

MADCAP

SCREWBALL CARTOON ROLE-PLAY

The Game



“‘I can’t understand why you’re writing scripts for Bugs Bunny,’
the old lady replied with some asperity. ‘He’s funny enough just as he is.’”
— **Chuck Jones**

Welcome to **MADCAP** !

We are so glad you could join us.

The cleverest thing that cartoons do is seem anarchical when they’re actually following their own set of strict rules. Before restraint was introduced in cartoons, there was anarchy, chaos, cheap laughs. When cartoons became as much about what you can’t do as what you can do, that’s when they achieved the comedy gold we remember today.

A note about “rules”: the most important thing about Madcap, indeed any RPG, is the story that you and your

friends tell together. If the rules are getting in the way of telling a good story, and especially a good laugh, then just go with it. Never use the rules as an excuse to make the story worse. That doesn’t mean everyone gets what they want all the time—there’s no drama in that. Good story, and especially good comedy, is the King, and the Queen, and their children, Jack and Ace. (And their nephew, Five of Clubs.)

Beginning with the advent of sound in films, and ending with the takeover of that

infernal TV box, the Golden Age was an era of animation mastery. Whether the understated zaniness of Chuck Jones, the boldness of Tex Avery, or the legendary voices of Mel Blanc, and June Foray.

This is the backdrop of the world of **Madcap**. Dynamite, pies to the face, the laws of physics bending to the will of humor. It’s enough to put Isaac Newton in a strait jacket.

Golly, there sure are a lot of words in this book! I’m *Kurt*, and I’ll tell you *just what you need to know* to have fun!



If you have **NEVER** played a role-playing game before...

Madcap is a game of cooperative storytelling inspired by Golden Age cartoons. One player acts as the Director, and they will work with the other players to build their Characters that will make up your Cast. Players will tell the director what moves they will make – that is, what actions that they want their characters to be doing, in the fiction of the story. The Director will respond, to let you know if the move worked or not. (The Director may say yes or no, or they may ask you to roll some dice to make the game more random and exciting.) Together, you, the rest of your Cast, and the Director work to improvise a story about wacky cartoon characters in a silly world of your own imagination.

If you have played a **COMPUTER** role-playing game before...

Madcap is a cooperative multiplayer game for two or more players. One of you will be the Director, who moderates the play of the game. The rest of you will play Characters, your avatars in the game world. You make your characters using the pre-generated playbooks, customizing your appearance. You will get an add-on power called a Gimmick; some of these will be for all adventures, others are exclusive to certain storylines.

Most of the game will be simple poses, where you tell the Director what moves you want your Characters to make, and the Director responds. The Director has final authority on what moves will be allowed, but sometimes we'll roll dice instead, to make random processes.

Role-playing is the core of the experience. You and your fellow players are out to say funny things and to improvise wacky storylines. There's no leveling up (unless you mod the game, using the variant rules).

If you have played a **TABLETOP** role-playing game before...

The master of the game is called the Director. Everyone else is the Cast of Characters. You generate characters using the stock playbooks, and you can customize your character using Gimmicks. Some Gimmicks will work for any game, but others will be exclusive to certain adventures.

Like all role-playing games, the Director says what goes and what doesn't. Your actions are called moves, and the Director has responses. There's no set turn order, you just act when you say you want to act. Only players roll dice, never the Director. All rolls are two dice plus modifiers. Usually, a total of 10 or better is a clear success, and 7-9 is a partial success.

You can spend story points to boost your rolls (laughs) and you can suffer damage points that take you out of action (lumps).



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It's time to get things started: The Rules of the Game

Madcap is a game of cooperative storytelling inspired by Golden Age cartoons. One player acts as the Director, the rest as Characters. Together, the characters form the Cast. Characters will make moves, and the Director will respond to the move, explaining whether the move was successful or not, and what exactly went down. Each character has different skills, motivations, and unique abilities. They also have ways of combining their skills with the other cast members. Together, the Cast and the Director work to tell a wacky adventure, the Director supplying the larger story beats, and the Cast the moment to moment actions.

The **Director** is the master of ceremonies. Everyone else is a **Player**, who gets to make a **character**. The Players tell the Director what they want their characters to do, which are **moves** in the story. The Director **responds** by telling more story or by demanding more moves. If the **mood** of the story isn't **casual**, we'll roll dice to see what happens.

Our roles: DIRECTOR & CAST

One of you is the **Director**. Just like a movie or TV show, the Director is the boss. What they say goes, even what rules we'll have in play.

The other players will be members of the **cast**. You yourself are a player, and you'll be acting out the role of a **character** in the game. (Sometimes, we'll call the characters that you control "Player Characters" or PCs. That's industry talk, kid.)

Like any good cast of characters, you have your own qualities you bring to a scene, friendships, rivalries, begrudging co-operation and hand-in-glove teamwork. Bickering may break out, but somehow it always seems to serve the larger plot. (We say 'somehow'-- really, we mean because the Director is working very hard to make sure it does.)

Everyone in the cast is working towards the group's overall goal, no matter how they act. Some cast members are obviously good guys. Other cast members seem dastardly or sneaky, but they are performing a valuable service by setting themselves up to be the butt of the joke.

You'll get to customize the **look** of your character – their hair color, their eye color, their voice, their mannerism, their credit rating, their Myers-Briggs profile, their gender, their species, their kingdom, etc.

Like all good characters ready to be monetized, you'll want to have a good **catchphrase**. This phrase lets us know what your character is on about.



Being **IN CHARAC- TER** vs. **OUT OF CHARACTER**, and **DECLARING** stuff

Just like an actor, you'll have to worry about two things at once: what your fictional persona is doing in the game – **in character** – and what you and your fellow players are doing to roll dice, to adjust numbers and to play the game – **out of character**.

When you tell the Director that your character will do something in the fiction of the story, you're declaring that you'll do this thing in character. "I declare that my Abecrombie character will open the door!" ... is the awkward but technically-correct way you'd do this.

When you get used to the game, you'll probably be more comfortable implying that you're declaring stuff in character. It's understood that when you say "I open the door" that you mean that Abecrombie the character is doing it, not you.

Declaring something means that your character is doing it. After Abecrombie opens the door, he might set off a trap that dumps a bucket of glue on his head. Welp, you declared you'd do it, so now you gotta live with the consequences.

Gotta take the good with the bad: **LAUGHS & LUMPS**

Your goal is to have fun. Each time we play out a scene in the game, you'll want to say funny things.

Each scene, when you say something funny, the Director may give you a laugh

A laugh is a point that you can exchange later, for benefits in the game.

You can only have up to three laughs at a time. If you've already got three, you might want to save your good material for a while and to let some other players get some "screen time" in to get their own laughs. Or maybe you should start spending yours.

Some characters can stockpile laughs for bonuses to die rolls. You can still make a roll even if you have zero laughs, you just won't get that bonus for laughs.

When something bad happens to you, you suffer a lump

Lumps aren't just physical injury. Exhaustion, stress, embarrassment that makes you do a funny face, etc. could all be lumps.

When you get three lumps, you must sit out of the action for a bit. (No more than five minutes, until we start a new scene.)

Some characters get bonuses to die rolls if they have lumps. They can still make these rolls even if they have zero lumps. (So you're either fine, or your injuries increase your luck. That's what we call a win-win situation.)

It keeps happening: **MOVES, RESPONSES, & ROUNDS**

When a player does something in character, it's called a move

I walk across the room." "I disarm the bomb." "I enter to win the Publisher's Clearing-house Sweepstakes." "I ask the maître d' if those legs go all the way up." "I re-arm the bomb." These are all examples of moves.

Every character has attributes for their common moves

- When the situation is charged, and everyone else is losing their head, you can use your **cool** moves to get something down.
- Use your **sharp** moves to read what's going on, and to do some brainy stuff.
- Use **sly** moves to put one over on the rubes, or to give them the slip.

MADCAP TIMES

UPPSALA, SWEDEN • In his Imperium Naturae, Carl Linnaeus set up a system for describing things whether they were animal, vegetable, or mineral: the three kingdoms.

For his work in taxonomy, the king of Sweden gave Linnaeus a noble title. After that, everyone could agree that Linnaeus was a real classy guy.

- Throw your weight around with your **tough** moves. Or throw other things again, put a little elbow grease into it.
- We'd try to explain what a **zany** move is, but it's not easy. It's for all those screw-ball, silly things that don't make any sense and that you can only do inside a cartoon.



Every character can take some time to be cool, sharp, sly, tough, or zany. We've listed some ideas in the attributes chapter, but you and yours will come up with your own.

Your character has ratings in each of these five attributes, from -1 (ugh) to =0 (meh) to +1 (ooh) to +2 (wow).

It's okay to try moves that don't use your best attribute, by the way. Who knows, you might get lucky.

If the mood isn't right, you may be asked to roll dice to make moves

If you just want to do cool, sharp, sly, tough, or zany things, and your fellow players and the Director think that what you're describing is funny, then we can just go with it. **Madcap** is about having fun.

In game terms, the host will describe what the **mood** is. (And if you don't know what the mood is, feel free the Director. They won't bite.)

When the mood is **casual**, it means we're not sweating rules and stuff. Just describe what your character does, free and easy. Make jokes, try new things, live a little

But sometimes, things get dicey. Maybe you want to use a move when your attribute isn't that great. Maybe people are watching you, and you're about to do something you aren't supposed to. It could be raining, sleeting, fuming, matriculating, or some other environmental hazard. Or maybe it would be funnier if we don't know what's going to happen next. The Director could declare at any time that we're in a **dicey mood**. (Heck, you could make the mood turn dicey, yourself, if you just make enough trouble.)

When the mood is dicey, even the most basic tasks can have a random chance to fail. You can't make any moves without checking with the Director first, and even then, the Director may make you roll dice. (**Madcap** rolls two six-sided dice for most things.) Now you could roll critically high or critically low, you could make spectacular failures or amazing successes. Who knows what will happen! It's dicey, baby!

Add a little violent to the crazy, and you get a **grudge mood** (which other games might call “combat time”.) Only the Director can declare a grudge mood, ... but you are capable (even encouraged) to use your character to antagonize other characters in the game’s fiction until they get so angry that a grudge starts. And just like a dicey mood, you have to roll dice during a grudge mood, so anything could happen.

Your character also has a unique move, just for you and you alone

For example, a Smartypants will be able to use their sharp to come up clever schemes, while a Trickster can use their sly to Flim-Flam other people, getting things done by deception and ruses.

Like the name says, each unique move is different from character to character. It’s the key thing that makes your character different from the others.

Your unique move might use one of your five attributes... or it might use your laugh count or your lump count. Each one is different! If you don’t have any laughs or lumps yet, no worries – you can still use your unique move, just not as well.

And if things get violent, you’ve got a grudge move

Madcap is a game about being funny, not being fighty. (I mean, sure, violence can be funny, but we’d like to think you’d try to get a few jokes in first. Punching down is not funny.) Of course, you can be as obnoxious, as crooked, and as annoying as you want, until the other people get so sick of you that *they* start a fight.

When your character gets involved in violence, whether it’s a swirling cloud of fists or a whizzing exchange of bullets, the Director will tell you that a grudge match has started. You can keep using your regular moves... or you can get dangerous and use your **grudge move**.

Just like your unique move, each grudge is different for each character. Some characters, like the Blowhard and the Scrapper, are very good at dishing out damage. Others, like the Tagalong, are much better at helping other people fight. And a few characters really aren’t the violent type, and their grudge move is pretty weak. Those characters will want to run from a fight, or stand behind someone else.

Your grudge move might use one of your five attributes... or it might use your laugh count or your lump count. Each one is different! If you don’t have any laughs or lumps yet, no worries – you can still use your grudge move, just not as well.

Your character might have a gimmick, too

A **gimmick** is a special quality that makes them even more unique. Your gimmick might give you another unique move, or it might affect how your other moves work, or it might do something even crazier. Read the gimmick’s description for the precise details.

After we play out a move, the Director responds to what you just did.

The Director tells you what happens. “The bomb stops ticking.” “Six to eight weeks pass before a limo pulls up and hands you a giant check.” “You are given a withering glance, a cold shoulder, and the table that’s right next to both the kitchen and the lavatory.” “What, and quit show business?” Etc.

Sometimes the Director will make you play out another move. “You annoy the fishmonger so much, he throws a haddock at you! Play out a grudge move!” “After you asked the computer to divide by zero, the screen turns fuzzy and then sparks start to fly out. Play out a sharp move to stop this before it gets out of hand!” “You’re driving so fast, you almost didn’t see that sign back there that said ‘DETOUR – BRIDGE OUT’. Make a cool move or it’s curtains for you!” Etc.

Other times, the Director may just let the situation sit, and they may move forward with the story. Or they may give another player a chance to take a turn at doing things.

There's no hard limit on the number of moves you can take in a row

You can move, the Director responds, and then you can move again... but there may be reasons you don’t want to do that.

If you take too many moves without giving your fellow players a turn, you may be pushing too far, and the responses may become worse.

When a character takes two moves in a row, it starts a new **round** of moves. (So in a single round, each player could make a single move.) Sometimes, you have all the time in the world, and you and yours can take as many moves as you want. ... But in some stories, time is a serious factor. Each time the players take a new round, the Director may “advance the clock”, pushing the story forward, for good or for ill. More details on rounds, countdowns, and other time-related stuff are in the Director’s chapter.

Don't just sit there ! Put some sauce on it.

It’s tempting to fall into a rut and just quote the rules, like some bureaucrat trying to get your forms filled out. That’s not what **Madcap** role-play is about, friend! With even your most casual moves, get into character. Talk with a funny voice. Describe what your character does. Tell a joke. Do something. Sure, they’re not all going to be winners, but it’s not about wins, it’s about fun!

Doing the exact same thing over and over again isn't good for laughs.

And speaking of fun, what’s more boring than the same thing that didn’t work last time? The Director might not let you get away with making the same move over and over.

For example, Dizzy Dingo wants to hit a minor character over the head with a mallet for the third time in a row. The Director encourages Dizzy to use their move in a different way. After they do some quick brainstorming, Dizzy decides to use a leaf blower. They roll high, and proceed to use the leaf blower to pelt the NPC with an array of debris, including leaves, sticks, logs, and home appliances.

What's the Mood?

Casual, Dicey, or Grudge

Screwball cartoons can go back and forth from the calm before the storm... to frantic slapstick ... then back to a breather. We're going to call this the mood of the story.

The game of **Madcap** has a **mood**, set by the Director, so you know

when we're being casual and informal ("I walk down the street without a care in the world) ... and when we're tempting fate in a dicey situation ("I run through traffic, weaving in between the rushing cars") ... and

when we're actively fighting in a grudge match ("I'll show that guy just what we do to jaywalkers in this town.")

As things happen in the game, the Director will change the mood

If you've played these kinds of games before, you'll probably pick up on what kind of mood that the game is in pretty quickly.

If you're not sure what the mood is, ask the Director. They won't bite. (We told them not to bite you.)

When you're playing the game, you and your fellow players will just improvise what your characters are doing. "We got to the store." "I get on the bus." "While she negotiates a lasting disarmament treaty between all nations of the world, I pick my nose." "He'll work the steering while I work the pedals," etc.

There are three moods:

- **Casual**, when it's all good
- **Dicey**, when it's random
- **Grudge**, when it's violent

Describe what your character does. If the situation gets dicey, roll dice. Oh, and you can't use violence unless the Director says that it's time for a grudge match.



When the mood is **CASUAL**, then we don't need to roll dice

When the mood is **casual**, we're not going to fuss with a lot of rules. We're not going to make you count every step, or enforce a fierce order of turns, or buff your THACO so your DPS meets the challenge level. Heck, we're not even going to make you roll dice for stuff! Just say what you do, and then do it.

If someone's not okay with taking things casual, then the Director can change the mood to "dicey" and we'll do this by the book.

Each game begins in a casual mood

We'll start off easy. Get in there and start playing! The sooner you start making jokes, the sooner you can get your first laugh.

When it's casual, we don't need to roll dice.

Just blurt out what you want your character to do. Walk down the street, put money a parking meter, enjoy the nice weather we're having, push people far weaker than yourself out of your way, get nice things from people who like you, etc.

If you want to do something dicey (like run a marathon, sneak past a watchful guard, persuade someone who is hostile to you, etc.), that's not something you can do casually. The Director will have to change the mood to **dicey** and you'll have to roll some dice.

When it's casual, we take turns however we want

There's no set order. You can even take two moves back to back, if everyone's okay with that.

Each move provokes a response, as usual, so you may want to let someone else take a turn before you get too many lumps.

When it's casual, not everybody has to take a turn

The Director may just talk to one Player getting screen time, working on a gag. Any Player can just chime in whenever they want.

It's casual, so you can just go with the flow.

When it's casual, story time is flexible

In casual play, we won't insist on play-by-play moves. The Director can push the story forward to the next scene, like a jump cut or dissolve in a television show. "It was a long drive, but here we are in Yellowstone National Park!" "After six grueling months at sea, your ship finally drops anchor on M  lee Island."

You see time-skips like this in movies, TV, and video games all the time. It happens here, too. It's casual, no big deal.

When the mood is **DICEY**, everything is a gamble

Walking across a tightrope, lighting the fuse on the firecracker, or gifting some rube out of their ice cream are all things where the outcome is uncertain. And when things get **dicey**, we get out the dice.

You make the mood turn dicey by doing something random and uncertain

Whenever you do something that the Director says you need to roll, the mood of the story switches to **dicey**. (The Director might say things are dicey right now, but even if they don't say it... well, if you're rolling dice, things are dicey. You'll pick this up.)

One of the things you can spend laughs on... is to make a casual move when things are dicey. Ask the Director for permission, first!

When it's dicey, each player gets a turn

When the boat is sinking, or the house is burning, or we're racing to the finish line, we all want a chance to do something. When the mood is **dicey**, the Director probably let a player take two turns in a row. They should let each player get a chance to do something. When each player has taken a turn, we call that a **round**. (Some Directors will ask each player in the table, left-to-right, going "round"

the table. See how that works? You're totally getting this.)

When it's dicey, not everybody has to take a turn, but you should make that clear

You don't have to take a move if you don't want to. You can just pass, and make it someone else's problem. (Heck, you were passing your turn earlier, when things were casual. When it's dice, though, things get hectic. We don't want to skip over you. Your turn is important to us!)

Each round, the players may have to deal with a group challenge

In dicey situations, things might happen that affect everyone. (The boat rocks on high waves; the high-power fan is blowing you and all your stuff away; the new phones came out today and they just opened the store so trample or be trampled, etc.) The Director may **challenge** all the players to make a move to respond to something that affects everyone.

A group challenge happens after the round is over – that is, after each player takes a single turn. The Director then asks everyone in turn to deal with the problem. They might say something general ("roll +cool to avoid catching on fire"), or they might go around

the table and ask each player what their character will do.

Once everyone deals with the challenge, we can go back to the players taking active turns to things. The challenge might be over ("hooray, the fire is out!") or not ("oh no, the blaze has spread to my artisanal toilet-paper collection!"). One thing's for sure: until this challenge is dealt with, things will still be dicey.

When it's dicey, story time shifts from moment to moment

Story-tellers might call this "dramatic time", because it's dramatic. We can't just skip ahead to Arbor Day, we have to deal with this house fire, first.

Once all the drama is over, we can switch back to **casual** mood and then skip ahead to the next plot point.

When the dicey stuff is over, the mood goes back to casual

When you get used to the game, you'll be able to switch between **casual** and **dicey** moods without everyone just saying it. If you're ever confused about whether we're rolling dice or not, ask your Director what the mood is supposed to be. We're all friends here.

When the mood is **GRUDGE**, it's time to roll with the punches

Violence is a thing in some cartoons... but it's not something we take lightly. **Madcap** is a game about being funny, and it's not really that funny when you're the bully throwing the first punch. That's why we have the **grudge**.

You push the mood towards grudge by provoking one of the Director's characters

Everyone can use a provoke move to make someone mad at you. Or you could bully someone, to either get something you want, or just to call someone out. You could even persuade someone to give you something or to start a fight with you.

The important thing is, you have to do something — anything — to shift the mood to grudge before you can start being violent. The Director declares when the mood changes, and if you really want to start a **grudge**, then you have to annoy somebody, first. Say a line, make a demand, squirt them in the face with your boutonniere, etc,

When it's a grudge, each player must take a turn, whether they want to or not

A grudge match is a group challenge. People are throwing punches, pies, bricks, kitchen sinks, etc. and anyone could get hurt.

Just like when it's dicey, when it's a **grudge** mood, the Director should ask each player what they're doing.

When it's a grudge, you can now use your grudge move. (You don't have to use that move, you can try to do other things, but if you are just rarin' to go, it's go time.)

Some characters will be pacifists, cowards, weaklings, etc. They will have grudge moves that are more about avoiding harm than dishing it out. You could also try other moves (persuade, bully, etc.) during a grudge, but you'll have to roll to pull it off, and you might get some lumps for your trouble.

The worst grudges also have a group challenge going on. ("Can we stop fighting for one minute and put out this fire, already?") So everyone takes a grudge move, then the Director makes everyone with the challenge. Some days, you can't get a break!

A grudge mood is random and uncertain

Just like when it's dicey, you also have to make rolls when it's a grudge mood. You may have to make +cool rolls to do the simplest things. Hey, it's a war zone.

And just like when it's dicey, you can ask to spend a laugh to make a casual move.

When it's a grudge, story time shifts from moment to moment

Just like when it's dicey, when it's a **grudge**, we're going play-by-play to make sure everyone gets their turn. It's like slow-motion in an action movie, or the whole page that the novel devotes to three seconds of some battle.

If you've played a tabletop game before, you've seen this kind of thing before: everyone takes a turn, then the Director describes the retaliation, then the players take their turns again, etc. Grudge matches are the same deal. Everybody gets a turn, whether they need it or not.

When the grudge match is over, the mood changes

Eventually, the grudge will end. Maybe all your foes are lying in crumpled, misshapen heaps on the ground. Or maybe you didn't win, and that's your teeth all over the floor. Maybe cooler heads prevailed, and you were able to come to a compromise... or maybe you all just ran away.

Whatever the case, when there's no more fighting, the grudge mood is over. The mood changes... but to what?

- If the fight had a clear ending – you lost, or they lost, or everyone lost – then we can go back to **casual** role-play. (The screen fades to black, and now we're cleaning up the mess we just made, or we're off to somewhere else, etc.)
- If there's still stuff to deal with, then the mood shifts

to **dicey**. Did anyone put out that raging fire? Or maybe we've agreed to stop fighting for a hot minute, and it's time for some dicey negotiations. Maybe we forgot why we were fighting in the first place!

