempt to leave the basement, go to **Ouch!** (following).

Ouch!

Suddenly, all the books in the basement take flight. The GM should ask everyone present to make an **Athletics** or **DEX** roll—again, the player should choose whichever has the highest value to improve their chances of success. Those who succeeded with their Observation roll (per **Feeding Time**, previous) gain a bonus die to this roll. As always, players can spend Luck points to turn a failure into a success; however, they cannot buy off a fumble (**Spending Luck**, page 113).

If the roll is successful, the investigator manages to dive behind some form of cover, e.g., the till point desk, shielding them from the influx of airborne publications. They suffer no damage. If the roll is a failure, the investigator is hit by a barrage of books. The GM should ask the player to make a **Luck** roll:

- If the Luck roll is a **success**, the investigator only gets hit with light paperbacks and suffers 1 damage; as long as they've taken no other damage during this case file, they are now **Hurt** (page 144), and the player should tick the relevant box on their character sheet.
- If the result is a **failure**, the investigator is hit by the notorious Taschen hardbacks for 2 damage. As long as they've taken no other damage during this case file, they are now **Bloodied** (page 144), and the player should tick both the Hurt and Bloodied boxes on their character sheet. The investigator is now also impaired, so their player should tick the Impaired box, too. Being impaired means that, until they recover, the investigator now fumbles if they roll 90 or more on their percentile dice.
- If the result is a **fumble**, the investigator not only gets hit by Taschen hardbacks, they also bang their head when they fall, taking 3 damage and temporarily knocking themselves out. They are now **Down** (page 144); the player should tick the Hurt, Bloodied, and Down boxes on their character sheet to remind them; they are also impaired (see previous bullet point).
- Any investigator who has the **Natural Toughness** advantage (page 51) deducts 1 damage from any suffered due to their inherent hardiness. This means they take either no damage (with a Luck roll success), 1 damage (Luck roll failure), or 2 damage (Luck roll fumble). The same is true if someone is wearing a Met stab vest (**Armour**, page 135).

If Ernie is present, he automatically runs for cover behind the till point desk, thus nimbly avoiding getting hit by anything. Go to **An Unholy Mess** (following).





An Unholy Mess

After the dust has settled, the investigators can extricate themselves from the scene of literary devastation.

- If an investigator was **hurt** (incurred a total of 1 damage), they immediately recover from their injuries and can erase the mark in the Hurt box on their character sheet (**After the Fight: Hurt**, page 145).
- If an investigator was **bloodied** (incurred a total of 2 damage), they also immediately recover from their injuries. They can erase the marks in the Hurt, Bloodied, and Impaired boxes on their character sheet (**After the Fight: Bloodied**, page 145).
- If an investigator was **down** (incurred a total of 3 damage), they come to, feeling distinctly the worse for wear. Their player should erase the marks in the Down and Bloodied boxes on their character sheet, but the investigator remains Hurt until the end of the following day, unless they spend 10 Luck points to affect a rapid recovery. They are also impaired until the end of the following day, unless they spend a further 10 Luck points (**After the Fight: Down**, page 145).

GM ADVICE

Why have the players mark the various boxes on their character sheets if they're going to erase them so soon after their investigators were injured? Because it gets the players into the habit of recording damage, so they know what to do the next time it happens.

The basement isn't the only site of de-shelving. Any investigator who heads up onto the ground floor to check for damage elsewhere discovers a trail of books leading from the children's department to the stairwell. All of them are brightly coloured story books for toddlers and early readers. Nothing else on the ground floor has moved a centimetre.

Enlightenment

If the players haven't already figured out what's happening, the GM should ask them to make an **INT** roll. If any of the investigators have children, they gain a bonus die to the roll, as they subconsciously recognise the *genius loci's* attention-seeking behaviour. As always, players can spend Luck or push the roll.

- If the roll is a **Regular** success, the investigator realises that the *vestigia* from the cockfighting ring has transformed into a *genius loci*, not a ghost. That transformation seems to be linked to the children's section, and its relocation was the trigger for the attack on Warwick Anderson. It's as if the *genius loci* is missing its Saturday Story Time sessions.
- If the roll is a **Hard** success, the investigator also realises that the *genius loci* is behaving like a small, abandoned child and appears to be confined to the basement—or else it would have relocated upstairs along with the children's section. The best it could manage was an attempt to drag the children's books down to it.
- If the roll is a **failure**, the investigator realises that the triggering event was the children's section being moved, but is none the wiser about what's in the basement.
- If no one succeeds at the INT roll, it's time to call DCI Nightingale for some advice. He asks them to think about what other members of the demi-monde might be powerful enough to cause such an effect. If they're still unsure, he tells them his suspicions—that they have a newly-formed *genius loci* on their hands.

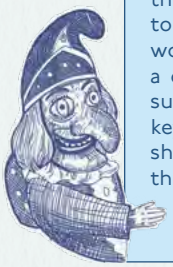
Conclusion

The case file is now almost over. The investigators have solved the mystery of what's in the basement one way or another, but they must still find a solution to the problem. After all, they can't leave the *genius loci* to attack anyone else, even if it is only doing so because it's lonely. They need to come up with a plan.

A Book at Bedtime

The GM should encourage the players to discuss how they're going to deal with the *genius loci*. If they're stuck, the GM should suggest the investigators ring DCI Nightingale, who prompts them—via the GM—to think about what might make the *genius loci* feel less neglected. Alternatively, if they're really stuck, the GM can ask for another **INT** roll to help them come up with a solution. Here are some suggestions for how the investigators can solve the problem:

- Perhaps someone could read stories to the *genius loci* once a week after the shop closes—see **Reading Stories Once a Week**, page 305.
- Perhaps the investigators could ask Ms Jackson to play a children's audiobook in the basement at least once a week after the shop closes, especially on nights when there are staff working down there—see **Audiobooks**, page 305.
- In addition, that's one heck of a mess that needs clearing up in the basement. Perhaps the investigators could get the *genius loci* to put the books back in return for a story? See **Quid Pro Quo**, following.
- Alternatively, if the investigators know any *genii locorum* or lower fae, they may wish to ask them to talk to the spirit in the basement to see what it wants.
- Or, the investigators could devise some way of communicating with the *genius loci* themselves—e.g., using letter flashcards (on sale in the children's section), and so on. Communicating in this manner reveals that the little spirit is lonely and just wants someone to read to it, like they did before the children stopped coming to the basement and the Saturday Story Time sessions held there.



GM ADVICE

These solutions are based on the ones in "The Cockpit" and what happened in various playtest sessions. Of course, your players may come up with a completely different solution, and that's fine! Once they've described their solution to you, you'll need to judge whether it will work—or make the problem worse! This might involve the investigators making a dice roll or you can simply judge that their plan succeeds automatically, depending on what it is. The key thing is not to force the ending to be like the short story on which this adventure is based—reward the players for coming up with their own solution, especially if it's really clever and inventive (**Player Agency**, page 221).

Quid Pro Quo

The *genius loci* can, indeed, be encouraged to tidy up after itself in return for a story. It takes a couple of hours to put everything back where it was, so it expects a nice long story afterwards as a reward. The GM should ask for a **Luck** roll from whoever reads to the *genius loci*:

- If the roll is a **success**, the story is exactly the right length, and the contented *genius loci* causes no more trouble for a week. But, if no other arrangement is put in place to make sure it is told a story once each week, it starts throwing books at staff members again until it gets another bedtime story.
- If the roll is a **failure**, the story wasn't long enough, and the *genius loci* turns the pages of the story book back to the beginning, hinting that it wants to hear it again. As long as the investigator complies, all is well until next week (see previous bullet point).
- If the roll is a **fumble**, the *genius loci* didn't like that story and starts throwing things around again. The investigators need to choose another book, and quickly!

The GM might also wish to call for an **Observation** roll to identify any books that are too badly damaged to be reshelved. The investigators can either put those to one side themselves or make a note of what needs replacing and let Ms Jackson know in the morning.

Reading Stories Once a Week

Someone reading the *genius loci* a bedtime story in person once a week—preferably on Saturdays—prevents any further attention-seeking behaviour. It doesn't matter what's read to it, as long as it's a children's book. It also doesn't matter who reads to it. If the investigators don't think of it themselves, DCI Nightingale adds the duty to the Folly's action list so they can keep an eye on the *genius loci's* development; meaning that, at least once a fortnight, a junior Folly member is expected to pop in to read the bedtime story.

Audiobooks

Playing audiobooks to the *genius loci* also works but needs to be done more frequently than an in-person reading. By trial and error, the investigators can determine that twice a week is enough to keep the young spirit content. They may also want to recommend that a story should be played when someone is working in the basement alone, just to be on the safe side!



Loose Ends

Hopefully, the only thing the investigators have left to do is let Ms Jackson know what's needed to keep the peace! Although she is somewhat bemused by the discovery that she has a "spirit of books and reading" in her basement, she is content to take whatever advice the investigators give her, if it means no one else gets hurt.

As for Warwick Anderson, he gets a job in another independent bookshop on the other side of the river. Nothing the investigators or Ms Jackson can say or do convinces him to set foot in Stonewaters ever again!

Rewards

Once all the loose ends have been tied up, it's time for an **Investigator Development Phase** (page 120).

- First, award development points to the investigators. If you are using the standard system (**Gaining Development Points**, page 120), that's 1 development point per session of play.
- Next, the investigators can spend their development point(s) to improve skills, learn a new spell, or master an existing spell. Alternatively, they may decide to save their development point(s) until they have enough for a new advantage (**Spending Development Points**, page 120).
- Now, the players review their investigator's backstory to see if there are any elements that can be altered or added, with the GM's permission (**Altering an Investigator's Backstory**, page 122).
- Finally, each player reviews their investigator's employment status and affluence rating. Unless they somehow provoked the *genius loci* into totally destroying the bookshop and were suspended as a result, there should be no need to change either of these (**Reviewing Employment and Affluence Rating**, page 122).
- Optional: if the GM intends for there to be an in-game break between the end of this case file and the beginning of the next, they may wish to award 1 additional development point for training.

Congratulations! Your first *RoL:RPG* case file is now complete!



Cast

The following section contains the profiles for the various NPCs the investigators are likely to run across during this case file. Common skills are listed first, followed by expert, and then combat skills. None of the NPCs in this case file besides DCI Nightingale are practitioners, so they don't have any spells listed. DCI Nightingale's profile can be found in **A Rogues' Gallery** (page 233).

Warwick Anderson, *age 29, frightened bookseller*

STR 50 **CON** 50 **DEX** 60 **INT** 60 **POW** 60
DB: 0 **MOV:** 9 **MP:** 12 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Speedy.

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 30%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 60%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 60%, Stealth 30%; Art/Craft (Fine Arts) 60%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English (own) 60%, French 60%, Italian 30%, Spanish 30%.

Saffron Jackson, *age 36, bookshop manager*

STR 40 **CON** 50 **DEX** 50 **INT** 70 **POW** 70
DB: 0 **MOV:** 8 **MP:** 14 **LUCK:** —
Advantage: Steadfast.

Skills
Athletics 30%, Drive 30%, Navigate 30%, Observation 60%, Read Person 60%, Research 60%, Sense Vestigia 30%, Social 60%, Stealth 30%; Accounting 60%, History 60%; Fighting 30%, Firearms 30%.

Languages
English (own) 70%.

Ernie, *ghost-hunting dog-in-training*

STR 20 **CON** 60 **DEX** 80 **INT** — **POW** 50
DB: 0 **MOV:** 10 **MP:** — **LUCK:** —

Skills
Observation 50%, Sense Vestigia 50%; Eat Sausages 70%; Bite 70%.

The Spirit of Books and Reading, *lonely genius loci*

STR 50 **CON** 40 **DEX** 30 **INT** 60 **POW** 80
DB: 0 **MOV:** 4 **MP:** — **LUCK:** 80
Advantage: Natural Toughness.
Disadvantage: vulnerable to cold iron.

Skills
Sense Vestigia 60%; Throw 90%.

Languages
Non-verbal; it does understand English, though, and its spelling ability is equivalent that of a five-year old.

Powers
Luck of the Demi-monde.

Demi-monde affinity
Books and reading.

Vestigia
The smell of blood, the taste of plasticine, and the sensation of crossed legs and chicken feathers.




SCIENTIA POTESTAS EST



Additional Rules

ALL THE STANDARD rules you need to play *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* are contained in Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. This chapter builds on those rules to provide some different or expanded options regarding, among other things, character creation, including creating your own investigator organisations and playing non-human investigators. There are optional tweaks to the basic rules for combat and damage, as well as some more information on magic for the Game Moderator (GM).

If you're new to roleplaying games or you're happy to stick with the standard rules you've read so far, that's absolutely fine. If, on the other hand, you want to add some extra nuts and bolts to your game, feel free to pick and choose from the following sections or adopt them wholesale—it's entirely up to you!

Advanced Character Creation

Chapter 1 took you through standard character creation. This section has new tweaks and suggestions for trying something a little different, starting with an alternative method for determining an investigator's characteristics.

Assigning Characteristics Revisited

In **Step Two: Assign Characteristics** (page 46), a player shares 280 points among their investigator's characteristics and, for simplicity, we advised allocating the points in blocks of 10. The advantage being that it keeps the maths simple, and when it comes to **Half Characteristic Values** (page 49), there's no rounding required. If you want more granularity when assigning characteristics, simply let the players allocate those 280 points however they wish between their investigator's five characteristics. If any rounding is required when calculating half characteristic values, the player should round down, e.g., STR 57 rounds down to a half characteristic value of 28.

The standard characteristic value range is 30 to 80, so you could also extend this to 20 to 90, if you wish to have more exceptional characters in the game.

Age Revisited

In the standard rules, a player chooses how old their investigator is, with any implications arising from their age simply factored in through storytelling. For example, an old character may be described as looking or behaving older than their younger companions—grey hair, wrinkles, making out-of-date cultural references, etc.—but aside from that, older characters are treated in the rules exactly the same as younger ones. If you wish to make age a more significant factor in play, you can incorporate the following changes.

Age and Movement Rate (MOV)

Age tends to slow people down, so as characters reach their 40s and beyond, their movement rate is reduced as follows—this can be applied to non-player characters (NPCs) as well:

- A character in their 40s: deduct –1 from MOV.
- A character in their 50s: deduct –2 from MOV.
- A character in their 60s: deduct –3 from MOV.
- A character in their 70s: deduct –4 from MOV.
- A character in their 80s: deduct –5 from MOV.

The average competitor at the Olympics is in their 20s. Of course, there are some individuals in their 70s that can outrun some 20-year-olds, but, as a rule, most people slow down with age. The modifiers above are intended for mundane human characters. Those who are touched by magic may not be subject to the same weathering effects of old age. Certainly Nightingale and Varvara are pretty spritely given how old they both are!

Investigator Experience Packages

Players wishing to start the game with a more experienced investigator can do so, with the GM's permission. However, in the interest of game balance, the additional benefits gained come at the cost of a disadvantage (**Disadvantages**, page 311).

Academic Experience Package

The investigator has worked in academia for many years and has published multiple papers in reputable journals, as well as contributing chapters to reference books on their subject—perhaps they've even written a book of their own!

- Create the investigator using the **Lecturer** occupation (page 69).
- Gain an additional 60 points to spend as desired on required and recommended skills.
- May not raise any skill above 80% by this method.
- Must choose one disadvantage (**Disadvantages**, page 311).

Criminal Experience Package

The investigator has spent most, if not all, of their life involved in crime of one sort or another. They served time in prison but have turned their life around and gone straight. The investigator could now give talks to young people to share their experience with the aim of helping others to avoid following in their footsteps.

- Create the investigator using the **Criminal** occupation (page 65).
- Gain an additional 60 points to spend as desired on required and recommended skills.
- May not raise any skill above 80% by this method.
- Must choose one disadvantage (**Disadvantages**, page 311).



GM ADVICE

As with the standard **Criminal** occupation (page 65), the GM should think carefully about permitting a player to choose this package, especially if the rest of the investigator group are police officers or law enforcement agents.

Ex-Military Experience Package

The investigator served in one of the Armed Forces during a full-scale military conflict; exactly which conflict depends on the character's age. While benefitting from their experience, they also bear its scars.

- Create the investigator using the **Service Member** occupation (page 73).
- Gain an additional 60 points to spend as desired on required and recommended skills.
- May not raise any skill above 80% by this method.
- Must choose one disadvantage (**Disadvantages**, page 311).

Experienced Investigator Package

This investigator's been around the block a few times, and while they may not have seen it all, they've certainly seen a lot over the years. As a result, they start the game with more skills than their less-experienced colleagues.

- Create the investigator using any of the occupations listed on page 45.
- Gain an additional 60 points to spend on skills.
- May also choose an additional new skill at 60% *or* distribute the 60 points among any existing skills.
- May not raise any skill above 80% by this method.
- Must choose one disadvantage (**Disadvantages**, page 311).

Paranormal Experience Package

The investigator has knowledge of the paranormal—more specifically, the demi-monde—either in an academic sense or through tangible experience. The player should discuss with the GM how their investigator is aware of the demi-monde, e.g., through reading old books or through actual contact, and write this into their investigator's backstory.

- Create the investigator using the **Parapsychologist** occupation (page 70; or another occupation with the GM's consent).
- Gain an additional 60 points to spend as desired on required and recommended skills.
- May not raise any skill above 80% by this method.
- Must choose one disadvantage (**Disadvantages**, page 311).

Police Experience Package

The investigator has served for a number of years on a police force. Alternatively, they may have retired from this profession, perhaps quite recently.

- Create the investigator using the **Police Officer/ Detective** occupation (page 71).
- Gain an additional 60 points to spend as desired on required and recommended skills.
- May not raise any skill above 80% by this method.
- Must choose one disadvantage (**Disadvantages**, page 311).



Spellcaster Experience Package

The investigator just has the knack when it comes to learning spells, or they've been using magic (quite possibly in secret) for some time now. As a result, your investigator begins the game with a higher Magic skill and additional spells. An investigator taking this package must first have chosen the **Magical** advantage (page 51).

- Create the practitioner investigator using any of the occupations listed on page 45.
- Magic skill starts at 70%.
- Have three first order spells (one mastered, two unmastered).
- Have two second order spells (one mastered, one unmastered).
- Must choose one disadvantage (**Disadvantages**, following).

Disadvantages

A disadvantage is something notable about an investigator that may cause them problems. Players who create their investigators using one of the investigator experience packages described in the previous section must choose one of the following disadvantages.

Some disadvantages have limits associated with them, which are akin to an advantage's prerequisites. They may relate to a characteristic or skill value, but may also specify which advantages they cannot be taken with, i.e., a player may not choose a disadvantage for their investigator that cancels out the effects of any previously selected advantages.



GM ADVICE

You may also wish to use disadvantages with your NPCs. Like investigators, they should incur only one and are subject to the same limits.

Blunt

Limits: none.

This character wouldn't know tact and subtlety if it walked up and slapped them in the face with a wet fish. As a result, they incur a penalty die on all Social skill rolls.

Crossed the Wrong People

Limits: none.

This character has done something to get themselves in some powerful people's bad books. The GM should pick who those powerful people are, and ensure that they feature in play. If the adversary is eliminated, the GM should contrive their replacement—perhaps a relative looking for vengeance.

Easily Distracted

Limits: none.

This character's mind is always on other things. They could daydream or have a preoccupation with some theory or other—either way, they often fail to see what's in front of their face. They incur a penalty die on Observation and Read Person rolls.

Damaged

Limits: may not be taken with the **Steadfast** advantage (page 52).

This character has been deeply affected by the things they've witnessed in the course of their life and/or career. As a result, they are more likely to fumble a roll, meaning that any roll of 95% or above is always a fumble (rather than 100%, see **Fumble**, page 107). When they suffer impairment from mental trauma (**Suffering Impairment**, page 118) or when in combat (**Wounds and Healing**, page 144), their fumble range increases to 90%, but recovers back to 95% rather than 100% (**Impairment and Recovery**, page 119).

Disorganised

Limits: none.

This character can never find what they're looking for, or remember where they've put things. They incur a penalty die on Luck rolls to find useful items, i.e., to see if they've remembered to pack the item in question or to find what they need at their current location.

Fingers and Thumbs

Limits: none.

This character lacks fine motor skills. As a result, they incur a penalty die on any DEX rolls involving manual dexterity, e.g., cutting things in the right place. They also incur a penalty die to damage rolls when using firearms and ranged weapons, such as bows. DEX rolls involving speed, such as when determining who initiates combat (**Who Goes First?**, page 124) or when putting on a **Burst of Speed** (page 151), are not affected.

Frail

Limits: may not be taken with the **Natural Toughness** advantage (page 51).

This character lacks physical resilience. They do not possess the **Hurt** damage level (page 144). If an investigator with this disadvantage incurs 1 damage, their player ignores the Hurt box on their character sheet and immediately marks

the investigator as Bloodied; if they incur 2 damage, the player marks both the Bloodied and Down boxes (**Wounds and Healing**, page 144). For ease, we recommend the player puts a permanent line through the Hurt box on their character sheet.

Hot-Headed
Limits: none.

This character never knows when to back down in a fight. They cannot choose the **Flee** option (page 130) when engaged in combat, and their **Involuntary Action** (page 108) in response to a fumble or failed impairment POW roll (page 118) always involves violence.

Iron-Blooded
Limits: cannot be taken by fae investigators.

There is something undefinable about this character that certain fae beings—*genii locorum*, unicorns, and the High Fae—detest (**The Effects of Cold Iron**, page 245). This character cannot forge friendships with the aforementioned fae and has real difficulty striking a deal with them. They also incur a penalty die on all Social skill rolls when dealing with anyone who is vulnerable to cold iron.

Magic is Exhausting
Limits: none.

This character has to put extra effort into casting spells. The base cost of every spell they know is increased by 1 magic point. For example, as a second order spell, the base cost for Fireball is 2 magic points; for someone with this disadvantage, the base cost would be 3 magic points. The cost for boosting a mastered spell is unaltered.

Not a Magical Bone
Limits: may not be taken with the **Magical** advantage (page 51) or by fae investigators (who are inherently magical; **No Newtonian Magic**, page 318).

No matter how hard this character tries, they cannot learn or use magic. The forms and wisdoms—or whatever method a particular magical tradition uses—are just too slippery to take root in the character's mind. They are, however, still susceptible to the effects of spells and spell-like effects used on or against them.

Slow-Footed
Limits: may not be taken with the **Speedy** advantage (page 52).

This character is slow on their feet and starts with a movement rate of 5 (MOV 5) before making any adjustments for age.

Slow Healer
Limits: none.

This character recovers from illness and injury more slowly than the average person. They may not spend Luck points to avoid the after-effects of being down (**After the Fight: Down**, page 145) or when recovering from a **Mortal Wound** (page 146). However, they may still spend Luck to turn a fatal blow into a mortal wound (**Wounds and Healing**, page 144).

Weak
Limits: maximum STR 40.

This character lacks physical strength. As a result, they incur a penalty die on all STR rolls, including when making a damage roll in melee combat (**The Damage Roll**, page 132).



Creating New Occupations

There are a huge variety of occupations in the world, and the list in the **Creating Characters** chapter (page 45) is designed to cover some of the most likely options. If a player wishes to choose an occupation for their investigator that isn't listed, take a look to see if there's an existing one that shares enough similarities that it can be used pretty much as is. Ideally, this should only involve a minimum amount of tweaking, e.g., changing the required skill or altering the recommended skill list by one or two skills.

If an occupation requires more alteration than this, it's better to create a new occupation, which is reasonably straightforward to do. Consider the skills someone with this occupation would know: which ones are essential (required skills) for that occupation, and which are preferred but not must-haves (recommended skills)? As you can see from the list of **Occupations** starting on page 62, most professions have only one or two required skills; three at the most. Next, list a few suggested contacts—people that someone in this occupation is likely to know or be able to influence. Then, think about the equipment that occupation might have as standard.

That's it—any further elements of what they do is story-based rather than rules-based. Story is the important bit, though, so don't forget to give some thought to how someone with this occupation is going to integrate with the other investigators and the game in general.

Example: *David wants to play an antiques dealer. He and the GM decide that none of the existing occupations really work for that. They think about the skills someone dealing in antiques would absolutely need to be able to carry out their job, and decide on Appraise and an Art/Craft specialisation of some sort. They then think about what other skills would be useful, and come up with a short list, containing History (useful for dating items), Languages (for reading old books and dealing with overseas clients), Observation (for spotting damage and fakes), Research (for checking the provenance of objects), and Social (for negotiating good prices when buying and selling). All they need now are a short list of potential contacts and some starting equipment, and the occupation is done! See the* ***Antiques Dealer*** *box (nearby) for the finished occupation.*

Antiques Dealer

Antiques dealers usually have their own shop, retail items out of their homes, or go on extended buying trips, making a profit on reselling to urban stores.

Suggested contacts: booksellers, antique collectors, historians and historical societies, possibly criminal fences.
Required skills: Appraise, Art/Craft (any).
Recommended skills: History, Languages, Observation, Research, Social.
Equipment: auction catalogues, jeweller's loupe, notebook, business cards.

Troupe Play

One option that may appeal to some groups is for each player to control more than one investigator at any one time. The main advantage being that it allows for a wider range of occupations and skills for tackling case files (scenarios), especially if playing the game with only one or two players.

Ordinarily, two investigators might not have all the necessary skills between them to uncover all the clues in a case file, and there's a limit to how many new ones they can acquire per game session through **Trying Your Luck** (page 114). This might mean the investigators have to rely more heavily on NPCs to provide them with the information or expertise they need. However, whenever possible, it's always more fun for the players to find out those sorts of details themselves, so having multiple investigators in play means that the players—and their investigators—are always at the heart of the action. One way you can achieve this is by having **Primary Investigators** (following) and **Secondary Investigators** (page 314).

Primary Investigators

Each player creates a primary investigator that they play for the majority of the game, using as many—or as few—of the advanced character creation rules as they wish. Primary investigators have the opportunity to appear in most scenes and are the main focus of the game for their player.

If it helps, think of a primary investigator as one of the main characters in a TV show—they'll appear in most of an episode's scenes and almost every episode of a series, but may occasionally be off elsewhere for some reason. There are only a handful of TV shows where the main characters are in absolutely every scene of every episode, and every episode of every series, so there's no reason the group's primary investigators have to be.

Secondary Investigators

Once the players have created their primary investigators, it's time to think about their secondary ones. If we stick with the previous analogy of a TV show, think of them as supporting members of the cast or as recurring guest stars. Both pop in from time to time to help in solving the mystery or to develop the story, but they're not the show's—or this game's—main focus.

There are a number of different options for who the secondary investigators are, and the GM should use whichever type they think is most appropriate for their current game. Of course, the type used may change after a long running case file is completed, and that's all good.

Secondary investigators can be created by the players, or the GM can create them for the players based on what's needed for the case file in which they'll be used—they can even be a group effort! Consider which one of the following options appeals to your group (each type is described in the following sections):

- **Alternates:** a second investigator for occasional use.
- **Significant others:** playing friends and relatives.
- **Burners:** for those who want to live dangerously!
- **Pool:** a stack of characters from which anyone can pick.

