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Blades in the dark pdf

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11 The point of all this is to create a pressure-cooker environment for your criminal 2 escapades. Traveling outside the lightning barrier is a very bad idea, so it's impractical to "leave town and wait for the heat to die down" after you pull off a score. Everything the players choose to do has consequences for their characters and shifts the balance of power around the pursuits and vices of roleplaying game. For a full guide to Doskvol, see page 237.THE BASICS THE PLAYERS Each player creates a character and sometimes plays more than one character. The GM plays the world and other characters belong. Each player invents their character to life as an interesting, daring scoundrel who reaches boldly beyond their current safety and means. This is the players' core responsibility: they engage with the premise of the game, seeking out interesting opportunities for crime in the haunted city—taking big risks against powerful foes and sending their characters into danger. The players work together with the Game Master to establish the tone and style of the game by making judgment calls about the mechanics, dice, and consequences of actions. The players take responsibility as co-authors of the game with the GM. For more, see Players Best Practices, page 182. THE CHARACTERS The scoundrels attempt to develop their crew from a ragtag group of poor independents to a serious criminal organization with established turf. They do this by taking illegal jobs from clients, planning their own devious missions, making alliances, destroying their enemies, and trying to stay one step ahead of the law. There are several character types to choose from, each representing a different style of scoundrel: Cutters are intimidating fighters. Lurks are stealthy infiltrators. Hounds are deadly sharpshooters Slides are manipulators and spies. and trackers. Spiders are devious masterminds. Whispers are arcane adepts. Leeches are alchemists, and saboteurs. Character types aren't unique. You can mix and match, or play a crew that is all of one type. It's up to you. For more, see Character Creation, page 51. THE CREW In addition to creating scoundrel characters, you'll also create the crew by choosing which type of criminal enterprise you're interested in exploring. The crew gets its own "character sheet," just like a player character. Assassins are killers for hire. Hawkers sell illegal products. A Cult serves a forgotten god. Smugglers transport contraband. Bravos are thugs and extortionists. Shadows are thieves and spies. The crew type isn't restrictive (you can pursue a variety of activities); it's there to help focus the game play. For more on crews, see page 91.1THE GAME MASTER OVERVIEWThe GM establishes the dynamic world around the characters, especially thecorrupt and wicked rulers of the city and the violent and desperate criminalunderworld. The GM plays all the non-player characters in the world by givingeach one a concrete desire and preferred method of action. The GM organizes theconversation of the game to give each player the spotlight. When the PCs are at their leisure after a job, they can perform downtime actions to reduce stress or heal, indulge their vices, and so on (see page 153). Fortune roll. When the PCs are doing something in the background that doesn't call for a dice roll, and which one? Is your scoundrel in position to make a fine action roll to gain initiative? The GM has final say. When events in the story match the experience triggers for character and crew advancement? Did you express your character's beliefs, drives, heritage, or background? You tell us. The players have final say. The particular choices you make will create your own unique form of Blades in the Dark. You'll say something about the world and the characters, about crime fiction, and even about the human condition. What will you say? There's only one way to find out.ROLLING THE DICE 1THE CORE SYSTEM 2Blades in the Dark uses six-sided dice. You roll several at once and read thesingle highest result.If the highest die is a 4 or 5, that's a partial success—you do what you were trying to do, but there are consequences: trouble, harm, reduced effect, etc.If the highest die is 1-3, it's a bad outcome. Things go poorly. You probably don't achieve your goal and you suffer complications, too.If you ever need to roll but you have zero (or negative) dice, roll two dice and take the single lowest result. You can't roll a critical when you have zero dice.All the dice systems in the game are expressions of this basic format. When you'refirst learning the game, you can start with a simple action roll: gather the dice, make the roll, and judge the result.If you get stabbed, for example,you resist physical harm with your Prowess rating. Resistance rolls always succeed—you diminish or deflect the bad outcome—but you also suffer stress.

THE BASICS 6. roll the dice and judge the result 22 Once the goal, action rating, position, and effect have been established, roll the dice and judge the result based on the single highest die result. If you get a critical (two or more 6s) you do it with increased effect. 6: You do it. 4/5: You do it, but there's a consequence: you suffer harm, a complication occurs, you have reduced effect, you end up in a desperate position. 1-3: Things go badly. You suffer harm, a complication occurs, you lose this opportunity, you end up in a desperate position. There's a consequence: you suffer severe harm, a serious complication occurs, you lose this opportunity for action, OR you end up in a desperate position. On a 1-3, your character doesn't achieve their goal and things go wrong somehow.