Now it's time to make some rolls. Persuade! Deceive! Bully! Flirt! Deal with this aftermath so we can get back to casual storytelling, already.



Do you fancy your chances?

Rolling Dice

To add a dash of the unexpected, we'll sometimes take little cubes and drop them on a surface. When the cubes stop moving, we look count the little dots on the tops. Trust me, this will all make sense one we start playing.

Can you do this thing? **AUTOMATIC, ROLLED, & IMPOSSIBLE** Moves

We won't be rolling dice for every single thing your character has to do. Simple stuff, like walking across the room, remembering your own name, and agreeing to the end-user license agreement on your apps won't require any rolls. These tasks are just **automatic**. Never roll dice if you don't think it's going to be interesting.

But what's "interesting" changes from group to group, and from moment to moment. As soon as you have to shove your way through other people, work in a high stress situation, or try to actually understand an end-user license agreement, things heat up. And when things get heated, the Director will change the mood from casual to **dicey**.

When the mood is **dicey**, the Director may call for you to **roll** dice to do even the simplest of tasks. You'll get to add something, like one of your attributes. (+Cool for regular things... +Zany for wacky things, etc.)

Be a good sport: if you roll well, that's great, but if you roll badly, don't complain about it. Take your lumps and move on.

Sometimes, the Director will say that something just can't be done, no matter how well you roll. You can't just marry the president, balance the budget, or find the lost city of Atlantis unless you have a good reason in the story to do it, and probably not in just a single move.

What is **impossible** will vary from game to game. When playing **Madcap**, you want to be funny. Snapping your fingers and getting everything you want isn't funny. (It's boring when the entire story is over with a single snap of your fingers.) Likewise, getting nothing at all isn't funny, either. (A good story makes us feel for our characters. We need to relate to their suffering, to know they *might* make it, even if they probably won't.)

If the Director says something is impossible, find a different thing to do... or find a different way to do the thing you want to do. (Run for president, build a super-computer to review the figures, marry a mermaid, etc.) What might be impossible in a single move could become something you can roll if you break it down into smaller (and funnier) steps.

When you roll, it's two six-sided dice, plus another number. If the total is 10 or more, you get what you want. If it's 7-9, it gets complicated.



When the mood is **CASUAL**, we won't need to roll dice

We talked about mood in the last chapter. You'll only be rolling dice when things are a little hectic... that is, when the mood of the game is dicey or grudge. You and your fellow players can just describe what your characters are doing if it's free and easy. If it's not interesting to roll the dice, then don't roll the dice.

Rolling dice means **ANYTHING** could happen !

If you're about to roll dice, you have to be ready to accept that something random is going to happen. Don't be the poor sport who gets a bad roll and then complains about the result. You wouldn't be complaining if you had rolled better, and we're not playing for money or anything serious. It's all in fun.

If you really, *really* don't think that what you're about to do should have any chance of going south, briefly make your case that you shouldn't have to roll. Your Director will listen to you, make a quick decision, and we can get on with the game.

When the mood of the story is "dicey", that means that hands are flailing, jaws are wagging, rain is falling, brakes are off, or other kinds of chaos are confounding the situation. So what was easy when it was "casual" can become a crapshoot now that it's "dicey".

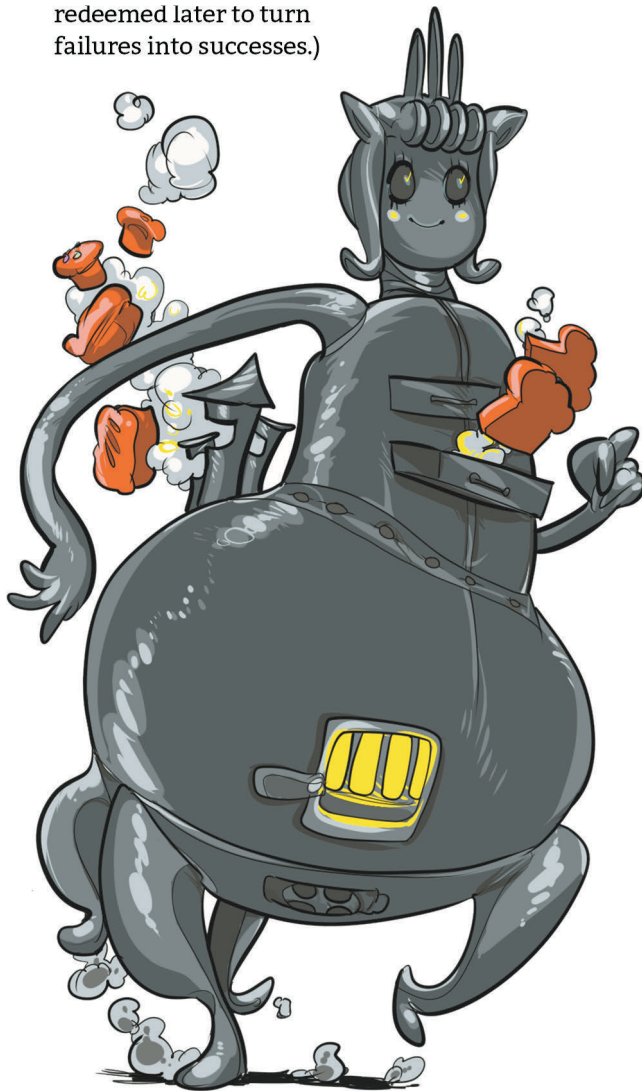
Madcap uses **two dice**. (The regular six-sided kind.) To keep things short and sweet, we'll just use the word "roll" when we want you to roll two dice. So when you see "**roll**", that means "roll two six-sided dice."

You'll almost always have a number to add or subtract to that roll. That's a modifier, which we'll usually write as **+mod**. "Mod" will be whatever you're adding. Like, if we say, "**roll +zany**", we mean "roll two dice and add your 'zany' number to the result."

This will give you a number. Rolling higher is usually better. We say "usually" because there can be too much of a good thing.

Sometimes, you'll roll a success... and the Director will make it a failure but also give you a laugh

The Director has the authority to override anything that goes on... even your die rolls. But as our way of thanking you for your good sportsmanship, you'll get a laugh for your trouble. (Laughs can be redeemed later to turn failures into successes.)



WHAT DIE ROLLING MEANS

Read the specific move to see what it does. These are just the basics of moves. Many of them will have their own tweaks and quirks, but this is the basic setup.

Oh, and feel free to make up your own moves! Like everything else, these rules are subject to interpretation. The Director has the final say in what goes on and what doesn't. Always go by what's funny. Don't let these silly rules get in the way of your fun!

Each move will have a simple scheme to follow when you roll. Each move is different, but most of them will be like this:

To do a move, roll +mod.

You might have some other modifiers to add or to subtract to this roll. For example, if you were told to take "+1 forward", from something earlier, then you'd roll two dice, add your modifier, and then add another +1. If you're told to take "+3 back", then find your last roll and add 3 to it. (You remember your last roll, right?)

Up to 6: Miss

Rolling 6 or less means it didn't work. Ask the Director what the aftermath will be. Defeat? Humiliation? Arrest? Anger? Unrequired love? Lumps? Or something that only your sick and twisted minds can think of?

7-9: It's Complicated.

Rolling 7-9 might get you what you want... kinda. You may suffer a **complication** (you get what you want, but you also get something you don't). Or you may be forced to take a **hard bargain** (either give up and accept this as a loss... , or get what you want *and* something you don't).

Risk should be proportional to reward. If you just tried something difficult or dangerous, then the complication or bargain should be severe. If this wasn't a big deal, then it shouldn't be complicated, either.

You and your fellow players are free to suggest your own complications. We have list that starts on page 80.

10-12: Win

Good job! The Director will tell you what your reward. The 10-or-better result usually just gives you what you wanted.

13+: Too Much

If you roll this high, you'll get what you asked for... and more. A kind word gets you a friend for life who won't leave you alone. A mean remark makes someone faint dead away and gets the authorities involved. That machine you fixed cans all the peaches... and when it runs out of peaches, it starts canning everything and anything. Etc. It's a cartoon world!

OTHER MODIFIERS

There's some things that can modify your rolls, so we call them **modifiers**. With **Madcap**, we don't have a lot of these, but there's a few.

Reroll:

If a gimmick or move lets you re-roll, you pick up all your dice and roll them again, adding the same mods you did last time. This re-roll is your new roll, even if it's worse.

For example, if you have a Chip on your Shoulder, you can re-roll your last grudge move.

+1 forward:

This means "take +1 to the next roll that you make." So if you're carrying a +1 forward bonus around, then the next time you roll, total it up and add one to result. Lucky you!

If we say, "+1 forward to the results", that means that whatever the move did, you get +1 to your next move, if and only if it's building on that last move.

If we say, "+1 forward for this scene", that means the bonus only lasts while we're doing this thing here. You can forget about it once we've moved on.

If we say "+1 forward on the results", that means that you get this bonus to things you related to your last roll. (Say, if you use +sharp to ask "who's in charge", then you get +1 forward to deal with who's in charge.")

After you use the forward bonus, it's gone. And you must use it on your next appropriate roll, you can't save them up.

+3 back:

This means "take whatever roll you just made before this one and add 3 to it."

For example, if you spend a laugh, you can take +3 back to your last roll. That means you can take your last roll and add 3 to it, which might turn a miss into a win.

Extra die:

Some gimmicks will let you roll more dice.

For example, if you're Unpredictably Zany, you get to roll three dice instead of two for all zany moves.

Less dice:

Some gimmicks will remove a die. That means you don't even get to roll it, you roll fewer dice.

For example, if you are Calm, Cool, and Collected, you only roll one dice with your cool moves.

There's no specific limit to modifiers. If you're somehow carrying around four "+1 forwards" and an extra die, then your next roll is gonna be a doozy. Most of these bonuses expire or can only be used for certain things, though. Try not to get too carried away with the meta.

MADCAP TIMES

In a previous article, we failed to define the term "boutonniere", which is a flower worn on the chest or the lapel for decoration. In screwball comedy, this flower was often a disguise for a hidden spout. When an attached bulb is squeezed by the hand, water ejects from the hidden spout, eliciting surprise and laughter from onlookers.

The Madcap Times regrets any confusion that may have been caused by using the word "boutonniere".

You win some, you lose some: Laughs and Lumps

Laughs are good to have.
Lumps, not so much...
though some characters can
do special things only when
they have lumps.

Oh, and to be clear: “laugh”
and “lump” are game terms,
things that affect the rules,
and not just the weird sounds
you’re making or the swelling
bruises on your injuries.

Laughs and lumps are given out by the Director

When you get into the role of
your character, and you have
them say or do something
funny, you can get a **laugh**.

At most, you can get one
laugh each scene in the game.
(That is, no more than every
five minutes.) You’re still free
to be funny while you wait,
but consider letting someone
else try out their material.

When you do something
bad (injury, embarrassment,
ennui, malapropism, anno-
mination, slander, heresy,
etc.) you get a **lump**. There’s
no limit to how fast you can
get lumps.

You can have up to three **LAUGHS** at a time

Who doesn’t like to laugh?
To encourage the players to
crack wise, the Director hands
out **laughs** to each player.

We suggest that you use a
counter for each laugh:
pennies, poker chips, anvils,
colored stones from your last
card game, etc.

As a rule, you start each
game with no laughs, and you
can’t carry more than three.
You also don’t keep them from
game session to game session,
so use ‘em if you’ve got ‘em.

If you already have three
laughs, consider spending one
of them pretty soon on a roll...
or maybe you should let some
of the quieter characters get
some screen time in there.

You can get laughs with your catch-phrase

The most straightforward
way to earn Laughs is letting
a Catch-phrase work against
you. At some point, the
Director may cite one of
your Catch-phrases, explain
why it’s relevant to the
current situation, and then
offer you the option of
accepting a negative
consequence in exchange for
a Laugh. That offer could
come at any time during
casual and rolled moves.

For example: Niels the
Newt wants to use one of his
crazy contraptions to trap an
enemy. He rolls successfully.
The Director knows that one
of Niels’ Catch-phrases is,
“That’s what we call precision
engineering!” The Director
Cites this Catch-phrase, and
explains how it could relate
to the contraption going
absolutely haywire. The
Director offers Niels a Laugh
point if they agree to let this
happen. After some
negotiation, Niels agrees,
earning them a Laugh point
to use later. The contraption
flies apart spectacularly.

Laughs are good.
Earn them by
being funny. Spend
them to add +3 to
a bad roll or to
make stuff happen.

Lumps are bad.
Get them by getting
beaten up or by
failing rolls. Get 3
lumps and you’re
out (for a bit).



You can get laughs when your success turns to ashes

Getting everything you want feels great... but it's way funnier when we watch you get hoist by your own petard. The Director can take any success you made, either through long effort or by a single die roll, and just ruin it. Then they hand you a laugh.

Heck, if you think it would be funny, you can ask the Director that your move should fail, and then get the Director give you a laugh for your trouble. (You can even suggest to the Director that *other people's* moves should fail and they should get laughs for their trouble. Some people like to watch the world burn.)

Use your **catch-phrase** as a guide for the kinds of things that should get ruined this way. If the failure would make you say your phrase in a natural and funny way, then you should go for the laugh.

You can get laughs with your comedic timing

You can also earn laughs by doing an excellent job of playing to your character. If you make a move that makes the other players (or at least the Director) laugh out loud, that could very well earn you a laugh point. Likewise, making a move that seems really in-character, or calls back to earlier events in a way that makes everyone else at the table guffaw and chortle, that's worth a laugh.

Use your **catch-phrase** as a guide to the kind of humor that your character does. Working this phrase into conversation can get you a laugh.

SPEND LAUGHS to change the game

You're not just collecting these laughs for your health. You can use them in the game!

You can spend a laugh to make a casual move when you couldn't, before

For example: Bobby Boulderson wants to punch through a wall to get into a building. The Director tells Bobby that the wall is too strong to punch through. Bobby points out that they have the catch-phrase, "Who needs Doors?" The Director agrees that this makes sense, and decides to let Bobby cash in their Laugh, and punch a giant hole in the wall.





Spend a laugh to take +3 backward to a roll that you just made

Cash in a Laugh to add 3 to a roll that you made on a previous turn. (Pro tip: don't be so quick to pick up your dice after a bad roll. Take a moment to decide if this is worth spending a laugh on.)

For example: Johnny Drybones rolls +zany to try and avoid falling down a cliff. The roll comes up just short of what they were hoping for. Johnny feels that making this roll is crucial, and they don't have a catch-phrase that helps in this situation. They decide to give the Director one of their Laughs, bringing the roll total up to where they wanted it.

GETTING LUMPS

Lumps are what you get when you don't get what you want. You will get most of your lumps from injury. (That is, when your character gets punched in a grudge match, when you drop an anvil on your foot, when you connect positive to positive, etc.) But you can also get lumps just from bad misses, such as when

We're going to use the word "lump" as a generic term for damage. So no, your character doesn't have to have exactly 3 lumps on their head if they have 3 lump counters. Work with us, here!

The most common way to get a lump is when your character suffers some horrible injury... and that usually happens in dicey situations when you're not rolling all that great.

3 LUMPS AND YOU'RE OUT

If you have 3 lumps or more, you "fall down". You are not allowed to participate in the rest of this scene, except as a punching bag.

Once you take a fall, your lumps reset back to zero

If you take too many lumps, you'll have to wait until the next scene before you can get back in action again.

Your lump count resets to zero at the start of a new game session.

We mention this here because if we don't say it, we'll hear all about it on our social medias.

What is a character, but a miserable pile of numbers?

Attributes and their Common Moves

Anybody can do something! And to measure those some-things, we use numbers. This wouldn't be an arr-pee-gee if we didn't use numbers, after all. And we have all the numbers here. The best numbers.

Attributes have a range, from -2 to +2. Low attributes mean you're not particularly good at doing these things. Maybe you're hot-headed, maybe you're not the sharpest tool in the shed, or maybe you don't have the kind of sense of humor that people would describe as "zany."

Don't roll dice if it won't be interesting

Yeah, we know we've listed a bunch of moves here with all these numbers and stuff, but that doesn't mean you have to

be a stickler about it. Only roll dice when you're not sure what's going to happen, and it will be interesting! A good director won't make you roll +sharp to see obvious things, or make you roll +cool to talk to helpful characters, or make you roll +tough to scare characters who already have good reason to be afraid of you.

Don't roll dice if you can't win

A Director is well within their rights to say that you can't just charm the big bad villain with mere +cool rolls, or ask them to surrender with a +tough roll, or even just use +sharp to see through their scheme instantly. Some things will require careful planning, crazy schemes, and wacky hijinks. And sometimes you'll have to find a

different way around your problem. Work with your Director, and find ways to have fun. It's a game, not a lottery.

When the mood isn't casual, things can get random

When the mood is still casual, there's no need to roll any dice. You're all just talking about the things you do.

But when the mood is **dicey** or a **grudge**, even the simplest things can go wrong. You're under a lot of stress! Things that you took for granted (opening doors, riding a bike, noticing that you're on fire, etc.) may now require moves (and random rolls) to deal with them. Ask your Director.

Cool is for doing things when it's too dicey to be casual about it
Sharp is to know what's going on.
Sly is to persuade or to fool people.
Tough is to bully people or do physical stuff.
Zany is to do cartoony gags.





Use +cool to keep your head while everyone else is losing theirs. You can use your cool to resist being roped into doing stupid things, to not let the chaos around you get to you, and to just display common sense. (Common sense is not a common thing in the world of cartoons.)

Roll +Cool to DO SOMETHING WHEN THE MOOD ISN'T CASUAL

This move is the catch-all for anything that isn't covered by the other moves. Normally, we don't sweat rolling dice when the mood is casual... but when things are flying around, people are screaming, it's raining cats and dogs, and whatnot, you can't just be expected to get things done.

You might also be asked to make this cool move if what you're about to do isn't cool. Picking pockets, cutting brake lines, setting traps, and all kinds of things that could go badly for you or someone else can call for a roll.

To do something while in a dicey or grudge mood, roll +cool.

Up to 6: Miss. Ask the Director what the response is, and be prepared for the worst.

7-9: Good news & bad news.

You flinch, you stall, or you otherwise aren't at your best. The Director chooses one:

- **Worse outcome.** You still do your thing, but something bad happens. (You drop the match next to the dynamite; you bump the throttle and the train speeds up; you leave the phone off the hook and your spouse hears everything, etc.)
- **Hard bargain.** The Director gives you a choice: get your thing done and something bad automatically happens to you... or you just let this fail, with no immediate consequences.
- **Dramatic tension:** Whatever you just tried to do fails... and gets even worse in the process. You can't try again until the next round. (That is, until everyone else has had a chance to do something, including the Director.)

10-12: Win. You do this thing. You even look good while doing it. Couldn't be easier.

13+: Too much! You get your thing done, but you set off a chain of events that will have more complications, later. (You throw the dynamite out the window... and next to the gas pumps at the motor pool; you pull the brake and the train slows down... but it slips and is now drifting down multiple tracks towards a gang of philosophers; you quickly answer the phone, say something stupid, and hang up, and the other party on the line thinks they need to call the cops, etc.).

Sharp

Use +sharp to talk circles around someone, be clever, to notice things, and to know things. While being sharp will keep you out for obvious danger, others might appeal to your greed, your ego, or other parts of your personality to talk you into things against your better judgement.

Roll +Sharp to READ the situation

When the mood is cool, the Director will describe things that your characters see in plain view. If that's good enough for you, then we're cool.

If you're not satisfied with that, you can press the situation and get a little dicey.

To read a situation, roll +sharp.

Up to 6: Miss. While you're sticking your neck out and ogling everyone with the hairy eyeball, someone else may take advantage or offense. Ask the Director what the response is, and be prepared for the worst.

7-9: ask one from the list below.

10-12: ask two from the list below.

13+: ask three from the list below.

- 🔥 What's my escape route?
- 🔥 Who is the biggest threat?
- 🔥 Who do I threaten most?
- 🔥 What's missing from here?
- 🔥 Is there a trap here?
- 🔥 Who's in charge here?
- 🔥 How could I get the mood back to "casual"

If your very next move acts on the answers the Director just gave you, take +1 forward.



There's a sucker born every minute, and you're on the lookout. Use +sly to talk people into doing things for you, to sell ice cubes to penguins, and to tell lies while keeping your fingers crossed behind your back.

Roll +Sly to **PERSUADE** someone

Lie, cheat, schmooze, prevaricate, or even tell the truth. Whatever works.

Declare who are you are persuading and what you want. Role-play it. Then roll +sly.

Up to 6: Miss. Ask the Director what the response is.

7-9: Sweeten the deal. Your target goes along, but only if you offer something more. Some examples:

- Give them some assurance that this can't fail.
 - Tell them your neck is on the line, too. Tell them you've got their back.
 - Offer more money, greater rewards, a bigger piece of the pie.
- If your target accepts, they agree to do what you declared. Otherwise, they don't. You can't try to persuade them again unless the situation changes dramatically.

10-12: Fast-Talk. They go along with what you say. If this is an obvious con, they'll figure it out in a minute.

13+: Hook, Line, and Sinker. They totally buy into this.

Tough

Any move that depends on your physicality in a straightforward way will depend on +tough. Think of +tough as strength, agility, speed, and endurance all rolled into one.

Now here's the thing: No Director worth their salt is gonna make you roll just because you tried to pick up a glass to take a drink of water. They might, however, make you roll if that water glass has a pair of eyes and the gift of consciousness, and it doesn't want to be picked up. You can assume they have an average ability to run, jump, punch, squeeze, pinch, flick, finagle, poke, wiggle, jive, and wail.

Use +tough on moves that require you to be physical: running, jumping, throwing, swimming, opening jars, moving boxes, bending bars, lifting gates, etc. You can also use +tough when you need to be physically imposing.

Roll +Tough to BULLY someone

Some people are reasonable, and do what they're supposed to. And sometimes, you've got to push them around a little.

Declare who you are bossing around and what you want them to do. Then roll +tough.

Up to 6: Miss. Your target tells you where to go. Ask the Director what the response is, and be prepared for the worst.

7-9: Your target picks one:

- ☞ Give in to your demands.
- ☞ Offer you something else. Either you accept their offer, or you take +1 forward on your next move against them.
- ☞ Start a fight. You strike first. Take +1 forward.
- ☞ Flee. If they can get away they're gone. If they can't, they cower and you and yours take +1 forward on your next move against them.