Two of these types—alternate and pool investigators—work well when a player's primary investigator is absent from the scene, perhaps because the group has split up and some people have gone off to investigate a separate plot thread in a different location. It means that all the *players* are present for a particular scene, even if their primary investigators aren't. The only real difference between them is that pool investigators are shared by the whole group rather than each one belonging to a particular player, which can give all the players more freedom to pick the most appropriate person for the job or scene.

Secondary Investigators: Alternates

Each player creates their additional character in the usual way, but the alternate character should contrast with the player's main investigator in some way. For example, if the primary investigator is a police officer and Folly apprentice, the player's alternate might be a paramedic or a lecturer with no magical ability whatsoever. The player plays their primary investigator most of the time, but occasionally switches to playing their secondary investigator when it feels appropriate, such as when their primary investigator is busy elsewhere—or in hospital recovering from their injuries—or when the GM frames a scene that strongly lends itself to the alternate investigator's inclusion, i.e., when their specialist expertise is required.

Secondary Investigator: Significant Others

Each player creates a secondary character who is important in the life of another player's primary investigator. For example, if someone was playing Peter Grant, another player could create Peter's mum as their secondary investigator, while someone else could create his dad. This enables the story to spread to domestic scenes outside of the main story. Such scenes can add a lot to the game and can help to bring the primary investigators to life. As we see in the novels, the relationship between Peter and his mother shows us another side to his character. As always, a player's secondary investigator should contrast with their primary one.

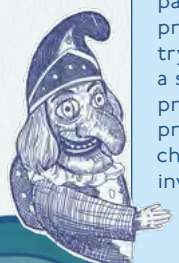
It's not expected or necessary for these secondary characters to become involved in the case file being played. The interaction with these significant others could be entirely secondary to your game's main story, but it's also quite possible the two may overlap in some way. That's certainly something we see with Peter's father as we learn more of his history, and he certainly sets Peter on the right track on at least one occasion, thanks to his expert knowledge[1].

You may be surprised how easily players get into the role of being one of their fellow investigator's significant others, and take delight in creating all manner of interesting dilemmas and situations. However, it's important to remember that as entertaining as developing the investigators' personal backstories may be, it's not the main focus of a *Rivers of London* game.

Another important point to keep in mind is that not everyone may be comfortable with this type of in-character relationship, i.e., some players may be keen to explore them, whereas other players may not be interested (for whatever reason). Before choosing the option to create secondary investigators who are significant others, everyone's willingness to participate should be discussed and boundaries set to ensure everyone's continued safety and enjoyment of the game. Players should always be able to change their minds about having someone else in the group play one of their primary investigator's significant others, for whatever reason, no questions asked. The same goes for anyone playing a significant other as their secondary investigator (**Considerate Gaming**, page 44).

GM ADVICE

Secondary investigators come in handy when a particular area of expertise is required that the primary investigators don't possess (and don't wish to try their Luck to obtain). For this reason, sometimes a secondary investigator is called in while a player's primary investigator is still present. However, it's preferable that each player only portrays one character in any given scene, so if a player's primary investigator is there, they should stay in the background until their secondary investigator leaves to avoid confusing matters.



Footnote: [1]*Moon Over Soho*

Out-of-Character vs In-Character Knowledge

Sometimes, an issue in roleplaying games is how to handle knowledge that you—the player—knows, but which your investigator doesn't. This can happen when playing more than one investigator during a case file. For example, your primary investigator might learn some vital clue in one scene. Then, you switch to playing your alternate investigator in the next scene. As your primary character is not present in the new scene—you, as the player, know the vital clue, but the character you are now playing does not. In-character knowledge can be handled in a number of ways.

- You don't let what your primary investigator knows influence how your secondary investigator behaves (and vice versa). This means the secondary investigator has no idea about the important clue discovered by the primary character, and so makes no attempt to act on the information. It isn't always easy to do, but playing through your investigator's ignorance can be good fun, like when watching a film—we as viewers sometimes know things the characters do not, and this creates a tension between us (the viewer) and the film, so we sit there yelling at the screen, *"No, don't turn your back on her, she's the murderer!"* In short, each character you play only knows what *they* know—they don't share a collective knowledge.
- You can have your investigator act on the secret knowledge, but only in a manner that subtly changes their actions, as though they were acting on a hunch or as if fate was steering them in the right direction. Thus, they sort of know information they shouldn't, but only use it in a minor way.
- You can have the primary investigator share their information with the secondary investigator "off-screen" between scenes. You might even like to have your secondary investigator say something like, "*I spoke to such-and-such on the way over, and you'll never guess what they told me!*" or, "*Hey, I just got this text from X about the case.*" This can often be the easiest way of dealing with the potential issue, but it's only possible if there's a feasible way the two characters could have communicated in the time available.

Keeping things straight in your own head as to what your different investigators know can be tricky, and there's no single right way to do it. If people do occasionally get themselves in a muddle, try to be forgiving—the last thing anyone wants is to get into an argument that leads to bad feelings. If that happens, the best solution is always to take a short break from the story and for the whole group to have a chat and agree on how you want to play it. After all, it's all about having fun together.

Secondary Investigators: Burners

This is a very different type of secondary investigator. We're talking "burners" as in burner phones here—something that's expendable and used for only a short time. The primary investigators are meant to be like Peter Grant—intended to live through multiple stories. There's always the risk of death, but on the whole, they should be relatively durable and able to experience a number of case files.

To provide a contrast, allow the players to each create a secondary investigator designed with the intention of pushing them into the frontline of danger. The GM should provide guidance on what types of characters would be a good fit in the particular case file in which they'll be taking part.

If the case file features a vampire house, for example, the burner investigators could be a group of amateur vampire hunters who lack any specialist equipment or training. As a side story, the players could enjoy a scene where they try to rid their neighbourhood of the vampire scourge, only to get themselves into terrible trouble. Such a scene could even act as a "pre-credits" introduction to the case file—like the ones you get on police dramas and crime shows—and allows the players to see just how deadly the vampires are before their primary investigators come face to face with them. In a later scene, those primary investigators may find evidence of the burner characters (who may now be vampires themselves) or even interview any surviving ones regarding the case file.

Secondary Investigators: Pool

The final kind of secondary investigators are what we call "pool" investigators, because everyone in the group has some involvement in creating them and anyone can play them, i.e., they are part of a shared pool from which every player can draw as and when the need arises—none of them are assigned to a particular player.

To create a set of pool investigators, the group should list the other characters within their primary investigators' close circle of colleagues. For example, let's say the group's primary investigators are Folly regulars Nightingale, Peter, and Abigail; their close circle might include Drs Walid and Vaughan, Frank Caffrey, and Harold Postmartin—even Molly, if the GM is allowing fae investigators. Some or all of these people could then be created as secondary investigators, ideally with everyone helping to determine their attributes and skills. Then, when one of those secondary investigators features in a scene, any player can volunteer to take on the role of that character (especially if that player's character is not in the current scene).

Investigator Organisations

The Folly is an integral part of the *Rivers of London* novels. Not only is it the headquarters of the **Society of the Wise** (page 260) and the Special Assessment Unit (SAU), it also acts as what we would call an "investigator organisation." In the game, such organisations provide both a reason for the players to work together and a base of operations. But not every game has to be centred around the Folly, and the GM and their players might want to create an organisation of their own.

The following sections look at some of the key points the GM might want to bear in mind if they decide to set their game outside the Folly but still want to have a focal organisation/base of operations for their investigators.

Creating Your Organisation

So, you've decided to design your own investigator organisation, but what sort of components does it need to make it work? Here are some key questions for you to think about.

- Who are its members? Do they all go to the same school? Have they formed a self-help group after experiencing "weird bollocks"? Do they all shop in the same local comic shop, or are they all regulars at the same pub or cafe?
- Where are they based? Are they in London, or are they in another large town or city? Are they more isolated than that; out in the countryside somewhere? Are they even in the UK?
- What is their base of operations? Is it a public building, like a library or a church hall? Is it a private building, e.g., one of the investigator's homes? Is it mobile, like a van? Or are they still looking for the right place?
- What resources can they access? Is one of the members wealthy and able to get the organisation whatever they need, whenever they need it? Is that benefactor a shadowy figure who only communicates with them by phone? Do they have a lot of useful contacts in the community where they're based? Or are they very much just getting started and don't have much in the way of gear or contacts?

Organisation Structure

One of the first things to consider is your organisation's structure, including who its members are, who's in charge, how it's structured internally, and, potentially, its relation to a wider parent organisation.

Every organisation usually has a leader—sometimes even more than one. In the Folly, for example, that's Nightingale. In game, it's preferable if the leader is not an investigator, which avoids having one player ordering the others around. Having the leader as an NPC also keeps them at arm's length and gives the players a greater degree of autonomy—the leader can step in to advise and direct when necessary, but isn't constantly keeping watch on the investigators' every action.

When it comes to how your organisation is set up, you may wish to use the classic cell structure. This means your group is a self-contained, semi-independent unit within a larger whole—sort of like the Folly is within the Metropolitan Police Service, only more so. While you might communicate with other cells within the overarching organisation, perhaps even sharing relevant and useful information to a limited extent, you are still partitioned from them, such that if your group is compromised, it doesn't expose the rest of the organisation.

Alternatively, you might just want to stick with the hierarchical, top-down organisation many businesses utilise—it all depends on what your organisation is (and what their aims are), who the investigators are, and what they're going to be getting up to in the course of their adventures.

An organisation's structure may also affect what resources are available to the investigators. For example, those who are part of an independently operating cell—especially if it's clandestine in nature—may have very different levels of access to resources compared to a group that is part of a large, well-funded hierarchical organisation.

Your Local Folly?

London is in the title of this game, but you can set your game anywhere you wish. You can easily shift it to a different city or even a different country—perhaps one that's local to you and your group. But relocating to somewhere further afield doesn't necessarily mean you can't be a part of wider Falcon operations. For example, perhaps officers and police staff (civilian workers) have been sent to re-open a mothballed branch of the Folly in another part of the UK.



GM ADVICE

While opening a new branch of the Folly within Great Britain shouldn't be an issue, moving to another country would bring up all sorts of jurisdictional issues—picture the Director's face if any of Nightingale's new fledglings suddenly set up shop in Germany[2], for example!

If you decide to follow this path, your first couple of case files could be pretty minor, serving more to introduce the investigators to their new home than dealing with anything really serious. Perhaps some of them were born and raised in this city, which is why they've been sent here by Nightingale. But slowly, the investigators begin to realise that there's a scarlet thread running through their cases that hints at something much more sinister, and that there's some unifying force behind it. With the folks at the Folly in London tied up in their own inquiries, it's up to the investigators to deal with the threat themselves before it escalates any further!

When considering the kind of stories you can tell outside London, have a think about your favourite TV shows. There are lots of police shows and murder mysteries set in cities, but there are also some that take place in more rural areas, too. Let's face it, according to several popular crime fiction and TV series, the Cotswolds (or somewhere very much like it) is a nightmare haven of murder, thievery, and intrigue! Basically, what we're saying is that your branch of the Folly doesn't have to be in a big city—it could even be in your local town or village, perhaps even with some local rusticated practitioners on hand, like Hugh Oswald[3], to offer guidance when needed.

It can be a lot of fun telling stories about places you and your players know well. It may not quite feel like the Peter Grant stories, but it can feel more like *your* story, and that can add a lot to *your* play experience.

Non-Police Organisations

Another key element that stands out from the novels—besides London—is the presence of the police. Just as the previous entry suggests options for games set outside London, you can have games in which the investigators are not members of law enforcement. Again, consider fiction and shows that



Footnotes: [2]*The October Man*, [3]*Foxglove Summer*

feature groups that investigate and deal with supernatural forces. For example, your investigators could be a group of high school pupils who battle occult forces, or members of a family who are part of a wider organisation that works to protect humanity from supernatural threats.

Base of Operations

If you consider most films or TV shows featuring a group of characters, they usually have somewhere to hang out and discuss their cases. This may be as straightforward as a place of work—like the Folly—though it could equally be somewhere far more informal, but likely just as important to those particular characters. For example, if your investigators are all high schoolers, their base of operations might be the school library. If, on the other hand, your investigators travel from town to town, their base of operations might be their vehicle.

The organisation's base of operations may be pretty mundane with little in the way of resources—four walls, a roof, some furniture, and maybe a kettle—but it might also have things like magical protections, a library, an armoury, and other resources, depending on how fancy it is. What your investigators' base of operations contains is up to your players to decide as they build their organisation, as long as it fits the story you are all building and is realistic in terms of their access to funds. For instance, an organisation financed by a wealthy dilettante is likely to have a very different base of operations to a group of older women who use the local village hall.

Playing Fae Investigators

Experienced groups, along with those who've got the hang of the standard game, may wish to try playing something other than human characters. The following sections deal with creating lower fae investigators—someone like **Zachary Palmer** (page 256), for example. A separate section deals with Quiet People as investigators (**Playing a Quiet Person**, page 319).

Fae Character Creation

The process is much the same as creating a standard investigator, at least to begin with. The GM may permit the players to use some or all of the advanced character creation rules described at the beginning of this chapter. Players should begin by deciding their investigators' occupations and assigning values to their characteristics as usual. However, there are a few exceptions to standard character creation that have to be considered when building a fae investigator.



GM ADVICE

Rules for creating player character *genii locorum* are not covered in this book.

Luck

A lower fae's Luck score is equal to their POW and refreshes every day at a set time (**The Luck of the Demi-monde**, page 243). The player should decide what that set time is—for example, midnight or bang on the stroke of noon. It could also be some other regular daily event, such as the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace (i.e., 11:00 am), or even one that isn't exactly the same time every day, such as sunrise or sunset. So long as the refresh time is clearly defined, it can be whatever you wish.

No Newtonian Magic

As fae characters have their own inherent magical powers through their spheres of influence (**Thematic Power**, page 244), they cannot use Newtonian magic. This means they cannot take the Magical advantage or learn or use the spells listed in **Chapter 4: Newtonian Magic**—although they may wish to look at them for inspiration for what their thematic powers may or may not be able to do. This also means that fae investigators do not have magic points, unlike their human colleagues. As lower fae, they also do not have access to **The Glamour** (page 243).

Sense Vestigia

All fae investigators begin the game with Sense Vestigia skill at 60% due to their inherent nature (**Sense Vestigia**, page 85).

Relationships and Backstory

Fae investigators have relatives, friends, and adversaries within the demi-monde. These should be noted in the investigator's backstory. The GM can incorporate characters from the investigator's background into their cast of NPCs, as well as suggest NPC characters that the investigator might know.

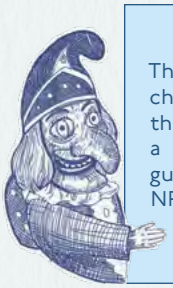
Affinities

Each fae has a special knack or sphere of influence tied to some element of the mundane world (**Thematic Power**, page 244). In Zach's case, this is locks—he just seems to be able to open any lock he comes across[4]. In *RoL:RPG*, we call this a "demi-monde affinity." When creating a fae investigator, you should choose a demi-monde affinity that fits with **Your Character Concept** (page 46).

Using their affinity, a fae investigator can achieve magical effects through the spending of Luck points. The amount of Luck a fae investigator spends determines whether this is an everyday or significant manifestation of their thematic power. The GM can also choose to handwave anything a fae investigator uses their affinity for if it simply serves to embellish the story, such as when Beverley glares frozen food into defrosting[5].

The GM should call for the following Luck spends when a fae investigator uses their powers:

Footnotes: [4]B*roken Homes,* [5]*Lies Sleeping*



GM ADVICE

The following guidelines are intended for player character use, although you may wish to implement them for lower fae NPCs as well, to keep them on a par with the investigators. Otherwise, use the guidelines presented in Chapter 6 when handling an NPC's **Thematic Power** (page 244); always use those rules if the NPC is a *genius loci*, for whom the following Luck spends do not apply.

- **Everyday manifestation** (costs 5 Luck points)**:** something that adds colour to the story—such as breathing life into a wilting bouquet of flowers—or performs a useful minor task, such as closing an open door. In game terms, it could mean the investigator automatically achieves something that would otherwise require a successful Regular skill roll to achieve, such as opening a standard door lock.
- **Significant manifestation** (costs 20 Luck points)**:** something that has an impact on another character or the story in a more impressive or meaningful fashion. In game terms, it could mean the investigator automatically achieves something that would otherwise require a successful Hard skill roll, such as getting an unfamiliar animal to follow your commands. The default cost is 20 Luck points, but the GM is at liberty to increase the cost if the situation is exceedingly challenging, or the outcome is particularly spectacular.

Note: Fae investigators cannot use their affinity to directly inflict damage, but they may be able to do so indirectly, e.g., by convincing an animal to bite someone or by blowing them off balance at the top of some stairs, causing them to fall.

Some sample affinities and examples of what they might achieve with everyday and significant manifestations of their thematic power can be found in **Table 13: Fae Investigator Affinities** (nearby).



GM ADVICE

Remember, we're not talking *genii locorum* levels of magical ability for fae investigators—even at their strongest, they aren't going to be able to pull off something as impressive as flooding the entirety of a major London landmark, for instance[6]. Having said that, with the GM's permission, they may be able to pull off something really impressive once per case file for a suitably large investment of Luck points.

Playing a Quiet Person

The Quiet People live beneath London's streets. Zach Palmer says they are not fae as such—not like him, anyway—but they are born different[7], so definitely part of the lower demi-monde and therefore available to players as investigators. The process is much the same as creating a standard investigator, with a few exceptions (**Fae Character Creation**, page 318, and following). As with other fae investigators, Quiet People investigators cannot use Newtonian magic, do not have magic points, and do not have **The Glamour** (page 243).

Occupations

Quiet People are more limited in their choice of occupation, given their previously secluded lifestyle; there are no Quiet People police officers or paramedics—yet! They tend to be craftspeople (with a focus on ceramics), farmers (someone has to look after those albino pigs), teachers, or engineers (to maintain their amazing machinery). This means Quiet People investigators mostly have the **Tradesperson** occupation (with variations for the potters and engineers; page 74), the **Farmer** occupation (page 67), or the **Lecturer** occupation (page 69).

Having said that, young Quiet People who are emerging into the surface world could have a much broader range of occupations, with the GM's permission. As long as the player can come up with a good reason why their Quiet Person could have a particular job, then they can take it and add those details to their backstory.

Sense Vestigia

All Quiet Person investigators begin the game with Sense Vestigia skill at 60% due to their inherent nature (**Sense Vestigia**, page 85).

Demi-Monde Affinity

Quiet People are very adept at shaping and manipulating earth and, more specifically, clay—it's just something they can do innately. In game terms, it's all part of their affinity. Use the Earth affinity in **Table 13: Fae Investigator Affinities** as inspiration for the everyday and significant manifestations a Quiet Person investigator can achieve. For example, by paying a Luck point cost rather than magic points, the Quiet People can use their innate powers to emulate the following spells: **Terra** (cost: 5 Luck, page 182), **Rock Drill** (cost: 10 Luck, page 180), **Impello Vibrato** (cost: 20 Luck, page 184), and **The Coffin Bell** (cost: 20 Luck, page 188).

Unlike most other members of the lower demi-monde, though, the Quiet People do seem to emit a *vestigia* when they use their thematic powers, so the player can either stick with the one mentioned in the Quiet Person's profile on page 253, or they can use the **Creating an Investigator's Signare** rules on page 164. If they choose the latter option, they should roll three times on **Table 10: Signare** as usual, discard one, and then add either a momentary blast of heat or the smell of the pigsty as a third element, if they haven't already rolled either of those two.

Footnotes: [6]*Rivers of London*; [7]*Whispers Under Ground*

Table 13: Fae Investigator Affinities

Affinity	Sample Manifestations
Air	The investigator can bend the very air to their will. **Everyday manifestation:** summon a draft powerful enough to close a door (5 Luck points). **Significant manifestation:** create a gust of wind to move a person, requiring the target to make a successful STR roll or be pushed back 2 metres/yards (20 Luck points).
Animals	Definitely at one with members of the animal kingdom. **Everyday manifestation:** make any animal docile (5 Luck points). **Significant manifestation:** get any animal to follow a one-sentence instruction; the instruction must be framed in terms the creature could reasonably understand (20 Luck points).
Earth	The investigator can bend the very earth to their will. **Everyday manifestation:** dig a 1 metre/yard square hole, 1 metre/yard deep in compacted earth in just a few minutes (5 Luck points). **Significant manifestation:** create an earth tremor powerful enough to unbalance someone within 10 metres/yards of the investigator, requiring the target to make a DEX roll or be shaken around and drop what they are holding (20 Luck points).
Fire	The investigator can bend fire to their will. **Everyday manifestation:** ignite flammable material (non-living) by touching it, as if holding a match to it (5 Luck points). **Significant manifestation:** ignite flammable material (non-living), but as if they are holding a burning torch to it (i.e., the object ignites far quicker and suffers greater damage (20 Luck points).
Mechanical	The investigator has a special aptitude with all things mechanical. **Everyday manifestation:** fix a mechanical watch and make it tick (5 Luck points). **Significant manifestation:** fix any car problems (mechanical in nature) in under 10 minutes, and make it run like new (20 Luck points). *If the investigator wishes, they can specialise rather than having a general mechanical aptitude. Example specialisms include clockwork or locks. For example:* **Everyday manifestation:** open a lock that normally requires a Regular success with the Locksmith skill (5 Luck points). **Significant manifestation:** open a lock that requires a Hard success with the Locksmith skill (20 Luck points).
Plants	The investigator can make vegetation do all sorts of interesting things. **Everyday manifestation:** encourage a small bouquet's worth of flowers to bloom on demand (5 Luck points). **Significant manifestation:** cause an obstruction or create a means of escape by making tree branches move, or swell the wood in a door so it jams, etc. (20 Luck points).
Water	The investigator can influence and control water, wherever it may be found, just not on quite the same scale as the rivers. **Everyday manifestation:** breathe underwater for several minutes or form a small volume of water into a particular shape (5 Luck points). **Significant manifestation:** breathe underwater for an hour or direct a jet of water (e.g., from a hosepipe or tap) to wherever they want it (20 Luck points).

Relationships and Backstory

Any Quiet Person investigator has relatives and friends—and perhaps even adversaries—within the Quiet Person community, and possibly the wider demi-monde. These should be noted in the investigator's backstory. The GM can incorporate characters from the investigator's background into their cast of NPCs, as well as suggest NPC characters that the investigator might know.

Sensitivity

Quiet People are raised in underground communities and may never have been exposed to the bright lights and noise of the upper world. Their senses are attuned to low light and quiet sounds, so they gain a bonus die to Observation rolls in quiet, dimly-lit environments. They cannot see in total darkness, though.

Conversely, they incur a penalty die to Observation rolls in noisy or bright environments. Remember when you had a migraine or a bad hangover? Remember how bright lights hurt your eyes and loud noises made your head throb? Well, now ask yourself if the light or noise would be strong enough to make you wince—if so, that's a penalty die. This would include the noise level in a busy supermarket or the light level on any day where the sun is shining brightly enough to cast strong shadows.

Skills Revisited

The following section presents some additional ideas and options regarding skills and skill rolls.

Creating New Skills

As mentioned in **Chapter 2**, it may be that a player wants an expert skill that isn't currently covered in the **Skill List** (page 81). Creating a new expert skill isn't so different to creating a new occupation: if there's an existing skill that can be adjusted slightly to cover what the investigator needs, then go for it, with the GM's approval.

If, on the other hand, there's nothing there that really works, look at the existing skills to determine what's needed. For example, besides the brief description of what the skill does overall, it needs details on whether or not there is a skill that opposes it, what constitutes a Regular and Hard difficulty level, how you might push the roll, and what the consequences for failing a pushed roll might be.

Example: *Jo wants her investigator's occupation to be Archaeologist, but she wants them to have studied anthropology as well. As there currently isn't an Anthropology skill—and the GM isn't convinced that any of the existing expert skills quite cover it—they sit down with Jo to figure out what the new skill encompasses. They agree on a brief description of what the skill does, as well as the fact that it doesn't have an opposing skill. They then determine what might be achieved at the different difficulty levels and have fun working out what the consequences of a failed pushed roll could be, along with ways to put in the extra effort that a pushed roll requires. When they're both happy with the new skill, Jo takes it as one of her investigator's six starting skills and writes it on their character sheet. For what the finished skill looks like, see the Anthropology box, nearby.*

Anthropology

Enables the user to identify and understand an individual's way of life through observation. If the skill-user observes another culture from within for a time, or works from accurate records concerning an extinct culture, then simple predictions can be made about that culture's ways and morals, even though the evidence may be incomplete. Studying the culture for a month or more, the anthropologist begins to understand how the culture functions and, in combination with Read Person (**Combined Skill Rolls**, page 322), may predict the actions and beliefs of those being studied.

Opposing skill/Difficulty level:
The difficulty for this skill is set according to the exposure of the skill-user to their subject.

- **Regular difficulty:** determining how someone might act after spending a month or more studying the person's culture.
- **Hard difficulty level:** determining how someone might act after spending only a week or less studying the person's culture.

Pushing Examples
Taking more time to study the culture; completely immersing themselves in the culture for a period, e.g., living with the people they're studying; taking an active role in a ceremony or rite, etc.

Sample consequences of failing a pushed roll: being attacked by the people studied due to some perceived transgression of their laws or social mores; suffering severe side-effects as the result of being involved in a ceremony that involved ingesting psychotropic plants.

Combined Skill Rolls

Some situations allow—sometimes, even demand—the simultaneous use of multiple skills. Other situations may be resolved by any one of a number of skills. In either situation, only one dice roll is made, with the result compared with each of the specified skills. The GM states whether a success is required for both skills—i.e., to achieve the task, the roll has to be a success for each skill involved—or if the roll only has to be a success for one of the skills involved.

Example: *a street criminal moves to pull a knife from inside their jacket. A successful Observation roll would allow Nafeesa to see the ruffian's hand moving towards the knife, while a successful Read Person would allow her to anticipate the action through the ruffian's demeanour. The GM asks for a combined Observation and Read Person roll for Nafeesa. If the roll's result is a success for either skill, it allows Nafeesa to anticipate the man's action and perhaps give her a chance to act first.*

Later, Nafeesa attends a party and wants to keep an eye open for anyone acting suspiciously. Once again, this requires both Observation and Read Person, so the GM asks for a combined Observation and Read Person roll. One roll is made and the result is compared to both skills—but in this case, the GM states that the dice roll must be a success for both Observation and Read Person for Nafeesa to achieve the task.