situation. You don't have to do an exact accounting every time, either. Use the factors to help you make a stronger judgment call—don't feel beholden to them. DOMINANT FACTORS If one effect factor overshadows the others, the side with that advantage dominates the situation. It doesn't matter if you have a fine sword and extra effect if you try to fight 20 people at once. Their scale dominates the battle and you're left with very limited effect, or no effect at all. The same principle applies to "impossible" actions. Una wants to tear down a stone guard tower that the Silver Nails are using as a lair. She says, "I take my sledgehammer over there and I Wreck the thing, smashing it down stone by stone. Ha! I rolled a crit! Great effect!" Obviously, this isn't possible. A person can't smash down a stone tower with a sledgehammer. We know it's inherently silly, like jumping over the moon. But this is also codified in the effect factors. The tower is dominant in quality, scale, and potency. Unless those factors are countered somehow, Una's effect level is zero before she starts. No matter what she rolls for her action, she'll have no effect. This concept is useful when assessing other very tough (but achievable) situations. Let's imagine instead that Una is facing a demon. She wants to Skirmish with it, by engaging it with her sword and dagger. This is similar to knocking down the tower with the sledgehammer. Even on a critical, the GM says, "You manage to land a solid blow against the creature's skull, but there's no wound and your hand throbs with the impact of steel against its scaly hide." In other words, zero effect! (On a 1-3, the GM might say, "The creature swats your sword aside, clutches you in its hideous grip, and breaks your spine in two." Seriously. Don't mess with demons.) But this situation isn't entirely hopeless. There must be some way to battle a demon. This is where effect factors can help make sense of the situation. If the demon is dominant in quality, scale, and potency, then the PCs can try to understand the factors, and take actions to address them. What's the demon vulnerable to? They can use that to remove its potency (and seize that advantage for themselves). What scale is it? They need to bring more troops. Etc. Effect factors are a way to codify the situation into a few key factors so it's easier to talk about what needs to change in order to have the desired effect. 25 THE BASICS 1 TRADING POSITION FOR EFFECT After factors are considered and the GM has announced the effect level, a player might want to trade position for effect, or vice versa. For instance, if they're going to make a risky roll with standard effect (the most common scenario, generally), they might instead want to push their luck and make a desperate roll but with great effect. This kind of trade-off isn't included in the effect factors because it's not an element the GM should assess when setting the effect level. Once the level is set, though, you can always offer the trade-off to the player if it makes sense in the fiction. "I Prowl across the courtyard and vault over the wall, hiding in the shadows by the canal dock and Lyssa's gondola." "I don't think you can make it across in one quick dash. The scale of the courtyard is a factor here, so your effect will be limited. Let's say you can get halfway across with this action, then you'll have to Prowl through the other half of the space (and the rest of the guards there) to reach the other side." "I didn't realize it was that far. Hmmm. Okay, what if I just go as fast as I can. Can I get all the way across if I make a desperate roll?" "Yep, sounds good to me!" EFFECTS IN THE FICTION Effects aren't simply a matter of a level name or ticking clock segments. After the action roll, when you narrate the outcome, answer the effect questions by describing what happens "on screen." The answers to the questions will tell the group what the new situation is like, creating a natural bridge to further actions. For a simple action, the effect level determines the end result. Do you achieve your goal partially, fully, or with great effect? For a complex obstacle, the GM creates a progress clock to track the effort made to overcome it. You tick a number of segments on the clock depending on the effect level of your action and the factors involved. When you fill the clock, the obstacle is overcome. See Progress Clocks, page 15. For example, if the player says "I shove him and run away," that might be a simple action. It will have limited, standard, or great effect on the enemy, resulting in a new situation. The enemy might be slowed down (limited), knocked off their feet and delayed in the chase (standard), or even injured by a powerful throw (great)—depending on the assessment of the factors at hand. If the player says, "I engage this guy in a knife fight to the death," that might be a more complex obstacle. The GM creates a clock for the thug's level of threat, then there are several action rolls to resolve the fight, each ticking the clock according to the effect level (and risking consequences from the outcome of each). Go with your gut and use simple or complex obstacles as you like, moment to moment in play. There's no hard and fast rule for what's "simple" or "complex." 