10-12: Your target picks one:

- ☞ Give in to your demands.
- ☞ Start a fight. You strike first, with +2 forward.

13+: Your target picks one:

- ☞ Give in to your demands.
- ☞ Cross the line. Start a fight. You strike first, with +3 forward.
- ☞ **Too much!** The target gives in to your demands

Zany

When you're a cartoon character, you can do impossible things: cling to a ceiling in terror, or hang in the air after accidentally running over a ledge, or other things that violate gravity, friction, mass, inertia, time, space, etc. Whatever it is, it has to be *silly*; it has to have a cartoony, comic sense. It can't be a cool way of reasoning with someone, a sharp and rational observation, a sly deceit, or a tough solution to a problem. It's got to be wacky, silly, and strange. Oh, and of course, when you roll +zany, be ready for some serious complications to crop up.

Roll +Zany to DO SOMETHING CARTOONY AND ABSURD

Examples of zany moves include:

- You now have a prop, such as: a bucket of sand, an imitation painting of the Mona Lisa, an anvil, a giant mallet, lit bomb, wooden board, the genuine painting of the Mona Lisa, etc.
- You figure-skate across the floor as if it were ice.
- Manipulate the media! Produce a newspaper out of nowhere, throw your voice into a radio, remove the back of a TV or computer monitor and pretend to be there, etc. This works, somehow.
- Pretend to be someone else! You put on a ridiculous disguise and pretend to be someone you're not. Somehow, this works.
- You don't plug the lamp into an electrical socket, but into a water spigot. When someone else turns it on, they get a face full of water.
- Hand someone a present, then walk off the scene. When they open it, who is inside, but you!

• You draw a door on a wall and then escape through it. To everyone else, it's a solid wall.

• You look down, see that you're standing on thin air, then run back to solid ground.

• Or make something up!

To do something zany, describe a silly thing that you will do, and roll +zany.

Up to 6: Miss. Most of us are going to pretend that we didn't see you just try to do that. Ask the Director what the response is, and be prepared for the worst. Most likely, you'll take a lump for this.

7-9: Comedy is when something bad happens to somebody else. And you're the somebody else.

The Director chooses one:

• **Worse outcome.** You still do your thing, but something bad happens. (You drop the match next to the dynamite; you bump the throttle and the train speeds up; you leave the phone off the hook and your spouse hears it all, etc.)

• **Hard bargain.** The Director gives you a choice: get your thing done and something bad automatically happens to you... or you just let this fail, with no immediate consequences.

• **Dramatic tension:** whatever you just tried to do fails... and gets even worse in the process. You can't try again until the next round.

10-12: Wow, that was weird. You do an incredibly silly thing. If it's funny, the Director might give you a Laugh.

13+: Too much! You get your thing done, but you also set off a chain of events that that will get even crazier. Maybe that's a good thing, but it's probably not, as it's going to make things more complicated. (A savvy Director should make a note of this result, and then call back to it much, much later to blow up in your face.)

Let's get creative, people !

Making Characters

Making a character in **Madcap** is easy. There are no wrong choices. Remember, we're all here to have fun, so always make characters that you think will be interesting to play.

Choose your PLAYBOOK

There's twelve **playbooks** offered in the game. Each one has positive and negative qualities.

Ask the Director or your fellow players for some suggestions. We recommend that each player have a different playbook.

We don't recommend First, pick a template. Look them all over, see if any of them speaks to you. Maybe one of them is close, but it would fit you a lot better with a couple tweaks. In that case, feel free to discuss it with the director. The templates are only here to help, nothing is set in stone.

Decide on your LOOKS

Once you've picked your playbook, you'll notice that each one gives you a few decisions to make regarding looks, and some special abilities such as props, costumes, impressions, etc. Circle the given options you like, or make up your own.

You are not limited to what we presented here! This is **Madcap**, the game of screwball cartoons. You can be almost anything you can think of.

What's your character's physical makeup?

- Human
- Humanoid animal
- Animal that walks on all fours sometimes but on twos at other times
- Always an animal
- Insect
- Robot
- Household appliance
- Gelatinous blob
- Something even weirder. Make something up!

How is your character styled?

- Feminine
- Masculine
- Somewhere in between
- Varies, depending on the plot and continuity
- Safe for all ages
- Barely suitable for family viewing
- In defiance of social roles
- So ambiguously that your fan page on the wiki has a comment thread with more than 255 entries, just about this

What does your character wear?

- Hand-me-downs
- The latest fashions
- Clashing colors
- Tattered clothes
- Futuristic gear
- Overalls
- Lab coat
- Formal wear
- Nothing
- Shirt or jacket but no pants
- A hat and tie, but nothing else
- Make something up!

Choose a *playbook*. Describe your *looks*. Make up a *catch-phrase*. If you want, take a single *gimmick*. Reset your *laughs* and *lumps* to zero.



Make up your CATCH-PHRASE

A good catch-phrase fits a lot of situations. Things going well? Catch-phrase. Things going bad? Catch-phrase! A good catch phrase should give your character ways to both earn and spend laughs. It's easier than it sounds. Coming up with a character's catch-phrase is as simple as knowing what motivates your character.

One catch-phrase is plenty to start with, and for medium-length campaigns that could grow to three, but more than five is probably a bit much.

Think about what your character is about.

What can your character not resist?

- A pretty face – “He was the dreamiest villain I ever saw.”
- Money – “Did you say a billion dollars? Billion with a B?”
- Cheesecake – “Of course I can go without... creamy... delicious... FORK IT OVER!”

What is your character's outlook on life?

- Vanity – “What does Heidi Klum have that I don't have?”
- Ready for a fight – “Put 'em up, put 'em up!”
- Anxiety – “Doomed, I tell you, doomed!”

Does your character have any distinctive physical traits?

- Prehensile Ears – “Just a little extra reach”
- Singed Whiskers – “That was a bit too much dynamite”
- Old and Cranky – “What are you smiling about?”

What does your character want out of life?

- Glory – “I'm too big for this one-horse town!”
- Victory Over a Rival – “I'll get that mouse if it's the last thing I do!”
- To annoy people – “Looks like we made a friend!”

Does your character have any phobias?

- Heights – “Is it dizzy up here you?”
- Capture – “Hide me, hide me!”
- Sappyness – “Anything but the Care Bear Stare!”

Does your character have any strange talents?

- Driving – “Was that lamp-post there before?”
- Music – “Wanna watch me burp the entire Tao Te Ching?”
- Knitting – “I knit.”
- Does your character have any Rivalries or friendships?

Does your character subvert expectations?

- Small stature – “The smallest pepper hurts the most.”
- Intelligence – “I'm not smart, I just wear glasses.”
- Courage – “Just because I'm a chicken doesn't make me some kind of chicken.”

You might also get a GIMMICK

A **gimmick** lets you customize your character a bit more.

Gimmicks add more stuff to your character, so they make the game more complicated. You don't have to pick one if you don't want to.

You can only have one gimmick per character. If you get a second gimmick, you'll have to choose which one to keep and which one to lose.

Also, no two characters in play can have the same gimmick. If you want a gimmick that someone else has, either ask them politely to give it up to you (and they'll pick a different one instead) or just choose something else.

The Director may choose to assign genre gimmicks to characters

Some gimmicks are specific to a type of story; we call these the **genre gimmicks**. The Director may want to run a specific kind of story. For example, if the Director wants to run an adventure set in far-future outer space, they may hand out gimmick roles such as “The Space Captain”, “The Token Alien”, “The Boffin Engineer”, “The Maverick Officer”, etc. to the players.

The Director may let the players choose among them which ones they want to take, or they may declare that certain players must take certain ones, etc. (It’s all in good fun, so be a good sport about it.) And you can still only have one gimmick, so if you have a genre gimmick, you lose any other gimmicks you might have.

Each gimmick adds something good to your character

Some gimmicks add a new move. Just like your unique move, this gimmick move gives you something new to try. For example, “Magic Art” lets you make drawings that come to life.

Other gimmicks modify the way rolls work. For example, if you’re “Unpredictably Zany”, you’re rolling an extra die with zany rolls.

Each gimmick also adds a down side

That’s the way of things, isn’t it? Each gimmick gives the Director license to do bad things to your character, whenever they feel like it.

Sometimes the down side is built into the gimmick. For example, “Unpredictably Zany” gives you an extra die to roll, but your zany trait drops by 3. Other gimmicks require you to do some kind of behavior. A few gimmicks encourage the Director to give your character a special kind of grief that other characters don’t normally receive.

If you’re not comfortable with the down side, then ask the Director if you can lose the gimmick or if you can trade it with someone else. Once you lose a gimmick, it’s gone, with both its good sides and bad sides.

You start each session with **ZERO LAUGHS** and **ZERO LUMPS**

Clean the slate! You start with no laughs or no lumps. (No matter how many you had left over from last game.) You can still use any moves that are “+laughs” or “+lumps”; you’ll just be rolling two dice and adding nothing until your numbers go up.

And now what you've all been waiting for: **THE PLAYBOOKS**

On the next few pages, find a playbook and choose it. Each one has a **character sheet**, with the five attributes and their numbers, a unique move, and a grudge move.

We recommend that each player chooses a different playbook. Stories are more interesting when you all have different strengths and weaknesses.

Blowhard, Lunkhead, and Scrapper are strong muscle. *Self-Aware, Snark, and Smartypants* are brainy thinkers. *Sweetheart, Trickster, and Vanity* are smooth talkers. *Grouch, Tagalong, and Wacko* make for excellent supporting players



The Playbook that don't take nothing from nobody: **Blowhard**



You did right to choose this playbook, because any other kind of character would just hold you back. The best way to deal with any situation is to get tough. And if they're tough, you gotta be tougher. That might be difficult for other people, but not for you. You like to let your fists do the talking, and you love to talk.

Play a Blowhard character if you like to be the center of attention, and you like to put people in their place.

LOOKS (Choose one or more)

Eyes: beady; leering; bloodshot; eyepatch; make something up; make something up

Face: broken nose; big chin; bristly beard; piercings; tattoos; beard; mustache; make something up

Body: muscular; hairy; stocky; fat; thick; make something up

Voice: Stentorian; authoritative; raspy; loud; make something up

Clothes: Leather; designer clothes; sleeveless with your guns out; combat boots; make something up

CATCH PHRASE (Choose one)

- 🔥 "I am what I am"
- 🔥 "I am the greatest!"
- 🔥 "You don't start none, you don't get none!"
- 🔥 Make something up

GIMMICK (Choose one or none)

- 🔥 Chip on Your Shoulder
- 🔥 Jack/Jill of All Trades
- 🔥 Punching Bag
- 🔥 Shake it Off
- 🔥 Sidekick
- 🔥 Unknowable Strength
- 🔥 Or choose something else!

Name

Blowhard

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Set 'em Up

Unique Move

To remind everyone how great you are, **roll +tough**.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication

10-12+: Choose one

- 🎲 As the Director who's in charge here, and how tough these mooks are. You take +1 forward to all grudge rolls until this scene ends.
- 🎲 Convince some people of your greatness. You'll take +1 forward on all your rolls with these people until you screw something up and ruin the mood.
- 🎲 Tell someone else to do something. If it's a player, they take +1 forward to do it. If it's a minor character, they try so hard to do it, and maybe they succeed.
- 🎲 Or make something up!

13+: As above, only you're even more awesome. For the rest of this game session, remind everyone how awesome you were.

Knock 'em Down

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +lumps**. (if you don't have any lumps, roll two dice and add nothing.).

Remember that if you asked who was in charge first, you get +1 forward for grudges with that one character.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: You dish out damage. That should learn them.

10-12: You dish out damage, and it feels good. Before you or anyone makes a move, you may choose to drop your lump count to zero.

13+: Goodnight Irene! You dish out damage and then some. You can take out a bunch of targets, do a bunch of property damage, inflict the kind of carnage that won't soon be forgot. Then you strike a pose, because you're awesome, and your lump count drops back to zero.

The Playbook that got up on the wrong side of the bed: **Grouch**



You have one nerve left, and everyone is constantly poking it. How these idiots haven't already offed themselves is a constant source of confusion for you. You may lack resources, you may lack skill, you may lack brains, but one thing you've got in spades is the stubbornness to never give up, never give up, never give up that ship. (Other people may confuse that emotion for "spite", "rage", or "homicidal insanity", but you prefer to say you're "persistent".)

Play a Grouch if you like mixing things up and getting confrontational with the minor characters.

LOOKS (Choose one or more)

Eyes: bushy eyebrows; glowering; bloodshot; make something up

Face: constant frown; wrinkles; rotten teeth; fangs; ears on neck; make something up

Body: green or blue complexion; skinny arms; big hand and feet; fur or scales; make something up

Voice: deep; grating; gravelly; whiny; make something up

Clothes: dark; hand-me-downs; patches; mismatched; make something up

CATCH PHRASE (Choose one)

- 🔴🌟 "I knew this would happen."
- 🔴🌟 "You're all idiots."
- 🔴🌟 "It is to laugh."
- 🔴🌟 Make something up

GIMMICK (Choose one or none)

- 🔴🌟 Bag of Junk
- 🔴🌟 Calm, Cool, and Collected
- 🔴🌟 Sharp Detail
- 🔴🌟 Straight Face
- 🔴🌟 Unpredictably Zany
- 🔴🌟 Or choose something else!

Name

Grouch

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Grumping

Unique Move

To spread your misery around, **roll +tough**.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication

10+: Choose one

- ☛ Ignore a hazard, such as a burning house fire or a hail of bullets. Sigh and talk about how this happens all the time and you can't be bothered.
- ☛ Win an argument by being so stubborn that the other person gives in, just to get rid of you.
- ☛ Solve a problem, but only after watching someone else fail to solve the same problem, because now it's funny to show them up. (The best way to do this is to point out the obvious door, machine, answer, etc. that's been in plain sight the whole time, but no one else in the context of the story even noticed it.)
- ☛ Make someone's plan fail, by pointing out the holes in it.
- ☛ Or something else that's all grouchy!

Huckleberry

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +cool**.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: Don't lift a finger. Just stare. Just tell your target what kind of person you are, and how little you have left to lose. Your attacker must choose a different target or end the grudge match.

10-12: Whatever damage you do, it happens off screen and is left only to the imagination.

13+: As above, plus if your target was a minor character, they are never seen or heard from, again. (Our attorneys have advised us to say that this doesn't mean you actually murder them. You could just tie them up, stuff them in a box, and mail them to some far corner of the world, which is considered "better", for some reason.)

The Playbook that is blissfully ignorant: Lunkhead



When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade. You can't let minor things like ignorance, incompetence, and idiocy get you down. All that matters is that you keep your eyes on the stars and your heart in your hand. Sure, sometimes other people take advantage of you... but you know that in a pinch, they will always show up to help you. You may not be very brave, very smart, or even good at anything at all... but you always know that at the end of the day, you can be an example to others.

Play a Lunkhead if you want to be a loveable doofus who always tries to do the right thing.

LOOKS (Choose one or more)

Eyes: crossed; large; one bigger than the other; make something up

Face: big smile; big ears; crooked teeth; make something up

Body: fat; long arms and short legs; huge; make something up

Voice: monotone; malaprops; long pauses; strange accent; make something up

Clothes: garish; unlaced shoes; mismatched; lots of pockets; make something up

CATCH PHRASE (Choose one)

- ☛ "It never hurts to help!"
- ☛ "I love you guys."
- ☛ "I don't get it."
- ☛ Make something up

GIMMICK (Choose one or none)

- ☛ Jack/Jill of All Trades
- ☛ Laugh Riot
- ☛ Sharp Detail
- ☛ Straight Face
- ☛ Unknowable Strength
- ☛ Or choose something else!

Name Lunkhead	Catch-Phrase	Laughs 	Lumps 
Looks			

 Cool	 Sharp	 Sly	 Tough	 Zany
--	---	---	--	--

Naivete

Unique Move

To do things no one told you that you can't do, **roll +laughs**. (If you don't have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: Blurt out loud some embarrassing fact about another character, or just flat out confess to your past crimes. This is never good.

7-9: Suggest that a friend do something silly, ridiculous, or nonsensical. If they do it, they take +1 forward on a roll that has something to do with that.

10+: Choose one

- 🔥 Find the unlocked door, open window, lock combination, or other way in that everyone else was too busy over-thinking to notice.
- 🔥 Distract a character with your obtuseness. Stall a villain or other authorities with your utter failure to understand what trouble you are in.
- 🔥 Or make up some other thing to do that no one told you that you couldn't do, yet!

Slapstick

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +zany**.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: Your attacker misses you. If your very next move is Naivete, take +1 forward.

10-12: You hurt your attacker, but you feel really bad about it. If the grudge is still going on, you can't make any more Slapstick moves unless you spend one laugh, **or** if another character takes a move to order you to participate again... which makes that character take a lump from getting sucker-punched, while they were ordering you around!

13+: This ain't gonna be pretty. You set off some sort of chain reaction that knocks out all the minor characters and does some serious property damage. You feel really bad about it, too.

The Playbook that is just itching for an excuse:

Scrapper



You'll never get adopted, because you're nobody's fool. You don't always start it, but you sure as sure are gonna end it. You're a small fry, which is fine, because they bigger they are, they harder they fall. Or you might be all that and then some, and really, it's their own fault when they ought to know better. You're not a monster. You're always kind enough to make sure the numbskulls land on their heads, so's they don't get hurt.

Play a Scrapper if you like to play a small character who talks big and can back it up.

LOOKS (Choose one or more)

Eyes: too much eyeshadow; glaring; stone-cold; steely; make something up

Face: black eye; scar on chin; tattoos; piercings; make something up

Body: small; wiry; long legs; coiled like a spring; bandages; make something up

Voice: tiny; squeaky; larger than life; make something up

Clothes: hand-me-downs; army fatigues; torn; patched; make something up

CATCH PHRASE (Choose one)

- 🔴🌟 "You must be new here."
- 🔴🌟 "Are you talking to me?"
- 🔴🌟 "And I'm all out of gum."
- 🔴🌟 Make something up

GIMMICK (Choose one or none)

- 🔴🌟 Bumbling
- 🔴🌟 Chip on Your Shoulder
- 🔴🌟 Punching Bag
- 🔴🌟 Shake It Off
- 🔴🌟 Unknowable Strength
- 🔴🌟 Or choose something else!

Name

Scrapper

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Spunk

Unique Move

To take nothin' from nobody, **roll +lumps**. (If you don't have any lumps, roll two dice and add nothing.)

7+: Choose one:

- 🔥 Blow off a threat, scam, or other nonsense.
- 🔥 Tell someone to step off and to let you guys alone. If you get into a grudge with that person later in this game session, take +1 forward to deal with them.
- 🔥 Intimidate someone by performing some painful feat, like chewing on nails or breaking something over your head.
- 🔥 Walk through a gun fire barrage, firefight, or other dangerous situation while refusing to make eye contact with anyone or to even recognize that bad stuff is going down. You don't sweat small stuff.
- 🔥 Defeat a physical barrier with an impossible feat of strength.
- 🔥 Or make something up!

Scuffle

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +sharp**. (Remember that if you warned someone to step off, you take +1 to deal with them.)

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: Give as good as you get. Either you're missed... or you take a lump and you dish out damage, too.

10-12: Choose one:

- 🔥 You dish out damage and avoid getting hurt.
- 🔥 Pick a friend. If someone attacks that friend before your next move, roll +lumps. On 7+, you save your friend from harm. On a 6 or less, you take the hit, instead.

13+: Total carnage! Dish out damage to a bunch of minor characters, trash the place, and look pretty scary doing it. This will end all but the most major of fights. (And it may have other lasting effects, such as bringing down the house.)

The Playbook that breaks the fourth wall: Self-Aware



You ever get the feeling that you're being watched? It's true! You're a cartoon character in a world of made-up nonsense. Just because there's a bunch of writers and artists creating everything you do and say doesn't mean you must let them boss you around! Maybe you're wryly amused by all the shenanigans and chicaneries around you. Maybe you feel bleak and hopeless because free will is an illusion. Or maybe you just go for the cheap laugh, because why not.

Play a Self-Aware if you like meta-humor and have the quick wits to make rapid puns and plays on words.

LOOKS (Choose one or more)

Eyes: half-lidded; glasses; bright; make something up

Face: smirk; sardonic; strong resemblance to persons living or dead; make something up

Body: unremarkable; ectomorph; make something up

Voice: impersonation of some celebrity; deadpan; quiet; make something up

Clothes: superhero costume; ink-and-paint-gloves; wacky stripes; make something up

CATCH PHRASE (Choose one)

- 🎲 "Ladies and gentlemen, I give you... me!"
- 🎲 "This never happened to the other guy."
- 🎲 "Hey, they can't all be gems."
- 🎲 Make something up

GIMMICK (Choose one or none)

- 🎲 Bag of Junk
- 🎲 Bumbling
- 🎲 Disguise
- 🎲 Inventor
- 🎲 Magic Art
- 🎲 Unpredictably Zany
- 🎲 Or choose something else!

Name

Self-Aware

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



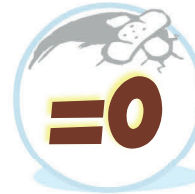
Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Genre Savvy

Unique Move

To break the fourth wall, **roll +laughs**. (if you don't have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication

10+: Choose one

- ☛ Pull a copy of the script out of nowhere, and describe what's going to happen in the next scene. The next three moves taken by anyone **but you** in that next scene take +1 forward.
- ☛ Drop a name of some celebrity or other cartoon character. That character walks onto the scene, and they are played by the Director. The next character to act on that advice takes +1 forward. This new character may disappear, it may hang around, or it may do something else.
- ☛ Disguise yourself as a different character for a one-shot gag, then describe how this would solve the situation. If it's funny enough, it works!

Meta

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +zany**.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: Crack wise and avoid harm... this time.

10-12: Produce some ridiculous prop out of nowhere (anvil, shotgun, sputtering bomb, unabridged copy of *Dianetics*, phased-plasma rifle in the 40-watt range, etc.) and deal out damage to your target.

13+: As above, only you tear the fabric of cartoon reality. Film skips sprockets, digital coloring glitches out, and madness ensues.

The Playbook that has an answer for everything: Smartypants



If there's such a thing as knowing too much for your own good, you are it. Maybe you're too shy to talk to other people. Or maybe you're just too smart for own good, and other people get tired of your know-it-all-attitude. Sometimes you might have the brilliant idea that saves the day... other times, it was your untried theory that started this whole mess in the first place.