Note the importance of using a single dice roll in the latter example. Both Nafeesa's Read Person and Observation skills have a value of 60%. The chance of success when making one dice roll and comparing it to both skills simultaneously is 60%. If two separate rolls were made, first against Observation and then against Read Person, the chance of succeeding in both would be reduced to 36%. That's statistics for you…

Social Skill: Difficulty Levels

A character may have a Social skill of 60%, but this doesn't mean they can charm anyone and everyone 60% of the time. The difficulty level for a skill roll is based on the opposing factor; in this case, the Read Person skill. So, if the opposing character has a Read Person skill of 70% or higher, the person rolling needs to make a Hard success (a roll equal to or lower than half the investigator's Social skill; **Determining the Difficulty Level**, page 105). The vast majority of NPCs have a Read Person skill below 70%, though, so the difficulty level will most often be Regular and a player only needs a Regular success to achieve their goal. When an investigator is interacting with an NPC, it's up to the GM when to call for a Social skill roll.

- If the NPC is positively inclined towards the investigator's goal, don't bother rolling dice—simply have them agree.
- If the NPC lacks strong feelings about the investigator's goal but is being asked to do something that requires them to put themselves out, the GM could ask for a roll at the appropriate difficulty level.
- If the NPC is opposed to the investigator's goal, any Social roll the player makes incurs a penalty die.
- If the player comes up with something to strengthen their investigator's interaction with the NPC, the Social roll may gain a bonus die, at the GM's discretion. For example, if the investigator is trying to persuade an NPC to do something, and the player puts forward a really good argument as to why the NPC would help them, then the GM could award a bonus die. Or if the investigator hands over a significant bribe, this could also be sufficient motivation to award a bonus die to their Social roll.
- At the extremes of what's possible with a Social roll, an NPC might refuse to give up information because they fear reprisals against their family. In a case like this, the NPC would be strongly motivated not to talk. Even if the player comes up with a very persuasive case, the best they might be allowed is a Hard Social roll with a penalty die.

Example: *Nafeesa is trying to get an NPC to reveal the name of their contact in the police force. The NPC is a doctor; as they're not a major or recurring NPC, the GM hasn't used the full character creation rules for them, but decides that their Social and Read Person skills are below 70%. The difficulty level therefore begins as Regular. However, the doctor has no desire to reveal her contact, so the GM adds a penalty die.*

Nafeesa's player fails the skill roll, and so seeks to push the roll by threatening to expose some of the doctor's underhanded dealings to the press. Nafeesa pulls out her mobile and dials a number, asking for the news desk, and then looks the doctor straight in the eye to make sure she understands the implied threat. The GM awards Nafeesa's player a bonus die on the pushed roll, which cancels out the penalty die incurred by the doctor's reluctance to talk. Unfortunately, Nafeesa's player fails the pushed roll and it is now entirely up to the GM whether the doctor is forthcoming, regardless of any further action the investigators may take against her. Bearing in mind, of course, what would be the most interesting fallout from that failed pushed roll. Perhaps the doctor lies, sending Nafeesa off on a wild goose chase… If, on the other hand, the player had succeeded at their Social roll, the GM would have to give up the name of the contact as this was the player's stated goal.

GM ADVICE

In the combined skill rolls example, as Nafeesa has the same skill value for both skills, if she succeeds at one, she also succeeds at the other. If we'd used Eli Venturini in the example instead, his Observation skill is 30% and his Read Person skill is 60%. In the first part of the example, Eli still has a good chance of getting some information from the combined roll as the dice result only has to be a success for one of the two skills involved. So, as long as he rolls 60 or lower, he learns something. In the second half of the example, it's going to be much harder for him to achieve his goal as the dice result must be a success for both Read Person and Observation, i.e., he needs to roll 30 or lower to learn anything of use.



Magic Revisited

We've already spoken about *vestigia*, *signare*, spells, and spellcasting in **Chapter 4: Newtonian Magic**. Here we take a look at a few other aspects of magic from the *Rivers of London* setting, as well as some guidelines on how to create your own Newtonian spells.

Higher-Order Spells

There are, of course, spells of a higher-order than the ones in Chapter 4—ones that take years of training and practise to master. Many are mentioned in the novels only in passing, such as the body control spell used by Nightingale against Patrick Gale[8], which Peter guesses is at least 20th order.

Such higher-order spells are, like **Demon Traps** (page 324), something the investigators are more likely to experience than use themselves. Following is an example of one such spell from *Rivers of London*; it has no prerequisite as it is not intended for player use.

Dissimulo (Eighth Order)

A spell that alters the position of the muscles and skin in a person's face, completely changing their appearance. The spell lasts for 10 minutes. When cast, the caster must overcome the target with an opposed POW roll.

- If the caster loses the opposed roll, the spell fails.
- If the caster wins the opposed roll, the target's face rearranges itself. Bones break and move, and flesh remoulds to the caster's design. The target feels intense pain.

When the spell ends, the forces holding the target's face together collapse, with terrible results. Death is likely, and the target suffers immediate Terminal damage (**Table 7: Other Forms of Damage**, page 149).

In theory, a practitioner could cast this spell upon their own face, but quite what dire need would drive a person to do that is hard to fathom.

Boost: each additional magic point spent increases the duration by 10 minutes. However, the spell automatically ends if the caster falls asleep.

I saw the dissimulo *as it happened that time: the courier's chin seemed to bulge, I heard the distinct cracking of bone and teeth as it jutted forward into a sharp point. The lips twisted into a snarl as the nose stretched until it was almost as long. It wasn't a real face, it was a caricature man-in-the-moon face that no human could have in real life. The mouth opened and I could see inside to the red ruin of his jaw.*
—*Rivers of London*

Creating New Spells

Aside from the higher-order spells discussed in the previous section, we also haven't included every single lower-order spell that Ben mentions in the *Rivers of London* novels, either. If there's a particular favourite spell belonging to the Newtonian tradition that you or the players would like to include in your game, you can always create it.

Look at the spells in **Chapter 4**. They each have an order, which determines how many magic points it costs to cast them. Some have prerequisites, followed by a brief description of what the spell does, and possibly, how long it lasts. If it can be boosted, the boost part of the description details what happens for each additional magic point spent. There may also be an additional effect if the spell is mastered. These are all elements that you'll need to think about if you decide to create a spell of your own based on what's in the books.

Figuring out a spell's order, and hence its base cost, may be quite straightforward if the source novel lists the *formae* needed to cast it. Be careful, though, as some of the Latin terms listed—like *aestus* and *iactus*—are *adjectivia* or *inflectentes*, so aren't counted when working out a spell's order. If in doubt, think about when it first appears in the novels—the earlier in the series Peter Grant learns it, the lower its level is likely to be—or what existing spell has a similar or equivalent effect.

The next thing to think about is the spell's prerequisites. Does it have any, and, if yes, what are they? You should be able to figure this out from the *formae* used to construct it. If you're creating a second order spell that includes *lux* as one of its *formae*, then Werelight or Flash Bulb would be its prerequisite, and so on.

After that, you need to figure out what the spell does in game terms. If it's a ranged attack spell, like Fireball, you'll need to include details of its effective range and how much base spell damage it deals. If it's a spell that affects how a person behaves, you should always include a way for the target to resist its effects. Remember, if the investigators can learn your new spell, then so can NPCs, and while players are often content to surrender a certain degree of investigator autonomy if the dice will it, no one enjoys arbitrarily losing control of their character as a result of GM fiat. See also **Important: Consent** (page 190).

Finally, if the spell can be boosted, what does that boost do? For example, does it increase the time the spell lasts or how much damage it does? Or does it have some other effect? Does mastery give you some extra degree of fine control over the spell's effect? Not all spells have to be boostable, and not all spells have a mastery effect, but these are both points you need to think about when adding the finishing touches to your creation.

Once you have everything in place, we suggest you test the spell through an NPC in one or two case files before you let the investigators get their hands on it. This way, you'll know if you've got the balance of what it does for how much it costs about right, or whether you need to go away and refine it a little further.

Footnote: [8]*Lies Sleeping*

Enchantments

In the *Rivers of London* novels, objects can be imbued with magical power through the process known as enchantment. This can result in handy items such as Nightingale's silver-topped cane, which serves as his **Wizard's Staff** (following), or at the other end of the spectrum, an enchantment is used to create the IED of magic, the terribly dangerous **Demon Trap** (nearby). And then there are the **Rose Jars** (page 326): an 18th century means of trapping and preserving ghosts.

The Wizard's Staff

We learn of several wizard's staffs during the course of the novels, all of them either constructed by—or with knowledge taught by—the legendary British practitioner blacksmiths, the Sons of Weyland[9]. The wizard's staff is a source of power, and can be thought of as a rechargeable "magic point battery."

At the heart of the staff or cane lies a core of gunmetal blue metal, the thickness of a pencil. This core has ripples of shading along its length where the metal has been repeatedly folded, like the blade of a samurai sword. In Japanese swordsmithing, this process of folding metal (pattern welding) produced exceptional blades from crude ores. In the hands of magical blacksmiths, it creates a matrix capable of retaining magical power.

A third order spell is used to raise the temperature of the forge and keep it hot while the metal is hammered—basically, a variation of the *lux forma* that both heats the forge and stops you from burning your hands while you work the hot metal. It takes well over 100 hours of work to create a single staff.



A practitioner who handles a wizard's staff should feel a buzz of power running through it. A staff made by one practitioner can be used by another, but there can be complications, if you wish. Who knows what it would be like to use the staff of a dark wizard? Or perhaps a staff might have had an angry spirit trapped inside it, making it a danger akin to a **Demon Trap** (following).

We're not going to provide rules for investigators to create their own wizard's staff just yet, but if you, the GM, want them to have one, they can either be gifted it as a reward for having performed some exceptional service, or you can work it into the story as something they craft for themselves—although it's going to take a heck of a long time for them to get it finished. Like demon traps, consider a wizard's staff as GM fiat—it's entirely up to you if your players can get their hands on one.

There are some rules of thumb you may wish to use for quickly creating a wizard's staff for an NPC.

- If they forged it themselves, the maximum number of magic points it can store is the same as their maximum number of magic points at the time they created it. They can choose to store fewer magic points in it, if they wish.
- If it was forged by someone else, assume it has a store of 10 magic points for a beginner's staff and 20 magic points if created for a more experienced practitioner.
- To recharge their staff, the practitioner must spend two hours of quiet concentration, focusing their energy into its core. A staff only fails to recharge if its core is damaged or broken.
- A practitioner wielding a staff decides on the source of the magic points they're using: their own supply or the staff's charge. If one source runs out, the spell automatically draws from the other until it, too, is drained.

Demon Trap

Given their vile nature, a demon trap is not something the investigators should be making, but it is something they may encounter. The easiest way to explain the nature of a demon trap is to compare it to a magical anti-personnel landmine. If it's triggered, it releases a sudden crescendo of *vestigia* followed by an explosion. The explosion can be a physical blast (akin to a regular anti-personnel mine or IED) or a psychic wave (which effectively fries people's brains).

Creating a Demon Trap

The creation of a demon trap is not especially difficult, but it is very nasty. The process originated in Scandinavia with the Vikings back in the 7th century. It requires only a second order spell—oh, and torture. Traditionally, a captive individual would be tortured to death and their spirit trapped in the device—basically, a demon trap is a weaponised angry ghost.

Footnote: [9]*Broken Homes*

A demon trap can take many forms. Traditionally made of metal, they can also be made from plastic, some forms of which are just as good as metal for retaining magic—if not better (**Vestigia in the Environment**, page 163). One demon trap described in the novels is a metal disk about 60 cm (2 feet) wide and 5 mm (0.2 inches) thick, but there are other designs on record. It's not so much the look as the feel of the trap that identifies one for what it is.

Setting Off a Demon Trap

Two definite contacts are required to set off the trap: stepping onto the trap primes the demon, while stepping off the trap releases it, causing the explosion.

- If a person is unaware of the demon trap's presence, and is moving around in close proximity to it, the GM should ask for a Luck roll. A failure means they have stepped on it and have set off the first of the two triggers. The second trigger is activated when they step off the trap.
- If the person stepping onto the demon trap is a practitioner, they may sense the trap and have a chance of deactivating it (**Locating a Demon Trap**, following).

When a demon trap goes off, the GM must determine two factors: the effect and the power level.

- First, the effect: choose whether the demon trap creates a physical blast or a psychic wave. Published case files will state which effect the demon trap uses.
- Second, the power level: choose whether it is a standard demon trap or a greater demon trap. Published case files will state what the demon trap's power level is.

For a physical blast effect:

- A standard demon trap creating a physical explosion inflicts Terminal* damage to those within 2 metres/yards, and Deadly* damage to those up to 6 metres/yards away.
- A greater demon trap creating a physical explosion inflicts Splat* damage to those within 2 metres/yards, and Terminal* damage to those up to a distance of 6 metres/yards away.

*Refer to **Table 7: Other Forms of Damage** (page 149) for definitions of Splat, Terminal, and Deadly damage.

For a psychic wave effect:

- A standard demon trap creating a psychic wave: those within 6 metres/yards must make a POW roll for **Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation** (page 177). Any victims within 2 metres/yards of the trap incur a penalty die to the roll.
- A greater demon trap creating a psychic wave: those within 12 metres/yards must make a POW roll for **Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation** (page 177). Any victims within 4 metres/yards of the trap incur a penalty die to the roll.

Locating a Demon Trap

If the person stepping on the demon trap is a practitioner, the GM should ask for a Magic roll:

- **Success:** the practitioner realises they have inadvertently set off the first of the two triggers. Once the first trigger is activated, the practitioner cannot move without the trap going off. They now have an opportunity to disarm it.
- **Fail:** the practitioner is unaware of triggering the demon trap and it goes off, inflicting the degree of harm determined by the GM (**Setting Off a Demon Trap**, nearby).

If the practitioner is aware of the presence of the demon trap, but doesn't know its precise location, they can search for it. To do this, the practitioner takes a fresh-cut branch in their hand and feels over the ground to find the edges of the trap. This requires a Sense Vestigia or Magic roll (whichever is higher):



- **Success:** the practitioner safely locates the trap without activating it.
- **Fail:** the practitioner locates the trap, but accidentally activates the first trigger. Once the first trigger is activated, the practitioner cannot move without the trap going off. They now have an opportunity to disarm it.

Disarming a Demon Trap

Once the trap has been located—one way or another—a practitioner must use the **Sīphōnem** spell (page 191) to disarm it. Failing the casting roll activates a trigger on the demon trap:

- If neither of the trap's triggers have been activated, failing the casting roll activates the first trigger. Once the first trigger is activated, the practitioner cannot move away without the trap going off. They now have a second opportunity to disarm it.
- If the trap's first triggers has already been activated, failing the casting roll activates the second trigger and sets the demon trap off.

Providing the spell is cast successfully, the trap is deactivated and the noxious energy drained out of it, funnelling safely upwards into a swirling vortex. The release of energy may cause a few unfortunate, but otherwise harmless, side effects, such as every house and/or car alarm within a street or two of the demon trap's location being triggered.

If the first trigger has been activated and no one present knows the Sīphōnem spell, then there are limited options available. Either call for someone who does know the spell, or evacuate the area and attempt to reduce the degree of damage suffered when the trap detonates. Whoever triggered the trap may attempt to jump to safety:

- Jumping away from a standard demon trap requires a DEX roll. On a Hard success, reduce the damage from Terminal to Deadly in the case of physical blast, or remove the penalty die in the case of psychic wave.
- Jumping away from a greater demon trap requires a DEX roll. On a Hard success, reduce the damage from Splat to Terminal in the case of physical blast. Sadly, if it's a greater demon trap, even this won't help in the case of the psychic wave because of its increased range of effect.

Any practitioner or member of the demi-monde within an 800 metre (0.5 mile) radius will also be aware that a demon trap has been triggered or defused; the release of a really powerful demon trap may be felt even further afield.

It's common for a demon trap to also have a secondary charge to catch incautious rescuers.

Rose Jars

Demijohn-sized, glass containers filled with a cloudy liquid of various colours, used for trapping ghosts. Peter Grant first encountered them when looking for missing social worker Brené McClaren[10]. According to Abigail's research, they were developed by a Creole woman known as Rose of New Orleans, who taught the technique to her husband, the notorious George Buckland (**County Practitioners**, page 260). According to New York Librarian Mrs Chin, she was actually Rosemarie Louise Moreno, an 18th century Black practitioner from New Orleans who trained at the *Académie Royale de Philosophie Occulte* in Paris[11]. Rosemarie allegedly brought knowledge of how to produce the jars to London when she fled the French Revolution.

Although the actual production process is currently unknown—to the Folly, at least—new variations have been created accidentally. Occupied Rose jars give off a soft glow because of the ghost or personality trapped within. Although an effective means of storage, any ghost captured in this way cannot be released without destroying it. If the jar is smashed, the entity within is immediately destroyed. If released by gentler methods, such as removing the sealed stopper, the jar cracks with the loss of one-quarter to one-half of the liquid within; the ghost appears and behaves in the same way as others of its kind (**Ghost**, page 249), before gradually falling apart in a most disturbing manner, then vanishing altogether.

If the ghost inside is amenable, touching a Rose jar transports the viewer's consciousness into the ghost's miniature realm, which appears as a single location of the ghost's choosing, surrounded, as Peter Grant describes it, by "shifting planes of crystal." There, the viewer can talk to the ghost and ask them questions for as long as the jar's resident wishes them to remain. A ghost is under no obligation to permit entry to their jar if they do not wish it.

While it is unlikely the investigators will uncover the secret of making Rose jars, the objects could be used by the GM as most unusual witnesses to a crime, or as assets to be recovered to prevent their misuse by unscrupulous collectors and unlicenced practitioners.

Creating Non-Newtonian Special Abilities

As you saw in Chapter 6, **Sahra Guleed** (page 234) and **Michael Cheung** (page 238) use a form of magic that is non-Newtonian in nature. Because this book doesn't define how non-Newtonian traditions work, we've given them special abilities that mimic the stunts they get up to in the novels.

It may be that you want to create an NPC of your own who uses magic from a tradition very different to that practised by Peter Grant and DCI Nightingale. The simplest way to do this is to adapt the spells in **Chapter 4** to better reflect that tradition but essentially use the same underlying system: a set magic point cost for a particular level of spell coupled with a

Footnotes: [10]*The Furthest Station*, [11]*False Value*

Magic skill roll to see if the spell is used successfully. After all, it may be that the only difference between the traditions is the gestures and terminology that each associates with casting a particular type of spell—i.e., the underlying principles of magic remain the same no matter how you dress it up. That's certainly what we've done with the **Snapdragon** spell (page 182), which Peter learned from Lady Caroline Linden-Limmer[12].

Alternatively, you may wish to create a particular special ability to give your NPC their powers. Let's look at Michael Cheung as an example of how you might go about that. From the novels, we know that Michael's business card states he is a "Legendary Swordsman[13]," so he's going to have a sword. It's not going to be an ordinary sword—he is using the word legendary after all—so let's make it the equivalent of a **Wizard's Staff** (page 324). Michael's a master of his art, so let's say it has a store of 20 magic points. By contrast, Sahra's sword (page 235) only has a store of 10 magic points as she's still an apprentice.

Michael has magical abilities, so he needs the Magical advantage. But we need to tweak that to better reflect his tradition, which is based on movement. So, let's adapt it so it becomes the **Mystic Art of Fighting** (page 234). When Michael expends a magic point in combat, not only can he pull off all sorts of gravity-defying manoeuvres, but he also gains a bonus die on his Fighting roll, which all adds to his legendary status.

Let's go back to Michael's sword. It may, effectively, be a wizard's staff, but it should also probably function something like the **Signature Weapon** advantage (page 52)—every legendary swordsman worth his salt has one of those. To make sure it matches with his fighting skills being magical in nature, let's also say the bonus die he gains on damage rolls must be paid for with a magic point spend. And there you have him: Michael Cheung, legendary swordsman, whose magic skills were created from a combination of tweaked advantages and an enchanted item.

So, for your NPC, think about what their magical abilities are and what advantages or other skills/items you could adapt to replicate the in-game effect you're after. You may even want to look at the demi-monde affinities used by fae investigators (**Affinities**, page 318) for some ideas, particularly if you think they come from a tradition that specialises in manipulating a specific type of element. Be careful not to make your NPC a magical jack-of-all-trades, though. Try to let each tradition have its own peculiar foibles so that the investigators recognise it the next time they see someone else using it.

Combat Revisited

The **Combat** section (page 123) contains all the rules needed to run fight scenes in your game. We advise you to stick with those until you become accustomed to using them. Once you are comfortable and confident with the standard rules, you may want to add a little more crunch to combat, so what follows is a collection of optional rules from which you can pick and choose as you please.

You are not under any obligation to use any of the following suggestions just because they're here. Everyone has their own preference when it comes to rules. Some people prefer to make spontaneous judgements about each new situation based on its unique merits, either narratively or with the aid of dice rolls, while others prefer to have a strongly defined set of guidelines to play by.

You and your group know what suits you best, but, if you're not sure, sit down and talk about it, or try adding and removing one rules tweak at a time to see what you do and don't like. As always, take what you want, leave what you don't! Keep the rules that you feel enrich your game and drop the ones that don't. After all, the idea is to have fun telling stories in the *Rivers of London* world, and you only need to use the rules that help support you to do that.

Surprise

Sometimes, opponents square up to each other like two boxers in the ring—they know they're engaged in a fight even before the first punch is thrown. If this is the case, the GM should start a combat round as soon as someone states they are throwing the first punch. This is effectively how we've treated all combat up until now.

However, not all fights start like that. In some cases, the attack may be a complete surprise—a sudden knee to the groin or a knife in the back, for example. When someone states that they're making a sudden, unexpected attack, they should have the opportunity to surprise their opponent. Of course, if the target has their wits about them, they may see the attack coming. Also, a character entering an ongoing combat could attempt to do so by stealth and gain the advantage of surprise. Once a character has been seen, or has participated in the combat, there is no further opportunity for a surprise attack as their opponent now knows they're there.

The following rules for surprise attacks assume the target has some chance of anticipating what's about to happen. If the target is drugged or otherwise unconscious, they're effectively defenceless and the GM should use their discretion to judge the outcome.

Footnotes: [12, 13] *The Hanging Tree*

Can I Make a Surprise Attack on My Opponent?

If you're sneaking up on a target, make a Stealth roll. The GM should use the NPC's Observation skill to set the difficulty level for your Stealth roll. With a success, you attack with surprise, while a failure means you attack normally. When a character attacks with surprise, the attack automatically succeeds. The attacker should then make their damage roll to see how badly they've injured their opponent.

- If your target knows you're there, and you're simply making a sudden attack and hope to gain the element of surprise, make a Stealth roll. The GM should use either the NPC's Observation or Read Person skill (whichever is higher) to set the difficulty level for your Stealth roll. With a success, you attack with surprise, while a failure means you attack normally.
- In both cases, if the NPC's skill is 70 or above, the difficulty level is Hard, meaning you'll have to roll equal to or lower than half your skill value on percentile dice.

What if Someone Tries to Make a Surprise Attack on Me?

If someone is sneaking up on you, make an Observation roll. The GM should use the NPC's Stealth skill to set the difficulty level for your Observation roll. With a success, you anticipate the attack and resolve it normally, while a failure means you are surprised.

- If you are aware of the presence of your attacker, and they're simply making a sudden attack and hope to gain the element of surprise, make an Observation or Read Person roll (whichever is higher). The GM should use the NPC's Stealth skill to set the difficulty level for your roll. With a success, you anticipate the attack and resolve it normally, while a failure means you are surprised.
- In both cases, if the NPC's skill is 70 or above, the difficulty level is Hard, meaning you'll have to roll equal to or lower than half your skill value on percentile dice.

When the GM attacks with surprise the attack automatically succeeds, and they should make a damage roll to see how badly they've injured their target.

Prone Revisited

In **Chapter 3**, we talked about outcomes other than damage during a fight, such as using combat manoeuvres to knock a person prone. A prone character is assumed to be lying flat on the ground and Fighting attacks against someone when they are prone gain one bonus die (**Combat Manoeuvres**, page 134).

- Normally, a prone character may stand up on their next turn in the round as a free action (**Combat Manoeuvres**, page 134). If another character is holding their action, they can interrupt (**Interrupting**, page 328) and attempt to keep the prone character down. If they successfully interrupt, the prone character must engage them in an opposed Fighting roll to stand up. This counts as both individuals' turns for the round.
- Lying down provides a stable position from which to shoot. A prone character gains one bonus die when making a Firearms roll.
- By lying flat on the floor, a prone character also presents a smaller target, and those targeting a prone character with a gun or spell incur one penalty die on their Firearms or Magic roll—but ignore this if at point-blank range.

Holding Your Action

Normally, a character waits until their turn in a combat round and then initiates their combat action, whether that's fighting, fleeing, or performing some other action that requires a dice roll (**Actions in a Combat Round**, page 126). However, a character may instead elect to hold their turn in the combat round, allowing them to take their turn following someone else's turn in the same round or remain ready to interrupt someone else's action—i.e., to try and stop that person from completing their intended action. The GM should keep careful track of the turn order in the round if they're going to allow the use of these options.

- If a player wishes to hold their investigator's action in a particular round, they can declare when they're going to act, saying something along the lines of, "*I'm going to hold my action and go after Sam.*" If they declare when they are going to act in this manner, it doesn't count as **Interrupting** (following).
- If a character fails to use their held action before it gets back to their regular turn in the following round, the held action is lost, but they may initiate the current round's action as normal.

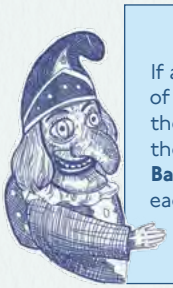
Interrupting

A player may hold their investigator's action so they can interrupt a character's future turn. For example:

- If another character breaks cover, even briefly (to fire shots for example), they may be targeted by a character who is holding their action.
- If, as an investigator, an enemy declares an attack on one of your allies, you may use your held action to intervene in some way, e.g., diving heroically in front of a colleague who is about to get shot.

Regardless of what action they are taking (melee, magic, firearms, etc.), the GM should call for an opposed DEX roll to determine who takes their action first—in the case of a tie, the person holding their action wins.

Example: *Izzy has her gun trained on Nafeesa and her colleagues. Nafeesa's player says they are holding her action and will only cast a spell at Izzy if Izzy moves to shoot someone. The GM declares that Izzy is going to shoot Nafeesa, so it comes down to a DEX roll to see whether Nafeesa or Izzy gets their "shot" off first.*



GM ADVICE

If a player really wants their investigator to dive in front of someone to save them from a spell or a bullet, and they haven't opted to hold their action, you could allow them to use their fight back response (**Response 3: Fight Back**, page 129), on someone else's behalf. Remember that each character can only make the fight back response once per round unless they have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).

Automatic Fire

Some firearms can be set to automatic fire (**Table 3: Weapons**, page 61), indicating that the gun keeps on firing until the trigger is released. This usually means that, in the space of a few seconds, the gun has fired all of its ammunition. When we use the term "full auto" in *RoL:RPG*, we're talking about a person emptying a whole clip on their turn in the combat round.

Firing on full auto is not the same as firing **Multiple Shots** (page 139), which we treat as three shots fired in rapid succession against a *single* target—either from three quick pulls of the trigger or from "burst fire" (a single trigger pull that fires three shots). The multiple shots rules allow the user to choose between increasing their chance to hit or increasing the damage they do if they hit.