26 1 WHY WE DO THIS EFFECT The reason we assess effect is to set expectations and make the fictional situation more clear, so everyone is on the same page. You tangle with the Hive enforcer, blade to blade. Do you inflict a grievous mortal wound? Do you only give them a shallow cut? Why are you having the effect that you have? How could it be worse? How could it be better? By assessing effect and describing it in the fiction, the players understand how much progress they're making and how much they're risking. By understanding effect, the group understands how many actions (and risk of consequences) will be needed to achieve their goals. Maybe a shallow cut is all you need to prove your point. Maybe nothing short of death will suffice. After each instance of action, effect, and consequences, the players know where they stand, and can make informed decisions about what to do next. If you've played other roleplaying games or video games, you're probably familiar with the concept of "hit points" for a character or a progress bar during a boss fight. The effect system in Blades is this type of pacing mechanic, abstracted so it can apply to any type of situation, from fighting, to social manipulation, investigations, arcane powers, infiltration, whatever! Every action has an explicit effect that everyone playing the game can understand—either resolving the current situation so we can move on to the next one, or incrementing progress toward the current goal. CONSEQUENCES When a PC suffers an effect from an enemy or a dangerous situation, it's called a consequence. Consequences are the companion to effects. PCs have effect on the world around them and they suffer consequences in return from the circumstances, or the outcome of Reduced Effect a roll can inflict consequences on a PC. There are five Complication types (at right). Lost Opportunity A given circumstance might result in one or more Worse Position consequences, depending on the situation. The GM Harm determines the consequences, following from the fiction and the style and tone established by the game group. reduced effect This consequence represents impaired performance. The PC's action isn't as effective as they'd anticipated. You hit him, but it's only a flesh wound. She accepts the forged invitation, but she'll keep her eye on you throughout the night. You're able to scale the wall, but it's slow going—you're only halfway up. This consequence essentially reduces the effect level of the PC's action by one after all other factors are accounted for. complication This consequence represents trouble, mounting danger, or a new threat. The GM might introduce an immediate problem that results from the action right now: the room catches fire, you're disarmed, the crew takes +1 heat from evidence or witnesses, you lose status with a faction, the target evades you and now it's a chase, reinforcements arrive, etc. Or the GM might tick a clock for the complication, instead. Maybe there's a clock for the alert level of the guards at the manor. Or maybe the GM creates a new clock for the suspicion of the noble guests at the masquerade party and ticks it. Fill one tick on a clock for a minor complication or two ticks for a standard complication. A serious complication is more severe: reinforcements surround and trap you, the room catches fire and falling ceiling beams block the door, your weapon is broken, the crew suffers +2 heat, your target escapes out of sight, etc. Fill three ticks on a clock for a serious complication. Don't inflict a complication that negates a successful roll. If a PC tries to corner an enemy and gets a 4/5, don't say that the enemy escapes. The player's roll succeeded, so the enemy is cornered... maybe the PC has to wrestle them into position and during the scuffle the enemy grabs their gun. lost opportunity This consequence represents shifting circumstance. You had an opportunity to achieve your goal with this action, but it slips away. To try again, you need a new approach—usually a new form of action or a change in circumstances. Maybe you tried to Skirmish with the noble to trap her on the balcony, but she escaped and leaps out of reach. If you want to trap her now you'll have to try another way—maybe by Swaying her with your roguish charm. 30 worse position 1 CONSEQUENCES, HARM 31 This consequence represents losing control of the situation—the action carries you into a more dangerous position. Perhaps you make the leap across to the next rooftop, only to end up dangling by your fingertips. You haven't failed, but you haven't succeeded yet, either. You can try again, re-rolling at the new, worse position. This is a good consequence to choose to show escalating action. As you suffer the stress indicated. You can't roll first and see how much stress you'll take, then decide whether or not to resist. ARMOR If you have a type of armor that applies to the situation, you can mark an armor box to reduce or avoid a consequence, instead of rolling to resist. Silas is taking level 2 harm, "Cut to the Ribs," and the fight isn't even over yet, so Ian decides to use Silas's armor to reduce the harm. He marks the armor box and the harm becomes level 1, "Bruised." If Silas was wearing heavy armor, he could mark a second armor box and reduce the harm again, to zero. When an armor box is marked, it can't be used again until it's restored. All of your armor is restored when you start a new score. See Load out, page 57. DEATH There are a couple ways for a PC to die: If they suffer level 4 fatal harm and they don't resist it, they die. Sometimes this is a choice a player wants to make, because they feel like it wouldn't make sense for the character to survive or it seems right for their character to die here. If they need to record harm at level 3 and it's already filled, they suffer a catastrophic consequence, which might mean sudden death (depending on the circumstances). When your character dies, you have options: You can create a new scoundrel to play. Maybe you "promote" one of the NPC gang members to a PC, or create a brand new character who joins the crew. You can transfer your character to the Ghost playbook and carry on as a spirit. A ghost character can later become a Hull or a Vampire through play. See page 213 for details about spirit characters.

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