Play a Smartypants if you enjoy being a genius who saves the day with brains, not brawn.

LOOKS (Choose one or more)

Eyes: thick glasses (with or without tape); squinty; crossed; large; make something up

Face: never smiles; wild uncombed hair; bald; crazed grin; wrinkles; pasty; make something up

Body: skinny; pot-bellied; hunched; short; tall and very thin; make something up

Voice: nasal; condescending; always uses big words; mumbles; self-important; make something up

Clothes: rubber gloves; pocket protector; corrective shoes; cargo pants; cane; fedora; make something up

CATCH PHRASE (Choose one)

- ☛ "It's elementary."
- ☛ "Fortunately, I am a genius."
- ☛ "As a matter of record. I do know it all."
- ☛ Make something up

GIMMICK (Choose one or none)

- ☛ Bag of Junk
- ☛ Calm, Cool, and Collected
- ☛ Inventor
- ☛ Sharp Detail
- ☛ Sidekick
- ☛ Straight Face
- ☛ Stinking Rich
- ☛ Or choose something else!

Name Smartypants	Catch-Phrase	Laughs 	Lumps 
Looks			



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Scheming

Unique Move

To use that genius brain of yours, **roll +sharp**.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below and the Director gives you a complication

10+: Choose one

- ☛ Pull some mundane item out of your pockets that can deal with this exact situation. You came prepared!
- ☛ Solve a complicated math problem.
- ☛ Fix a machine or computer.
- ☛ Sabotage a machine or computer.
- ☛ Solve a code, combination lock, or password.
- ☛ Given enough time, build an elaborate trap. You will need to find some bait. (Money, cheese, birdseed, dullard and his dog, etc.)
- ☛ Do research in a library to find the obscure clue.
- ☛ Know some obscure fact in science or the humanities
- ☛ Or something else that's all smarty!

Cringing

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +cool**.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: Violence never solved anything! Ask one other player to take this hit for you. If they say yes, then they play out the grudge match instead of you. If they say no, take your lumps.

10-12: Not in the face! You avoid damage.

13+: Who knew your skinny arms could do this? You get a good punch in there, doing damage to your attacker.

The Playbook that is just dying to see what you do next: **Snark**



In the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. While everyone else around you is chaotic, insane, passionate, and blind-crazy... you keep your wits about you. Maybe you're disillusioned with everything and you just can't be bothered to care. Maybe you're a good person who wants to keep everyone out of serious trouble. or maybe you just enjoy watching the house burn down around you. Your detachment gives you a perspective that the hotheads just can't manage.

Play a Snark if you enjoy watching everyone else make fools out of themselves, only to step in and save the day.

LOOKS (Choose one or more)

Eyes: beady; bug-eyed; seen it all; make something up

Face: sneer; blank expression; make something up

Body: tall and skinny; short and round; unremarkable; make something up

Voice: deadpan; condescending; deep; quiet; resigned; make something up

Clothes: business suit; drab colors; out-of-place jewelry; sensible shoes; make something up

CATCH PHRASE (Choose one)

- ☛ "Ha hah, no seriously, what are we gonna do."
- ☛ "Are you done?"
- ☛ "As usual, it's up to me to fix everything."
- ☛ Make something up

GIMMICK (Choose one or none)

- ☛ Adorable
- ☛ Calm, Cool, and Collected
- ☛ Laugh Riot
- ☛ Sharp Detail
- ☛ Straight Face
- ☛ Unpredictably Zany
- ☛ Or choose something else!

Name

Snark

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Wisecrack

Unique Move

To make a clever remark, **roll +sly**.

7-9: Choose one:

- ☛ Nothing. It's not like anyone listens to you anyway.
- ☛ Choose one from the "10+" list, but the Director also adds a complication.

10+: Choose one:

- ☛ After a fellow player fails to do something, tell them what they did wrong. If they do the task again, they automatically succeed.
- ☛ Tell someone who is about to do something that they can't do it. They try anyway, they fail.
- ☛ Successfully explain to someone that it's in their best interests to just leave things well enough alone or for you to be on your way.
- ☛ Ask the Director if there's anything any hidden dangers here. If the Director says yes, they **don't** tell you what they are. Instead, you take +3 forward on your next wisecrack.
- ☛ Or make something up!

Pragmatic

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +laughs**. (if you don't have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: Choose one:

- ☛ Run, hide, flee, etc. You avoid lumps, but earn the contempt and mockery of all present.
- ☛ Defend yourself by blocking, throwing, or otherwise giving up some important prop or item. That item is destroyed, lost, or stolen, which will complicate things later in the story.
- ☛ Take a lump but hurt your target, too.

10+: Choose one:

- ☛ Hurt a single target, but you become dirty or disheveled in the process. Until you get cleaned up, everyone you meet will comment on your shabby appearance.
- ☛ Crack wise to your target, who then injures themselves as they miss you.

The Playbook that's too good for this wicked world:

Sweetheart



Some people are the real deal, and you're it. You've got looks, you've got charm, you've got guts... what you don't have a lot of is common sense. Just look at the company you keep! You're almost too good for this world, but someone has to do the right thing, sometimes. Even if you're not sure what the right thing is.

Play a Sweetheart if you want to be a ray of golden sunshine into this dreary, wicked world.

LOOKS (Choose one or more)

Eyes: doe-eyes; big eyelashes; deep pools; guileless; make something up

Face: gap-toothed smile; ruddy cheeks; big ears; make something up

Body: flawless skin; tone not muscle; small; thin; non-threatening; make something up

Voice: dulcet tones; struggles with words; sometimes cracks; earnest; make something up

Clothes: lacy; fashion plate; pastel colors; make something up

CATCH PHRASE (Choose one)

- ☛ "I'm sure they didn't mean that."
- ☛ "Everyone has some goodness inside them!"
- ☛ "Pretty please?"
- ☛ Make something up

GIMMICK (Choose one or none)

- ☛ Adorable
- ☛ Bumbling
- ☛ Calm, Cool, and Collected
- ☛ Laugh Riot
- ☛ Straight Face
- ☛ Unpredictably Zany
- ☛ Or choose something else!

Name

Sweetheart

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Appeal

Unique Move

To turn on the charm, **roll +laughs**. (If you don't have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: Embarrass you and yours in the most horrible way possible. This ought to be good.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication. (A common complication is someone falling in love with you.)

10+: Choose one

- 🔥 Ask the Director who is in charge here, and what you can do to make things right. Take +1 forward by following through with the answers.
- 🔥 Show off your winning smile. Minor characters will swoon, major characters will take notice.
- 🔥 Convince someone to help you. Or at least, not to act against you for the time being.
- 🔥 Reveal some obscure fact about your history, where you were handsome and beautiful and everyone knew it
- 🔥 Or make up something else appealing!

Appease

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +lumps**. (If you don't have any lumps, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Remember that if you pleaded with someone earlier not to hurt you, you take +1 forward in a grudge against them.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: When will all this wickedness end! If your very next move is Appeal, take +1 forward.

10-12: Violence is not the answer! Tell your fellow combatants to get outta here. If their very next move is to ditch this pop stand, they take +3 forward. If it's anything else, they don't. (And yes, that +3 is for you, too.)

13+: You actually hurt someone, dishing out damage. After you do that, apologize profusely and make an Appeal move to end all of this, taking +3 forward.

The Playbook that totally has your back: Tagalong



Not everyone is here for the spotlight. Sometimes, you're just the straight face to make everyone look better. And that's fine, because it also means that whatever horrible stuff is happening, it's not your fault either. Unlike some other characters, you're not mean-spirited. Sure, you can still get angry, but you're more of a detached observer or concerned friend.

Play a Tagalong if you don't need the spotlight to shine, you're more than happy to help your friends get things done.

LOOKS (Choose one or more)

Eyes: wide; alert; thick glasses; make something up

Face: blank expression; reassuring smile; neat hair; braces; make something up

Body: unassuming appearance; really tall; long arms; make something up

Voice: supportive; nagging; gibberish but other characters understand you anyway; make something up

Clothes: last year's fashion; big shoes; purse or backpack; make something up

CATCH PHRASE (Choose one)

- 🔴 "And I'll help!"
- 🔴 "Wait for me!"
- 🔴 "Should we really be doing this?"
- 🔴 .. or make something up!

GIMMICK (Choose one or none)

- 🔴 Adorable
- 🔴 Calm, Cool, and Collected
- 🔴 Jack/Jill of All Trades
- 🔴 Laugh Riot
- 🔴 Sharp Detail
- 🔴 Straight Face
- 🔴 or choose something else!

Name Tagalong	Catch-Phrase	Laughs 	Lumps 
Looks			



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Helping

Unique Move

After another player declares a move, but before they roll any dice, you can move to assist and **roll +laughs**. (If you don't have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: No bonus, and if something bad happens to your friend, it happens to you, too.

7-9: Your friend takes +1 forward.

10-12+: Your friend takes +1 forward. After they roll, you can spend one of your laughs to give them +3 backward.

13+: Your friend takes +3 forward. After they roll, you can spend one of your laughs to give them +3 backward.

Handy

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +lumps**. (If you don't have any lumps, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: You avoid getting hit, and you also avoid taking damage. You may choose to declare a friend: that friend takes +1 forward on their next grudge match; if they lose, you take the lump instead.

10-12: You avoid getting hit. You may ask a friend for help. If they agree, they immediately play out a grudge match vs. your attacker, with +3 forward. (If they lose, they suffer alone.)

13+: Wow, you actually had it in you to land a punch? You dish out damage. All your friends take +1 forward to their grudge matches until this fight ends.

The Playbook that's going to put one over on you: **Trickster**



Ain't you a stinker? The world is full of people who need their come-uppance, and you have all the uppance you can pack. While you are seemingly capable of anything... you don't use your power for personal gain – you're always looking out for the greater good. Your response may not always be proportional the crime, but it's the thought that counts, neh?

Play a Trickster if you like to pull one over on these rubes and show everyone who the smartest one is.

LOOKS (Choose one or more)

Eyes: leering; rolling; shady; make something up

Face: “honest”; the kind you want to punch; wide smile; make something up

Body: small; healthy; spry; make something up

Voice: deadpan; sarcastic; smooth and slick; velvet; make something up

Clothes: ink-and-paint gloves; backwards ball cap; mask; cane; make something up

CATCH PHRASE (Choose one)

- ☛ “Seriously, I can’t believe you fell for that.”
- ☛ “It wasn’t me!”
- ☛ “Have I got a deal for you.”
- ☛ ... or make something up!

GIMMICK (Choose one or none)

- ☛ Bag of Junk
- ☛ Disguise
- ☛ Laugh Riot
- ☛ Magic Art
- ☛ Shape Shifter
- ☛ Sidekick
- ☛ Unpredictably Zany
- ☛ ... or choose something else!

Name

Trickster

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps

Looks



Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Flim-Flam

Unique Move

To pull one over on these maroons, **roll +sly**.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication

10+: Choose one:

- ☛ Declare a target and pilfer a small item from them.
- ☛ Look out, it's a diversion! Confound one major character or a group of minor characters long enough for you and yours to get one thing done.
- ☛ Change your outfit to look like random person off the street. Take +1 forward to fool the rubes.
- ☛ When pursued, ditch them. (Pretend to be lamp, hide in a billboard, point at a distraction, etc.)
- ☛ Do some shenanigans that put others in peril. (You only pretend to go over the edge, you switch signposts behind you, you change lanes, etc.)
- ☛ Pretend to be a mirror image to convince another character to do something stupid.
- ☛ Or something else that's all tricky!

Artful Dodge

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +laughs**. (If you don't have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: You avoid getting the punch in the face you so richly deserve. If your very next move is Flim-Flam, you may take +1 forward.

10-12: It's a good idea to have friends. Choose one:

- ☛ Think of a way out of this, and try a Flim-Flam move, taking +1 forward.
- ☛ Ask a fellow player to deal with this palooka. If they say yes, they immediately play out a grudge, taking +1 forward. If they say no, you take a lump.

13+: Who knew your skinny arms could do this? You avoid harm and actually dish out some real damage.

The best Playbook: **Vanity** (Just pick this one. You deserve it.)



Enough about them, let's talk about you! Only you have the wits, the cunning, the strength, and (most importantly) the humility to see yourself all the way to the top! Why you're not already at the top is anyone's guess. You'd have succeeded already if you weren't surrounded by these idiots, who can never get one thing right. Or for the bad luck that follows you everywhere you go. But you keep at it. You're too great to sweat the small stuff. And compared to you, everything is small stuff.

Play a Vanity if you want to be handsome, good-looking, and all puffed up with pride, because you have a sense of humor about getting deflated now and again.

LOOKS (Choose one or more)

Eyes: sultry; leering; perfect; make something up

Face: shining teeth; coiffed hair; immaculate skin; perfect; make something up

Body: muscular; lean; toned; tanned; perfect; make something up

Voice: showmanship; musical; charming; well-spoken; perfect; make something up

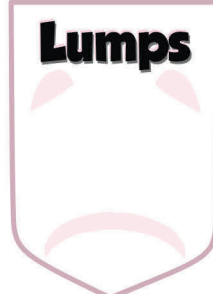
Clothes: the latest fashion; haute-couture; custom-fitted; hipster; perfect; make something up

CATCH PHRASE (Choose one)

- ☛ "Is it hot in here, or is it just me."
- ☛ "Hello. And, you're welcome."
- ☛ "Appreciate me now, and avoid the rush."
- ☛ Make something up

GIMMICK (Choose one or none)

- ☛ Adorable
- ☛ Bumbling
- ☛ Laugh Riot
- ☛ Sidekick
- ☛ Stinking Rich
- ☛ Or choose something else!

Name Vanity	Catch-Phrase	Laughs 	Lumps 
Looks			

 =0 Cool	 =0 Sharp	 +2 Sly	 -1 Tough	 =0 Zany
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Grandstand

Unique Move

To remind everyone how great you are, **roll +sly**.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one from below **and** the Director gives you a complication

10-12+: Choose one:

- 🎲 Ask the Director who is “important” here. Take +1 forward to deal with the important people this scene. (And ignore people who aren’t important.)
- 🎲 Before you do something, tell everyone a brief anecdote of how you’ve done this before, only someplace else and it was a lot more spectacular than it is, here. Then +1 forward to do that thing.
- 🎲 Ask someone to do something. If it’s a player, they take +1 forward, and then you take all the credit for the doing.
- 🎲 Or make something up!

13+: As above, only you’re even more awesome. For the rest of this game session, remind everyone how awesome you were.

Showboat

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +laughs**. (if you don’t have any laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.) Remember that if you grandstanded to ask was important first, you’ll get +1 forward to deal with that person, including grudges.

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps, then take a moment to fix your hair.

7-9: Really, everyone should go home, you’ve just outclassed them. You avoid damage and you look good doing it.

10-12: You dish out some damage, but (more importantly) everyone sees you do it.

13+: You dish out damage; describe a method of delivery that is worthy of your greatness. Issue a challenge to whoever’s in charge that they surrender this grudge right now because they don’t stand a chance against your superiority. Lesser characters will give it up right then and there, but major characters might keep at it.

The Playbook that's both funny ha-ha and funny strange: Wacko



There might be some kind of logic to what you do... but if anyone was hard-pressed to figure it out, it would be that you like to have fun. You have no impulse control - you see something, you go after it. You're fun to visit, but I wouldn't want to live with you. You're easily fooled, but you're also easy to anger, and you never give up. You are capable of things others can't do, often because no one ever told you that you couldn't do it.

LOOKS (Choose one or more)

- Eyes:** manic; bug-eyed; different sizes; make something up
- Face:** large nose; lolling tongue; crooked teeth; disturbing smile; make something up
- Body:** long arms; big feet; tiny body; misshapen form; strange skin color; make something up
- Voice:** shrieking; infantile; unintelligible; never speaks; incoherent; make something up
- Clothes:** clown outfit; garish colors; broken restraints; spikes; lots of pockets; make something up

CATCH PHRASE (Choose one)

- ☛ "Niagara Falls!"
- ☛ "I'm not mad! But I am *going* mad!"
- ☛ "All fun and games until someone gets hurt!"
- ☛ Make something up

GIMMICK (Choose one or none)

- ☛ Bumbling
- ☛ Disguise
- ☛ Jack/Jill of All Trades
- ☛ Magic Art
- ☛ Shake It Off
- ☛ Shape Shifter
- ☛ Unpredictably Zany
- ☛ Or choose something else!

Name

Wacko

Looks

Catch-Phrase

Laughs

Lumps



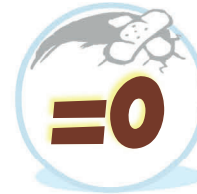
Cool



Sharp



Sly



Tough



Zany

Wackiness

Unique Move

To do something out of the ordinary, **roll +zany**.

7-9: Either give up, or choose one and the Director gives you a complication. **10+:** Choose one.

- Ask the Director a question about the current situation and include a thing that has no relation to the situation. Such as “Is there an escape route to Albuquerque?”, “Who’s the biggest threat who just needs a hug?”, “Why isn’t there a gift basket of fresh fruit here?”, “Why isn’t that bear-trap wheelchair accessible?” “Who’s in charge here and why hasn’t my soup arrived yet?” etc. If you or your friends act on the answer, they get +1 forward.
- Set up a cut-away gag to something else, far away. Anyone who appears in this gag now has a grudge against you.
- Quick change into some costume and do a bad impression of some other person, then ask someone to go along with your plan.
- Or make something up!

Frantic

Grudge Move

To fight in a grudge match, **roll +laughs**. (If you have no laughs, roll two dice and add nothing.)

Up to 6: You get hurt! Take your lumps.

7-9: You don’t get hit, but you are a huge distraction.

Everyone else gets +1 forward to their grudge matches for the rest of this scene.

10-12: You actually do some damage to your target.

13+: Too much! Not only do you some damage to your target, but you take a lump, yourself. (What, and quit show business?)

At the discretion of the Director, you also start a chain of events that escalates into something bizarre. (Your pants fall down, revealing the birthmark that proves you’re the heir to the throne. You spill a glass of wine that causes a waiter to slip, fly out the window, and into a pillow factory scheduled for demolition. Your gesture inspires the rampaging monster to fall madly in love with you, then we smash cut to the wedding, etc.)

Customize your character:

General Gimmicks

If you want, you can add a single gimmick to your character. You can only have one, but you can change it between adventures. Every gimmick has both an **upside** and a **downside**. If you ever “break the rules” by ignoring the downside, you will lose the gimmick.

A General Gimmick is optional. You don't have to have one.

If you don't want to have to deal with a gimmick on top of everything else... you don't have to have one. (You can change your mind, later.)

Not all gimmicks may be available in all games

The Director may say that some gimmicks aren't appropriate for today's story. You'll have to do without or pick a different one.

You can't have the same gimmick that someone else has.

So if someone else is the Punching Bag, you can't be the Punching Bag, too.

ADORABLE

Handsome, charming, beautiful, doe-eyed, innocent, pleasant, easy on the eyes, and would not be kicked out of bed for eating crackers. You've got one or more of those, going for you.

Aww, you're so sweet and innocent. You couldn't possibly be the craven malefactor what done this awful thing. Roll +sharp. On a 10+, convince someone you're harmless and they leave you alone. On a 7-9, convince someone you're harmless, but only for this hot minute, so you better get out of here.

People complicate your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh. Someone falls madly in love with your puppy-dog eyes, sugary-sweetness, etc. Deal with it or lose this gimmick.

BAG OF JUNK

One person's trash is another one's treasure.

You carry around a bunch of useful stuff. Roll +sharp. On a 10+, you have exactly what you need to deal with this situation, and you make take +1 forward. On a 7-9, you have something that's inappropriate and possibly dangerous.

Junk complicates your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh, and have something bad happen to your bag of junk. (The stuff spills out everywhere and you have to gather it up; police confuse you for the Garbage Thieves who plague this city; a piece of junk you have is actually the missing spy satellite that the CIA needs to recover, etc.)

A gimmick is an optional add-on. It gives you a new thing to do, but it also comes with a downside.



BUMBLING

You have a tendency to fall forward.

You can just fall out of any bad situation. When someone tries to make you do something or tries to hurt you, roll +zany. On a 10+, you avoid harm completely, but something strange happens. On a 7-9, something strange happens, and you blunder from this bad thing to a different thing.

At any time, you can bumble into a bad situation. The Director hands you a laugh, and then you stumble into a bad place. Deal with it or lose this gimmick.

CALM, COOL, AND COLLECTED

Being cool isn't something that just happens. Being cool is a state of mind.

Add +3 to cool, but you only roll one die. Whenever you make a roll that adds +cool, you never roll more than a single die. Also, raise your cool by +3. This can raise your cool to as high as +6. (Die rolling is such a drag, man. Why roll two dice+cool, when you could roll one die+cool+3, you dig?)

Don't forget that you've got this gimmick. If you ever roll two or more dice and then add your cool, then you've blown your cool. The Director takes this gimmick away, your character takes a lump, and you go back to the normal rules (to whatever your cool was before, and now you're rolling two dice, again, like a square).

CHIP ON YOUR SHOULDER

Let's try that again. I don't think you felt it the first time.

Don't like this grudge match? Re-roll! Whenever you don't like the way a grudge match came out, you can demand that it be re-rolled. **This second result stands**, even if it's worse.



DISGUISE

It's good that you have this gimmick, so that when we get tired of looking at you, we can look at something else!

You can pretend to be someone you're not. Roll +sly. On a 10+, you quick-change into someone else, and you can fool someone for a while. On a 7-9, you can quick change into someone else, but they won't be fooled for more than a minute, so act fast. While disguised, you take +1 forward to moves that work with this disguise... and any move that violates the disguise ends this immediately.

Disguises complicate your life. While you're disguised, the Director can hand you a laugh. Someone or something else immediately appears, mistaking you for someone else (ex-spouse, Queen of France, the FBI's most wanted list, their long lost twin, etc.)

INVENTOR

They laughed at you, at the academy. Though that might have had more to do with your dress sense than with your genius.

You can make amazing stuff. Roll +zany. On 10+, you invent something useful. (A rocket ship, a killer app, a robot bodysuit of the president, etc.) and this thing really works, until something messes it up. On 7-9, the thing works but using it has terrible side effects.

Inventions complicate your life. While an invention is in play, at any time, the Director may have outside forces show up. They may be here to steal the invention... they may be here to arrest the inventor for making something illegal... they may have come from the future to stop this invention from enslaving the Earth, etc.