With full auto, the user gets a different choice. Either they can pull the trigger and fire in an arc at a selection of targets, known as "spray and pray," or they can pull the trigger and hold the gun steady in order to fire on a single target or small area, which we term "concentrated fire." To do either, you need to have over half the ammunition left in the clip. Using full auto almost always empties the clip (for exceptions, see following). It doesn't necessarily do that in real life, but this is a game, and for ease of play, there must be some compromise with how things work in the real world.

Given how quickly automatic weapons fire, some are fitted with a larger ammunition capacity, which may be a belt or drum of some kind. Such weapons can be used to make up to 3 auto fire attacks on multiple rounds without the need to reload.

GM ADVICE

As gun play is not central to *RoL:RPG*, we haven't included things like the number of bullets a weapon has per clip or magazine in **Table 3: Weapons**. Instead, that's something that should be determined narratively by you during combat based on the weapons in use. If it seems unreasonable for someone with an automatic weapon to use full auto because they've been shooting everything in sight with single shots up to that point, then feel free to insist they'll need to change their clip first. If necessary, the GM could ask a player to make a Luck roll to determine whether their firearm holds less than half its magazine.



Spray and Pray

Also known as "suppressing fire," the aim is to make everyone in the arc of fire think again about the life choices that brought them to this moment. It's more about getting people out of the way than it is about harming them. Imagine the sound as the hail of bullets comes flying in your general direction—most people are going to throw themselves to the floor and get their heads down.

In the standard firearms rules, we have the **Dive for Cover** rule (page 128). However, versus full auto, diving for cover is a little different. Everyone in the arc of fire has the option to dive for cover, and anyone who takes that option automatically avoids taking damage; however, they do have to sacrifice their next turn. If they've already taken their turn in the present round, they must sacrifice their turn in the following round.

Holding the firearm and moving it in a sweeping motion from left to right (or vice versa) produces an arc of fire up to 90 degrees at most. As *RoL:RPG* doesn't use tactical combat maps as standard, the GM must decide which targets would be within the arc of fire and which would not. If the group has decided to play with visualisation aids, or if using a battle map on a tabletop gaming platform (**Distances in Combat**, page 127; **Who's Where?**, page 221), then who is and isn't within the arc of fire should be obvious.

The shooter only rolls to hit if someone decided not to dive for cover, i.e., if every target dived for cover, there's no need to roll anything—the shooter fires wildly over everyone's heads. If the shooter does need to roll their Firearms skill, they do so with a penalty die due to the difficulty of controlling a gun used on full auto. A difficulty level is set according to range, as is the usual case for firearms attacks. The chance of hitting targets with spray and pray diminishes with range, so any targets beyond 50 metres/yards are ignored. If the majority of the targets are within point-blank range, the GM can award a bonus die (which would cancel out the penalty die; **Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).



- **Failure:** no targets are hit.
- **Regular success:** 1 target is hit.
- **Hard success:** 3 targets are hit.
- **Critical success:** 6 targets are hit.

To determine which targets are hit, go around the table and ask each person to nominate a target. The GM goes first. Each target can only be hit once with spray and pray—if you run out of targets, the rest of the shots miss.

- Each NPC target that is hit suffers 1 damage + base weapon damage for that firearm.
- Each investigator that is hit should make a Luck roll: a success means they are lucky and suffer only 1 damage; whereas with a fail, they suffer 1 damage + base weapon damage for that firearm.

Concentrated Fire

As the name suggests, concentrated fire focuses the gunfire on a tighter target area. The shooter has a choice: either target just one individual (central target) or target that individual and one target on either side of them (group target)—these two additional targets must be within arm's reach of the central target, i.e., the whole group must be within a 2 metre/yard-wide zone.

The difficulty level is set as for a normal firearms attack and any relevant modifiers are applied (except for the multiple shots rule). Using concentrated fire gains a bonus die to the shooter's Firearms roll, which cancels out the penalty die imposed for auto fire. This means the shooter rolls their Firearms skill with only the modifiers for point-blank range, target speed, etc., affecting the roll, if applicable. If the shooter ends up with more than one bonus or penalty die, refer to **Multiple Bonus or Penalty Dice?** (page 143).

If the attack is successful, the shooter makes a separate damage roll for each target. If the attack was concentrated on a single target, double the result of the damage roll before adding base weapon damage, as per the increased damage option for **Multiple Shots** (page 139). Otherwise, roll damage for each target hit.

If a larger group of targets is confined into a narrow space, then the number of individuals included in the group target may be increased to incorporate everyone within the 2 metre/yard zone. So, for example, if the shooter is firing on full auto down a packed Underground train carriage, or firing through the open back doors of a van filled with passengers, or shooting into a crowded lift just as the doors open, the GM should increase the number of targets in the group. Also, targeting just one individual in a close group is impossible with automatic fire.

Miscellaneous Firearms Rules

There are three other sets of additional rules the GM may wish to consider for firearms in *RoL:RPG*.

Sights and Bracing

A combination of telescopic sights and some form or bracing (such as using a mounted weapon, bipod, tripod, or some other effective support) effectively doubles the standard range when using firearms. If using sights with something like a .303 Lee-Enfield rifle (standard range of 100 metres/yards) with the weapon stabilised on sandbags, for example, the difficulty level would not be increased until the range exceeded 200 metres/yards. The maximum effective range is also doubled with sights. Sights are of no benefit at point-blank range.

Complete Concealment

If a target remains completely concealed behind an obstacle for the whole round, an attacker may still take shots through the cover in the hope of hitting their target (**Cover and Concealment**, page 138). You don't just have to hide behind something during combat, though—you can also attempt to conceal yourself within an area. The chance of a shooter hitting a hiding target depends on the size of the area in which they are taking cover. For example, there is a great deal of difference between hiding in a small garden shed and hiding inside an aircraft hangar: the former provides much less cover as there are only so many places you could be located within it, while the latter probably has many locations suitable for concealing oneself, meaning the attacker has little to use except perhaps their intuition (and a successful Observation roll) to work out where their target is so they can shoot at them.

If the target is concealed within a larger location, the GM has several options, depending on the situation:

- Raise the difficulty level.
- Apply a penalty die.
- Raise the difficulty level *and* apply a penalty die.
- Only allow a hit with a Critical success—if at all.

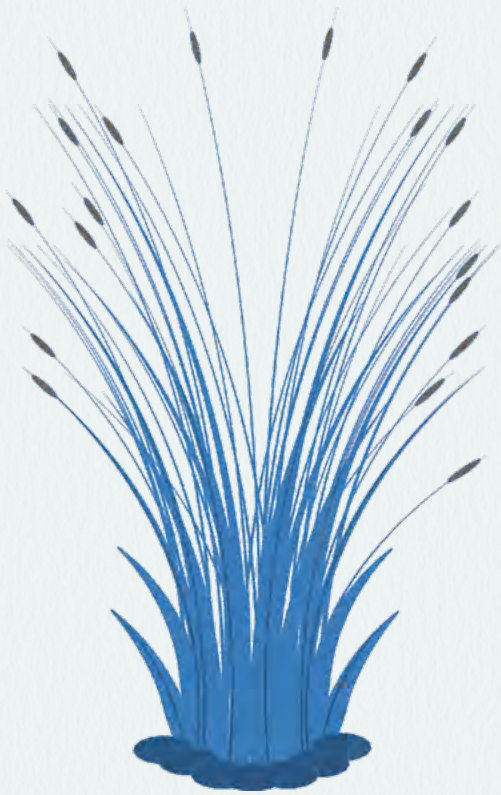
The GM should also remember to reduce any damage inflicted with a successful hit according to the protection afforded by the materials used to construct the hiding spot (**Table 6: Cover Protection**, page 138).

Armour Revisited

Some forms of armour provide protection to specific body parts; for example, a helmet protects the head. The standard combat rules do not use hit locations (but see the **Optional Hit Locations** rules, following). In the general rough-and-tumble of a fistfight or a fall from a window, it's credible that armouring specific parts of the body, such as the head, could reduce the overall damage received, and in the interest of simplicity and the flow of the game, no further rolls need be made.

However, in the case of a single specific attack, such as being shot, the question arises of whether the shot hit an area protected by armour. In this case, the GM should ask for a Luck roll. If the Luck roll is successful, the armour was hit, and the damage is modified by the armour value. If the Luck roll is failed, the attack hit an unarmoured area. A character wearing armour that protects both head and torso gains a bonus die to their Luck roll for armour protection.

A character wearing all-over body armour or possessing natural armour, e.g., an elephant's skin, does not require a Luck roll—the armour's protection applies in all cases. If a weakness is spotted in an enemy's armour—a vulnerable spot, such as an open mouth or eye—that area may be targeted, and the GM should set an increased level of difficulty or apply a penalty die for the attempt.



Optional Hit Locations

Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game doesn't use hit locations in the way that you might find in some other roleplaying games, as where someone is hit during combat is dealt with narratively by the GM and the players in accordance with the characters' actions during the fight. However, if you would like to bring hit locations into your game, you can use either the Luck roll described previously to determine if an armoured part of the body has been hit, or you can take the result of the damage roll and consult **Table 14: Optional Hit Locations**.

Table 14: Optional Hit Locations

Ignore or adjust any results that do not make sense within the context of the combat taking place.

Damage Roll	Location
1–6	Head
7–8	Neck
9–25	Chest
26–27	Groin
28–46	Abdomen
47–63	Right leg
64–80	Left leg
81–88	Right arm
89–96	Left arm
97–98	Right hand
99–100	Left hand

Damage Rolls: Alternative Method

Rather than using a damage roll to determine the amount of damage inflicted by a successful attack, the relative levels of success can be used instead. This cuts down on the number of dice being rolled and can speed up combat.

In the case of an opposed roll:

- When both sides achieve the **same level of success** (i.e., there's a tie) and the attacker wins the opposed roll because it's their turn in the round, the attack inflicts only 1 damage (no base weapon damage added).
- When the attacker beats their opponent by **1 level of success**, the attack inflicts 1 damage plus base weapon damage. This could be a Weak success vs a fumble, a Regular success vs a Weak success, a Hard success vs a Regular success, or a Critical success vs a Hard success.
- When the attacker beats their opponent by **2 levels of success**, the attack inflicts 2 damage plus base weapon damage. This could be a Regular success vs a fumble, a Hard success vs a Weak success, or a Critical success vs a Regular success.
- When the attacker beats their opponent by **3 levels of success**, the attack inflicts 3 damage plus base weapon damage. This could be a Hard success vs a fumble, or a Critical success vs a Weak success.
- When the attacker beats their opponent by **4 levels of success**, the attack inflicts 4 damage plus base weapon damage. This could only be a Critical success vs a fumble.

In the case of a successful attack made with an unopposed roll:

- If the attacker's level of success **equals the level of success** required to hit the target, the attack inflicts just 1 damage (no base weapon damage added). This could be the attacker rolling a Regular success vs a Regular difficulty level, or a Hard success vs a Hard difficulty level.
- If the attacker achieves **1 level of success** above what was required to hit the target, the attack inflicts 1 damage plus base weapon damage. This could be the attacker rolling a Hard success vs a Regular difficulty level, or a Critical success vs a Hard difficulty level.
- If the attacker achieves **2 levels of success** above what was required to hit the target (a Critical success vs a Regular difficulty level), the attack inflicts 2 damage plus base weapon damage.

As previously described, 4 damage inflicted in one blow is a mortal wound, while 5 damage inflicted in a single attack is a fatal blow and liable to kill the character (**Wounds and Healing**, page 144).



Wounds and Healing Revisited

The standard rules for dealing with wounds and healing in **Chapter 3** detail how damage inflicted during combat affects a character and how characters recover from their injuries. The **Wounds and Healing** section (page 144) also includes a table dealing with damage inflicted by sources other than weapons (**Table 7: Other Forms of Damage**, page 149). This section looks at two aspects of wounds and healing in greater detail: resisting incapacitation (following) and **Poisons** (page 333).

Spending Luck to Resist Incapacitation

Normally, a character that suffers 3 or more damage during combat is **Down** (page 144)—they are, to all intents and purposes, incapacitated and can take no further part in the fight. However, there is a way for them to get up and back in the action, should they really want to do so. Any character who wants to resist the effects of being down can spend Luck to remain active for a few extra rounds.

- Remaining active until the end of the current round costs 5 points of Luck.
- A character can continue to act in each subsequent round by spending an additional 5 points of Luck at the start of each round.

Getting back up again is a mixed blessing, as an active character may present a more attractive target for further attacks due to their obviously weakened state. If they do suffer further damage, they are immediately down on the ground again and can no longer resist it. They'll just have to wait until the fight is over.

A character who has suffered a **Mortal Wound** (page 146) can also spend Luck points to resist their injuries in the same way, although it is up to the GM whether they can do anything other than call for help.

Example: *Nafeesa has been shot, taking 4 damage (a mortal wound), and collapses to the ground, where her attacker leaves her for dead. She automatically falls prone, and her player marks the Down box on the character sheet; they then spend 5 points of Luck so Nafeesa can remain active until the end of the present round, giving Nafeesa enough time to call for help on her mobile phone.*

Poisons

Table 7: Other Forms of Damage (page 149) covers mild, strong, and lethal poisons in a simplified manner. While this is likely to be all you need in the game, if you wish to focus on a specific type of poison and its effects, you may wish to use this more detailed system instead.

All poisons are divided into four bands: very mild, mild, strong, and lethal. The bands indicate the deadliness of the poison and assume a single dose—application, draft, bite, or sting, depending on how the poison is administered.

- If multiple doses are received, the victim adds a penalty die to their CON roll to resist its effects.

Individual poisons cause a range of symptoms, including stomach pains, vomiting, diarrhoea, chills, sweats, cramps, jaundice, altered heart rate, impaired vision, convulsions, unconsciousness, and paralysis. It's up to the GM whether the symptoms permit the victim to act or not, or to act with a penalty die or an increased level of difficulty.

Alongside the various symptoms, poisons also cause physical damage. If an investigator is poisoned, the GM should ask their player to make a CON roll.

- If the CON roll is successful, the severity of the damage is reduced by moving the strength of the poison down one level. For example, with a successful CON roll, a lethal poison is now treated as a strong poison in terms of the damage it inflicts. If the victim achieves a Hard success with their CON roll, the poison moves down two levels, e.g., from lethal to mild. The GM may allow a poison's effects to be shaken off altogether if the CON roll is a Critical success.

If the CON roll is failed, they incur they following damage:

- **Very mild poisons:** no damage, only temporary unconsciousness (1D6 minutes or rounds, as appropriate).
- **Mild poisons:** 2 damage; recovery takes around 24 hours (akin to food poisoning).
- **Strong poisons:** 4 damage (**Mortal Wound**, page 146).
- **Lethal poisons:** make another CON roll. If failed, death is immediate, whereas with a success the victim suffers a **Mortal Wound** (page 146).

The speed at which the poison acts is determined by the administration method and GM discretion. Fast-acting poisons begin to work within a single round—death from cyanide poisoning could be expected within a minute, for example. Slower poisons may take hours or even days to register their effects.

Table 15: Poisons

Poison	Type	Speed	Effect (1 dose)	Notes
Amanita (agaric mushrooms)	Mild	6 to 24 hours	Violent stomach pains, vomiting, jaundice. Suffer 2 damage. Recovery takes around 24 hours.	Responsible for 95% of fatalities from mushroom poisoning, the death cap mushroom being foremost.
Arsenic	Lethal	30 minutes to 24 hours	Burning pain, vomiting, violent diarrhoea. Make another CON roll: with a failure, death is immediate; with a success, suffer a mortal wound.	Arsenic poisoning was difficult to determine (hence its popularity as a tool for murder) until 1836, when the Marsh Test was invented.
Belladonna (deadly nightshade)	Lethal	2 hours to 2 days	Rapid heartbeat, impaired vision, convulsions. Make another CON roll: with a failure, death is immediate; with a success, suffer a mortal wound.	One of the most toxic plants in the world; consumption of 10-20 berries by an adult will probably cause death.
Black Widow Spider Venom (latrotoxin)	Strong	2 to 8 hours	Chills, sweats, nausea. Suffer 4 damage (mortal wound).	Rarely causes death if medical treatment is provided.
Chloroform	Very mild	1 round	Unconsciousness for 1 hour. No damage.	Widely used as an anaesthetic in 1800-1900s, but rarely used these days. A high strength (toxic) dose may cause death.
Cobra Venom	Lethal	15 to 60 minutes	Convulsions, respiratory failure. Make another CON roll: with a failure, death is immediate; with a success, suffer a mortal wound.	Contact with eyes causes immediate irritation and, if untreated, blindness. If antiserum is available, then major injury and death can be avoided.

Poison	Type	Speed	Effect (1 dose)	Notes
Curare	Lethal	1 to 20 minutes	Muscular paralysis, respiratory failure. Make another CON roll: with a failure, death is immediate; with a success, suffer a mortal wound.	Common name for poison used on arrows in South America. Also used in the 20th century as an anaesthetic during surgery. Harmless if ingested—only direct application via a skin wound results in paralysis.
Cyanide	Lethal	Seconds to 15 minutes	Dizziness, convulsions, fainting, death. Make another CON roll: with a failure, death is immediate; with a success, suffer a mortal wound.	Highly toxic—causes death if ingested as a cyanide salt or if inhaled through gas.
Rattlesnake Venom	Strong	30 minutes to 24 hours	Vomiting, violent spasms, yellowish vision. Suffer 4 damage (mortal wound).	Venom destroys tissue, causing necrosis, although rarely fatal (especially if antidote is given within 1 to 2 hours).
Rohypnol	Very mild	15 to 30 minutes	Unconsciousness for 4-8 hours, possible amnesia. No damage.	An odourless and colourless benzodiazepine, used as a pre-anaesthetic and in the short-term treatment of insomnia. Also known as a "roofie."
Strychnine	Lethal	10 to 20 minutes	Violent muscle contractions, asphyxiation, death. Make another CON roll: with a failure, death is immediate; with a success, suffer a mortal wound.	Death within hours if medical treatment not provided.

Writing a Case File

Now that we've addressed the additional rules for expanding the game, let's turn our attention to tips and advice for designing your own case files.

Using the Source Material

Finding plots for your own case files may be easier than you think. If your players have not read the *Rivers of London* novels and comics, and you can trust them not to at your request, you can simply transpose some of those plots into your game setting, as the Peter Grant stories are, of course, the primary source of inspiration for this game.

However, trying to run the ongoing plot from the novels as a campaign is not recommended. Narrative fiction and interactive games have different plot rules and provide different sorts of satisfaction, so what works in one may not necessarily work in the other. In the novels, Peter Grant is prone to making huge intuitive leaps that your players are highly unlikely to be able to replicate. He often finds himself randomly in the right place at the right time. And he is backed up by an ever-increasing number of powerful allies who can provide information out of the blue (often without explaining how it was obtained) and rescue him when he gets into trouble.

If you're going to use a plot from one or more of the novels in your games, you'll need to adapt it. Read through the story and then strip it down to its bare essentials in terms of how the plot progresses (what are the key locations, people, and events). Then decide what are the clues and actions needed to thread the investigation together (what can the investigators learn in each scene to move them to the next). Work out which skill rolls are needed to provide these clues to the players. Make your players *work* for the revelations they uncover—just not so hard that their investigators can't figure out what's going on. Make sure there are at least two or three ways to learn a clue (and such clues don't necessarily have to be found in the same place). And be very wary of moments where the novel handwaves over awkward metaphysical twists, bends its own magical rules, or pulls previously unforeseen information, characters, or powers out of the bag to save the day. A novelist can get away with this because they are in full control of the narrative, but it's much more difficult for a GM who is facing a group of analytically inclined players across the table. Thus, your version of a story needs to progress logically, with the investigators centre stage working out the clues and using them to decide their next actions.

The short stories are much easier to convert than the full novels. The solo adventure included in this volume, **The Domestic** (page 17), is an adaption of a short story of the same name[14]. Comparison of the two shows that they are not identical—the short story provides the inspiration and the structure for the game, but the scenario writer has built on top of that to introduce people to *RoL:RPG* by adding new story elements and rules explanations. Another writer might take it in a completely different direction, so this is where you get to make your own creative mark.

Case files adapted from the following stories would all run for one or two sessions each, could be played in any order, and involve little politics:

- "A Rare Book of Cunning Device" (short story)—something scuttling about in the British Library[14].
- "The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Granny" (short story)—a car breakdown at night[14].
- *The Furthest Station* (novella)—hunting ghosts on the Metropolitan line of the London Underground.
- *Body Work* (graphic novel)—a malevolent cursed car, physical danger.
- *Black Mould* (graphic novel)—a vengeful fungal haunting, physical danger.
- *Detective Stories* (graphic novel)—four short cases with a helpful emphasis on police procedure.

Note that "A Rare Book of Cunning Device" and the short story "King of the Rats"[14] are very open-ended as written, with much of the mystery left unsolved or the wider implications unexplored. They might make excellent starting points for you to write your own solutions and introduce your own revelations, or as a springboard into a larger plot line. And don't forget, taking the book for walks is part of the duties of those who work for the Folly (**Chapter 7: Basement**, page 264).

> **GM ADVICE**
>
> Back when the rules system for *RoL:RPG* was still being developed, both "A Rare Book of Cunning Device" and "The Cockpit" were used as demonstration scenarios, so we know they adapt well and that players can have fun with them, even if they know the story. "The Cockpit"[14] was later developed and transformed into **The Bookshop** (page 285), the introductory scenario in this book.



Devising Your Own Case Files

If your player group are huge fans who have read every *Rivers of London* story already, you will have to create your own case files, but don't worry, you don't have to be Agatha Christie! In fact, go ahead and make use of a Christie plot—she's not accoladed as the "Queen of Crime" for nothing! If you are writing a case file for a private group of player friends, there are no copyright restrictions upon you, so feel free to borrow whatever inspiration you want from TV shows, movies, crime novels, or urban fantasy fiction. There are a ton of "Nordic Noir" crime dramas available on various television channels,

Footnote: [14]*Tales from the Folly*

or you could go further afield and discover the great range of subtitled international crime fiction from India, Korea, China, South America, and so on. Change the names and the scenery (and some incidents if there is a danger of your players recognising the plot; you don't want to spoil the surprises for them). And, of course, bring on the magic.

The Antagonist

He was standing at the far end of the roof garden, leaning nonchalantly against the railing. He was dressed in a beautifully tailored dark suit, a pale silk cravat, and was carrying a cane topped with a mother-of-pearl handle.
—Moon Over Soho

When writing a case file, start with your antagonist. Somebody (or Something) has committed a crime such as murder—or at the very least done something disruptive and unusual enough to get the Folly's attention. Who or what is that antagonist? What are they trying to achieve? How has this resulted in the hook or inciting incident, e.g., the discovery of a body?

Not all antagonists are villains. Some are just doing their own supernatural thing when the investigators decide to stick their noses in—the Quiet People in *Whispers Under Ground* are an example. Some aren't aware that they are doing anything wrong or have so little sentience (or a sentience so far beyond comprehension) that it's impossible to ascribe them moral culpability. Ghosts, for example, might be scary and disruptive, but many are only the bare remnants of human personalities, and our heroes' motive in finding their bones and laying them to rest is not to bring them to justice, but simply to restore peace. The "poltergeist" in the short story "The Cockpit" is the magical equivalent of a confused animal and needs soothing rather than defeating.

NPC motivation matters. Remember the adage: "*Everyone is the hero of their own story.*" Whatever a sentient antagonist has done, they have a reason in their own mind for doing it—such as:

- They were hungry or had some other compelling appetite that needed sating.
- It was self-defence.
- They were trying to protect something, someone, or some community, such as their family.
- They were forced by a higher power.
- They were trying to protect their financial interests or place in the world.
- They were trying to teach someone a lesson.
- They were out for what they see as justifiable revenge on an individual or a group.
- They were trying to effect much needed (as they see it) change upon society.

Unless the excuse is, "*I was drunk*" or "*I was high*," their crime will not be random, and random crimes make for poor investigative plots anyway. The whole discipline of criminal psychology is built (at least in fiction) around the investigator's ability to empathise with the perpetrator to solve the crime. And antagonists who do bad things for reasons that investigators can understand, however grudgingly, are antagonists that are memorable and have depth. You don't have to agree with or exonerate a perpetrator to see how they came to commit their crime.

The Hook Scene

At twenty-three minutes past eleven Robert Weil drove his 53 registered Volvo V70 across the bridge that links Pease Pottage, the improbably named English village, with Pease Pottage, the motorway service station. We know the exact time because the Highway Agency cameras picked him up at this point.
—Broken Homes

The hook scene is your next most important touchstone after you have decided upon your antagonist. This is where the investigators are introduced to the case. There are different types of hook:

- An investigator may run into something supernatural, such as a ghost, and decide to investigate on their own initiative.
- An NPC stranger may ask for help from either an investigator, DCI Nightingale, or the Folly as a whole.
- Someone known personally to an investigator—such as a friend or relative—who is aware of their interest in weird stuff may ask for help.
- Most commonly, the Folly is brought in on an official basis by some other branch of the Met because a crime has been committed.

One option is to bring the players in gently:

Example: *"You are all present at the Folly when a call comes through that a body has been found in the British Museum. It looks like a Falcon case, and DCI Nightingale asks that you attend the crime scene straight away…"*

This gives less confident players time to collect their thoughts and their equipment, ask questions like "*Which borough does this fall under?*", "*Who is the Senior Investigating Officer on the case?*" etc., and generally get into character. Alternatively, you can follow the grand tradition of crime drama and just drop them into the opening scene, leaving them to establish the context later. This is more dramatic and atmospheric, but might be too far outside your players' comfort zone:

Example: *"Room 41 of the British Museum, 'The Sir Paul and Lady Ruddock Gallery,' has been closed off to the public with blue and white police tape. As soon as you step past the museum guards into the room, you can see the problem: there's a glass case in the centre of the room that has been smashed, and the white plinth within stands empty. Broken glass is strewn on the wooden floor, but it doesn't obscure the large circular daub on the polished floorboards that appears to have been drawn in blood. Scene of Crime Officers are shuffling around in their white protective suits. DCI Hargreaves turns and looks at you, and you can tell from his expression that he's none too pleased to have a Falcon case on his patch."*

Either way, your opening or "hook" is important. It establishes atmosphere. It introduces the parameters of the case, relationships with NPCs, the perceived *modus operandi* and threat level of their antagonist, and the initial cache of clues the investigators need to sort through. It can take some time to play out as the players ask questions, so you need to be familiar with every aspect of it.

If the regular police have called in the Folly, what makes them think that this is a Falcon-type case? What clues has the inciting incident provided? These could be mundane or magical—or both! Research on several fronts will be necessary, and specialist NPCs, such as pathologists, may need to be contacted. For more information on crime scenes, types of evidence, and available specialists, see **Criminal Investigations** (page 202).