JACK/JILL OF ALL TRADES

Your résumé is quite the piece of work. Twenty pages of work history, zero letters of recommendation

You've worked every kind of job there is. When you do something, make up a history of the job you did, and roll +tough. On a 10+, you do this job just like a pro, as if you've done this for years. On a 7-9, you do this job, but not in the right way. (You do this job the way they did it back on the scullery ship... or you accidentally use industrial cleaner on the wedding dress... or you ship everything to the wrong address, etc.) This partial success may or may not still get you paid or get the job done, but it should be funny.

Your career history complicates your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh. An old co-worker or boss shows up and gives you grief.

LAUGH RIOT

*We're not laughing at you,
we're laughing because of you.*

Spend a laugh to re-roll your last roll with three dice.

When you spend a laugh, it works different. **You do not add +3 backward to the last roll.** Instead, you re-roll the last roll, and you roll *three* dice this time, instead of two.

MAGIC ART

You have a magic crayon, ink pen, brush, stylus, or something like that, that lets you express your meta.

You can make art that becomes real. Roll +zany. On 10+, you draw something that solves your current problem. On 7-9, you draw something that might help, but it looks really off. It's probably only worth +1 forward, at best. On a 6 or less, you draw something terrible, and it makes things worse (gives you a lump, breaks something important, etc.)

Rolling doubles with magic art makes it weird. If any of your two dice match, the art takes a life of its own. (A hole that you draw in a wall blows away on the wind, only to settle on other places where it's a hole again. A thing you drew comes to life and goes on its own agenda, being crazy or violent or whatever it is that things do. Etc.) This weirdness is inconvenient at best, and a menace to everything you hold dear, at worst. Either deal with it or lose this gimmick.

PUNCHING BAG

*Does your face hurt?
Because it's killing me.*

You can take up to six lumps, but you can't have more laughs than lumps. It's the sixth lumps that puts you out of action. (Characters without this gimmick go down after three.)

If you receive a new laugh, and adding that to your total would take you over your lump count, choose one: discard the laugh; or have some klutzy mistake happen your character, and put that point in lumps, instead.



SHAKE IT OFF

When you have to take a hit, try to take it on a thick, insensitive part of your body. Like your head.

Random chance to avoid lumps. When you're supposed to take a lump, roll +lumps. (That is, roll two dice and add the lumps you already have, before taking this one. If you have no lumps, roll two dice and add nothing.) If you roll 7+, ignore that new lump you were just about to take. Walk off the pain!

SHAPE SHIFTER

Jelly, protoplasm, marmalade, ink, whatever. Whatever you are made out of, it ain't normal.

You can change into other things! You can change your shape! Roll +zany. On 10+, you turn into something useful; take +1 forward to do things related to your shapeshifting. On a 7-9, you almost turn into something useful, which may give you unusual powers or agency.

Shapeshifting complicates your life. At any time, the Director can have someone wander up to you, mistaking your shape-shifted form for something else, and then have something harmful, embarrassing, or worse happen to you.

SHARP DETAIL

Other people, they just don't see things like you do.

After asking questions, take +2 forward. When you successfully use +sharp to ask questions, you can take +2 forward when acting forward on the questions. (Characters without this gimmick only take +1 forward.)

Details that other characters could let go will seriously bother you. You must straighten crooked picture frames, re-alphabetize books on the shelf, clean up errant dust, etc. These complications could delay or distract you.



SIDEKICK

Every Napoleon needs a Lafayette; every Simon needs a Garfunkel; every Hall needs an Oates; every Spongebob needs a Patrick; and every pop-culture reference needs another one.

You have someone that follows you around. They carry your bags, answer your mail, water your plants, bury your incriminating evidence, witness your mortgage signing, babysit your children, and – most importantly – they can take a lump for you, once per scene.

You will have to babysit the sidekick. They are frequently the targets of kidnapping, violence, and blackmail. They will often do stupid things and you'll have to bail them out. Deal with the problem or lose the sidekick.

STINKING RICH

I don't know who would put all their money in a big bin and then go swimming in it. But I suppose if you have that much cash, who am I to tell you what to do with it.

Screw the rules, you have money! Roll +sly. On 10+, solve a problem by throwing money at it. (Buy the rival business and fire everyone; everyone gets a car, send a cash advance to the game designer to edit the errata in your favor, etc.) On 7-9, either you don't solve the problem, or you can throw money at it to make it go away, but there will be complications later.

Wealth complicates your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh, and some business comes up. Deal with it or lose all your money (and this gimmick).

STRAIGHT FACE

Your job is to look serious. Either you let yourself be the butt of the joke, or you just wryly comment on the silliness of everyone else. Bide your time, and make everyone else look good. Only when the moment is right should you cash in all your chips for a really sweet payoff.

Other players can take your laughs, and you can stack your laugh points. Whenever the Director hands you a laugh, say this phrase aloud: "Anyone who has fewer laughs than me can take this laugh away." If you forget to say it, you lose this gimmick.

At any time, if another player has fewer laughs than you, they can take 1 laugh from your count and add it to their own count.

You can spend 2 laughs to take +6 backward. Or you can spend 3 laughs to take +9 backward. (Characters without this gimmick can only spend a single laugh to take +3 backward.)

UNKNOWNABLE STRENGTH

Sometimes you don't know your own strength.

Your character is mightier than a locomotive. You can lift trucks, throw anvils, open pickle jars, etc. In casual situations, you can just be assumed to carry around giant weights and juggle boulders. Before you make a move in the game, mention if you're using super-strength or not. Then roll. If you roll doubles, your super strength kicks in.

If you succeed, it's amazing. You don't just punch someone, you send them into next week. You don't just open a door, you lift the entire wall and slide under it, etc.

If you fail, it's amazing, too. They dodge your punch and your punch hurtles you through the air. Or you toss a building over your shoulder and it collapses into rubble. There's no halfway about it.

UNPREDICTABLY ZANY

Who knows what could happen, when you're involved?

Subtract 3 from your zany but roll an extra die. Reduce your Zany attribute by 3. This can drop your zany to as low as -5.

Whenever you make a roll that adds +zany, roll an extra die. (So yes, that's three dice instead of two. Who knows what's going to happen?)



Getting cast in the big role:

Genre Gimmicks

These gimmicks are specific only to certain stories. When a Director is about to run a story, they might choose to give a Genre Gimmick to give to each player. For the duration of this session, the player gets to use the Genre Gimmick's unique move.

For example, the Director says that tonight's adventure is a flashback to the days of the founding of Prairieville. Everyone gets one "Wild West" Genre Gimmick.

Each Gimmick also comes with a role for the story today. You're expected to play up this role, so really sell it.

Genre Gimmicks each have a down side, just like General Gimmicks. That down side is tied to the role of that Gimmick.

Before the game starts, the Director can assign a Genre Gimmick to one or more players

So each character can have a role in this particular episode. One person is the sheriff, another is the undertaker, someone else is the greenhorn, etc. Now that the major roles are cast, we can get started.

The Director should pick a few gimmicks that they think are necessary for the game. (If you want to hunt down the black hats, then you'll need at least one White Hat, etc.) The Director should leave You don't have to use all the gimmicks if you don't want to. (If you don't think the Grizzled Prospector would be good for this adventure, you could leave it out, etc.)

Players should take the gimmick roles that they think will be the most interesting. After the necessary gimmicks are taken, players should have their pick of gimmicks: either general gimmicks, or one of the genre gimmicks that wasn't necessary but is still appreciated.

You can still only have one Gimmick at a time

If a player has a general gimmick, then this Genre Gimmick replaces it for this session. For example, if you're going to be the Space Captain, then you can't be the Punching Bag or the Straight Face.

If you want, you can ask your Director to let you have a Genre Gimmick, that wasn't in play

Unlike the general gimmicks (above), these genre gimmicks are very specific to only certain kinds of stories. For example, a fantasy dragon or a space alien might not be appropriate for a **Madcap** adventure that's supposed to be normal school-kids.

But don't let us stop you! If you think one of these genre gimmicks might work in your current game, then ask your Director if it's all right. The important thing is to have fun.

These are like general gimmicks, but only for certain genres (sci-fi, western, medieval, etc.) The Director may assign you one of these at the start of the adventure.



YE OLDEN DAYS

When your story is set in the Middle Ages, or in some kind of fantasy world pastiche that vaguely resembles the Middle Ages, you can assign these gimmicks as roles in your story.



The Dashing Robber

With a swish of your cape and a tip of your hat, you are very much the handsome rogue. Everyone wants to be you, or to fall in love with you, or to catch you and put you in prison. (And maybe all three, who can say.) You rob from the rich... because why would you rob the poor, they don't have anything, they're poor. That's just common sense.

They never see you coming or going. When you're not somewhere you want to be, roll +sly. On a 7-9, you reveal yourself as being here the whole time. (If these people are hostile, this starts a grudge.) On a 10+, you can show up, do a thing, and disappear without starting a grudge.

You are wanted by the corrupt sheriff and other forces of law.

The Cunning Spy

Maybe you work for the king. Or the queen. Or some foreign power. Or maybe you work for yourself, plotting your eventual coup when all the light touches will be yours. Whatever it is, you're taking careful notes, and when the time comes, you'll be ready.

Your eyes and ears are everywhere. You can eavesdrop on any conversation, past or present, even if you weren't there, because your network informs you. Roll +sharp. On 10+, the Director reveals a scene you hadn't seen, and you may take +1 forward to deal with this. On a 7-9, the Director reveals a scene that's dangerous, and if you act on it, you take a lump.

If anyone finds out you're a spy, you could be in serious trouble.

The Crazy Magician

You've spent your entire life, wearing these clothes and building up a powerful reputation as a master of the mystical arts, and for one purpose: so people would be scared of you and not bother you with their petty problems. It didn't work.

You can cast spells! Roll +zany. On a 10+, your spell does something important, but it expires one minute later unless you spend a laugh. On a 7-9, your spell works but with weird side effects.

Magic complicates your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh, and then something bizarre and mystical happens to you and/or the ones you love. It's never good.

The Little Big One

They say might makes right. So you're here to make it right. You may not have the brains, or the money, or the looks, but you've got the brawn.

You block for other people. When a friend is about to take a lump, roll +tough. On a 7-9, you take the lump instead. On a 10+, nobody takes the lump.

You can't refuse requests from the weak and helpless. The Director may have other characters beg you for help.

The Fortune Teller

See, you put on some colorful robes, deck yourself out in cheap jewelry, hold up a crystal ball and wave your hands over it saying all kinds of crazy stuff, and people give you money. Nice work if you can get it.

You knew this would happen. Before somebody else makes a roll, roll +cool. On 7+, they take +1 forward on your next roll. On 6 or less, they take -1 forward on their next roll. You can use this on people even if they don't want you to.

The future complicates your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh... and a note with a spooky and secret prediction of the future. If you tell anyone what this note says, you lose all your laughs. But if you make that prediction come true, you may gloat to all the other players how you knew this would happen.

The Knight in Shining Armor

The best part of having a helmet that completely covers your head is that they can't see your expressions of disgust or amusement.

Spend all your laughs to make a solemn vow. Vow to do something on your honor. Spend *every single one* of your current laughs. For each laugh you spend, you take +1 forward to all rolls to do this thing you promised you'd do.

If you ever act dishonorably, you will be shamed for it. Atone for your shame or lose this gimmick.

The Heir to the Throne

Try not to think of your job as "just waiting for my parents to die." Take up a hobby, like croquet or philandering.

Everyone else is comic relief in your story. When something humiliating would happen to you, roll +cool. On a 7+, it doesn't happen to you, but you earn no laughs. On a 6, it happens to you even worse, but the director may give you a laugh for your trouble.

Evil people keep trying to prevent you from ascending to the throne. People keep saying you look just like this one peasant they saw, once.

The Put-Upon Peasant

Life for everyone in the middle ages wasn't "nasty, brutish, and short." Just your life, apparently.

Take a lump? Take a laugh, too! Whenever you take a lump, for whatever reason, you also get a laugh.

No one takes you seriously and they make you do all the hard work. All the other players' characters out rank you. People keep saying that you look just like the heir to the throne, but you just don't see it.

The Worldly Clergy

No one knows sin better than you do.

The divine can forgive this one little thing. Roll +sly. On a 7-9, you can reveal some item, money, or secret that a holy person would have no business knowing, thus shaming yourself in the process. On a 10+, you can get away with this thing without having your worldliness revealed.

People keep coming to you for help on religious matters, as if you're some kind of authority figure. Put their minds at ease or lose this gimmick.

The Fantasy Dragon

We recommend going with the classic look of glittering scales, sharp claws, dagger teeth, leathery wings, and glowing eyes. But sure, if you want to go with some kind of magical-friendship look, that's good too. You be you. We're just putting it on the table.

You're a dragon. Roll +zany. On a 10+, you do some awesome dragon stuff (fly, breathe fire, kidnap a princess, etc.) On a 7-9, you almost pull off this dragon thing, but something goes awry, usually in an embarrassing way. (When the other dragons find out about your screw-up, it will be all they talk about, at the Moot Gathering of Wyrmkynyng Upon the Nigh.)

Adventurers keep showing up to kill you and/or steal your hoard. Only people you want to be nice to, are ever afraid of you.

The Motley Fool

If you bring a ukulele or lute or other instrument to the game, and then make up rhyming couplets on the spot to poke fun at your fellow players, we will declare you the winner of the game.

All lumps can give you laughs. Whenever you or another player takes a lump, roll +laughs. If you roll 9 or less, you get another laugh.

You have no money, no resources, and no authority. But having no status means you have nothing to lose, either. Feel free to speak your mind.

THE WILD WEST

Six-guns, frontier towns, and steam trains. Even if your players haven't seen a western, they should know enough to fake it. And that's what role-playing is, really.

The Spunky Kid

You can't wait to go on a grand adventure! Beat the bad guys, find the lost gold, and save the day! Of course, if you're not back by sundown, your parents are going to ground you.

You meddle in places you don't belong. You can eavesdrop on any conversation, even if you weren't there, because your network informs you. Roll +sharp. On 10+, the Director reveals a scene you hadn't seen, and you may take +1 forward to deal with this. On a 7-9, the Director reveals a scene that's dangerous, and if you act on it, you take a lump.

No one takes you seriously. They keep telling you to leave this to the adults.

The City Slicker

With your nice silk hat and your fancy cigar, you're pretty sure you can put one over on these dirt farmers, here in the sticks.

You can put one over on these rubes. Roll +sly. On a 10+, you cheat at a poker game, you produce a fake deed that says you own the place, or you otherwise play a trick on these rubes. On a 7-9, the trick still works, but only for the next minute or so when the trick is revealed.

Being slick complicates your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh, and your criminal past catches up to you. Deal with this or lose this gimmick.

The Tall Tale

One day, your name will be listed with the likes of Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed, Pecos Bill, Calamity Jane, and Hiawatha. Like, right now, just write those names next to yours on the character sheet. There you go.

You are a legend come to life. Roll +tough. On a 10+, you perform some ridiculous feat of strength, agility, or endurance. (Lasso a tornado, divert a river, chop down a forest, etc.) On a 7-9, your feat works, but it adds another complication we weren't expecting. (The tornado runs off with you, you flood the town, a blue ox attacks you, etc.)

You can tell people about the awesome things you did, but no one believes that you did it. That's just a myth.



The Bullet Magnet

Why is it that when other people do all the stupid stuff, it's you who gets shot?

Take lumps for other people. If someone is about to take a lump, you can take that lump instead. Come up with some reason, the sillier the better.

No one believes that you just take damage unfairly like this, and they're really sick of hearing you whine about it all the time.

The White Hat

Your clothes are always clean, and your star always shines.

Spend all your laughs to make a promise. Vow to do something on your honor. Spend *every single one* of your current laughs. For each laugh you spend, you take +1 forward to all rolls to do this thing you promised you'd do.

People keep coming to you for help, for some reason. Help them or lose this gimmick.

The Grizzled Prospector

Just what year is it, anyway?

You've been alone in the wilderness way too long.

Roll +zany. On 10+, tell some boring story and then produce some item, map, or obscure fact that aids you in your struggle. On 7-9, you still produce something, but it's old and brittle and outdated, so it works but with complications. (It breaks after one use, it disintegrates when held up to light, that friend died ages ago but their children can help you, etc.)

Claim jumpers are after your claim. It's worthless, but they still want it. Defend your claim or lose this gimmick.

The Undertaker

In a hundred years or so, they'll call this "goth" or "death metal". But you, you're ahead of the curve.

You're not easily phased. When something bad happens that might affect you, roll +cool. On a 7-9, you can't act again until someone else does, first, but you are immune to all this wickedness. On a 10+, tip your hat, ignore this, and move on.

You depress people with a reminder of their own mortality. No one invites you to parties.

The Cartoon with No Name

No one knows who you are, or where you came from. Maybe you're an angel. Or the devil. Or just somebody who squints and mumbles a lot. People either get out of your way or they don't get up again.

You are number one with a bullet. Whenever you get in a gunfight, roll +tough. On a 7-9, you defeat one minor character. On a 10+, you defeat one major character or all the minor characters in this scene.

Everyone's really creeped out by you, and no one trusts you, no matter how much good you do.

SPACE OPERA

One step beyond! From the classic movie serials, to the blockbuster franchises and beyond, science fiction can be a lot of fun. Players enjoy hammy acting and histrionics played out with broad themes. Best of all, you don't have to explain anything, because some future thing does it!

The Space Captain

Handsome, witty, commanding, intelligent – these are words that you can order your underlings to say about you any time you want.

You uphold the prime directive. Make an impassioned, hammy speech and roll +tough. On a 10+, others are moved by your speech and they give in to your demands. On a 7-9, they have more demands before they'll listen to you.

Even though you're in charge, no one does what you say. Also, for some reason everyone expects you to go out and solve the problems yourself, instead of delegating.

The Token Alien

When choosing your name, you could go all silver-age with one like "Bree-yark". Or you can go more contemporary to have a lot more apostrophes and glottal stops, like "W'th't V'w'ls" or something like that. Word combinations are also good, such as "Starglare Moonshadow". And in a pinch, there's always the standby of saying that your name is unpronounceable.

You have alien powers.

Make something up and roll +zany. On a 10+, your alien power works and you don't have to explain how. On a 7-9, your alien power doesn't quite work right (side effects, partial success, etc.), and you still don't have to explain how.

Being alien complicates your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh and have something weird happen to you. They don't have to explain why. Other people are freaked out by your alien ways. Also, they keep saying your ways are alien, no matter how normal you play your character.

The Boffin Engineer

"Boffin (noun): A person with knowledge or a skill considered to be complex, arcane, and difficult." Huh, we both learned something today!

Specifications are just guidelines, really. When you work with machines, roll +sharp. On a 10+, you can push it way past its specs, but it can't take much more of this. On a 7-9, you push it past its specs but with side effects, usually involving the Director shaking the table and you must fall out of your chair.

People keep breaking your stuff, and then it's you who has to fix it.



The Red Shirt

Your sacrifice will be duly noted. Wait, why is everyone talking about you like you've already been sacrificed? It's probably nothing.

You're always around to be in the line of fire. When you're not somewhere you want to be, roll +lumps. On a 7+, you are revealed to have been there this whole time.

Everyone else outranks you. Other players can order you to fight their grudge matches for them, to handle dangerous materials, or to do anything that superioers can order subordinates to do.



The Maverick Officer

Listen, pipsqueak! If you want to get stuff done in this world, you have to stand up and take action! Nothing worth a darn ever came out of following a bunch of procedures and rules written in a bunch of books! ... Except this one. This book here, this one is good.

You don't have time for this shazbot. When you're asked to do something, say that this is against all regulations and experience, then roll +cool. On a 10+, say that's not your job but still succeed at doing it anyway. On a 9 or less, say that's not your job, blow off doing the job entirely... and if anyone else succeeds at this job, they can take one laugh away from you.

Your other crew members complain about your stuck-up attitude, no matter how nice you are.

The Renegade Scientist

One day, you hope to unlock the secret of untold power. Here's hoping its limitless untold power, that's the best kind of untold power.

You'll show them, you'll show them all! Roll +sly. On a 10+, produce some gadget that will solve this problem. On a 7-9, produce some gadget, but it needs something else to power it, which is a crime against nature (a being made of living crystal, the last sunflower, the tears of a child, etc.)

You did something in the past that was so horrible, everyone thinks you're evil. Even people who just met you will think you're evil.

The Medical Officer

People are filled with all sorts of bones and organs. It can get really gross. Maybe it's not too late to become a gardener.

You're a doctor. As a move, spend 1 laugh to remove all lumps from one single character. You can also spend 1 laugh to do other weird medical miracles, too. Make something up!

You keep telling people that's not your job, and that dammit, you're a doctor... but people keep asking you to do that job anyway.

Be fair, build up, have fun: The Director's Chair

The most important thing about **Madcap** is the story that you and your friends tell together. (Really, that's important about any role-playing game, but we digress.) If the rules are getting in the way of telling a good story, and especially a good laugh, then just go with it. Never use the rules as an excuse to make the story less interesting. That doesn't mean everyone gets what they want all the time—there's no drama in that. Good story, and especially good comedy, is the King, and the Queen, and their children, Jack and Ace. (And their nephew, Five of Clubs.) Don't be too obvious about this if you can help it; the illusion that the rules are being followed can make accomplishments all the more satisfying.

Why "Director"?

Being a Catacomb Lord might be good for a session of Tunnels and Trolls, where the spirit of the game requires someone to strategize on behalf of the world. But Madcap needs a Director, someone who challenges his Cast without working against

them, who knows the cast's capabilities and finds ways to utilize them, and who knows how to balance the big picture vision with the cast's spontaneity. In short, the Director's in it for the sake of putting on a good show.

BE FAIR about how you apply the rules of the game

You and your fellow players are a creative bunch. You can make up your own characters, your own stories, your own jokes. You must know a few things about each other, and what you think is funny. Really, you could have fun without any rules at all. (Wait, did we just talk you out of playing a **Madcap** game? Come back!)

For the best role-play, everyone should be working out of the same set of rules. We must decide whose characters are strong, fast, clever, etc. And we also must decide *how* strong, etc. they are. Sometimes, when we can't decide, we'll want to change things up with some random die rolls. Making

things unpredictable will surprise and delight us.

You can break any rule... but only do it when it makes the game better

As Director, you're not the enemy of the players – you're here to challenge them to come up with funny and clever ways to deal with story points, to take risks and to reap rewards.

The players only get their one characters and what their playbooks tell them that they can do. You're the Director, you can do whatever you want. Don't break the rules to make it *your story* — break the rules to make it *everybody's* story.

When the dice fall, stand by the result

If you ask the players to roll dice, then you must abide by the roll. If they roll really well, then you must reward that. If they roll really badly, then you need to make that roll have some sort of cost, penalty, mistake, or setback. If you don't reward high rolls and punish bad ones, then you're teaching the players that die rolls aren't suspenseful risks, they're just busy-work, which is no fun. As the Director, if you want the story

Three tricks to be the best Director you can be:

Be fair about how you apply the rules to everyone.

Build upon the jokes, the stories, the material that your players share with you.

Have fun! Don't let a rule, an argument, or other trivia get in the way of a good time.



MADCAP TIMES

UNCLE GARY'S GUIDE TO RPG ETIQUETTE

A player is the boss of their own character, but not others. Stick to saying what you are doing; leave the results open so other people can work with it.

DON'T SAY

"I shoot him in the face."

DO SAY

"I reach for my gun so's I can shoot him in his smug little face."

DON'T SAY

"Our money troubles are over. I just won the lottery."

DO SAY

"Our money troubles are over. I've got a scratch ticket right here! Anyone got a dime?"

DON'T SAY

"Everyone just falls at my feet because I'm so great."

DO SAY

"Back up and give me some space, so my adoring fans can throw themselves at my feet!"

to proceed in an exact way, with no chance of deviation, then don't roll dice.

Players really like it when you reward high rolls (like 12s) with really, extra-special results. Many also find it funny when you make a low roll (like a 2) have some terrible outcome. Put some sauce on it – the more you and your fellow players describe the randomness, the more fun it can be for everyone.

Be the window to the world of imagination !

Role-playing is theater of the mind – most of what is going on is in your imaginations. And that's the plural "you" – that is, it's both the Director's idea and the players' ideas. As the Director, you have to describe the current setting. "You're in a bar," or "you're at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles" or "you're in a tattoo parlor on the floor above the jackhammer school during an earthquake."

What you're imagining in your head might not match what everyone else is seeing. Maybe you think there's one exit, and another player thinks there's three. Maybe you said, out loud, that there were twelve angry thugs and the player just missed that, or maybe you didn't.

As Director, you're the eyes and ears of the game world. You can't describe every detail, so you'll have to learn how to make things clear.

And briefly, too, because droning on and on to describe every detail isn't fun, either. Never punish players for something you forgot to say. And when they have different interpretations of the story than you do, work with them. You can encourage players to use +sharp to ask questions, but don't demand it, or you'll turn this into "roll-playing" and the game will lose its fun-loving sense of freedom.

BUILD UPON what your players are doing

Role-playing is like improv theater. We have a premise: a wacky cartoon, set in space, or the wild west, or your backyard, what have you. We have established characters, with playbooks, gimmicks, looks, and catch-phrases. We know that getting laughs are good and that getting lumps are bad.

Make stuff up !

As the Director, what you say, goes. So if you say, "the ice cream cone catches fire" or "the stoplight turns yellow, then blue, then orange, then plaid, then a rainbow of colors", that's what happens. After a while, you'll develop a sixth sense of comedy and timing to make this stuff sound funny for your group.

Players will want to improvise, too. They'll want to pull mallets from off-screen, or phone their long-lost grandmothers, or describe their winter house in Albuquerque. Going off-script can be hilarious.

Madcap is more loosey-goosey than your typical role-playing game. We don't have inventories tracked by weight, ultimates on cooldown, tiers of crafting ingredients, or the many other fancy formalisms that other games use to make the players feel important. Your character has a sword +1, you know you can hit things with it for damage. But when all you got is a one-page playbook with a few moves, some players may have a hard time answering the question, "What exactly can my character do?"

And the short answer is, "Anything that's funny!" That is, anything that makes us laugh and that falls in with your character concept. No one's going to break down our door to tell you that you're playing the game wrong. Encourage your players to be creative, to use their attributes and their moves to come up with new things. Give out a laugh for the funny things, and post the really funny things to your social media, #madcap.

When in doubt, roll and shout !

Remember the “rolling dice to make things interesting” rule. If a player wants their character to do something weird, and we’re not sure if they can do it or not, then ask for a roll and then we’ll see what happens.

For most rolls, it’s +cool for stuff that is normal (fix a car, get directions, throw a baseball, etc.). For weird stuff (pulling mallets out of nowhere, receiving a package mere seconds after you ordered it, jumping out a window to bounce off a flagpole and come right back inside, etc.) it’s +zany. In other cases, use your best judgement on what attribute to roll.

Asking players to roll for questionable stuff adds a fun level of uncertainty to the game – we don’t know what’s going to happen! And what’s appropriate has a way of evening out, since characters good at zany things will have high zany attributes, and characters bad at cool things will have low cool attributes, and thus the dice can moderate what goes and what doesn’t.

“Yes, and...”: The art of improvisation

Once something has shown up in the story, then it’s in the story. If a character blows up the library, then they can’t come back and check out books later.

More than most role-playing games, **Madcap** encourages players to make stuff up on the spur of the moment. As Director, you’ve got to say what stays and what goes

You can always push the “undo” button and take something out of play if it wasn’t appropriate... but you should only do that as a last resort (the nuclear option).

Always try to build on what players are doing, instead of tearing them down. If they say, “I pull out a gun,” you might say something like, “Yes, and the clerk pulls out a bigger gun!” If they say, “I just won the lottery!”, you could reply with, “Yes, and the tax collector standing behind you clears their throat.” If they say, “I watch the groupies to land at my feet!”, try responding with “Yes, they do, and there’s a big smoke cloud. When it clears, your wallet is missing. And your pants.” This kind of humor builds on what players are doing, adding more jokes without contradicting anything that’s going on.

And as we said before, stand by any die rolls. If a player rolls high, build on the enormous success they just earned. If they roll low, then make a joke at their expense. As the Director, you do have the power to just ruin that 12 a player just rolled — if you *must* do that, give the player a laugh for their trouble, and describe their hilarious and

unexpected failure. But for the love of Chuck, don’t use this rule too often. Players will get confused and frustrated if dice have no meaning. It might take you a while to figure out the right balance, so always listen to your players.

The “Yes and...” rule for building people up applies to everyone: the Director and the Players, which brings us to ...

Role-play is saying what you are doing... and not just telling other people what they are doing

Only the Director has the authority to make blanket statements about what is going on. What the Director says, goes. The players are acting under direction; they only control their own character, not other people’s or the environment.

It’s natural for a player to think, “I said I did it, so I did it”. But some moves might go too far. Naturally, if a player just says, “I solve all the problems with a wave of my hand”, that’s clearly too much. But saying, “I snatch the deed to the orphanage away from the banker and tear it up!”, when that’s the whole plot of today’s adventure, isn’t something that just happens because of a single line someone said!

The give-and-take here is that the player declares something they want to do, and then the Director says what the response is. Note that “response” part – the Player only controls their own player. They’re free to say that they are *grabbing at the deed*, but they don’t get it just because they said they did.

When a player goes too far, work with the player to talk them down a notch. (Some players get very excited in the heat of the moment.) Get them to rephrase their request so it’s more about stuff in their personal control.

Never bite your players

Human bites are the third-most common kind of bite injury, and the first-most likely to become infected. Just because a player asked what the mood currently is, is still no excuse for biting them. The players are more afraid of you, than you are of them.

Oh, and don’t do the other kind of metaphorical biting, either: when you play “gotcha” with the players and punish them for stuff they didn’t say. As the Director, you’re the window the world, so if you didn’t mention that the house is on fire, the players don’t know, either. And if you tell them, “You didn’t say you went to get more bullets, so you don’t have bullets now”... then you’re training your players to describe everything they do in boring, tedious detail — the death of comedy. Work with them.

Speaking of working with them, **you can ruin a player’s success at any time... and then give them a laugh as a compromise.** Only do this if you think this failure is funnier than if they had succeeded. Giving the player a laugh reduces the sting of you throwing your authority around, like this.

HAVE FUN

Look, we could sit here and try to make up rules for every little thing that might happen in your game. This book would be 900 pages, and you and your players would all need law degrees to follow along. That’s not most people’s idea of “fun”.

Role-playing games are free-form stages of imagination. Use these rules as the

foundation, so you and yours all know what you’re supposed to be doing (“pretending to be cartoon characters”) and how you will compose your story (“make stuff up and maybe roll some dice to see if you can get away with stuff”).

Every role-playing game has said that the Director’s role is to be in charge, and what they say, goes. If you must choose between following the letter of the rules, or having fun, you should pick fun.

To signal to the players when things are getting dicey, declare the mood

When we’re just talking and having fun, the mood is **casual**. If a player wants their character to do something uncertain, momentous, or climactic, then the mood isn’t casual any more. Things are **dicey** right now, and stuff could go wrong. (If things are too predictable, then it’s not screwball comedy.)

When the mood is **dicey**, you can demand die rolls for even the simplest of tasks. Die-rolling is a compromise between “getting exactly what you want because you just said you wanted it” and “not getting anything at all because the Director said no.” We’re agreeing to put it up to a lottery.

As with everything, you as the Director are free to declare

something is impossible. If you do, don't let a player roll dice at all – just tell them they can't do it. (If you let a player roll for something, you are agreeing to give them that thing if they roll high. Don't fall into the rookie mistake of letting them roll, hoping they fail, and then giving them nothing after they roll that 12. That's not fair, and you'll lose the players' trust.)

In some role-playing games, players can just pull out the swords or guns or phaser rifles and just start shooting whenever they feel like it. In **Madcap**, players aren't allowed to get into fights unless the mood is a **grudge**... and only the Director can say when the mood changes.

Getting into a grudge match isn't that hard – all the player must do is get the other characters so angry that they insist on it. Trespassing on private property, putting up signs that say it's wabbit season, refusing to turn the volume on the stereo down, insisting that the remake is better than the original, etc. – these are good reasons to start a grudge match.

The reason we have the grudge rule is so that your players will do something – *anything* – other than relying on the old saw of “just hit them.” (And if you've played another role-playing game before this one, you've probably seen players eager to pick up their hammers to

treat everyone they meet like they're nails.) Be strict about this: if it's not a grudge mood, then tell the players they've got to try something other than shameless violence.

Only be random when random is fun

We can't stress this enough: if you don't think a character should be able to do something, don't let them roll for it. Impossible means “no roll at all”, not “roll dice and then fail anyway.” After you explain to a player that the move they just said they wanted to do won't work at all, ask them to try something else. There's always something else to try!

Give a sense of urgency by giving a clear countdown

Sometimes the story might drag, because the players don't feel a need to get on with it. Sure, you told them that they must find the missing deed to save the farm from foreclosure, but they're too busy puttering around. If everyone's having fun, that's not a big deal ... but if the game is starting to stall, you need to tell the players that they're running out of time.

The key here is, you must let the players know! If the players don't know there's a timer, then they don't know time is running out. Consider putting in a countdown.

A **countdown** is 3 or more counters that you put on the table. When a story

beat happens, remove a counter. Whenever you remove a counter, add some story spin on it. (The banker could call to remind everyone that they're coming to foreclose. The mailbox can get clogged with “past-due” notices. The appraiser comes by to put monetary values on the orphans. The film crew from the house-flipping show sets up in the yard, etc.)

If you want to be more mysterious, you can hide the exact number of counters from the players – just describe an event (as above) and make it very clear that time is running out.

And when time does run out: that's it, they've lost. They've lost the farm. Play out a bit of the aftermath and then that's all, folks! During the debriefing, if any of the players asks why they lost, tell them time had run out before they'd solved the problem, and explain what they could have done differently. Losing when you didn't know why isn't fun. Losing but knowing how you could do it better the next time is part of the fun.

Only be random when random is fun

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HOW A DIRECTOR'S CHARACTER CAN BEGIN THE GRUDGE

- Messing with their stuff (Stomps on their hat, swipes their hamburger, tips over their bike, etc.)
- Insults, shouted with such gale force like some hurricane wind.
- Withering sarcasm. (“Oh suuuure, I'll stick my neck out for losers like you.”)
- Brandish a weapon. Brandish like you mean it!
- Toss a cast member out on their keister.
- Give a maniacal speech, describing violence in detail.

a player that the move they just said they wanted to do won't work at all, ask them to try something else. There's always something else to try!

Some players, flushed with enthusiasm, will shout they want to do something and then roll dice. (They may not say what move they're trying, they'll just roll dice, because that's what you do, right?)

Be patient with such players. They just want to advance the story! Explain that they might want to ask

before rolling next time. (And if the mood was **casual**, they shouldn't be rolling at all.)

The players are the stars. (**Not the winners, mind you, just the stars**)

As the Director, you present a situation to your players. The players push the story forward with their moves in the role-play. You respond, and we keep going back and forth like this until the story ends.

Players aren't entitled to success. If they can't lose,

then there's nothing at stake, and then the story isn't that interesting.

Keep the story moving forwards

As the Director, you may find that your players have the worst luck. You thought they would succeed with at least *one* of the rolls they made, but they're all coming up bust. They didn't spot the vital clue. They can't convince the mayor to help them. They haven't won a single fight. What to do?

Everything can be funny... especially failure

After playing out a move, both the Director and the player should describe what happened. If it's a win, then it's a brief recap of how our hero overcame adversity. If it's a lose, then it's a quick joke about how our hero suffers some indignity.

Dead air is the enemy of comedy. Whenever something happens, talk about it. It doesn't have to be Shakespeare, but some of the best stories people have about their role-play experiences are the humiliations suffered when someone rolls a 2. The Internet is full of them.



If at first you don't succeed, try something else

Can't find the missing clue? Our heroes could seek out a private eye, a bloodhound, satellite photos, or something else to find it. Is the mayor refusing to help? Run against them in an emergency election, win the seat, and do it yourself. Can't beat 'em? Join 'em! Maybe if you give into your enemies, you can move past this and get done what you really need to get done.

As Director, encourage to try other solutions to problems. Everyone has several moves they can try. So many cartoons have been made where the first, second, fourth, or eleventh try fails, but the last one succeeds. (Funny how it's always the last thing you try, too.)

Finally winning, after the dice have made so many failures, can be an exciting, hard-won victory.

Where our heroes fail, their rivals may prevail !

When non-player characters make progress and heroes aren't, it gets **personal**. The players risk the humiliation of defeat. And knowing that rivals are working towards the same goal will spur the players to take more risks. They may even try to sabotage the rivals. (And the rivals can sabotage right back. Ah, cartoon grudges...)

Rivals make the game personal — now you're working against a face you can recognize, not some abstract clock. If our heroes don't save the farm, get the treasure, or solve the mystery — then someone else will! And they'll never live it down. Play this part up for comic effect, and you'll soon find your players get into the spirit of things.

Can't win 'em all: the agony of defeat

Once everything has been tried, once there's been too many failures... well, that's when our heroes might just have to admit they've been licked. The bank forecloses on the orphanage. The mysterious treasure remains lost, perhaps forever. No one gets the big part in the picture.

Comedy isn't about getting what you want, so the players shouldn't take it so hard if they don't always win. It's not like they're losing any money, experience points, loot-crates, exclusive drops, street cred, or anything else. It's a comedy game! Lighten up!

For failure to be meaningful, the players must understand how it happened. They have to see it coming. You'll want to drop hints that with each scheme they try that ends in ashes, the clock is ticking. The banker could show up to taunt our heroes and to slap them with more "past-due" notices. The buyers for the missing treasure are sick of waiting and give our heroes one last chance, and that's it. The casting calls will eventually be closed. Etc. Make it personal, make it real.

After the game is over have a quick debriefing

It's a good idea to let people ask a few questions after it over. Good questions include:

- 🔥 Did you have fun?
- 🔥 Did a rule come up that you didn't understand?
- 🔥 Did someone describe something, but you didn't understand how it worked?
- 🔥 Does anyone want to make changes to their character?
- 🔥 Does anyone want to suggest any new or variant rules?

Don't make too big of a deal about the debriefing. Taking five minutes at the end the session to ask what's working and what's not will take the guesswork out and put enthusiasm back in.

CARTOON STORYTELLING

In role-playing games, stories are long and dense. In Golden Age cartoons, stories are short and to the point. Reconciling these two factors is the most important part of telling stories in Madcap. You have to have a story that lets your Cast behave as cartoon characters while also giving their actions stakes and having a through-line that will sustain longer play sessions. When seeking inspiration for stories, you can ‘cheat’ a bit by looking outside the Golden Age to the 90s revival, and even modern cartoons to achieve a mixture of the old and the new.

The Old

The characters should be allowed to solve problems and achieve things in cartoony ways. Players should be encouraged to give their characters clear, simple motivations. Your imagery should include puns, and things operating by cartoon logic. Much of the moment to moment storytelling comes from the mixture of various characters motivations and personal rules of engagement.

Things have a way of refreshing themselves. Just because a player just got run over by a steam roller doesn’t mean they’re out of the game.

The New

Golden age cartoons tended to pit a single character against another. Sometimes it was because of an eternal feud, sometimes one character crossed another, sometimes it was out of pure spite. Look to the 1990s onward for cartoons that revived the lunacy of Golden Age cartoons with just a hint of drama to create more emotional involvement.

The ability to tell a story longer than “dog chases cat” will be greatly aided by the subtle use of persistence. Unlike Golden Age cartoons, characters should seem to remember encountering each other (barring any plot motivated memory loss caused by anvils to the noggin.) Some of your cast may have villainous tendencies, but they’re good guys for the purposes of this story, united by a common cause.

SETTINGS

To facilitate denser stories, the setting of the story should have an identity. It should be more than simply a backdrop for the action. It should have consistent locations, NPC’s, and conflicts which are larger than the Cast alone. Spend a little time—just a little—considering practical aspects of the setting. How are most people getting around? Where do people like to hang out? Do the police exist? Feel free to use the example setting as a reference.

Important: Remember that your setting can be a parody of a location, a movie setting, or historical civilization.

Although Madcap stories can take place at any time, Madcap exists in the present day and is shaped as much by modern sensibilities as by Golden Age style. The characters aren’t going around pretending not to know what iPods are.

The Code

If a player tries to “attack” an NPC who hasn’t crossed the line, don’t have them roll. Remind them that the NPC hasn’t provoked the cast yet, and if they insist on attacking at that point, explain how their character fails the action. There won’t be any consequences for their failure the first time this happens,

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In a previous article, we failed to define the term “petard”, which is a French word for firecracker. A petard could also be a metal box filled with gunpowder. During castle warfare, a soldier would attach the box to a wall or door, light the fuse, and then get away. Such devices were often unreliable, and when they exploded early, the soldier would be “hoist by their own petard” — they would suffer the harm they intended for someone else.

The Madcap Times regrets any confusion that may have been caused by using the word “petard”.

unless they want to use a relevant Catch-phrase, and accept a consequence in exchange for a Laugh. Be slightly stricter about the Catch-phrase making sense in these cases.

Important: It is not the Cast's job to guess when a character has crossed the line. Keep them informed.

Example Play: The cast needs to get past a security guard. Nina Fizzlesticks wants to pour a jar of ants into his trousers. The director decides that because the Guard hasn't really done anything to the cast yet, they should have to try something else before pulling out the big guns. Sammy the Screw Parakeet tries using wordplay to confuse the guard and they get past him without ever having to come to blows.

And, as always, improvise !

No matter how detailed your story outline is, the real storytelling begins when you and the cast start playing. The story you tell together will naturally evolve as a function of the Cast's various motivations, strengths, and weaknesses. It will be up to you to provide scenarios, and to reveal the details of the larger story as things move along.

Cartoon characters tend to luck into the things that move the story forward. If you're used to directing a party who are determined, observant, and cooperative, Directing your Cast may be an adjustment. You may have to take their undirected action and invent ways for it to move the story forward on the fly. What you don't want is a roving band of weirdos moving from place to place smashing up bars.

Try to give your cast a chance to figure things out on their own, having the entire story handed to them will start to feel cheap after a while.

For example: The cast haven't managed to hit the next milestone for some time. Larry the Lemur flies into a spinning whirlwind at a random minor character, seemingly without reason. As the director, you could say that through the whirlwind, Larry manages to get hold of some Bus Tickets to the next town over.

LISTENING

Listening is just as important for the Director as the individual members of the Cast. Paying attention to what grabs your Cast's interest will be crucial to a fun campaign and letting the cast use their Catch-phrases. How far you take this is up to you. Too little



flexibility, and the Cast will feel they have no influence over things. Too much, and the story will be meandering and have no payoff.

For example: Niles the Newt hasn't managed to use his penchant for Rube-Goldberg machines for some time. You hadn't planned on creating a scheme-worthy situation, but Niles expresses interest in using this ability. You can re-work the situation to accommodate Niles.

CATCH-PHRASES

The cast have, hopefully, put some thought into their catch-phrases. Your job as director is to reward them for that work. Try to build situations that highlight your cast's unique qualities. Try to be prepared to respond to players using their Catch-phrases, as this is when their character is really shining.

Giving Laughs

Start of Campaign: Players should start with 1-5 Laughs, depending on the length of a campaign. If you start with too few, the Catch-phrases will take too long to come into play and players will feel like they don't have influence in the story. Too many, and players won't be interested in earning more Laughs. A good rule of Thumb is to start the Cast with a Laugh for every two hours of play.

Fail + Catch-phrase: Never force a player to take a laugh point in exchange for a Catch-phrase working against them. Getting a player to take a Laugh point will take more than just the allure of the Laugh. It'll have to feel right for the character. And if you get them to take it, they'll expect to be able to use the Laugh successfully.

Freebies: Players should earn a Laugh when they actually make the group Laugh through their actions, or if their actions just impress you or the rest of the group. Managing these is tricky, because you can have a large effect on the Laugh economy. Do your best to be fair.

Taking Laughs: Players should explain why the catch-phrase applies to the situation. It'll be up to you to decide if it makes sense, but remember how they earned that laugh.

Usage when rolling – the player may spend a laugh in order to roll twice, and the rolls are combined and added to the skill to create their final score.

Usage when not rolling – if you agree that it makes sense, a player may spend a laugh point to make a casual action succeed that would not have succeeded without the appropriate catch-phrase.

Example: Coocoo Gus wants to drive an NPC crazy. The Director does not think the NPC can be driven crazy casually. Gus points out that one of their Catch-phrases is "the gift of madness was meant to be shared." The Director agrees to let Gus spend a laugh point to make the move succeed.