As the GM, it's a good idea to write yourself a flowchart of clues—where they can be found and how they lead to the next clue or piece of information. Your notes become your memory aide when running the scenario. Alternatively, or in addition, you might want to create a relationship map or plot progression diagram, such as the ones in **Chapters 8**, that shows who the main NPCs are and how they are all related to each other and the events of the case.

Further Scenes

The bulk of the case file is likely to be a series of investigative scenes of one sort of another. NPCs, both helpful and hindering, will be encountered. New places will be explored. As you will be painting a verbal picture for your players, make sure you have included enough detail in your notes when you write these scenes to see you through. Exactly how much detail that is differs from GM to GM; some manage quite happily with simple bullet points of key descriptive words, while others prefer detailed notes. Experiment to find



out which works best for you, and don't be afraid to make something up on the spot if a player asks a question you didn't anticipate—just remember to write it down somewhere in case it becomes important again later.

Bear in mind that investigators may encounter the scenes in a different order to the way you imagined, particularly when interviewing witnesses and suspects, so make sure that the plot is flexible enough to cope with that, as an investigative game is rarely completely linear. Don't be afraid to move clues about to make sure the investigators find them, so that the plot and story you are creating with them doesn't stall or find itself at a dead end with none of the players sure of what to do or where to go next.

Your investigator group is likely to split up at some point to investigate different leads. Make sure that your clues can be relayed back to the rest of the team—it's no good having a really important clue written in Latin graffiti on a wall if none of the investigators there have Language (Latin), so make sure that you make its presence stand out enough that they'll either try their Luck (**Trying Your Luck**, page 114) or take a photo and show it to someone (like another investigator or NPC) who can read Latin. In these days of mobile communication, maintaining contact and sharing clues even when the investigators are in different locations shouldn't be an issue—as long as they have signal (**Luck Rolls**, page 113) or the investigators' phones haven't been sanded (**Spells and Technology**, page 176)!

What Will Your Antagonist Do Next?

Once they have created the hook scene by, for example, dumping a body somewhere, what is the antagonist's next move? Are they aware that the police are on their case or oblivious? Will they try to hide their tracks, flee, or go on the offensive? Are they watching the investigators? Will they change their plans based on the investigators' actions?

Remember, the best antagonists don't just sit around twiddling their thumbs waiting for the investigators to catch them. They have their own agenda and they're going to follow it. Having said that, be flexible when it comes to your NPCs' plans, so if the investigators go off-script, their antagonist can also improvise in an attempt to get around the obstacles the investigators have created for them.

Clues and Notes

One of the most important pieces of advice we can give you is this:

Keep clear notes on everything

This applies both when writing a case file and when playing the game, as mentioned previously. Every time you introduce a character or location, and every time you hand out a clue, you need to be able to retrieve that information for your own use and for the players. As you go through your scenario notes, tick off those clues that have passed into the players' hands, so you can be sure they have all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle. Even if you make up incidental details on the fly ("*Her name is, er, Jane McLibrarian*"), *write it down*.

- Clues should be flagged up more obviously in an *RoL:RPG* case file than in crime fiction, where the author is frequently trying to mislead the reader with red herrings, delay a revelation for dramatic effect, or establish their protagonist as incredibly clever or perceptive.
- Clues should also be *far* more obvious than in real life—which is why you can wrap a case file up in two to three hours rather than two to three months.
- If a clue is absolutely vital to your ongoing plot, don't hide it behind a firewall of dice rolls that the players could fail. For important and essential clues (i.e., ones the investigators absolutely must get) it is enough for them to say "*I search the room*," without them having to succeed at an Observation roll—though you could use a roll to establish which investigator finds it or how long it takes them to do so.

Concluding the Case

So, your players have worked out whodunnit, why they dunnit, and how they dunnit. Does the antagonist need chasing down or luring out? Will the antagonist resist? Are the players going to take the decision to have their investigators walk away? The concluding scene is a good time to bring in a dramatic setting or dramatic emotions. It can also be a good point at which to introduce some physical or magical threat to the investigators, but at a level they can handle. While not realistic—most real-life arrests are non-violent and routine—it is very much part of the crime fiction genre to end a case with a big perilous "bang," and this should leave your players feeling more satisfied.

Research Your Folklore

You don't have to stick to the paranormal creatures detailed in this book. *RoL:RPG* takes place in a world where magic is universal but manifests differently in different countries, so you are at liberty to integrate other mythologies into your version of London—or wherever you choose to set your game. The diverse multicultural nature of the UK's capital city makes for great supernatural possibilities but try to avoid the pitfall of treating ethnic minorities—even implicitly—as "spooky foreigners" or their cultural entities as "dangerous immigrant monster of the week." The book series deliberately eschews this trope in favour of invented monsters such as jazz vampires and ancient local spirits like Mr Punch. If you are

going to use overseas folklore as an element in your stories—if you want *yokai* haunting a sushi bar or a *bruja* operating out of The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine—as always, do so with respect and care.

Use the London Setting

It was your typical Notting Hill mews, a cobbled cul-de-sac lined with what used to be the coach-houses of the wealthy, now converted into houses and flats. It was the sort of place that gay cabinet ministers used to stash their boyfriends back when that sort of thing would have caused a scandal. These days it was probably full of bankers and the children of bankers.
—Whispers Under Ground

The *Rivers of London* novels are deeply tied to place. The history, mythology, and geography of a particular setting don't just provide flavour text to the game, they inform and help to shape the plot. There can be no *RoL:RPG* case file without at least some reference to locale. It's assumed that most GMs will choose to use London as a setting just because of the wealth of material available in Ben's novels, but, if you set your game elsewhere—Liverpool, say, or some other country such as the USA, or simply outside London in the British countryside (as in *Foxglove Summer*)—we urge you to invoke the same depth of background and use appropriate descriptions (sights, sounds, and smells) to conjure the setting in the players' minds.

Research your setting. *Use it*. In any long-settled area, real life can probably provide you with more plot inspiration than you can squeeze into any single case file. It's a funny old world, and you might be surprised at the strangeness you find with just a little digging through the internet or local guidebooks, and how little you need to do to adapt it into a good plot.

But, just as a counterbalance, don't be unnecessarily restricted by reality—this is an urban fantasy game, after all! An entirely fictional housing complex, the Skygarden Estate, was inserted into London for the novel *Broken Homes*, because it had to have a specific form to meet its plot function. There are a number of important resources available to the 21st-century GM, most of them online and completely free.

- **Local government websites:** every local authority in the UK (borough/town/city) has an official website. These largely consist of dry bullet points about who to contact for help with various problems, but a poke around might provide useful local information. Online reviews also exist for each council and can give an unexpurgated snapshot of what local people think of their council.
- **Local newspapers:** the two newspapers that every Londoner can pick up for free at stands on the street—but especially at public transport hubs like Underground stations—are the *Metro* (a morning tabloid, broadly irreverent to the establishment) and the *Evening Standard* (a much more conservative and pro-establishment evening paper). There are many smaller local newspapers. All have online versions which can be accessed for free.
- **The London Underground:** if you are using the London setting, you almost certainly need a diagram of the "Tube" system—the London Underground. Peter Grant uses a car because he's a police officer—his obsession with routes and traffic conditions is a British peculiarity. But civilians are much more likely to use public transport or hail a ride using an online app, because it's cheaper, faster, and they won't be struggling to find somewhere to park once they arrive. Only a little over 50 percent of London households have their own car—far fewer than in Britain as a whole—and younger, more central Londoners are even less likely to keep a private vehicle larger than a bicycle.
- **Street maps:** as the GM, online map platforms are your best friend, especially the ones that include a "street view" option. If you are setting a scene in, say, a big house that backs onto a park in London, don't just describe it as "a big house that backs onto a park." Find yourself an actual, suitable location using the online satellite map, and then look at the street view. Check out the area in glorious 3D. Are the gardens large or small, or just the last resting sites of decaying mattresses? Is your chosen house old or modern? Look at the type of cars parked on the road. Is the corner shop a genteel wine shop-delicatessen, a Polish mini-mart, or an off-licence (liquor store) clad in metal security shutters? Is there a river or stream nearby that comes under the purview of one of the *genii locorum*? Does that park have historical provenance as a highwayman-haunted heath? Are there any historical ruins nearby? Once you have a street name, you can find the postcode online (formatted as, for example, SW1A 2WH)—and that is your key to various websites for house-buyers that provide demographic information, house prices, crime levels, and example house plans for the street (very useful as play aids for raids and searches!). You can also search the history of the locality (borough/parish/village) for more inspiration.
- **Interior plans:** many public or historical buildings have plans available online, and many galleries and museums have video tours or 3D virtual tours. If you are setting a scene in the Anglo-Saxon Gallery of the British Museum, for example, it's easy to access a detailed map of the building and get the location right—it adds immeasurably to atmosphere for your players if you can describe their walk through and allows them to search for clues in logical places if they have a map to work from.

- **Online review sites:** official websites showcase beautiful professional photographs of places as the curators want you to see them. Independent online review sites, on the other hand, collects tourist photos and comments by the general public, which may give you a different perspective.
- **Travel guides:** the one exception to using the internet for your research is that, if you are not personally familiar with a setting such as London, you will get a more focused and clearer idea of what it's like *to be there* by reading a professionally written and detailed travel guide from a specialist publisher—particularly the kind that emphasises a "warts and all" approach. A good travel guide should give you an idea of what it's like using public transport, how people behave, what sort of food is available in different areas, how the streets change at different times of the day, and what sort of trouble/crime a stranger is likely to encounter. They also provide historical summaries, highlight interesting oddities of local history, and maps of buildings such as museums. And you don't necessarily need the most up-to-date version, either: older editions are just as useful, and a lot cheaper to buy.
- **Weird stuff:** there's a bunch of websites about weird stuff—you know, ghosts, Fortean events, folklore, and more—that can provide you with inspiration for plots and spooky encounters. Most regions and cities have a rich history of hauntings and so on, so get your search engine working by looking up things like "Thames+ghosts" or "Baltimore+folklore" to dig up interesting details about places where you'd like to set your case files.

Writing a Campaign

When we use the word "campaign," what we mean is a series of case files with a linking theme, and, for full satisfaction, a plot arc. To frame it in terms of the novels, each book, for example, constitutes its own "mini" campaign of interlinked mysteries and challenges, while the first seven novels (*Rivers of London* to *Lies Sleeping*) form a much longer, more intricate, overarching campaign.

Your *RoL:RPG* campaign might start off as one or two self-contained cases, but soon alert players should notice that there are connections. Perhaps some apparently harmless or random NPC starts cropping up repeatedly. Perhaps clues are dropped about some criminal mastermind lurking in the background. Perhaps NPC allies start pulling the investigators into their larger political machinations.

One useful tool for writing a campaign is to **plot backwards**, i.e., know what your ideal, climactic end scene looks like and then write backwards from that. What do you need to set up that end scene? What pieces of information must the investigators know? What resources? What magical objects must they have found? What NPCs must be present—or absent?

GM ADVICE

In practice, campaigns are usually written from both ends towards the middle, leaving enough room in that middle for side-plots, diversions, and inspired last-minute additions. But, even if you plot forward for much of the campaign, as soon as you know where and how the final showdown is likely to take place, or as soon as you know the final revelation, *check that plot backwards* just to make sure it all works logically. There's nothing more embarrassing than your players saying, "*But that makes no sense*," and you suddenly realising that they are right...



When you've got that figured out, you can work out which plot clues need dropping into earlier cases and which NPCs you need to introduce and keep alive—or have alternatives to, should the worst happen. It makes the chain of logic that pulls the investigators in so much clearer if you build it link by link backwards from the end—and chains of logic are *vital* in investigative plots.

It's a good idea for your campaign to include different types of case files to vary the pace and keep the proceedings feeling fresh. Some, for instance, should involve dire physical peril, while others should be more research based. On top of that, some could be spooky, while some could be emotional.

There are plenty of laugh-out-loud moments in the *Rivers of London* novels and comics, so don't feel you have to be po-faced or overly dramatic all the time. Some NPCs can be played for humour—think of the lovelorn scrap man and motor mechanic, Thomas Debden, and his attempts to woo Molly[15]. Make others unsettling; for example, meeting *genii locorum* and other immensely powerful beings should never be a comfortable experience.

Send the investigators into a variety of different and memorable settings. If your game is based in London, how about heading down the sewers and up Big Ben's clock tower? Attending a Buckingham Palace garden party or on a chase through the middle of the Notting Hill Carnival? Lurking in the vaults of the Bank of England or carrying out surveillance in Smithfield meat market at midnight? Use London's colour and variety, its extremes of bleak deprivation and conspicuous wealth, futuristic ambition, and historical darkness, to help sell your story and create a memorable experience for both you and your players. And that goes for anywhere else you choose to set your game.

Good luck!

Footnote: [15] *Black Mould*


EXIT

Appendix A: Ready–to–Play Investigators

If you would prefer to start playing *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game* straight away, simply use these ready-made (pre-generated) investigators. Alternatively, you could use these investigators as examples for your players to help them become familiar with the game's rules before they go on to create characters of their own, or simply use them as inspiration. Note that two of the investigators have the Magical advantage while the others are proficient in other areas—a combination of skills and advantages ensures the players' group has a good balance of expertise and helps to ensure everyone gets to have their moment in the spotlight during each game.

Skills in bold text are the investigator's starting skills (**Determine Skills**, page 52). Feel free to customise these profiles as you wish, altering the name, gender, backstory, and so on, to best suit your game and your players' preferences.








Nafeesa Jones

Occupation: Police Officer
Age: 22

STRENGTH	70/35
CONSTITUTION	50/25
DEXTERITY	40/20
INTELLIGENCE	60/30
POWER	60/30

MOV: 8
LUCK: 60
Magic Points: 13
Advantages: Magical

Common Skills

Athletics	30/15
Drive	30/15
Navigate	30/15
Observation	**60/30**
Read Person	**60/30**
Research	30/15
Sense Vestigia	**60/30**
Social	**60/30**
Stealth	30/15

Expert Skills

Language (English)	60/30
Law	**60/30**
Magic	**60/30**

Combat Skills

Fighting	**60/30**
Firearms	30/15

Backstory
Your life was never straightforward. Your mother is a preacher at an evangelical church in Hammersmith, London, and you always seem to take second place. You're not sure about your father; you've heard a few things about him, but why should you get in touch when he doesn't bother? You left school at 17 and got a job in IT. Then, you married at 19 and were about to enrol for training as a special police constable when you unexpectedly got pregnant. None of that stopped you though, and now you're a full-time police officer and a mum—and if that's not enough, you ended up meeting Peter Grant and becoming a Newtonian apprentice! Of course, with a husband and young child, you don't live at the Folly, but you do spend a lot of time there.



Affluence
Average.

Spells
Impello, Werelight (mastered); Fireball.

Signare
Blackbird song, the taste of apples, and a tick-tock sound.

Equipment
Warrant card, mechanical watch, mobile phone, and a grab bag containing police notebook, pens, spare phone battery, Airwave radio, torch (flashlight) and spare batteries, Folly and Met forms, crime scene barrier tape, PPE pouch, waterproof clothes, snacks, bottled water, and *Blackstone's Crime Investigators' Handbook*.

Morgan Omans

Occupation: Police Officer
Age: 23

STRENGTH	40/20
CONSTITUTION	70/35
DEXTERITY	50/25
INTELLIGENCE	60/30
POWER	60/30

MOV: 8
LUCK: 60
Magic Points: 13
Advantages: Magical

Common Skills

Athletics	30/15
Drive	**60/30**
Navigate	30/15
Observation	30/15
Read Person	30/15
Research	**60/30**
Sense Vestigia	**60/30**
Social	30/15
Stealth	**60/30**

Expert Skills

Language (English)	60/30
Law	**60/30**
Magic	**60/30**

Combat Skills

Fighting	**60/30**
Firearms	30/15

Backstory
You grew up in Dundee and went to a private boarding school. University wasn't for you, and so you dropped out and got a job in a betting shop. Joey, another staff member, introduced you to a sword-fighting class and you loved it. After a year, the instructor invited you to join a higher level, invite-only group. This group was something else, and it quickly became apparent that they weren't only using swords, but magic as well. One of the senior pupils is also a cop, and that was the spark that led to your present life. So now you're a police officer and apprentice living in the Folly.



Affluence
Average.

Spells
Aqua, Flash Bulb (mastered); Shield.

Signare
The sound of tuning a guitar, the smell of school changing rooms.

Equipment
Warrant card, mechanical watch, mobile phone, and a grab bag containing police notebook, pens, spare phone battery, Airwave radio, torch (flashlight) and spare batteries, Folly and Met forms, crime scene barrier tape, PPE pouch, waterproof clothes, snacks, bottled water, and *Blackstone's Crime Investigators' Handbook*.

Jordan Schneider

Occupation: Doctor
Age: 38

STRENGTH	70/35
CONSTITUTION	70/35
DEXTERITY	40/20
INTELLIGENCE	70/35
POWER	30/15

MOV: 8
LUCK: 60
Advantages: Damage Bonus, Natural Toughness.
Damage Bonus: +1

Common Skills

Athletics	30/15
Drive	30/15
Navigate	30/15
Observation	**60/30**
Read Person	**60/30**
Research	**60/30**
Sense Vestigia	30/15
Social	**60/30**
Stealth	30/15

Expert Skills

Language (English)	70/35
Medicine	**60/30**
Science (Biology)	**60/30**
Science (Chemistry)	**30/15**
Science (Forensics)	**30/15**

Combat Skills

Fighting	30/15
Firearms	30/15

Backstory
Rugby was always your game, but then you're built for it. You were never just brawn though, you had brains too. You studied medicine in Manchester, and then followed your boyfriend to London. You've been together for over ten years. The idea of being a GP leaves you cold; quietly talking to old ladies about their lumbago—no, thank you. You prefer the excitement and chaos of Accident and Emergency. Staff from the Folly questioned you about some curious individuals you treated, and they seemed to warm to you—so much so, that they've called on your help a few times, and the rest, as they say, is history. So now you spend half your time at the hospital and the other half with the team from the Folly.



Affluence
Average.

Equipment
Folly Consultant's Card, mobile phone and spare batteries, high visibility jacket, and a doctor's bag containing photo ID, a prescription pad, safety alarm, alcohol wipes, PPE, alcohol gel, sharps bin, small torch (flashlight), specimen bottles, syringes, dressings and surgical tape, stethoscope, blood pressure monitor, thermometer, paracetamol (acetaminophen), ibuprofen, penicillin, adrenaline (epinephrine) auto-injectors, and asthma inhalers (among other things).

Eli Venturini

Occupation: Lecturer
Age: 49

STRENGTH	50/25
CONSTITUTION	60/30
DEXTERITY	40/20
INTELLIGENCE	80/40
POWER	50/25

MOV: 8
LUCK: 60
Advantages: Silver-Tongued, Wealthy.

Common Skills	
Athletics	30/15
Drive	30/15
Navigate	**60/30**
Observation	30/15
Read Person	**60/30**
Research	**60/30**
Sense Vestigia	30/15
Social	**60/30**
Stealth	30/15

Expert Skills	
History	**60/30**
Language (English)	80/40
Language (Latin)	**60/30**
Language (Greek)	**30/15**
Language (Spanish)	**30/15**

Combat Skills	
Fighting	30/15
Firearms	30/15

Backstory
You grew up in a small town in Kent, the so-called Garden of England, where you attended the local grammar school. After university, you put down roots in London and have stayed there ever since. You found out at a young age that you and your sister were adopted. You've always wondered about contacting your birth mother, but have never quite plucked up the courage to do so. It's funny that you became a history lecturer—it's almost as if you prefer to delve into everyone's history but your own. The 17th century is your period, with an especial interest in the life of Sir Isaac Newton. Indeed, it was your chosen specialist subject on a well-known TV quiz show, and following that appearance, you were contacted by someone from the Folly. Turns out you have a mutual interest!



Affluence
Wealthy.

Equipment
Folly Consultant's Card, University photo ID, leather-bound journal, fountain pens, mobile phone and spare batteries.

Jules Garland

Occupation: Chancer
Age: 27

STRENGTH	40/20
CONSTITUTION	50/25
DEXTERITY	80/40
INTELLIGENCE	60/30
POWER	50/25

MOV: 9
LUCK: 60
Advantages: Speedy, The Knowledge (London).

Common Skills	
Athletics	**60/30**
Drive	30/15
Navigate	**60/30**
Observation	**60/30**
Read Person	**60/30**
Research	30/15
Sense Vestigia	30/15
Social	30/15
Stealth	**60/30**

Expert Skills	
Language (English)	60/30
Language (Filipino)	30/15

Combat Skills	
Fighting	**60/30**
Firearms	30/15

Backstory
The main thing you remember from your childhood is a lot of shouting. Your mother moved from the Philippines to London, England, in the 1980s, and married your well-off architect father. They must have been happy once. Your father died a few years back, and his new wife took most of his estate. You still see your mother occasionally, usually when she wants something from you. The rock in your life was your stepsister. She was a few years younger than you, but she had problems no one knew about. You were the one who found her body. You don't have a fixed abode—you get by day-to-day—and plans are what other people make. Sometimes, those people from the Folly give you jobs to do—they seem like a good lot, on the whole. At the very least, they're usually good for a hot meal.



Affluence
Poor.

Equipment
Folly Consultant's Card, battered mobile phone and a spare battery.

Mina Patel

Occupation: Entertainer
Age: 28

STRENGTH	40/20
CONSTITUTION	50/25
DEXTERITY	80/40
INTELLIGENCE	60/30
POWER	50/25

MOV: 8
LUCK: 60
Advantages: Connected, Fast Reactions.

Common Skills

Athletics	**60/30**
Drive	30/15
Navigate	30/15
Observation	**60/30**
Read Person	**60/30**
Research	30/15
Sense Vestigia	30/15
Social	**60/30**
Stealth	30/15

Expert Skills

Art/Craft (Piano)	**60/30**
Art/Craft (Acting)	**30/15**
Art/Craft (Digital Music)	**30/15**
Disguise	**60/30**
Language (English)	60/30
Language (Urdu)	60/30

Combat Skills

Fighting	30/15
Firearms	30/15

Backstory
You grew up near Leicester in the English Midlands. You did well at school and excelled in music. Then, you moved down to London to study, and lodged with one of your aunties. Following university, you took a job doing data entry for the Metropolitan Police Service. Yet, music has always been your passion, and you spend your evenings practising and writing songs in your bedroom. So far, you've made some money on the side playing gigs, but you're biding your time until you get your big break. Your auntie doesn't approve of you spending so much time alone in your room—she doesn't think it's healthy for a young woman! Your friend, Morgan Omans, asked for your advice on a music-related case they were working, and that's how you became involved with the Folly.



Affluence
Average.

Equipment
Folly Consultant's Card, Metropolitan Police Service staff photo ID card, notebook, pens, keyboard, mobile phone, and spare batteries.

Appendix B: Rules Summaries

A collection of rules summaries (cheat sheets) for quick reference while gaming. You may find it useful to copy/print out these summaries so that they are to hand during a game.



Character Creation

Summary of rules for creating an investigator (full details of character creation can be found in **Chapter 1**).

Step One: Determine Occupation

Pick an occupation from the **Investigator Occupations** list on page 45. Further details about each occupation can be found in the **Occupations** section (page 62).

Step Two: Assign Characteristics

- Distribute 280 characteristic points among: STR, CON, DEX, INT, and POW.
  - Each characteristic should be assigned a value from 30 to 80. The higher the value, the stronger the characteristic.
  - An average human characteristic value is 50.
  - Allocate characteristic values in blocks of 10 (30, 40, etc.) and write them on the character sheet.
- Calculate the half values for each characteristic and write these down, too (e.g., the half value of STR 40 is 20). The "autocalc" character sheet calculates these half values for you.
- Roll 2D10, add the results together, and then add this total to 50 to generate your Luck value.
- Your default MOV rating is 8 (unless you choose the Speedy advantage in Step Three).
- Choose your investigator's age (page 49) and write it on the character sheet.

Step Three: Advantages

Choose two minor or one major advantage for your investigator (page 50).

- Make sure that your investigator has the necessary prerequisites to take that advantage.

- If you choose the Speedy advantage, remember to adjust your MOV rating to 9.

Note: investigators who do not choose the Magical advantage cannot choose Magic as a skill in Step Four.

Step Four: Determine Skills

- All **common** and **combat** skills begin at 30%. All **expert** skills begin at 00% (zero).
- Choose a total of **six** skills; these should include:
  - All the skills required by your occupation.
  - Any skills you wish from your occupation's recommended skills.
  - Any other skill you wish, whether common, expert, or combat (as long as you have no more than six skills).
- Boost any chosen **common** or **combat** skills from their starting value of 30% to 60%.
- Boost any chosen **expert** skills from their starting value of 00% to 60%.
- If you chose the Magical advantage, boost your Sense Vestigia skill to 60%.
- Write the skill values for chosen **common** and **combat** skills (60%) in the space provided, then write down their half values (30%). The "autocalc" character sheet calculates these half values for you.
- Write the chosen **expert** skills in the space provided, along with their full value (60%) and their half value (30%).
- An investigator's own language is a free skill (the same value as their INT or 60%, whichever is higher). If from a bilingual family, they also receive their second language at the same value (page 52). Write language skills in the space provided for **expert** skills, and add their full and half values.

Magic

- If you chose the Magical advantage and the Magic skill, and your investigator is a Newtonian practitioner, you start the game with Werelight as one of your first order spells.
  - Pick one other first order spell and one second order spell from the **Spell List** (page 179).
  - Check the box next to Werelight to show it is a mastered spell (**Mastering a Spell**, page 171).
- If you chose the Magical advantage and the Magic skill, and your investigator is a hedge wizard, choose two first order spells and one second order spell from the **Spell List** (page 179).
  - Mark one of your first order spells as mastered (**Mastering a Spell**, page 171).
- Divide your POW characteristic by 5 to determine your investigator's base number of magic points, then add 1 for your mastered spell.
- Look at **Table 10: Signare** (page 165) and choose one element from each column. Alternatively, you can roll 1D100 three times (one for each column).
  - Choose two *signare* to keep and discard the third. Or, just create your own *signare*.
  - If your investigator is being trained by a character with a known *signare*, you should incorporate one aspect from that into your own as a third element.

Step Five: Create a Backstory

- Answer the questions about your **Childhood** (page 56) and **The Present** (page 57), then write these answers in the spaces provided.
- Determine if your investigator has had a supernatural encounter (**Brush with the Supernatural (Optional)**, page 57). If so, write down the details.
- Next, determine their **Affluence Rating** (page 57) and write it in the space provided.
- Finally, write down the names of one or more friends or family members on whom your investigator can rely. This is the final step of creating your backstory.
  - If you took the **Connected** advantage (page 50) during **Step Three: Advantages**, you can add names here, too—although you can wait until later if you haven't worked out who they are yet.

Step Six: Equip the Character

- Work out what equipment your investigator would be able to access as part of their occupation (page 59) and write it on the character sheet. Any weapons the investigator has should be written down in the Weapons box.
- The investigator may purchase any other equipment they need with the GM's permission, as long as it fits within their Living Standard (**Table 2: Living Standards**, page 58).