Failing Forward: COMPLICATIONS

If a Cast member rolls a common move between 7-9, often the most interesting outcome is for their character to **fail forward**. They get what they want (or pretty close) but there's a complication.

Some moves already have some ideas for complications already listed in their text. For some others, you might have to improvise.

Some Ideas for Complications:

- Make the player choose: give up, or get what they want and get hurt in the process.

Be descriptive!

Characters can shock themselves, set themselves on fire, drop stuff on their feet, nail their hands to the table, fall into open manholes, eat or drink something inedible, et cetera.

- They get what they want, but a valuable tool or resource is used up in the process.

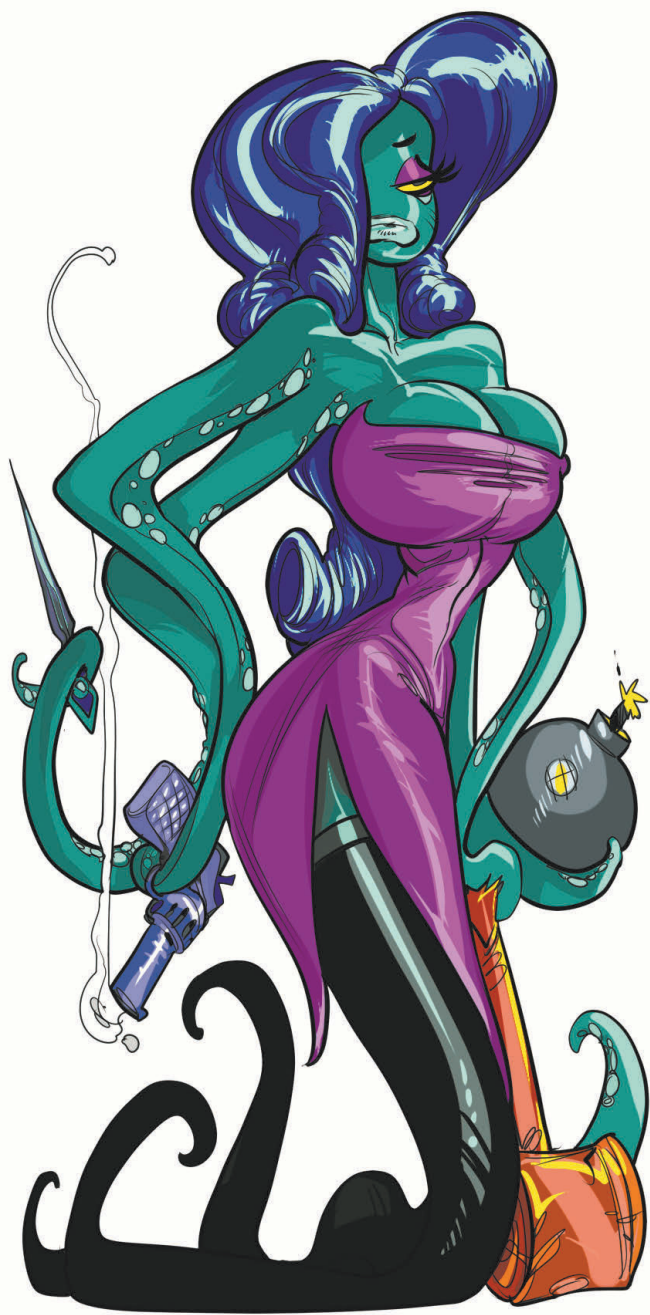
Tools break. Guns can run out of bullets. The very last dime is spent and they're flat busted until next payday, etc.

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GAMBLERS FORCED TO MAKE HARD BARGAINS
A great complication is when you make a player choose between getting what they want and suffer something bad... or they have to give up. Now instead of being a bad guy ("You rolled bad and now I must punish you for it") you are turning this back around on the player. ("You rolled bad, now you have to make a choice.")

- The move would have worked... but you are lacking the resource you need that would've made it succeed!

This complication can be a callback to the complication listed above this one. ("If only you had a screwdriver." "Oh, right, I'm out of bullets." "Sorry, kid, but the fair is twenty-nine cents, and you've only got twenty-eight, etc.")
- They get what they want, but a countdown to disaster advances one more step. (We talk about countdowns on page 75.)
- A minor character means well, but they're more useless than useful. Can you let them down easy?
- A prop that you were depending on suddenly fails. (The batteries are dead, the seams crack, the thing wilts or crumbles into dust, etc.)
- A pebble, rock, coin, or other small thing you dropped earlier has bounced around and caused a parade of physics-based horror.
- Someone who was knocked unconscious wakes up and believes that they're some celebrity figure.
- Your mouth has been zippered shut, glued, etc. The player can't speak and must mime all actions until someone else can solve the problem.
- Something goes wrong with the cast's mode of transport. Their boat starts sinking, their plane loses its engines, the train conductor can't stand the "chug chug" noise any more and ditches in a field, etc.
- One of the cast's annoying relatives shows up. The relative is helpful and fun to the rest of the cast... but they make your life miserable.
- Why aren't you in uniform? The cast are mistaken for another group (a cleaning crew, a rock band, catering staff) and before they have time to protest they find themselves doing that crew's job.
- A salesman keeps popping up at random, trying to get the cast to buy steak knives, encyclopedias, and vacuum cleaners.
- You stumble upon a crime happening, and the criminals take you as a hostage.
- The cast take refuge in a nearby house inhabited by ghoulish, macabre, but otherwise hospitable weirdos. The decor looks like a Halloween store threw up. Behind every door waits some kind of phantom, monster, or wraith.
- The animation budget runs dry. Until you get out of the red, you must cut corners by re-using old animations, flashbacks, still frames, etc.
- The cast are temporarily thrown into a parody of the last movie the quietest player has seen.
- You're splashed with vanishing cream or invisible ink. No one can see you until this gets washed off. You might not know when this happens.
- In the middle of a heated brawl, everyone stops for tea and biscuits.
- A photographer appears and snaps your picture with a flash camera. You are temporarily blind.
- Your doctor calls. They say you must do something weird (drink a gallon of orange juice, avoid nuts, etc.) or you will die. Ignore them at your own risk!
- You're shrinking! It could be contact with an evil ray, or some formula, or what have you. Your small size makes life inconvenient until you can find a cure.
- You enter the part of town where all those creepy stop-motion halloween cartoons live. They spook you with their jagged movements and gaunt designs.
- All props have gone on strike. They form a picket line and refuse to do any work until their demands are met.



- You overhear something dire, like plans for a robbery and a murder. It may all be a comic misunderstanding.
- You are transformed into a duck. If you were already a duck, you are now two ducks.
- The orphanage is on fire!
- The weather takes a turn for the worse: rain, fog, sleet, meteors, etc.
- A do-gooder knight keeps messing up your plans, but they're a noble so what are you going to do?
- The king and queen demand that you attend the royal gala, and you'd better not embarrass anyone.
- Taxation is too high! The peasants are revolting!
- The Black Knight has arrived, and they are wreaking havoc. So much havoc!
- An ogre, dragon, mermaid, kobold, or some other monster is terrorizing the countryside.
- A jester follows you around, recording all your mistakes and repeating them in public.
- That stupid kid from town won't leave you alone. It's only a matter of time before they get in over their head.
- That fat carpetbagger from back east has made a bet that you'll fail, so they're trying to stop you by underhanded means.
- They say that at night, when the blue moon is full, a monster roams these plains. Or is that on *new* moon nights? Who can remember these things.
- The general store has been selling monogrammed candles for Ted N. Taylor's surprise birthday party.
- Grand-aunt Ethel has gone missing! Rumor has it that she's eloped with Bigfoot, but that can't be right. Unless Bigfoot is blind *and* deaf.
- The spirits of the happy hunting grounds need you for a vision quest.
- Dirty Frank is in town. They say he once shot a man for snoring too loud!
- Sick of all your crap, your superior has sent you on a suicide mission.
- That all-powerful alien is really a child! It's treating us like toys!
- This weird alien device keeps doing things. (Changing our colors, fluoridating our water, switching our genders, etc.)
- That one officer insists on doing everything by the book, even if it will get us all killed.

- 🔥 A mad scientist has built a doomsday device and is threatening to unleash its power.
- 🔥 You have a contagious space disease. It needs a space cure. From space.
- 🔥 These aliens can't even conceive of violence... which is why they're getting their butts kicked.
- 🔥 There's only one kid who has the info / money / resources you need, and they don't believe a word of what you say.
- 🔥 Local teen is convinced that you are a robot / alien / Bigfoot / etc., and they won't stop interfering in your affairs until they have proof.
- 🔥 A victim of the town bullies has gotten strange and mysterious powers and is taking revenge!
- 🔥 Mysterious "fiction" book describes future events. Is free will an illusion?
- 🔥 Busybody keeps trying to "protect" you from danger, but they're doing more harm than good!
- 🔥 Spoiled kid is throwing an awesome party. They are unaware of the danger that's coming for them!
- 🔥 You've stuck babysitting your obnoxious cousin.
- 🔥 Rolling blackouts.
- 🔥 This monster is actually a baby! We'd better return it to its mother before something bad happens!
- 🔥 The grim hunter is here to stop your evil once and for all. (Whether you're evil or not.)
- 🔥 Old college friend / drinking buddy / Internet fling is in town, and they need your help to find their missing friend or loved one.
- 🔥 You didn't read the fine print in that end-user agreement, and now it's come back to haunt you!
- 🔥 Death robot has faulty facial recognition software, and they are targeting everyone on your friend's list.
- 🔥 Oh no! It's the ethnically-diverse non-denominational street gang!
- 🔥 Your face is showing up in an embarrassing, dank meme.
- 🔥 You've been summoned for jury duty. At the worst possible time!
- 🔥 All your software starts updating right now making your stuff useless until it's done. (Your smart phone, your smart car, your smart toaster, your smart underwear, etc.)

STORY IDEAS

A good story for **Madcap** should do three things: Stay within the theme, unite the cast, and give them a chance to shine.

Theme

Madcap is a game about cartoons characters being wacky. If your heart burns to tell a bone chilling horror story, Madcap is not the game to do it in. The story premise should be kinda funny all on its own. More often than not, that's really all you need.

In order to be fun for everyone, the story should have stakes for the entire cast. It should not only provide opportunities for each of them to forward the plot, it should also provide their motivation for wanting to do so in the first place.

This is where it really helps to look beyond the Golden Age to more recent cartoons, which tend to a bit more going on, plot-wise.

A Chance to Shine

We highly recommend that you know who your cast are going to be before making major story decisions. If one of your cast is a demolitions expert, they won't have fun in a world where there's nothing to blow up.

Setups

A journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step (onto a banana peel). Here's some ideas on how you can set up your own story.

The cast are entrusted with something important.

This can be something a precious belonging of an admired figure, something that Prairieville citizens rely on. Whatever it is, whoever it belonged to really should have known better than to let the cast look after it.

Potential conflicts:

- Nefarious forces try to steal the item leading to a chase them across the. The cast will be thrown out of their comfort zone, see strange sights, and fend off the foes who always seem to be one step ahead. At some point during the story, they may succeed in stealing the item, at which point the cast must regroup and figure out how to get it back.
- The cast break the item by playing with it irresponsibly. They must find a way to get it fixed or find a replacement. They track down someone who can get a replacement but they have demands of their own, leading to a cascading scavenger hunt across town.

Something threatens the cast's way of life

The citizens of Prairieville really have things figured out, which of course means that someone out there is determined to screw things up for them. Some people want to make a quick buck, some people want to bring their trouble with them, some people have a bridge to sell, and some people just don't understand Toon's way of looking at things.

Potential conflicts:

- Some big business looks at Prairieville and gets dollar signs in their eyes, all they have to do is level a few beloved landmarks and put up a bunch of gaudy tourist traps. The cast have to disrupt construction efforts, and drive the big cheese absolutely bonkers until they leave.
- Stodgy media watchdogs think the cast are a bad influence on today's kids and are determined to put an end to their antics once and for all. The only way to save humor is to either drive them out or bring them around to your way of thinking.
- A Toon has gone rogue and is abusing their powers in 3D land. They've been robbing jewelry stores, boosting cars, and humiliating the police with ransom notes written on whoopee cushions. Now real life human beings have taken over Prairieville to catch this rogue Toon. It's up to the cast to expose the miscreant while evading the coppers—both the real-world ones and the toon ones, following Mayor McBovine's orders to cooperate.



The cast are transported to a strange land

Try taking your cast to an unfamiliar place and introducing them to people not familiar with their way of doing things. If this is not your first session, have fun bringing back previously established NPC's as doppel-gangers in this new setting.

Potential conflicts:

- The cast find themselves in another era like Renaissance Italy. You can come up with an explanation for how they ended up there, like time travel, or you can just announce, "you are in Renaissance Italy." If they're good sports, they'll go along with it.
- The cast are thrust into a movie or video game. Pick any movie or game that you and your fellow players are familiar with. Usually the more serious it is, the more fun it will be to pit its characters against the wacky cast members. Grim action heroes and sappy romantic leads will be especially fun for your cast to torment and ridicule.

- A story takes the cast beyond their reality to mysterious realms where things are animated a bit differently. They will encounter strange beings, like the jittery creatures from stop motion land, the flat-affected cut-paperians, the botox-faced ghouls of limited animation-ville, and their incessantly bouncing black and white ancestors from The Old Days™.

The cast are challenged to a competition

This type of story makes it easy to give a varied cast opportunities to show their various strengths. In the run-up to a competition, there will be problems solved, gadgets invented, intelligence gathered, crosses—doubled, and sabos tagged. To give weight to the story, the competition should have some stakes to it, more than merely bruised egos.

Potential conflicts:

- The cast decide to enter the Prairieville Five hundred and one. They have three days to get hold of a car, soup it up, and learn to drive it. But that would be too easy. There's a big cash prize in it for the winner, which means that teams from all over town are signing up, and they're not all planning to run an honest race.

- There's also the race manager who does not want his beloved race turned into a circus, and will do everything he can to keep the cast from being allowed to participate.

Building Settings

When you're just starting out, you can make it easy on yourself by sticking to the imagery and thematic content we're used to from Golden Age cartoons; old Hollywood, vaudeville, forests and quaint towns. Depending on your comfort level, you can push this rule pretty far. Just remember: the cast bring their rules and their logic with them when they travel.

Hot Spots

When making up the locations for your setting, it's best to adopt a utilitarian viewpoint. Your cast are going to need to meet new characters, to have slapstick, encounters, to travel from here to there, to learn things, and to relax and have fun. Is there a train station, a post office, a restaurant, a dance hall, a school, mountains, rivers, deserts?



Non-Player Characters: **THE SUPPORTING CAST**

It can help to start by establishing a general flavor of the people who live in your setting. Now, in the real world, not everybody in a given area acts the same way, and they shouldn't in your

setting either. There should be both a mainstream, and those who swim against it.

Ask yourself: What would a tourist say about the citizens of your setting? What do the citizens themselves have to say in response to this? Do they agree, disagree, or maybe it depends what part of town you're from? Does anyone in your setting feel outcast, or are they an accepting bunch?

Background Players

Knowing the feel of your setting will help you invent citizens on the fly, but it also helps to know some of the folks your cast will meet in advance. An easy way to do this is to go back to your list of Hot Spots and figure out who hangs out there, who works there, who isn't welcome there. These residents can give a sense of persistence to stories, and they can also be used to add stakes. If a character is introduced for a new story just to have their life threatened, it can be hard to get invested in their well-being. But if a character that your players know and love over the course of many sessions is suddenly in danger, that can have a lot more meaning for them.

The random extra: Minor Characters

Make it personal. Whenever you have to relate a story point, attach a **minor character** to it. Don't just say, "This is the last gas station" – put in a weird attendant. Make them a duck or something. Do a funny voice. Copy your favorite joke from the Internet.

A Minor Character can be dealt with in a single move or less. They stay bullied, persuaded, or defeated.

The named roles: Major Characters

The characters you actually bother to give names, catch-phrases and backstories to are the **major characters**.

Major characters can have recurring roles. They show up to taunt our heroes. After losing a grudge match, they plot their revenge, and then they come back later.

A major character can take two, three, or more moves to defeat. (Or maybe one big amazing roll, if you're feeling generous.) Start a new count-down and take one counter from it each time the players show them up. (And as with all countdowns, make a point of telling the players you're doing this, so they understand what they're dealing with.)

Archetypes

When making up new characters, use whatever inspiration you can find. citizens fall into this category.

Disinterested Bystanders

These are the people who flip burgers, drive cabs, sell gum, empty trash, etc. They fill up space and add local color.

It doesn't make sense to attack them or even to attempt to provoke them. They'll never cross the line, even with the most powerful unique move.

Stubborn Jerk

The stubborn jerk serves as a story obstacle. They're rude, inconsiderate, and they stand between the cast and their goal. But they don't do anything too bad right away. They need to be provoked into yelling, or some kind of slapstick violence before the cast may engage them. Two good or one great mania move will provoke the Stubborn Jerk into crossing the line, which will usually take the form of some kind of insult.

In their attempts to get rid of the cast, they may try tie them up in ways ranging from a simple burlap bag to over-elaborate piles of chains and padlocks. The cast may roll Toon-physics to escape, or muscles to break out by force.

With enough trickery, pranksterism, and lunacy, the Stubborn Jerk will eventually either give up, become catatonic, or lose their marbles.

The stubborn jerk will rarely resort to violence.

Goon

Goons are at the beck and call of a big bad or a gang. They don't have much motivation of their own. They don't require provocation, as they're usually out to get the main cast, and they'll try to get you if they see you. Goons are much more vulnerable to attack if their guard is down, say if they're distracted by some verbal trickery, a costume, or an impression.

Goons can have long-brimmed hats and trench-coats, looking a lot like the creep you see on the "Neighborhood Watch" signs. They don't often shave, and they might do bad things like smoke or drink. The worst criminals will pack heat. (Firearms, not coals.)

Guards

Guards are usually just doin' their job. They might be in the Cast's way, but it doesn't mean they're bad guys, just obstacles. Guards will give the cast's Toon-Physics ability a workout, as they're sure to try and catch them in a net, a box, or perhaps just their gorilla-like fists. Some guards may be swayed by an appeal (stagecraft)

overcome by trickery (wits). But they're usually too gung ho to be driven to crossing the line (make exceptions for catch-phrases and powerful unique moves.)

Guards often have an ill-fitting uniform that shows off their large, stocky physique. They'll carry things like nightsticks, billy-clubs and flashlights.

Slimeball

This week only, this character's loyalty to the highest bidder! Also on sale, purloined information, a promise not to cooperate with your foes, fake ID's and more! A Slimeball might be useful to the cast, but as the name suggest, they're a complete skeez-lord who will roll over on them at the drop of a hat. They won't be easily swayed by minor acts of intimidation, but with just the right menacing glare (+10) they'll at least pretend to cooperate. Just because they're terrified doesn't mean they'll always tell the truth. The Slimeball will always run away from a fight. As soon as the Slimeball no longer sees the cast as a business opportunity, they won't hesitate to cross the line.

Big Dumb Galoot

Meet the world's dumbest demolition equipment. This one min-maxed on brains and brawn. With fists like bank safes and a towering stature, they pack a major wallop

when they hit. However, like his slightly smarter cousin the Goon, the galoot is prone to letting their guard down due to japery and deception.

Galoots often wear suspenders and tiny hats.

Gang of Miscreants

There's no guarantee that any of the above characters will appear one at a time. They're bound to notice that they don't do so well on their own eventually. Groups of characters should be thought of as a single entity. The only difference is they're like a single entity that does things That only a group can do: surround our heroes, block exits, confer with each other.

The gang likes to stick together and think together. Split up, they are far less effective. Smart players may figure out it's greatly to their advantage to get these mooks to separate and then deal with them one at a time.

One really high roll could deal with the gang in one fell swoop. Or three good rolls, all in this scene, might do it. (More countdowns!)



When the Director makes the Players roll: Challenges

In this **Madcap** game, the players do all the dice rolling. When the players want to make a move, and the mood of the game is **dicey**, the players will have to make rolls to get things done.

But sometimes, our cast will have to deal with the things that happen to them. The usual things: dodge falling anvils, throw lit sticks of dynamite, solve the crossword in pen, balance the budget, cure cancer, etc.

The Director can ask a player to deal with a **challenge**. It's like a move, where a player has to roll dice to deal with it, but a challenge is a request from the Director, not an action on the player's part.

A challenge can be a **response** to something that a player did. For example, if you tried to take the Mona Lisa off the wall, the Director may respond that the alarm has gone off, and then they challenge you to deal with the response.

Other times, the Director may suddenly ask for player to deal with something as its own thing, not as a response to anything. Say your character is sitting there minding their own business, whittling on a stick without a care in the world. The Director may suddenly ask for a roll to deal with the challenge of the Abominable Snowman that just wandered up behind you and is covering you in 11 herbs and spices.

Challenges can change the mood

If everything was casual before, it's all dicey now that we're rolling dice. Maybe after we deal with the challenge, we can go back to being casual again.

And you may have to deal with challenge in the middle of a grudge, too. Life's tough, you just gotta be tougher!

Challenges can be anything the Director can think of

Challenges usually follow the same setup as a move.

CHOOSING WHAT MOD TO ADD

The Director usually picks the mod

For many challenges, the roll will be **+cool**. (When things are dicey, keeping your cool is what saves you.)

But not always! The Director is encouraged to come up with other things to roll. Some examples:

- ☛ Smashing down a door: **+tough**
- ☛ Noticing someone sneaking around: **+sharp**
- ☛ Hiding from someone: **+sly**
- ☛ Deal with some mechanical device: **+sharp**
- ☛ Run somewhere and get there on time: **+tough**
- ☛ Convince someone to leave you alone: **+sly**

The players must deal with challenges: things in between them and what they want. Some challenges have a countdown until they expire and something *really* bad happens... like our heroes becoming the losers!



Sometimes, there's a choice

There's often more than one way to deal with a challenge. If you're caught in the hen-house, you could try to jump into the rafters (+tough), pretend to be a chicken (+sly), look for a secret way out (+sharp), or maybe just wait it out and hope it all goes away (+cool).

A generous Director may let the player pick the attribute that they think will best deal with the problem. Encourage your players to improvise — when a player says they want something done, ask them how they want to do it. (“I want to put out the fire.” “What abilities do you have to put out the fire?”)