Core Rules

Rules summaries for skill rolls, pushing rolls, spending Luck, opposed rolls, bonus/penalty dice, and the investigator development phase.

Skill Rolls

Only call for a skill roll when the outcome is dramatic. The player should state a clear goal as to what they want their investigator to achieve *before* they roll any dice. If the goal isn't acceptable, the GM should help to rephrase it.

- **Critical success:** a dice roll of 01 (the best possible result).
- **Hard success:** the dice roll is equal to or below half of the character's skill or characteristic value.
- **Regular success:** the dice roll is equal to or below the character's full skill or characteristic value.
- **Failure** (called a Weak success in opposed rolls)**:** the dice roll is above the character's skill or characteristic value.
- **Fumble:** a dice roll of 100 (the worst possible result).

Levels of Difficulty

- **Regular difficulty:** a task that would challenge a competent person. The player needs to roll equal to or below their investigator's full skill or characteristic value in order to succeed. If the opponent's skill or characteristic is below 70, the difficulty level is Regular.
- **Hard difficulty:** a task that would challenge a professional. The player needs to roll equal to or below one-half of their investigator's skill or characteristic value in order to succeed. If the opponent's skill or characteristic is equal to or above 70, the difficulty level is Hard.

Pushing Skill Rolls

If an investigator fails a skill roll, they can describe what additional action their investigator takes to roll the dice again for a second more concerted attempt. If they fail a second time, the consequences will be more serious. The GM may wish to foreshadow what those consequences might be before the player rolls their dice again.

Spending Luck

Luck points can be spent:

- On a one-for-one basis to alter a dice result; e.g., to 01 to achieve a Critical success, to change a Regular success to a Hard success, and so on.
- To attempt a skill roll if no one present has the necessary expert skill (**Trying Your Luck**, page 114).
- On combat damage rolls to increase the amount of damage inflicted on a target by improving the level of success achieved on the dice roll—it does not mean that you can spend 1 Luck point to add 1 damage (**The Damage Roll**, page 132).
- To prevent an investigator from dying if they suffer a fatal blow in combat (**Damage Conditions**, page 133).
- To reduce the effect of wounds after a fight (**Wounds and Healing**, page 144).

Any spent Luck points are deducted from the investigator's current Luck value, which reduces the chance of passing future Luck rolls. A player may spend any number of Luck points, up to their current Luck value, on a given roll.

Luck points cannot be spent:

- On Luck rolls.
- To alter the result of a pushed roll.
- To "buy off" a fumble, i.e., to change a fumble to any other result.
- To alter another player's dice rolls.

Opposed Rolls

Use when two characters are opposing one another, e.g., an investigator and a non-player character (NPC). Both sides roll against the appropriate skill or characteristic and compare their levels of success to determine the winner:

- A Critical success beats a Hard success.
- A Hard success beats a Regular success.
- A Regular success beats a Weak success.
- A Weak success beats a fumble.

In the case of a tie, the player can spend Luck points (**Spending Luck**, page 113) to improve their level of success to a better one than their opponent's. If the player doesn't spend Luck, the character with the highest skill value wins. If both sides have the same skill value, use a random tiebreaker, e.g., tossing a coin, or let the tie stand. Opposed rolls cannot be pushed.

Bonus/Penalty Dice

Each skill roll may have a maximum of one bonus or one penalty die applied to it, at the GM's discretion.

- **Bonus die:** roll an additional tens die when making a skill roll, i.e., roll two tens dice and one units die. Use the tens die that gives the lowest (best) result to determine if the character succeeds or fails.
- **Penalty die:** roll an additional tens die when making a skill roll, i.e., roll two tens dice and one units die. Use the tens die the gives the highest (worst) result to determine if the character succeeds or fails.
- One bonus die cancels out one penalty die, and vice versa.

Investigator Development Phase

Once a case file is complete, the players should work through the following steps to advance their investigators.

- Spend **Development Points** (page 120) to improve the investigator's skills, buy a new skill, buy a new spell, master a spell, or buy an advantage (**Spending Development Points**, page 120).
- Review the investigator's backstory to see if there are any elements that can be altered or added with the GM's permission (**Altering an Investigator's Backstory**, page 122).
- Review the investigator's employment status and affluence rating (**Reviewing Employment and Affluence Rating**, page 122).
- Recover if an investigator is impaired (**Impairment and Recovery**, page 119).
- Undertake **Training** (page 122) if there is to be an in-game break between case files.

Combat

Rules summaries for combat, including actions in a round, combat responses, ranged attack modifiers, damage rolls, and vehicle combat.

Steps in Combat

All fights, whether involving fists, swords, firearms, or spells, are resolved using the same six steps.

- **Step 1: Set Your Goal** (page 127)**:** describe what the character is doing (what action are you initiating?).
- **Step 2: Target Responds** (page 127)**:** the target describes how they intend to respond (how is the target reacting?).
- **Step 3: Dice Rolls** (page 130)**:** usually, both sides roll percentile dice (an opposed roll) to determine who wins. Sometimes, especially for ranged attacks, only the attacker rolls dice (an unopposed roll).
- **Step 4: Damage Roll** (page 132)**:** figure out any damage or other effects.
- **Step 5: Narration** (page 133)**:** the winner describes what happens.
- **Step 6: Next Player's Turn:** play moves on to the next character (an investigator or NPC), who now starts their turn with Step 1.

Actions in a Combat Round

Combat is structured into rounds. During each combat round, each investigator takes one action (a turn). They may use their action to:

- Initiate a melee attack using the Fighting skill.
- Initiate a firearms attack using the Firearms skill.
- Initiate a spell attack using the Magic skill, if the investigator possesses the skill.
- Flee—this may require an opposed roll to break free of the fight, if already engaged in combat.
- Perform some other action requiring time and perhaps a dice roll, such as picking a lock while others fight. Note that simple actions—like speaking—don't "use up" a character's turn, while moving anything more than a short distance may (**Distances in Combat**, page 127).
- Reload a weapon.
- Drawing an easily accessible weapon counts as a "free" action.

Which Skill to Roll in Combat?

- If it's a hand-to-hand melee attack, use the **Fighting** skill.
- If throwing something, use the **Athletics** skill.
- If shooting a firearm or a bow, use the **Firearms** skill.
- If casting a spell, use the **Magic** skill.

Combat Responses

- **Response 1: Do Nothing** (unlimited reaction; page 128).
- **Response 2: Dodge** (unlimited reaction; page 128).
- **Response 3: Fight Back** (limited to once per combat round; page 129).
- **Response 4: Flee** (page 130).

My Options: When Someone Tries to Hit Me?

If someone tries to hit you with a punch or a weapon, such as a knife, you can:

- Take no direct action and hope they don't inflict too much damage when they hit you (**Do Nothing**, page 128).
- Attempt to avoid their blow (**Dodge**, page 128).
- Attempt to avoid their blow and hit them back (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).
- Attempt to hit them with a spell before they hit you (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).
- If you have a firearm in your hand, you can attempt to shoot them before they hit you (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).
- Attempt to avoid their blow and run away (**Flee**, page 130).
- If the attacker is using a weapon, you could attempt to disarm them using a **Combat Manoeuvre** (page 134).

This could allow you to knock the weapon to the floor or perhaps wrest possession of it from your opponent.
- Attempt to avoid their blow and restrain your attacker using a **Combat Manoeuvre** (page 134).
- Attempt to avoid their blow and move your attacker using a **Combat Manoeuvre** (page 134). This could be to knock them to the floor or push them away.

My Options: When Someone Shoots at Me?

If being shot at from *beyond* arm's reach, you can:

- Take no direct action and hope that the shot misses (**Do Nothing**, page 128).
- Turn and flee, in which case the shooter incurs a penalty die if you have MOV 8 or higher (**Fast-Moving Targets**, page 138).
- **Dive for Cover** (page 128).
- Attempt to hit them with a spell before they hit you (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).
- If you have a firearm in your hand, you can attempt to shoot them before they hit you (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).

If being shot at from *within* arm's reach, you can fight back using your Fighting skill to perform one of the following options (remember—you can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage; page 51):

- Attempt to inflict harm on the attacker. Use your Fighting skill to oppose your attacker's Firearms roll. If the shooter loses the opposed roll, they take damage and have fired and missed.
- Attempt to disarm the attacker. Use your Fighting skill to oppose your attacker's Firearms roll (**Combat Manoeuvre**, page 134). This could allow you to knock the firearm to the floor or perhaps wrest possession of it from your opponent.
- Attempt to restrain the attacker. Use your Fighting skill to oppose your attacker's Firearms roll (**Combat Manoeuvre**, page 134). This could be to restrain the hand and arm holding the gun (pointing it away from you as it fires) or restrain/knock the shooter and somehow foil their shot.
- Attempt to avoid their shot and move your attacker using a **Combat Manoeuvre** (page 134). This could be to knock them to the floor, or push them away.

My Options: When Someone Casts a Spell at Me?

If being targeted with a spell from *beyond* arm's reach, you can:

- Take no direct action and hope that the spell fails (**Do Nothing**, page 128).
- Turn and flee, in which case the caster incurs a penalty die if you have MOV 8 or higher (**Fast-Moving Targets**, page 138).
- **Dive for Cover** (page 128).
- Attempt to hit them with a spell before they hit you (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).
- If you have a firearm in your hand, you can attempt to shoot them before they hit you (**Fight Back**, page 129). You can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage (page 51).

Table 16: Summary of Ranged Attack Modifiers

Modifier	Effect	Page Reference
Aiming	Bonus die	138
Cover and concealment	Penalty die	138
Fast-moving target	Penalty die	138
Multiple shots	Bonus die or increased damage	139
Point-blank range	Bonus Die	138
Target size	Large: bonus die Small: penalty die	139

If being targeted with a spell from *within* arm's reach, you can fight back using your Fighting skill to perform one of the following options (remember—you can only fight back once per combat round unless you have the **Fast Reactions** advantage; page 51):

- Attempt to inflict harm on your attacker. Use your Fighting skill to oppose your attacker's Magic roll. If the attacker loses the opposed roll, they take damage and their spell fails.
- Attempt to restrain the attacker. Use your Fighting skill to oppose your attacker's Magic roll (**Combat Manoeuvre**, page 134). This could allow you to restrain the attacker and cause their spell to fail.

Bonus and Penalty Dice in Combat

Each skill roll may have a maximum of one bonus or one penalty die applied to it.

- If, overall, an attack gains two or more bonus dice, make the attack roll with one bonus die. If the attack is successful, you use the second bonus die on the damage roll.
- If, overall, an attack incurs two or more penalty dice, make the attack roll with one penalty die. If the attack is successful, you incur the second penalty die on the damage roll.

The Damage Roll

If an attack is successful, roll percentile dice and compare the result with the attacking character's STR (melee) or DEX (firearms/ranged/spells):

- **Failed or fumbled:** 1 damage (no weapon/spell damage is added).
- **Regular success:** 1 damage + base weapon/spell damage.
- **Hard success:** 2 damage + base weapon/spell damage.
- **Critical success:** 3 damage + base weapon/spell damage.

Factors Affecting Damage

- If a player rolled a Critical success on their attack roll (or bought one with Luck points), they gain a bonus die to their damage roll.
- The damage roll may gain a bonus die if the successful attack roll originally gained two or more bonus dice (**Multiple Bonus or Penalty Dice**, page 143).
- The damage roll may incur a penalty die if the successful attack roll originally incurred two or more penalty dice (**Multiple Bonus or Penalty Dice** (page 143).
- Successful attacks against certain fae characters with an iron weapon gain a bonus die to the damage roll (**The Effects of Cold Iron**, page 245).
- If a character has the advantage **Damage Bonus** (page 51), they add +1 damage to unarmed and melee attack damage, but not to ranged, firearm, or spell attack damage.
- If a character has the advantage **Natural Toughness** (page 51), they suffer –1 damage from unarmed and blunt melee weapon attacks. The damage from knives, bullets, or damage-causing spells, e.g., **Fireball** (page 183) is not affected.
- A character wearing regular armour, e.g., a Met stab vest, suffers –1 damage from melee attacks (**Armour**, page 135). Damage from firearms and some spells is unaffected.
- A character wearing ballistic armour suffers –2 damage from melee and firearms attacks (**Armour**, page 135). Damage from certain types of spell attack is unaffected.
- The final amount of damage inflicted may also be affected by **Cover and Concealment** (page 138) and/or the **Shield** spell (page 185).

Vehicle Combat

Vehicle combat uses the same six steps as regular combat, but drivers use their Drive skill in the opposed roll in **Step 3: Dice Rolls** (page 130).

Vehicle Damage

Damage to vehicles is calculated based on relative Build (**Table 8: Vehicles**, page 159).

- If the vehicle's Build is greater than double the other's, the one with the higher Build is dealt no damage, while the one with the lower Build suffers 3 damage.
- If the vehicle's Build is greater than the other's—up to double its Build—the one with the higher Build suffers 1 damage, and the one with the lower Build suffers 2 damage.
- If the vehicles have equal Build values, they both suffer 2 damage.

The driver of any vehicle suffering damage must make a **Control Roll** (page 158) or risk crashing the vehicle.

Vehicle Damage Conditions

Like the damage suffered by people, vehicle damage is cumulative.

- When a vehicle takes 1 damage, it is **Pranged** (still drivable).
- If a vehicle takes 2 damage, it is **Damaged** (still drivable—just!).
- If a vehicle takes 3 damage, it is **Wrecked** (no longer drivable).

Table 7: Other Forms of Damage

Level	Suggested Damage	Examples
Minor: a person could survive numerous occurrences of this level.	Make a CON roll: if failed, take 1 damage; otherwise, no damage is suffered.	Mild acid, breathing smoky atmosphere*, a thrown fist-size rock, falling (per 3 metres/yards) onto soft swamp.
Moderate: it would take a number of occurrences at this level to kill a person.	1 damage	Falling (per 3 metres/yards) onto grass, strong acid, breathing water*, exposure to vacuum*, fire (e.g., a burning torch).
Severe: one or two occurrences at this level would render a person unconscious or dead.	2 damage	Falling (per 3 metres/yards) onto concrete, fire (flamethrower, running through a burning room), being 6 to 9 metres/yards from an exploding hand grenade or stick of dynamite, a mild poison**.
Deadly: the average person has a 50% chance of dying at this level.	3 damage	Hit by a car at 48kph (30mph), being 3 to 6 metres/yards from an exploding hand grenade or stick of dynamite, a strong poison**.
Terminal: outright death is likely at this level.	4 damage (probably a **Mortal Wound**, page 146).	Hit by a speeding car (65+ kph/40+ mph), being within 3 metres/yards of an exploding hand grenade or stick of dynamite, a lethal poison**.
Splat: outright death almost certain at this level.	Make a CON roll: if a success, it's a **Mortal Wound** (page 146); if a failure, immediate death (but can reduce to a mortal wound if 30 Luck points are spent—see **Damage Conditions**, page 133).	Being involved in a high-speed head-on collision, being hit by a train.

Notes

***Asphyxiation and Drowning:** make a CON roll for the character at the start of their turn in each round (or each minute if not in combat). Each time the CON roll is failed, the character suffers 1 damage as long as the threat remains. For Moderate damage (water and vacuum), apply a penalty die to the CON roll after the third round (or after 3 minutes; **Bonus Dice and Penalty Dice**, page 111).

****Poison:** always call for a CON roll. If failed, apply the damage as stated. With a successful CON roll, move up one level on **Table 7: Other Forms of Damage**. For example: with a successful CON roll, a lethal poison is treated as a strong poison (Deadly rather than Terminal); with a Hard success, move up two levels on **Table 7: Other Forms of Damage**. Poisons may cause a variety of additional symptoms including: stomach pains, vomiting, diarrhoea, chills, sweats, cramps, jaundice, altered heart rate, impaired vision, convulsions, unconsciousness, and paralysis—it's up to the GM whether the symptoms permit the victim to act or not, act with a penalty die, or with an increased level of difficulty. At the GM's discretion, they may allow a poison's effects to be shaken off completely if the CON roll is a Critical success.

Injuries and Healing

Rules summaries covering impairment, wounds, damage conditions, and healing.

Impairment

Impairment can be caused by mental trauma or by physical injury.

- Suffering from impairment increases an investigator's fumble range.
- While an investigator is impaired, a dice roll of 90 or above for *any* skill or characteristic roll counts as a fumble—rather than the usual result of 100 (**Fumble**, page 107).

Suffering Impairment

- **Mental trauma:** if an investigator is in a stressful situation, the GM should call for a Regular POW roll. If the player passes this roll, the investigator is fine, but if the roll is failed, the investigator is impaired and performs an **Involuntary Action** (page 108).
- **Physical injury:** if a character is **Bloodied** (page 144) or **Down** (page 144) in combat—or if they survive a mortal wound or a fatal blow—they become impaired.

Recovering from Impairment

If the impairment was caused by mental trauma, the investigator recovers either:

- At the end of a case file.
- If they take a break from the case file of three or more days and succeeds at a Regular POW roll. They gain a bonus die to the POW roll if they attend therapy or counselling.
- If the player spends 10 Luck points to remove the impairment check mark from their character sheet.

If the impairment was caused by physical injury:

- **Bloodied:** the investigator recovers from impairment once the fight is over.
- **Down:** the investigator recovers from impairment at the end of the following day unless the player spends 10 Luck points.
- **Mortal wound:** if the character survives (a successful Medicine roll), they remain impaired until they fully recover from being **Injured** (page 147).

Damage Conditions

Damage is cumulative, i.e., every time a character is dealt damage in combat, it is added to any damage they have already suffered in the fight so far.

- A character suffering a total of 1 damage is **Hurt** (page 144).
- A character suffering a total of 2 damage is **Bloodied** (page 144).
- A character suffering a total of 3 or more damage is **Down** (page 144).
- A character suffering 4 damage *in a single blow* (from a spell, a weapon, or a firearm) has taken a **Mortal Wound** (page 146).
- An investigator suffering 5 or more damage *in a single attack* (a fatal blow) must spend 30 Luck points immediately, otherwise they are killed outright. If they can spend 30 Luck points, the damage is reduced to 4 (a mortal wound).

Damage Condition Effects During the Fight

- **Hurt:** the character is in pain but suffers no mechanical effect.
- **Bloodied:** the character is impaired (**Impairment**, page 118).
- **Down:** the character is incapacitated, i.e., they cannot take any further actions during this fight; they are also impaired.
- **Mortal wound:** as for **down**, but the character needs medical attention within an hour if they are to survive. A successful INT roll extends this to two hours (**First Aid**, page 146).

Healing

The time taken for wounds to recover depends on the investigator's damage condition at the end of the fight.

- **Hurt:** the investigator recovers once the fight is over.
- **Bloodied:** the investigator recovers once the fight is over, although they still show physical signs of their encounter, e.g., bruised knuckles, a black eye, a split lip, etc.
- **Down:** the investigator remains **hurt** until the end of the following day unless they spend 10 Luck points. The investigator also remains impaired until the end of the following day unless they spend a further 10 Luck points.
- **Mortal wound:** a successful Medicine roll saves the investigator's life (**Medical Aid**, page 147). The skill roll may be subject to a bonus or penalty die, depending on the conditions. If the investigator survives, they must choose two of the following: **Injured** (page 147), **Luck Loss** (page 147), **Development Loss** (page 148), or **Disfigurement** (page 148).

Chases

Rules summaries for chases.

Investigators Fleeing

The players use the following four steps when their investigators are running away:

- **Step 1: Establish the Location** (page 151)**:** describe where your investigator is headed based on the GM's description of the location.
- **Step 2: Chase Roll** (page 151)**:** the investigator's actions determine whether they're using a burst of speed (DEX) or negotiating obstacles (Athletics) to avoid their pursuers.
- **Step 3: Track Successes** (page 152)**:** each player keeps a running tally of how many chase successes and failures they have accumulated so far.
- **Step 4: Combat or Next Player's Turn:** if the investigator decides not to make a ranged attack against their pursuer (**Ranged Attacks Mid-Chase**, page 156), play moves on to the next character's turn.

If a player gains two chase successes before incurring two chase failures, their investigator wins the chase, and has outpaced and lost their pursuer. The chase is over and they got away.

If a player incurs two chase failures before gaining two chase successes, their investigator loses the chase. Their pursuer catches up with them and can now, on the GM's next turn, try to grab or attack them. The investigator can continue to flee if the NPC fails to incapacitate or otherwise restrain them. On each subsequent chase round:

- Each time the investigator incurs a chase failure, the NPC stays in range and can attack them again on the GM's turn.
- Each time the investigator gains a chase success, they move ahead, out of melee range of their pursuer.
- If the investigator now gains a chase success on two consecutive rounds, they outpace and lose their pursuer. The chase is over and they got away.

Note: NPCs move automatically during a chase, so the GM does not need to roll dice for them unless they are attempting to attack the investigators.

Investigators Chasing

Players use the following four steps for chases when their investigators are pursuing someone:

- **Step 1: Establish the Location** (page 154)**:** describe what your investigator is doing based on the GM's description of the location.
- **Step 2: Chase Roll**(page 154)**:** the investigator's actions determine whether they're using a burst of speed (DEX) or negotiating obstacles (Athletics) to catch up with their target(s).
- **Step 3: Track Successes** (page 154)**:** the player keeps a running tally of how many chase successes and failures they have accumulated so far.
- **Step 4: Combat or Next Player's Turn:** if the investigator decides not to make a ranged attack (**Ranged Attacks Mid-Chase**, page 156), play moves on to the next character.

If an investigator incurs two chase failures before gaining two chase successes, they lose the chase and are left out of breath, while the NPC runs off out of sight.

If an investigator gains two chase successes before incurring two chase failures, they catch up with the NPC and can now try to grab or hit them. If the investigator fails to incapacitate or otherwise restrain their target, the NPC can continue to flee. On each subsequent round:

- Each time the investigator incurs a chase failure, the NPC moves out of range.
- Each time the investigator gains a chase success, they catch up and can make another attack on the NPC on their next turn.
- If the investigator incurs a chase failure on two consecutive rounds, the investigator loses their quarry and is left out of breath, while the NPC runs off out of sight.

Note: NPCs move automatically during a chase, so the GM does not need to roll dice for them unless they are attempting to attack the investigators using a ranged attack (**Ranged Attacks Mid-Chase**, page 156).

Vehicle Chases

The steps used for vehicle chases are the same as for those on foot, except the investigators use their Drive skill in place of DEX and Athletics during **Step 2: Chase Roll** (page 151).

Newtonian Magic

Rules summaries for *vestigia*, *signare*, magic points, and spellcasting.

Detecting Vestigia

The Sense Vestigia skill can be used to detect *vestigia*, depending on its strength.

- **Extremely strong:** usually no Sense Vestigia skill roll required.
- **Strong:** a successful Regular Sense Vestigia roll detects all a *vestigium's* elements.
- **Weak:** a successful Regular Sense Vestigia roll detects the *vestigium's* main element; a successful Hard Sense Vestigia roll detects all the *vestigium's* elements.

Detecting Signare

The unique magical signature that each practitioner leaves behind whenever they cast a spell can also be detected using the Sense Vestigia skill.

Casting Spells

- Each spell requires a certain number of magic points to be spent before it can be cast (**Magic Points and Spells**, page 172).
- It takes one combat round (or the narrative equivalent) to cast a spell—the same amount of time it takes to throw a punch or fire a gun in combat, i.e., it takes up the caster's turn in a combat round (**The Combat Round**, page 124).
- Various factors affect whether or not the spellcasting roll gains a bonus die or incurs a penalty die (**Table 11: Mastered vs Unmastered Spells**, page 174; **Table 16: Summary of Ranged Attack Modifiers**, page 354).
- The standard rules for **Multiple Bonus or Penalty Dice** apply to spellcasting rolls (page 143).

Magic Points

- A character's magic point total is equal to one-fifth of their POW + 1 for each spell they have mastered.
- Spent magic points regenerate naturally, returning to their normal maximum value for **The Next Scene** (page 173).
- The base cost of attempting to cast a spell is a number of magic points equal to the spell's order.
- The cost of a mastered spell can sometimes be boosted (raised) if the caster wishes to increase or alter its effects (**Boosting a Spell**, page 176). Not all spells can be boosted.
- Once a practitioner runs out of magic points, they may continue to cast spells, but such attempts may cause them harm (**Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation**, page 177).
- There is no need to track "negative" magic points, but a practitioner must roll for Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation every time they attempt to cast a spell when they have zero magic points available.

Spellcasting Rolls

A Magic skill roll must be made when attempting to cast a spell, unless the caster is not pressed for time.

- **Regular success or better:** the spell works just as it should.
- **A failure:** the result is in the hands of the GM; something happens, just not what the caster originally intended (**Failing Spellcasting Rolls**, page 174).
- **A fumble:** the caster is drained of all magic points and must roll for **Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation** (page 177).

As always, Luck can be spent to alter the result of a Magic skill roll. Spellcasting rolls outside of combat can also be pushed, but a second failure means the caster is drained of all magic points and must roll for **Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation** (page 177).

Spellcasting in Combat

In combat, spells work in the same manner as firearms. The casting (Magic) roll is used instead of a Firearms roll.

- The damage roll for spells usually uses the caster's DEX to reflect that they are attempting to hit a target. Thus, use DEX rather than POW or STR when consulting the **Damage Roll** section (page 132).
- As with a firearms attack, spellcasting rolls in combat are subject to the same bonuses and penalties as firearms (**Ranged Attack Modifiers**, page 138).
- The target(s) of a spell during combat have the same response options as if they are being shot at (e.g., **Dive for Cover**, page 128, or **Fight Back**, page 129).
- Spellcasting rolls in combat cannot be pushed.

Sensing Someone Casting a Spell

In a scene, when a character declares they are casting a spell, any nearby practitioners should be given the opportunity to make a detection (Magic) roll before the caster makes their spellcasting roll:

- **Regular success:** the practitioner senses a spell is being prepared, but has no idea which spell is being cast.

They may attempt to rapidly cast a spell of their own in response (**Fight Back Using Magic**, page 129).

- **Hard success:** the practitioner senses a spell is being prepared, and, if it's a spell they are familiar with, the GM should tell them its name. If they are not familiar with the spell, some hint of the spell's effects should be given. They may attempt to rapidly cast a spell of their own in response (**Fight Back Using Magic**, page 129).

Hyperthaumaturgical Degradation (HTD)

If a character fumbles a Magic skill roll when casting a spell, fails a pushed spellcasting roll, or continues to cast spells once they have run out of magic points, they must make a POW roll. If they fumble a pushed spellcasting roll, the POW roll incurs a penalty die.

- **Critical success:** the character's magic points are reduced to zero, but they suffer no damage.
- **Hard success:** the character's magic points are reduced to zero, and they suffer 1 damage.
- **Regular success:** the character's magic points are reduced to zero, and they suffer 2 damage.
- **Fail:** the character's magic points are reduced to zero, and they immediately suffer 4 damage—a **Mortal Wound** (page 146).
- **Fumble:** the character's magic points are reduced to zero, and they suffer severe physical trauma (such as a stroke, heart attack, or aneurism). They immediately suffer 5 damage—a fatal blow. If they do not (or cannot) spend 30 points of Luck straight away to reduce the damage to a mortal wound, they die (**Damage Conditions**, page 133).

Demi-Monde Magic

Demi-monde magic does not work the same way as Newtonian magic. It consists of three abilities:

- **The Glamour** (page 243)**:** the power to sway someone's mind.
- **The Luck of the Demi-monde** (page 243)**:** a demi-monde's Luck value is equal to their POW and refreshes at the same time every day.
- **Thematic power** (page 244)**:** a demi-monde's sphere of influence or affinity grants them certain magical powers.

The Glamour

When the glamour is used on a regular person who knows nothing of its existence, they are permitted a POW roll:

- **Fumble or failure:** the target does as they are bid without question, and they don't ever think to question why they acted as they did.
- **Regular or Hard success:** the target does as they are bid without question, but later wonders what possessed them to act that way. Of course, they soon console themselves with whatever excuse feels the most rational to them.
- **Critical success:** the target is unaffected by the glamour and reacts to the request as if asked by anyone else. They're not aware of anything magical having taken place.

When the glamour is used on a person who's been informed about it and how to resist it, they, too, make a POW roll:

- **Fumble:** the target behaves exactly as bidden, just as someone who is ignorant of the glamour would.
- **Failure:** the target begins to act as requested—perhaps taking a few steps or speaking a few words—but then recovers their self-control. They are aware of the use of the glamour.
- **Regular, Hard, or Critical success:** the target is aware of the use of glamour, but they are not compelled to act upon it.

Thematic Power

A demi-monde's thematic powers break down into two categories:

- **Minor:** something which simply illustrates the character's affinity with that element or power. Routine acts don't help to resolve a case file (scenario) or further anyone's agenda, they just add some colour and character to the story.
- **Major:** an act that somehow furthers the plot, helps to resolve a case file, or provides an in-game benefit.

Any demi-monde NPC can perform minor manifestations of their power whenever they wish, but it's best not to overdo it or they lose their impact.

Any demi-monde NPC can perform one major manifestation of their power once per case file. Performing such acts is demanding, emotionally and energetically, and may also cost them socially.

Appendix C: Bibliography

Detailed here is a range of useful source materials that could be of use to those playing *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*, including books, graphic novels, films, television shows, and websites.

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Appendix D: Maps and Handouts

This appendix contains the collected player versions of the various maps and handouts found in **Chapters 7 and 8**. Plain-text versions of text-based handouts can be found in the PDF package that accompanies this book, free to download from chaosium.com.

Handout: Bookshop 1

Warwick Anderson's Statement

I was working in the basement. It was around midnight, give or take, moving the celebrity chef books to the other end of the cookery section, when I was hit in the back by something. I turned around to find Banksy's *Wall and Piece* at my feet—the paperback, not the hardback, or else that would have really hurt.

Thing is, I was supposed to be the only one in the shop. There was no sign of anyone who could have thrown it, so I'll admit, I was spooked. I went upstairs to take a look around and make sure no one had broken in, but all the doors were locked, and I couldn't see anyone. I was feeling a bit annoyed by this point, so I gave up looking and went back to reshelving the books.

Next thing I know, I get hit on the head by a soft toy, like the ones we keep at the till points. I was just about to turn around and catch whoever threw it red-handed when a ton of books smashed into me from the art section and flattened me. A couple of the really big Taschen art books caught me in the back of the head, but I managed to stagger to the phone at the downstairs till and dialled 999.

It's all a bit hazy after that, but someone helped me up to the ambulance, where they told me I had a mild concussion. I went home, then I got a call asking me to come back in so I could be interviewed by some special crimes unit—you lot, I'm assuming? I told them there was no way I was going within 500 metres of that place, but eventually, they convinced me to meet you here instead.

Handout: Bookshop 2

Saffron Jackson's Statement

I got a phone call in the early hours from a police officer asking me to come to the bookshop to take care of the door. They said they'd had to break the glass to get inside to see what had happened to poor Warwick. They left shortly after that because it was all kicking off in the piazza; a fight outside a bar, or something—I don't know.

Next, I called the maintenance company to send someone over to board up the door and clean up the glass. Once the maintenance guy got here, I checked around to see if anything was missing. It didn't look like it, but it's a bit hard to tell in all that mess downstairs. I've not touched anything down there because one of the officers told me not to until you'd been to see it.

So, if you'd like to follow me, I'll take you to the basement. I don't want to tell you how to do your job, but I'd really appreciate it if you could hurry it up—I'd like to get everything all squared away again before opening time.

Handout: Bookshop 3

▸ Cockfighting

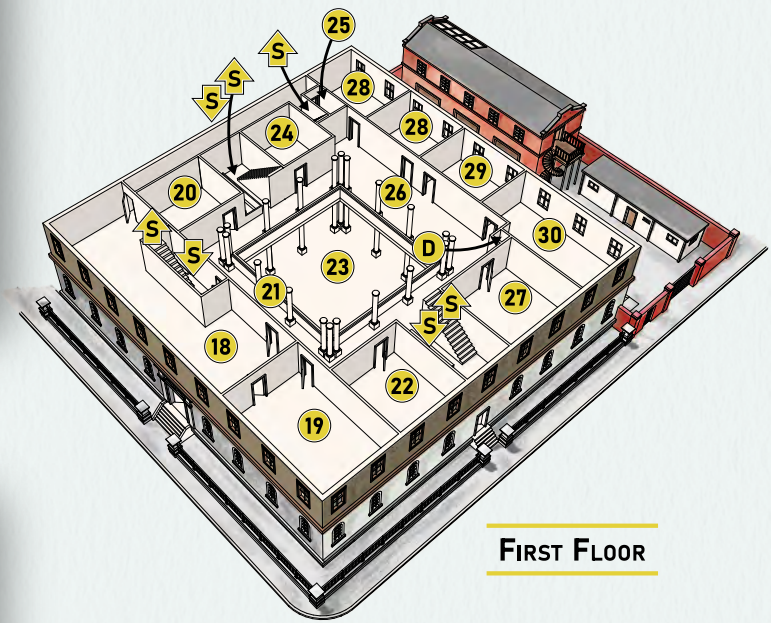
Cockfighting was once a highly popular—and very lucrative—spectator sport in London and elsewhere in the UK. Historically speaking, its roots go back over 6,000 years, though it first became really popular in England during the Tudor era. By the 18th century, the blood sport was at its height, with all levels of society indulging in the heavy betting that accompanied each match. Upper class venues, like the Royal Cockpit (whose last remaining traces are Cockpit Steps by Birdcage Walk), charged a hefty admission fee to keep the riffraff out.

It took around two years to fully train a fighting bird. Due to the amount of money required for that training, and the size of the wagers on fight days, this blood sport was tightly regulated—more so than any other sport at the time. It was finally banned in England and Wales in 1835 under the Cruelty to Animals Act.

The Folly

First Floor

18 Magical Library
19 Reading Rooom
20 Records
21 North Colonnade
22 Senior Reading Room
23 Atrium
24 Billiard Room
25 Storage
26 South Colonnade
27 Small Dining Room
28 Teaching Lab
29 Study
30 Breakfast Room

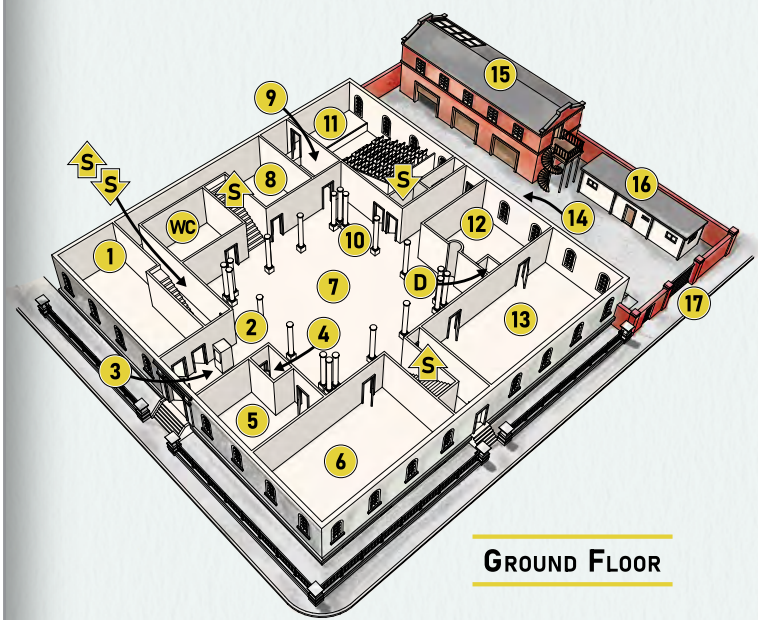


First Floor

Ground Floor

1 Visitor's Lounge
2 North Colonnade
3 Lobby Booth
4 Switchboard
5 Smoking Room
6 Mundane Library
7 Atrium
8 Storage
9 Preparation Room
10 South Colonnade
11 Lecture Hall
12 Private Dining Room
13 Dining Room
14 Entrance to Basement
15 Coach House
16 Portakabin
17 Gates to Courtyard

S Stairs Up
S Stairs Down
D Dumb Waiter
WC Water Closet



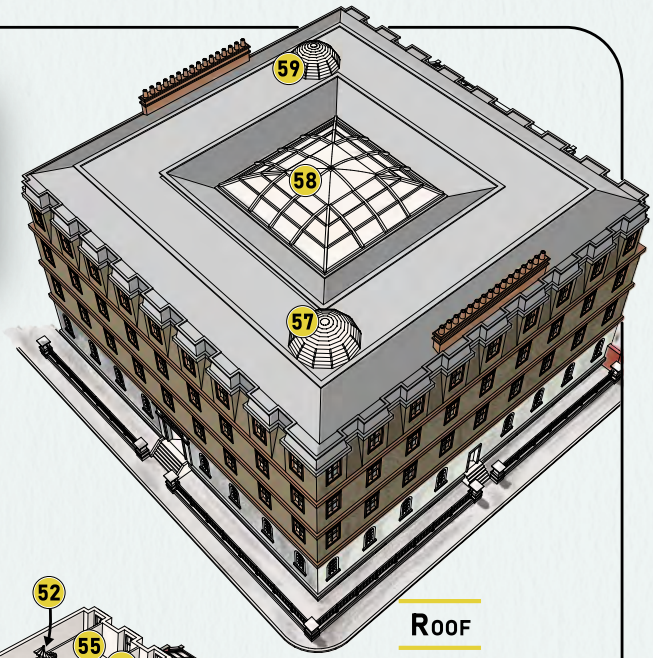
Ground Floor

0 9 meters
3 6

0 30 feet
5 15

Roof

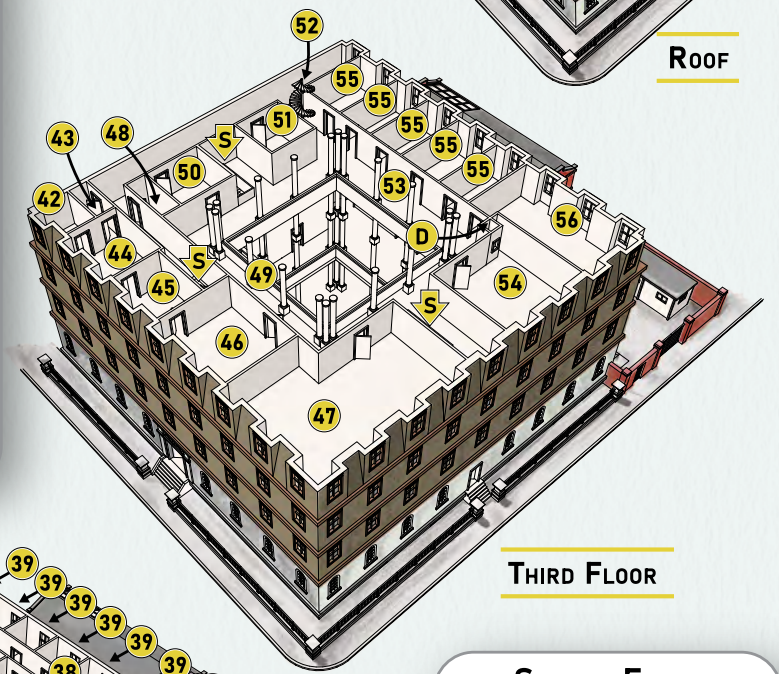
57 Arboretum Skylight
58 Top of Atrium
59 Observatory



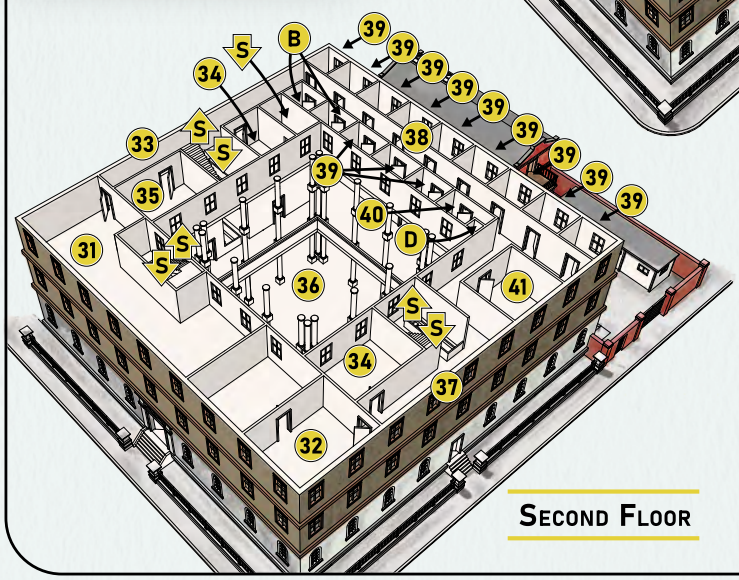
Roof

Third Floor

42 Master's Bathroom
43 Dressing Room
44 Master's Suite
45 Parlour
46 Master's Office
47 The Arboretum
48 Master's Man
49 North Colonnade
50 Equipment Storage
51 Valets' Lounge
52 Stairs to Observatory
53 South Colonnade
54 Senior Dining Room
55 Senior Member's Suite
56 Senior Lounge



Third Floor



Second Floor

Second Floor

31 Gallery
32 Forge
33 East Corridor
34 Storage
35 Rare Books
36 Atrium
37 West Corridor
38 South Corridor
39 Bedroom
40 Refectory
41 Smoking Room

B Bathroom

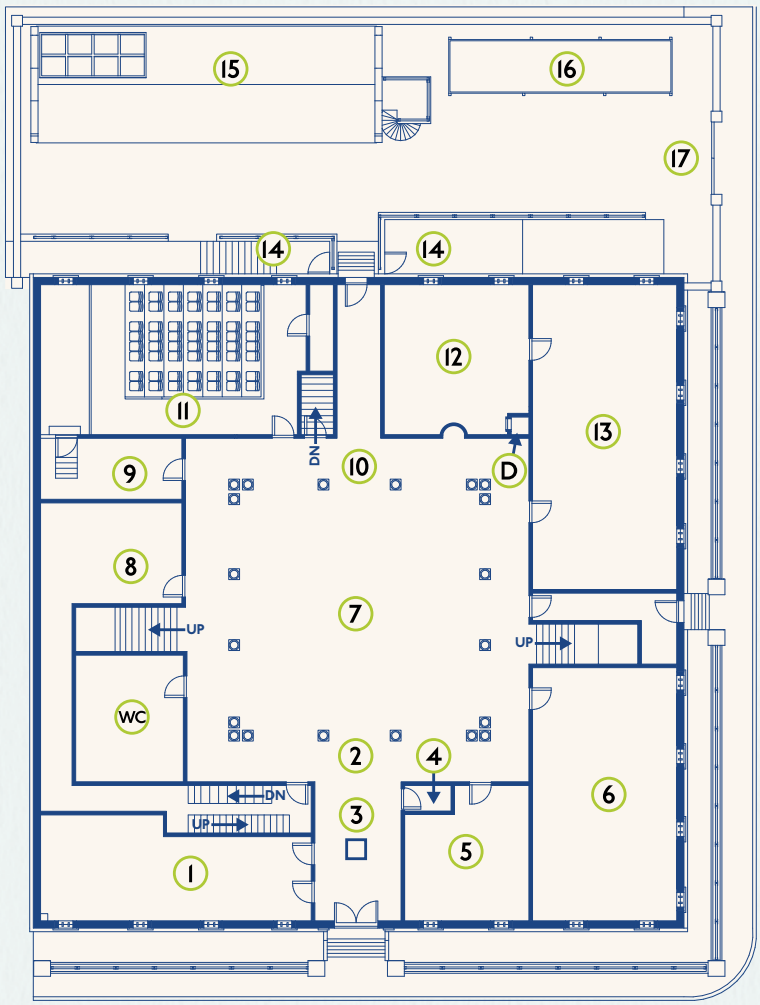
The Folly

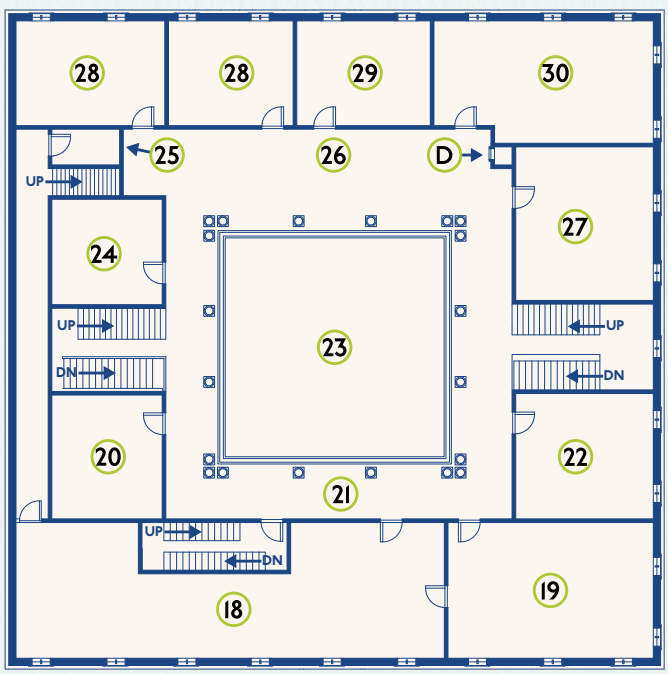
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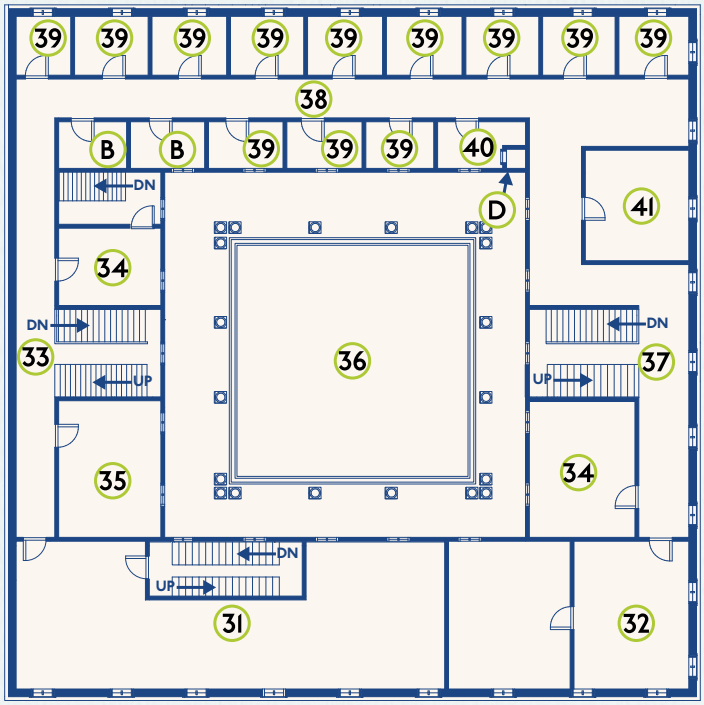




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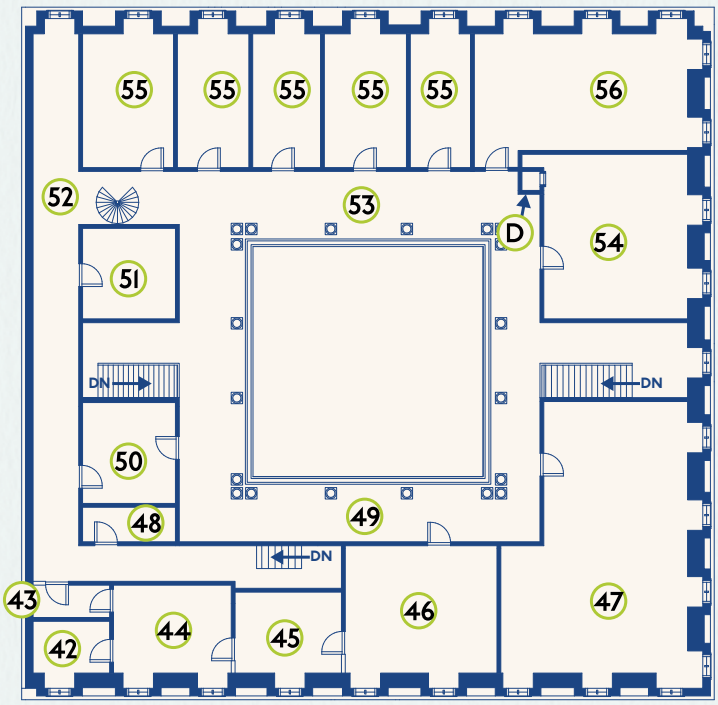
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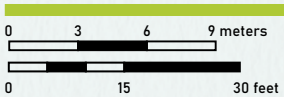
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B Bathroom
D Dumb Waiter



Third Floor

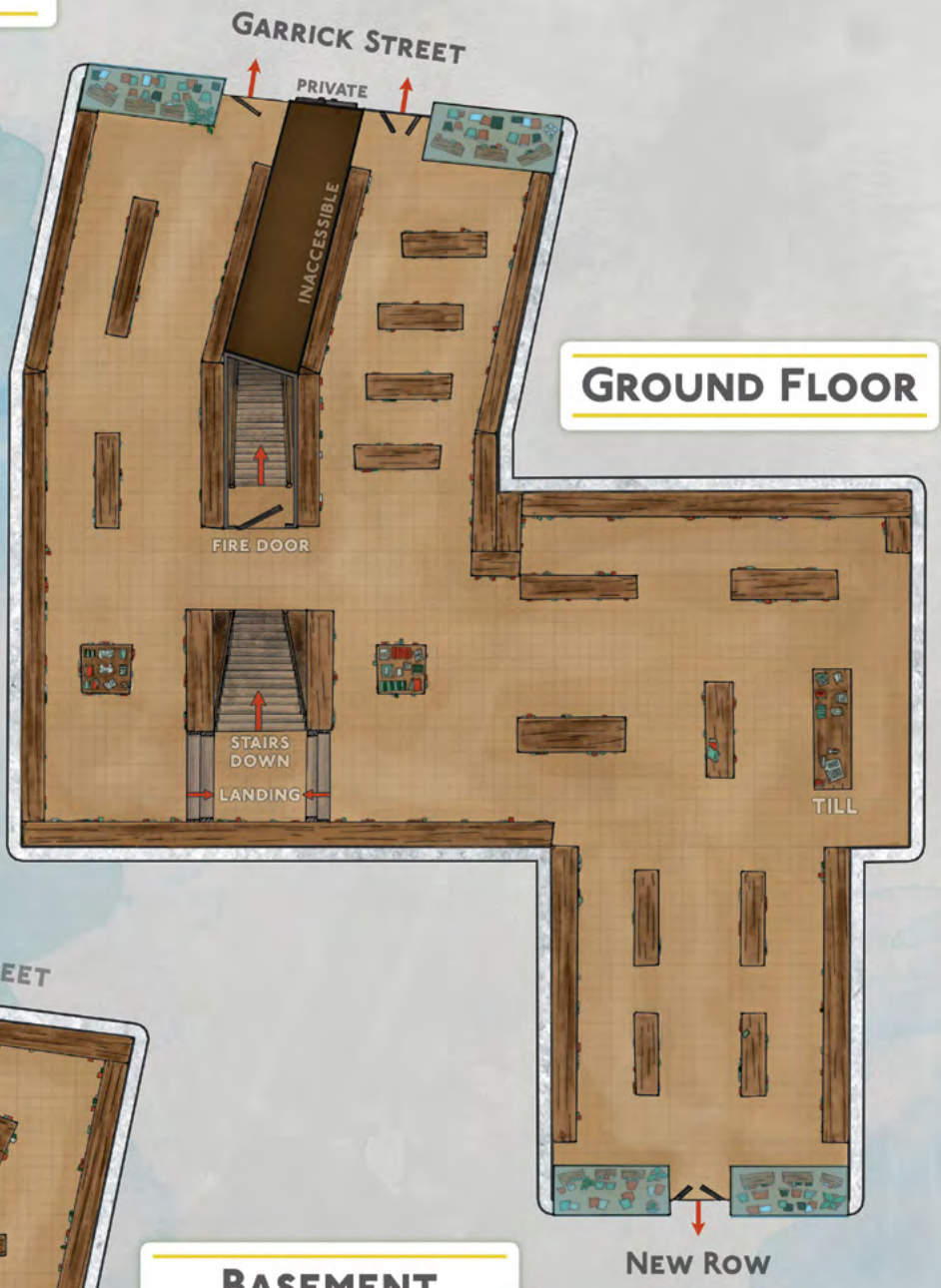
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53 South Colonnade
54 Senior Dining Room
55 Senior Member's Suite
56 Senior Lounge





Stonewaters Bookshop





Ground Floor



Basement

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Rivers of London
the Roleplaying Game

PORTRAIT

INVESTIGATOR INFO

Name _____

_____

Occupation _____

Place of Birth _____

Residence _____

Gender _____ Age _____

Affluence _____

Notes _____

_____

_____

CHARACTERISTICS

STRength ____/____ Full/Half

CONstitution ____/____ Full/Half

DEXterity ____/____ Full/Half

INTelligence ____/____ Full/Half

POWer ____/____ Full/Half

SUPPLEMENTAL INFO

MOV _____

Luck ____/____ Starting/Current

Magic Pts ____/____ Starting/Current

ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

COMMON SKILLS

Athletics	____/____ Full/Half
Drive	____/____ Full/Half
Navigate	____/____ Full/Half
Observation	____/____ Full/Half
Read Person	____/____ Full/Half
Research	____/____ Full/Half
Sense Vestigia	____/____ Full/Half
Social	____/____ Full/Half
Stealth	____/____ Full/Half

EXPERT SKILLS

_____	____/____ Full/Half
_____	____/____ Full/Half
_____	____/____ Full/Half
_____	____/____ Full/Half
_____	____/____ Full/Half
_____	____/____ Full/Half
_____	____/____ Full/Half
_____	____/____ Full/Half
_____	____/____ Full/Half

COMBAT SKILLS

Fighting	____/____ Full/Half
Firearms	____/____ Full/Half

DAMAGE

- ☐ Hurt
- ☐ Bloodied
- ☐ Down
- ☐ Impaired

WEAPONS

_____/____ Full/____ Half/____ Damage/____ Range

_____/____ Full/____ Half/____ Damage/____ Range

_____/____ Full/____ Half/____ Damage/____ Range

_____/____ Full/____ Half/____ Damage/____ Range

_____/____ Full/____ Half/____ Damage/____ Range

_____/____ Full/____ Half/____ Damage/____ Range

MAGIC SPELLS

☐ ____/_____ Order/Name

☐ ____/_____ Order/Name

☐ ____/_____ Order/Name

☐ ____/_____ Order/Name

☐ ____/_____ Order/Name

☐ ____/_____ Order/Name

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NAME △ _____

OCCUPATION △ _____

CONTACTS

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

SIGNARE

MAGIC SPELLS

☐ _____ / _____
Order / Name

☐ _____ / _____
Order / Name

☐ _____ / _____
Order / Name

BACKSTORY

EQUIPMENT

CASE FILES

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Rivers of London
the Roleplaying Game

PORTRAIT

DEMI-MONDE INFO

Name _____

_____

Occupation _____

Place of Birth _____

Residence _____

Gender _____ Age _____

Affluence _____

Notes _____

_____

_____

CHARACTERISTICS

STRength _____/_____ Full/Half

CONstitution _____/_____ Full/Half

DEXterity _____/_____ Full/Half

INTelligence _____/_____ Full/Half

POWer _____/_____ Full/Half

SUPPLEMENTAL INFO

MOV _____

Luck of the Demi-Monde _____/_____ Starting/Current

ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

COMMON SKILLS

Athletics	_____/_____ Full/Half
Drive	_____/_____ Full/Half
Navigate	_____/_____ Full/Half
Observation	_____/_____ Full/Half
Read Person	_____/_____ Full/Half
Research	_____/_____ Full/Half
Sense Vestigia	_____/_____ Full/Half
Social	_____/_____ Full/Half
Stealth	_____/_____ Full/Half

EXPERT SKILLS

_____	_____/_____ Full/Half
_____	_____/_____ Full/Half
_____	_____/_____ Full/Half
_____	_____/_____ Full/Half
_____	_____/_____ Full/Half
_____	_____/_____ Full/Half
_____	_____/_____ Full/Half
_____	_____/_____ Full/Half
_____	_____/_____ Full/Half

COMBAT

Fighting	_____/_____ Full/Half
Firearms	_____/_____ Full/Half

DAMAGE

☐ Hurt

☐ Bloodied

☐ Down

☐ Impaired

WEAPONS

_____/_____ Full/_____ Half/_____ Damage/_____ Range

_____/_____ Full/_____ Half/_____ Damage/_____ Range

_____/_____ Full/_____ Half/_____ Damage/_____ Range

_____/_____ Full/_____ Half/_____ Damage/_____ Range

_____/_____ Full/_____ Half/_____ Damage/_____ Range

_____/_____ Full/_____ Half/_____ Damage/_____ Range

AFFINITY

_____

_____

_____

MANIFESTATIONS (COST)

Everyday manifestation = 5 Luck points

Significant manifestation = 20 Luck points

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NAME _____ OCCUPATION _____

CONTACTS

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

_____ / _____ ☐ Secure ☐ Sour
Name / Relationship

SIGNARE (QUIET PEOPLE)

BACKSTORY

EQUIPMENT

CASE FILES

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Ben Aaronovitch

Born and raised in London, Ben had the sort of unrelentingly uninteresting childhood that drives a person to drink or Science Fiction. The latter proved useful in his early career when he wrote for *Doctor Who* (before it was fashionable), *Casualty*, and the cheapest soap opera ever made—*Jupiter Moon*. Alas, his career foundered in the late 1990s and he was forced to go out and work for a living. It was while running the Crime and Science Fiction sections at the Covent Garden branch of Waterstones that he conceived the notion of writing novels instead. Thus was the *Rivers of London* series born, and when the first book—*Rivers of London*—proved to be a runaway success, he waited all of five minutes to give up the day job and return to the bliss that is a full-time writing career. He still lives in the city that he modestly calls "the capital of the world," and says he will leave when they prise London from his cold dead fingers. He promises that he is already hard at work on the next Peter Grant novel and not playing computer games—honest.



Gary Bedell

Gary has worked as a professional illustrator and designer for over 20 years. From the age of three, he always had a pencil, pen, or anything that he could create with in his hand. By the age of six, he knew that being an artist was his calling.

His inspiration comes from many sources. From the look and eerie feel of Herbie Hancock's "Rockit" video and visual artists like Katsuhiro Otomo, Arthur Adams, Koji Morimoto, Adam Duff, Rodney Matthews, and Craig Mullins, to musicians like MF Doom, Thundercat, DJP, and Karriem Riggins. But his main inspiration came from his grandparents and other members of his family. They taught him to push, work hard, and never give up, while also nurturing his creativity.

In his career, Gary has worked with such companies as Crypt TV, Activision, Aftershock Entertainment, Fantasy Flight Games, Disney, and Nickelodeon. He is currently the lead artist for Attack Wagon, creating conceptual art for their project *Scrap Guilds*.

When he's not working, Gary loves to spend time with his wife and three kitties, travelling, spending time on personal projects, DJing, and collecting vintage toys. He also runs an artist organisation called Clever Kaiju: a community where professional and aspiring artists can network, learn from each other, attend their classes and demos, and, in some cases, find employment.



Irene Caro

Irene, under the pseudonym Araire, is an illustrator who primarily works on scientific historical recreations for museums. More recently, she has begun to produce art and illustrations for roleplaying games and book covers, often with a military theme. Although, like everyone else, she started off using a traditional pencil, nowadays, she uses exclusively digital painting for her work, incorporating 3D bases and photobashing. You can find her work at artstation.com/araire.

Like any lover of art, she was attracted to the world of illustration as a child but it was not until much later that she devoted herself to learning the profession. Now, she is lucky enough to dedicate herself to it entirely, and especially enjoys being commissioned to create illustrations for fantasy literature, which is one of the main reasons she became interested in art in the first place!



JB Casacop

JB is a professional freelance illustrator who creates fantasy and science fiction art for games. He holds a bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from the University of the Philippines. After college, he explored different career paths, such as advertising and traditional animation, before eventually deciding to specialise in game art production. He attended numerous game art workshops, both in the Philippines and Singapore, to advance his skills. For the better part of the past decade, he's worked for well-known publishers such as Fantasy Flight Games, Atomic Mass Games, Ubisoft Entertainment, Green Ronin, Alderac Entertainment Group, and, most recently, Wizards of the Coast and Chaosium. Popular titles he's illustrated cards for include *Warhammer 40K Conquest*, *A Game of Thrones* Living Card Game (1st and 2nd edition), *The Lord of the Rings LCG*, and multiple *Star Wars* games, as well as several yet-to-be-revealed *Magic: the Gathering* cards.

JB is a bona fide geek whose hobbies include assembling custom lightsabres, 3D printing miniatures and cosplay props, playing open-world video games, and reading comic books. When he's not busy with these, he spends time learning martial arts such as Arnis, Muay Thai, Tae Kwon Do, and HEMA.



Caleb Cleveland

Caleb is a freelance illustrator and concept artist based in San Diego, California, specialising in art direction and story development. Heavily influenced by illustrators like Gustaf Tenggren, Alex Toth, and Frank Frazetta, he's been drawing and painting fantastic monsters and characters since he was old enough to pick up a copy of *The Fiend Folio* (TSR, Wizards of the Coast). His schooling in theatre design, where he tried to marry illustration and performance, wholly turned to illustration upon graduation. He has since explored his love for costume design, conceptual art, and dramatic storytelling in games, comics, and children books. Currently, he is Art Director at Hunters Entertainment, lending his hand to titles like *Kids on Bikes* and *Alice is Missing*, and can often be found instructing artist workshops.



Simeon Cogswell

Simeon is a nonbinary geek who started gaming in 1993, when they were given a copy of the *Dungeons & Dragons Rules Cyclopedia* by their grandfather. Little did he know the kind of effect that would have on a dorky third grader, because almost 30 years later, Simeon now makes these books for a living. Sim's areas of geekery include: RPGs, anime, board games, retro video games, and typography.



Alyssa Faden

Alyssa has been a professional cartographer since 2012. She is best known for her incredible cityscapes and stunning details, often inviting viewers of her creations to see stories-within-stories for years after. Her clientele includes Monte Cook Games, Kobold Press, Profantasy Software, Gygax Magazine, Golden Goblin Press, and Troll Lord Games. Her style is unique and self-taught, with influences including the lovely ink work of such greats as Jeff Laubenstein and Jeff Easley. She is a long-time tabletop RPG gamer with a passion for game mastering *Call of Cthulhu*, so when asked to create some maps for Chaosium she did, of course, fall over herself in utter fan girl enthusiasm.



Paul Fricker

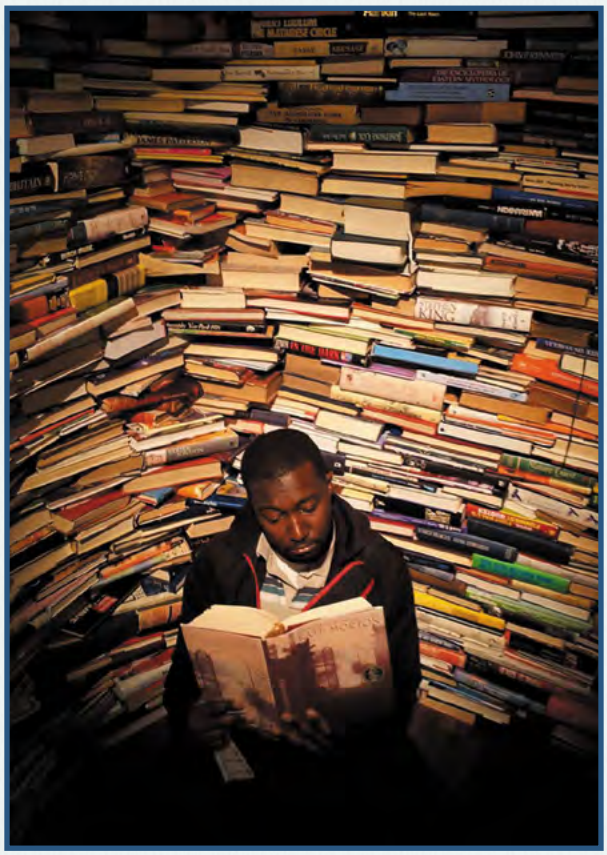
Paul Fricker is a freelance writer and games designer, and lead system designer for *Rivers of London: the Roleplaying Game*. In partnership with Mike Mason, Paul is best known for writing and revising the latest edition of Chaosium's award-winning RPG, *Call of Cthulhu*. Over the years, he has participated in the creation and development of numerous scenarios and campaigns, beginning with *Gatsby and the Great Race*, back in 2005.

Paul is also one of the hosts of the horror and gaming podcast, *The Good Friends of Jackson Elias*. He often can be found on Twitter (@PaulFricker), where he endeavors to focus on the important topics in life: gaming, music, and food.



Doruk Golcu

From a very young age, Doruk wanted to create monsters. To that end, he studied until his eyes bled out of his skull and got degrees in genetics and neurobiology, only to find that the creation of monsters was considered "unethical" and "a crime against nature and humanity" in those fields. In the end, he decided to just draw the monsters instead, and became a fantasy and horror illustrator. He studied at the Art Students League of New York, as well as being mentored by several legends of the fantasy art genre through Smart School. He works mainly in the field of tabletop roleplaying games, with companies such as Chaosium, Monte Cook Games, Paizo, Draco Gaming, Epiphany Games, Penny Dragon Games, and many others. When he is not busy drawing and painting in front of his computer, he teaches Argentine tango, practices martial arts and fencing, and eats unhealthy amounts of chocolate. He tends to move to an entirely new location every five years or so, but is currently hiding in a small sleepy town in the US Midwest with his lovely wife, a small pack of cats, lots of trees, squirrels, bunnies, and probably some cryptids.



Lloyd Gyan

From working with Modiphius Entertainment, to being the cultural liaison on RPGs such as *Bastion* and *Liminal*, Lloyd Gyan has come to see all that the RPG community has to offer. His unique take and perspective on the world at large brings a fine nuance to setting books—his specialty, coming from his many years as a second-generation Ghanaian living in London.

"Peter Grant's magical life has always vibrated with me, being a West African boy living his best life in London. To be given a chance to work on a project as personal as this is a dream come true. Also, I actually know what Star Beer tastes like!"



Lynne Hardy

A multi-award-winning writer and editor, Lynne has been working on and off in the roleplaying industry for almost 30 years, most recently in her capacity as Associate Editor for Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* RPG. Her past credits include work for Modiphius Entertainment, Cubicle 7, Green Ronin, and Pelgrane Press. She also created her own steampunk pulp adventure game: *Cogs, Cakes & Swordsticks*. Bizarrely, for someone who works predominantly in the horror field, Lynne hasn't watched a lot of horror films as they're far too scary, but she is rather fond of tea, books, and fountain pens, along with the occasional G&T. When she's not beavering away at the day job, she gives talks and workshops on traditional hand embroidery techniques.

Follow her on Twitter (@CogsandCakes).



Gavin Inglis

Gavin Inglis is a writer and teacher based in Edinburgh, with a background in tech and music. He writes adventures for *Call of Cthulhu*, including the introductory solo, *Alone Against the Flames*. Other work includes interactive novels published through Choice of Games, and credits on *Zombies*, *Run!* and *Fallen London*. His fiction has appeared in a magazine for actual conjurers, and his story collection, *Crap Ghosts* is the definitive reference to ineffective apparitions. Gavin was Language and Cognition Fellow at the Department for Clinical Neuroscience in Edinburgh, during which he produced a graphic novel about Functional Neurological Disorder, and an AI version of H.P. Lovecraft. His interactive web story about mental health, Hana Feels, was nominated for an XYZZY award. www.gavininglis.com.



Kurt Komoda

Kurt was born in New Jersey on May 15, 1970, interrupting his brother Paul's 4th birthday. The third son of two working artists, the Komoda household was never short of art supplies and had a near constant feed of sci-fi, kaiju, and horror to inspire and traumatise.

After graduating high school in 1988, Kurt joined the US Navy and served as an Aviation Anti-Submarine Warfare Operator and was a combat aircrewman onboard Lockheed P-3Cs based out of NAS Moffett Field. When the Cold War ended in 1991, the US apparently didn't need quite so many submarine hunters, so he opted for an early-out offered by the force reductions and returned to civilian life in 1992.

While working as a flight coordinator for Princeton Airport, Kurt took various artist gigs, the highlight of which was painting in the blood of his friend, the legendary jewellery designer, Axel Stocks. In 2001, Kurt started work as a commercial artist at The Studio NYC, illustrating storyboards, ad comps, book illustration, character design, and anything else that was thrown across his desk. He was laid off from the art studio in 2014 but this turned out to be a blessing, as the transition to 100% freelance was surprisingly smooth and has continued to support him to this day.

When he's not working, Kurt's hobbies include macro photography, kayaking, origami, fossil hunting, and video games. Kurt has been an avid martial artist since high school and continues to train and teach. He also takes care of Jowday, a feral that won his way inside and is the only good cat in the world.



Mike Mason

Mike Mason is an award-winning game writer and the creative director at Chaosium Inc. for the *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game. Mike is the co-writer of *Call of Cthulhu 7th edition, Pulp Cthulhu*, and the lead designer of the *Call of Cthulhu Starter Set*, *Malleus Monstrorum* (2nd edition), and the revised *Masks of Nyarlathotep*. Traces of Mike's tentacles can be found in every book in the line.

Around the millennium, Mike published *The Whisperer,* a fanzine devoted to *Call of Cthulhu*, and ran the Kult of Keepers, a group of *Call of Cthulhu* scenario writers organizing convention games. Mike previously worked for Games Workshop as the Line Manager and co-writer of the ENnie Award winning *Warhammer 40,000 RPG*: *Dark Heresy*, as well as working on *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*. Mike lives in the Midlands of England, betwixt the rolling Derbyshire Peaks and the Satanic Mills of Nottinghamshire, with a grumpy cat called Stripey.



Lucas Marques

Lucas is a Brazilian illustrator with more than 10 years' experience in professional illustration, games, and animation. His passion for art was awoken by Japanese entertainment and pop culture of the 1990s. The anime and *tokusatsu* creations of that time still have a large influence on his creative process.

From these foundations, Lucas developed his artistic skills by studying the fundamentals of his craft and experimenting with new materials and techniques, mixing traditional and digital media to create fantastical characters and worlds that reflect contemporary elements of pop culture and media.

As an artist, Lucas is driven by all the possibilities and opportunities his field presents to him every day, and he is always looking for new ways to make his ideas—and those of his clients—come alive!



Portrait by Leafturner Photography

Keris McDonald

Keris McDonald lives in the north of England, discovered *Dungeons & Dragons* before it was even considered a threat to one's immortal soul, and has been playing and GMing scenarios for Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* for 35 happy years. Her RPG scenarios have been published by *Worlds of Cthulhu* and *The Cthulhu Hack*. With many years involvement in writing live-action roleplaying events, she is currently helping run a Victorian Gothic LARP system.

A writer of supernatural fiction across the horror, fantasy, and erotica genres, Keris has nine novels in print and has seen her short stories published in many magazines and anthologies. Her short story, "The Coat Off His Back," was chosen for inclusion in *Best Horror of the Year Vol. 7* (ed. E Datlow).



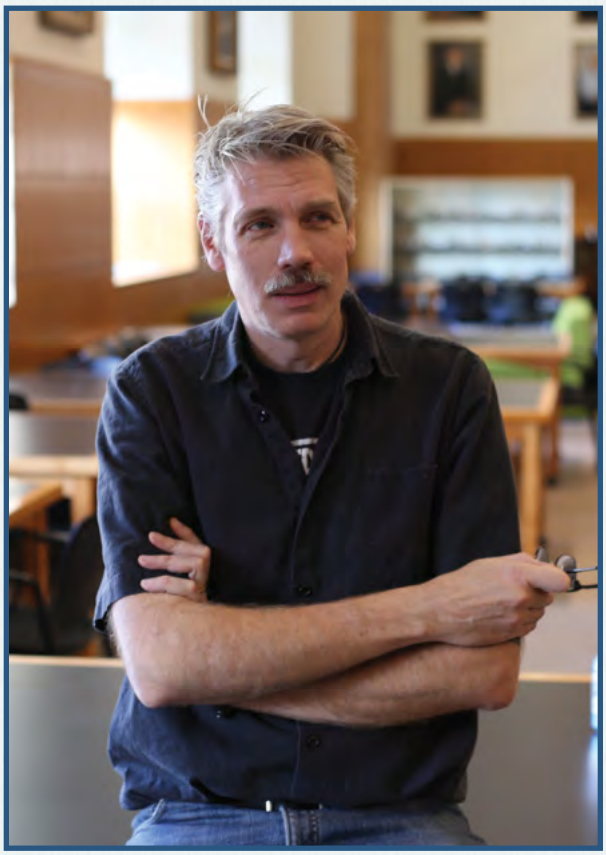
Maurice Mosqua

Maurice is a freelance artist and illustrator from Germany. He started his artistic journey in video games, creating landscapes, characters, and assets as a 2D artist. His true passion, though, always lay in creating larger scale artworks and concepts, so he decided to become a full-time freelance illustrator. Now, he mainly works on pen & paper roleplaying games and board games, along with book and album covers. He loves creating atmospheric and moody worlds, places, and their different inhabitants, mainly in medieval fantasy settings. But when the occasion arises, he likes to challenge himself with new genres and themes. So, when the offer came to work on the *Rivers of London* RPG, he was immediately hooked and ready to go. *"Like all the other artists featured in this book, I put in a lot of work to make Ben's ideas come alive. I hope I've done Ben's vision justice, and I am proud to be a part of this project."*



Nicholas Nacario

Nicholas is an award-winning graphic designer, art director, and part of the creative team behind the *Call of Cthulhu* roleplaying game. His short stories, essays, and *Call of Cthulhu* scenarios have appeared in various fiction and roleplaying publications such as *Corporate Cthulhu*, *Destroy All Robots*, *Down Darker Trails*, *Ill-Considered Expeditions*, and *Legends of New Orleans*. He is originally from the San Francisco Bay Area and now resides in Portland, OR.



Matt Ryan

Matt Ryan got his start in the tabletop roleplaying games industry in 2004, writing for Atlas Games' *Ars Magica*. In 2013, he began drawing maps, and while he still writes occasionally, he now focuses his energy on cartography and graphic design. He has drawn multiple maps for Chaosium games, including *Call of Cthulhu*, *RuneQuest*, *7th Sea*, and *Pendragon*.

Drawing the Folly plans was a treat for Matt, as it allowed him to incorporate previous versions with ideas from Ben Aaronovitch, Lynne Hardy, and Mike Mason in order to produce the finished items. Matt also created a complete 3D digital model, which the gang had fun running through!

Matt lives in the Finger Lakes region of New York with his wife, KC. The pair can often be found eating dinner in their canoe on Cayuga Lake.



Lucya Szachnowski

Lucya Szachnowski has lived in London all her life and loves her city, roleplaying, and all things magical. For Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* RPG, she co-wrote *The London Guidebook*, "The Garden of Earthly Delights" for *Strange Aeons*, "Suffer Little Children" and "London Calling" for *Day of the Beast*, "The Occulted Light" for *Before the Fall,* and contributed to *The Investigator's Companion* and *Keeper's Compendium*. She wrote the introductory scenario for the *Sigil & Sign* RPG by Cubicle 7 and Make Believe Games. After years working on local London newspapers, she did an MA in English literature, specialising in literary London. Under the pen name Lucya Starza, she has written books on practical magic in Moon Books' Pagan Portals series, and writes a London-based blog: A Bad Witch's Blog. She is very excited to be involved in the *Rivers of London* RPG.



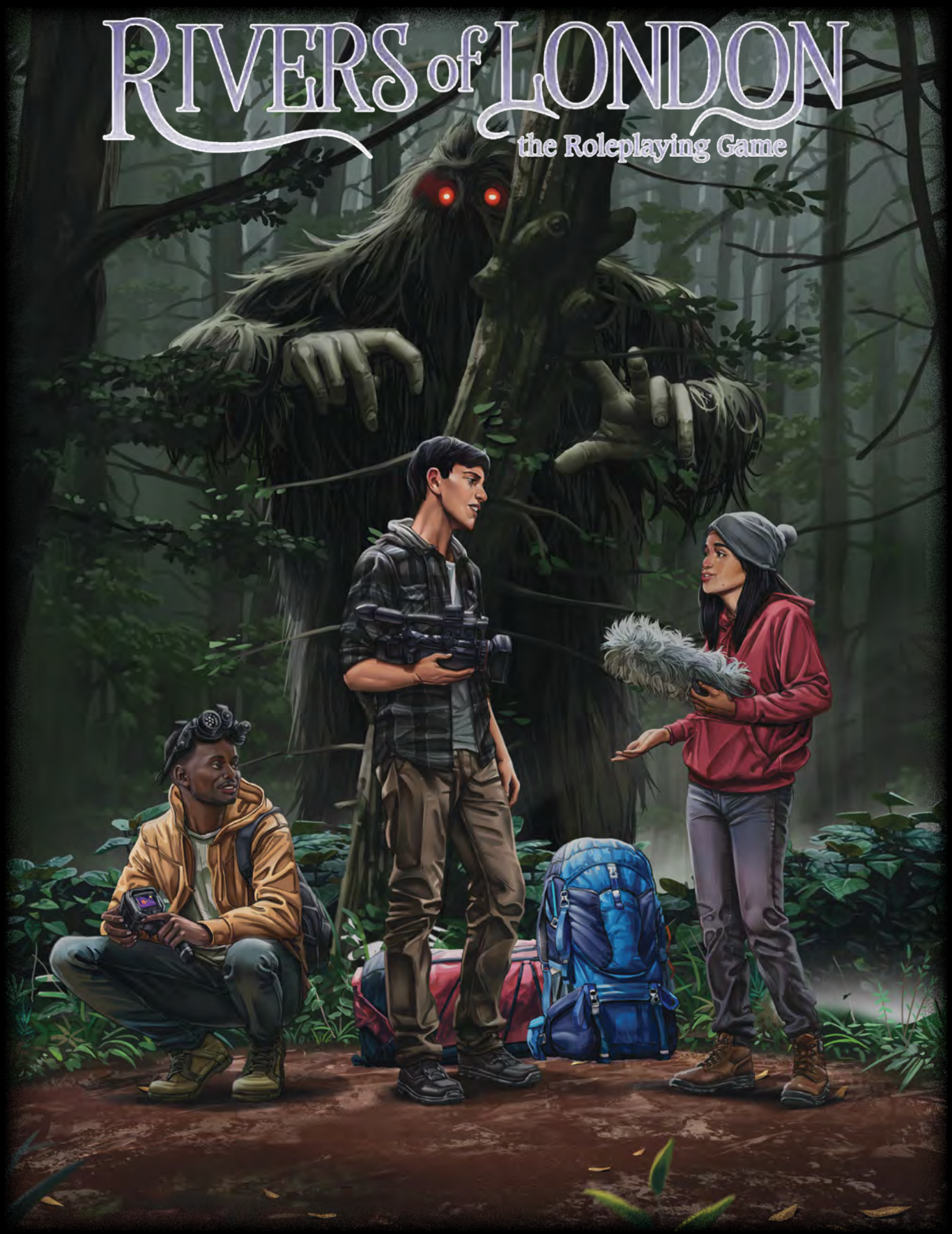
Anna Urbanek

Anna is a graphic designer by trade, a librarian by education, and a folklorist by heart's demand. As a part of the Double Proficiency team, she has been fortunate to provide layout and graphic design for such tabletop roleplaying and board game projects as *Starport RPG*, *Adventure Tactics*, *Old-School Essentials*, *Gangs of the Undercity*, *Inspirisles*, *Asunder*, *The Lost Citadel*, *Earthdawn*, and many more. Whenever she finds the time, she collaborates with her partner on writing, editing, designing, and illustrating in-house projects, like *Herbalist's Primer*, a collection of encounter decks known as *Wayfarer's Decks*, and the upcoming strategy tabletop RPG, *Aphelion Toolkit*.

Outside of work, Anna is a reclusive witch hiding in the middle of a Finnish forest with a partner, a wolf-like dog, two cat familiars, and a couple of mini humans. She busies herself with researching obscure and arcane topics, embroidering 8th-century clothing replicas, playing *Shadowrun*, and studying world mythologies and folk stories. Powered by the glories of coffee and pistachios, she wages an eternal (and losing) battle with the cats to keep at least one houseplant alive. Her current life goal is to befriend the local murder of ravens.


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