Okay, this shouldn't be a surprise: **if you let a player pick the attribute, they will almost always pick their highest one**, no matter how little sense that makes. (“You want to disarm the bomb using +tough? What, are you going to punch its lights out?”) Players want to win, after all.

As a Director, you have two choices here:

🔥 **Tell the player to use a different attribute.** (Hey, you heard them out the first time, we had a good laugh, now let's get serious.)

This option keeps the game consistent (that is, “being fair”), but it's not always the best because it limits the player's input.

🔥 **Give the player a choice: Use the attribute that you think is good, and we'll do this normally... or let them use their silly choice, and they will automatically suffer a complication, whether they pass or not.** And no, don't tell them what the complication will be, just that there will be one. Then tell the player to choose quickly, they're holding up the game.

This option works with the player's crazy scheme (that is, “building up”), but don't let the player use this as an excuse to just roll their best thing all the time.

Since the +zany attribute can do almost

anything, a player with a high +zany score can easily suggest using it for almost any challenge.... And that's fine, if you insist they also must take this extra complication. (Hey, it's +zany, so it should be complicated.)

Just like a Move: ROLL RESULTS

A typical challenge plays out like a typical move.

Up to 6: Miss

Rolling 6 or less means you didn't pass the challenge, and you suffer accordingly. You don't notice the thing, you get hurt and take a lump, etc.

It's not all downsides, though. When you lose a challenge, describe your suffering in great detail, and your reaction to it. Crack a joke. This could be an opportunity to milk this for a **laugh**.

7-9: It's Complicated.

Rolling 7-9 might get you what you want... kinda. You may be forced to take a **complication**. See page 80 for more details.

10-12: Pass

Good job! The Director will tell you what your reward. The 10-or-better result usually just gives you what you wanted.

If the Director thought the attribute that you used was less than ideal, you may still suffer a complication. This will still be better than just failure.

13+: Pass with flying colors

If you roll this high, the Director might give you something extra. Maybe you can give +1 forward to other people to defeat the same challenge. Or you get some reward that can be redeemed later (the thanks of the people, extra cash, the Nobel Prize, etc.)

We're all in this together: GROUP CHALLENGES

Sometimes, a challenge will happen that affects everyone. ("The iceberg is coming right for us! Everyone roll +tough or you'll be sunk for sure!")

All players then roll at the same time.

Random rolling should lead to unexpected results. Players who roll high should be able to give bonuses to players who roll low. ("You rolled a 13, so you can give +3 back to one player as you yank them out of harm's way. Choose!")

This could be a time for heroes. You could let a player turn their pass into a miss to help someone else. ("You darn

iceberg! It's me you really want! Take me, instead!")

As always, encourage players to describe what they're doing, based on how their rolls came out. Again: encourage players to really ham up their failures by giving out a **laugh**.

EXTRA-challenging Challenges

As the Director, you can make a challenge as weird as you want. If this is the grand climax of the story... or if our players really screwed up ... then you can add some extras. A few suggestions:

- There's a countdown with 2, 3, or more counters. The challenge doesn't end until all the counters are gone.

For group challenges, considering putting in 1, 2, or 3 counters per player into a pool, for the kind of task that everyone can participate in. ("If we don't bail this water, the boat will sink and we're all doomed!") To build drama, you can make players choose between making a move or dealing with the challenge.

- For a big boss battle, it's the grudge match to end all grudge matches! It's time to fight off the ninja pirate army, the giant robot from Mars, or what have you.

First, declare the

grudge mood has begun. Then give every player a single turn, with a choice: either use their grudge move on the enemies, or do something else.

Then, deal with the chaos. Make each player roll something (like +tough, or +sly, or even +lumps) or they get caught in the swarming dust cloud of the fray, and take a lump.

For that classic-gaming feel, combine this extra with the countdown, as above. ("If you can win 7 grudge matches, you will finally fight the iceberg back into the sea, with such force that it won't soon think about attacking our ships again!")



Running the Game: Campaigning

There's no reason every story has to take place in Prairieville though. Your entire cast of characters can be transposed to, WWII Paris, Ancient Egypt, even a Galaxy Far, Far Away. Have fun figuring out how your cast could fit into the roles of these other settings. For even more fun, bring back NPC's from Prairieville. Hey, annoying security guard who always spoils our fun, you just got promoted to Pharaoh! (But you still have the same lisp, sorry bud. Nothing we could do about it.)

One-shot games use the character just once. Episodic keeps the same ones, but each adventure is its own thing. A saga is when you have major events, continuity, and other stuff you find in wikis all over the inter-nets.



TYPE OF GAME

The Improvised One-Shot

The **Madcap** game is all about getting started quickly. Pick a playbook, pick a gimmick, and customize the character. And you can use genre gimmicks can quickly get people into their roles for a quick story. ("You're the knight, she's the rogue, he's the wizard, etc.")

You can also improvise a story on the spot, just by listening to your players. ("I'm a Roman senator who was turned to stone, and I'm seeking revenge on the gorgon who made me this way!" "I'm an alien trapped on this backwards planet, and I'm helping the senator only to rebuild my spaceship!" etc.) The crazier, the better!

Once the adventure is over, that's it. One and done. (If you really like these characters, you can use them again later, sure, but you don't have to. It can be lots of fun to just let your freak flag fly.)

The Episodic Campaign

Cartoons made for TV were usually singular stories, self-contained so they could be broadcast in any order.

In an episodic campaign, the Director runs a self-contained story each game session. The players bring the same cast to each episode.

In between games, the Director can let the players customize their characters between play sessions:

- Move one point from one attribute to another attribute. (No attribute can go below -1 or above +2.)

- Swap out one gimmick for another gimmick, or just ditch gimmicks entirely.

Like a classic television show, an episodic campaign has a comfortable familiarity: you get to spend time in a familiar setting.

In this book, the "Prairieville" and "Elderberry Junction" series work well with the episodic format.

The Saga

With the rise of on-demand media and binge-watching, some of the comedy cartoons have moved away from the episode format. One story can have hints of a larger story to come. Characters can have arcs where they change and grow. And the tone can change from wacky comedy to something with *all the feels*. Maybe you and your fellow players want to try the saga format.

In a saga campaign, the Director runs part of a story each game session. Stories don't have to begin or end with each session; you could end one story and pick up a new one. Characters come back.

Series Pitch: Anytown USA

Prairieville

Prairieville is a sunny, laid back town. The streets are clean, the buildings smartly painted. Even the hustle and bustle of the downtown doesn't keep the citizens from tipping their hat to passers-by. Though at first glance it seems quaint, with its chrome-trimmed eateries, street cars, and friendly populace, citizens of Prairieville are citizens of modern times. There are townsfolk of all shapes and sizes, identities, and backgrounds. Some of these townsfolk have jobs they perform, but only because it's part of their character. Most of 'em are just there to do Toon things. There's a real "summer vacation" vibe.

Still, Prairieville is not without its seedy elements. There's the 17th street Kittens and their rivalry with the Soda Smuggling Poodle-dogs known only as "The Perms," neither of whom are big fans of Mayor McBovine, who promises to clean up the streets.

HOT SPOTS

Charles Martin Memorial Airfield

The Prairieville Municipal Airport and Charles Martin Memorial Airfield, or PMACMMA, is a small airstrip on the edge of town. It's dotted with small hangers and stream-lined,

sparkling clean small aircraft. Unfortunately for the cast, the only pilot available most of the time is Iggy Everest. Iggy is an Iguana and pilot for hire. His bravery and eagerness are matched only by his terrible eyesight. Oh, and the smoke from the engine is nothing to worry about, she does that from time to time. These days more or less

constantly. That old crate of his may not be much to look at, but it's also in atrocious condition.

June's Deli

Run by June, who can make a sandwich any which way you want. Unless you want something stupid like ketchup. In which case, get out.

Prairieville is the south-west that only existed in cartoons from the 1950s. It's got petty rivalries and old Hollywood money.

If you're new to role-playing, you might want to start with this campaign.



MADCAP TIMES

PRAIRIEVILLE, US •
This Sunday marked the first day of Prairieville's new "blue laws" came into effect. The Mayor famously ran his campaign to improve city funds, mostly by "sin taxes" on adult consumables such as beer and tobacco.

After numerous protests by the café's patrons, Jacobian "Jarvis" O'Lope, of the Flaming Bongo Café, spoke out to grow awareness that the reduced portions at his café is a direct result of these laws. He went on to say that the Café is still the most popular restaurant in the Prairieville business district.

"I'm still big", said Jarvis, "it's the pitchers that got small."

Freddy's Bakery

At Freddy's, you'll find the classics for sure. Chocolate cupcakes, lemon tarts, flaky croissants. But never satisfied to leave well enough alone, that nutty squirrel is always working up something new. Angel food cake with ham, jalapeno eclairs, and would you care to try his new ginger snaps? (The secret ingredient is soy sauce.)

Street Car

If you ride the Prairieville Tram, you'll probably see the beaming face of Conductor MacNeille, and hear her window-shattering "Allllll abooooooooaaarrd!" She's been running the Street Car for decades. She grew up in hard times, relying on the kindness of strangers more than she cares to talk about. As such, she's a well-known pushover among those citizens who can't afford the fare, which has gone up since Mayor McBovine got elected.

Flaming Bongo Cafe

A joint for hepcats and cool customers to get their bean juice. There you'll meet Jarvis, a mile a minute talking rabbit and beret wearing beatnik. Jarvis has bloodshot eyes, but it's only because he hasn't slept in years. His percussive speech bleeds into beat poetry mid-sentence, and if you stick around long enough he'll tell you about all the great horn players who have come through. You'll find locals there sipping weapons-grade espresso and snapping their fingers to the high-flying saxophone of Charlie Parakeet.

Prairieville City Hall

There are few who have returned from the perilous labyrinth known as city hall and still had the sanity to tell the tale. To reach Mayor McBovine's office, you must first brave the hostile jungle that is the first floor. Cut your way through nylon belts. Defeat or befriend the wild peoples that have been waiting in line so long they've devolved into primitive hunter-gatherers. Elude the sacred guardians. Fear the guardians above all others, for they have pepper spray.

If you do all this and still possess memory enough of your life before city hall to continue your quest, you will answer the three impossible riddles of the lady who stamps the forms. You will then ascend to the second floor, where you must have a 4114-G-9B in triplicate, two forms of ID, and the missing shard of the chalice of souls. Do this, and you might, just might be granted an audience with the Mayor. Or her secretary will take a message.

Prairieville Episode #1

MAROON RACCOON'S SHLOSCAR

Okay, here's the premise, and it couldn't be easier: the players are hired to house-sit for Maroon Raccoon while he's away. Couldn't be easier, could it?

We've designed this adventure to be an introduction to the game, for new players. Heck, even a first-time Director. We recommend that the person who's watched the most cartoons take the role of Director, and everyone else be part of the cast.

Supporting Cast

Here are some of the key principals that you'll be directing. Feel free to add more characters if you think you need some more.

Maroon Raccoon, Comedy Legend

You have all been entrusted to house sit for legendary comedian Maroon Raccoon. He starred in a bunch of short subjects and became popular for making jokes that have not aged well at all, so we won't repeat them here. Maroon is a raccoon (natch) who looks like your dad's drinking buddy. He dresses like it's laundry day and he could buy and sell you ten times over.

He's off to make "Trash Pandas 3: Revelations", a comedy where he and his drinking buddies hang around in Hawaii and tell the same jokes they said in "Trash Pandas 2: Panda Harder".

Maroon needs someone to house-sit, and he didn't become a high-rolling millionaire by spending money. Instead, he's hiring our cast to sit on the house for him. There's no pay, but they get free run of the house.

Maroon's most prized possession is his **Shloscar Award for Best Entendre**. (Which was given to him by the Shlacademy of Motion Picture Shlarts and Shliences, thanks for asking.) This award is unique, because this category was eliminated after only one year. (Now the categories are "Best Sight Gag", "Best Verbal Pun", and "Best Fart Joke", and don't get me started on the politics involved in getting those.)

Sounds like a simple job, yes? All you have to do is not go in one of the 23 rooms, and not touch a single inanimate object. Also, the study has an alarm on it, so what could go wrong?

Mama Robilia, the Empress of the Auctions

If you're a collector of toys for children still mint in box that have never been played with, or old vinyl records of acts you've never heard of... then there's one name you know: Envidia Robilia, better known by her screen name, "xX_MamaRobilia_Xx_1911". The queen of the collectibles, her name has been a curse for many people on the auction sites, swap meets, and estate sales. She always gets what she wants, snatching up the best tchotchkes before people can even find them, and selling them for ten times their original price or more. Legally or illegally, what Mama wants, Mama gets.

And it's the perfect time to get what she wants, right now. With Maroon gone to shoot some silly movie, and his house stocked with inebriated idiots, this would be the perfect time to steal the prized Shloscar and sell it on the "Off-White Market", which is some kind of Internet thing that we don't talk about when kids are in the room.

MADCAP TIMES

DOOVALACKY, AUSTRALIA

• Professional athlete and model-train enthusiast Robert “Football Bob” Rorter-bludger has been banned for life from all sports everywhere by the Australian-Rules Football Association.

Football Bob leads the world in rules violations, a record that is expected to stand after yesterday, when he was carded 97 times in the first half, 73 times in the second half, and twice during the halftime interval.

Bob was quite vocal in his opposition to the ruling. “Can they really ban me from *all* sports everywhere? Football Bob is the name on my driver’s license and all my stationery! It’s all I know how to do!”

No one in Australia could be reached for comment, as the entire continent was closed for a day of mourning, declared *in memoriam* of one of Football Bob’s infractions.

Only Mama’s close henchmen know what she really looks like. Her online picture is a grainy black-and-white photo that was taken through three layers of Vaseline. She might be some kind of bird.

Mama Robilia will be avoiding making a physical appearance, though she might have to intervene with phone calls.

Football Bob and the Hooligans

Mama Robilia could hire the best criminals that money can buy. But then she’d probably lose money on the deal when she finally unloaded the stupid thing. So she’s hired the best criminals that a reasonable and appropriate budget can buy. This will be a gang of minor characters that you can populate with whatever characters you need. (You know, like Jerry the Stabber, Fancy Jane, Mickey Two-Ears, Sawtooth Mary, and Craigsfist.) We recommend that you have two hooligans for every cast member. (For example, if you have 3 players, that’s six Hooligans.)

What’s important is that the gang has a boss that Mama can trust... and that would be Football Bob. He’s a tutukiwi – that’s a bird from New Zealand — and he used to play Australian-rules football as a professional until he was banned from all sports everywhere for his many sports infractions. Football Bob is the smartest of this bunch, and he’s keen on not getting arrested.

The Prairietown Police

These characters might show up or they might not. The Police respect Maroon Raccoon – they think his films are hilarious, especially “Dick Maul, Mart Cop” and “Dick Maul, Mart Cop 2”. Also, Maroon is rich, and rich people get respect in Prairieville. So if the party gets out of hand, noise complaints, illicit substances, unexplained fires, etc., they can show up as a complication.

The Police are neutral in all these affairs. They’ll arrest people who commit obvious crimes ... which means they’ll only arrest Football Bog and the Hooligans if there’s some evidence to hold them on, like if they are caught red-handed.

Party People

Even if your cast doesn’t host their own party (and what are they, monks from a monastery or something?), a party will start itself. People will just start ringing the doorbell and inviting themselves in. A DJ will set up when no one is looking. More people will bring chips, dips, chains, whips, and other party favors.

Party people should be everything your cast is not: young, good-looking, fun, loud, et cetera. Some of your cast may get lured into the festivities. Others may be in for some terrible times.

Framing the adventure: The 3-Day Countdown

Maroon Raccoon is famous for his working vacations. He does all his scenes in exactly one take, like a professional actor. So he’s only going to be gone for exactly three days.

As the Director, assume the role of Maroon Raccoon and have him explain these things to the cast. Then he’s off to Oahu.

The players know:

- Don’t go in the study
- Don’t burn the place down.
- Don’t call Maroon. It interrupts his concentration.
- Feel free to party. Maroon has a rep to consider.

Clearly, some of these points are at odds with each other.

So now as the Director, you've set up a structure for the adventure: "last three days without screwing up."

The last thing before starting is asking if any player wants to start with a gimmick. Gimmicks are optional, and each player can only have one. For this starting adventure, we're going to suggest that you **limit the players to choosing general gimmicks only**. (This story works better without wizards, dragons, aliens, and other such strangeness.)

Also, tell the players they start the game with zero laughs and zero lumps.

Setting Up the Story

First, tell the players that the mood is **casual** right now. We're just going to set up our little adventure.

Next, ask the players what they want to do with the place. It's a huge mansion of an aging man-child movie star. It's got games, booze, toys, other kinds of toys, etc.

Tell each player that if they can come up with something to be doing on this first day, you'll give them a laugh. Offering this reward should encourage even the quietest player to come up with something. (And yes, suggestions are okay.) It's even okay if your cast members want to team up: two people can plan a party or play a video game.

Build up: listen to what your players want to do, and find ways to bring that into the story. Your cast may surprise you with crazy ideas. (Such as "set up an illegal poker game" or "set up a radio telescope in the backyard", or something even crazier.)

Each player should get some screen time. We suggest that you go around the table and ask each player one thing that they want to do. If what they want to do is funny, give out a laugh.

Some moves that the players make will be casual, and no rolls will be needed. If they just want to sit by the pool or play some video games, that's easy.

Other moves will be harder. Maybe they want to get into the *good* liquor, or they want to organize their own party, or they want to do that telescope thing we talked about, earlier. Tricky stuff will change the mood from casual to **dicey** – now the players will have to start making rolls, because they might be able to mess things up.

And then it's the Night Time, which is the Right Time to Party

After the players describe what they're doing in Maroon's mansion, you can just say that the mood is **casual** again, and that time just passes to the next interesting thing... which is

the evening, when the Party People arrive.

Have fun. Play the Party people as the most over-the-top characters you can think of. Do your worst imitations of celebrities or other people that your players might know. Ham it up! The Party People should be pushy, and the mood gets **dicey**.

The players could just get the party people out of the house, using their various moves. Ask your players what they want to do, and then after they tell you, ask them how they they want to do it.

For example, if a player says, "I want to impress everyone with my dance moves", then ask them how they want to do it. Most players will pick their best attribute and try to use that. Ask the player to make their case. ("How does your 'sharp' help you dance better?" "Uhhh, I can follow my partners' moves better?")

Have fun. Work with the players. If they roll low, complicate their lives based on the attribute they used. ("You're not very sharp today, and you blunder over the furniture and into the pool. Take a lump.")

MADCAP TIMES

A REFRESHER ON THE BASIC MOVES

Roll +COOL to get something done when the situation is dicey.
Roll +SHARP to ask probing questions
Roll +SLY to lie, to trick people, or to be sneaky
Roll +TOUGH to bully people or to do strenuous things
Roll +ZANY to do a wacky thing that makes no sense but is kind of funny

See MOVES, page 23

Getting Football Joe and the Hooligans into the picture

Now that you've had some time to see what your players are doing, find a way to get the Hooligans into the picture.

Be fair. The players are the stars in this story. They only know what's going on if you tell them. So if Hooligans are up to no good, you have to communicate to the players that (1) there are bad people here and (2) they're up to no good.

Build up. The best way to involve the Hooligans should be something your cast already put into play.

- If your cast are partying, they might bump into a Hooligan. Take the role of this Hooligan and make them look out of place. Ask your player how their character will respond.
- If one of your cast is skipping the party (by being in a quiet room or playing video games or doing whatever it is nerds do), a Hooligan might break into the room they are in, mistaking it for being empty.

- Football Joe might do some homework and find out which player is the most likely to sell Maroon out, and offer them some money if they help with the heist. It's time for the little angel and little devil to appear on the shoulders to play our hero's conscience.
- Or Football Joe could just take the direct route, and threaten on of the cast. Are any of them cowardly? Scrawny? Would Football Joe make the mistake of picking on someone that he thinks is cowardly and scrawny, only to be schooled in the error of his ways?
- Try something we haven't thought of. Look to your favorite cartoons, books, games and stories for inspiration. **Have fun!**

Now we've got a story !

After this first night, you've got two more nights to play out, and then Maroon Raccoon comes back. This is the part of the story that we call the **rising action**, where things get wilder and crazier.

Each morning, you can switch the mood back to **casual**, and ask the players how they clean up from last night. Then, when night falls, switch the mood back to **dicey**. Now, let's complicate things:

- If last night's party was great, then the next night's party will be even crazier. More people show up, and they may be the kind that the players don't get along with: former relationships, business rivals, circus clowns, that one scientist that ones to capture our cast member for scientific experimentation, etc.
- If last night's party was terrible, then disgruntled party-goers might take revenge. They could smear our heroes' reputations, make prank calls, threaten to blow up the house, fall in with Football Joe, etc.
- If the Hooligans were chased off, then Football Joe will escalate. He'll start trying wackier schemes. (Delivering pizza, disguising as the gas man, digging a tunnel underneath the house, driving a bulldozer through the wall, etc.)

MADCAP TIMES

THERE'S NO VIOLENCE UNTIL THE DIRECTOR DECLARES A GRUDGE

- As the Director, you're in charge of the mood of the game. The players can't use their grudge moves, unless they can somehow antagonize the Director's characters into getting violent, first. This is a game about screwball comedy — make the players try at least one thing before they start punching.

See MOOD, page 11

💣 If our cast made loud, obnoxious embarrassments, the Police could show up. Maybe our players could talk their way out of this. Maybe they could get them to deal with Football Joe. Or maybe some of our cast will spend time behind bars.

💣 Or make something up! We put a whole bunch of ways to complicate your game, back on page 80.

Have fun!

Also don't forget to give out laughs. Give each player one opportunity to get a laugh during each night sequence in the game. Remember: no character can have more than three laughs, so if someone already has three, give someone else a chance.

Gasp, what if the Shloscar gets stolen?

Football Joe and the Hooligans can't get the award unless (1) the players fail to keep them out of the house, and (2) the players fail to keep them out of the study.

In your role as Director, throw challenges at your players. Distract them with disasters at the party! (Clogged pool filters, spills on the carpet, terrible DJs, etc.) Things are **dicey**, so you can ask your players to make rolls to set things up. (+Zany to set up bizarre traps, +sharp to just look around the house, +tough to nail boards over the windows, or make something up, etc.).

If your players succeed vs. all the challenges that you throw at them, without the slightest complication that gives Football Joe and his Hooligans a way in, then your cast has one the day. **Be fair.** Don't just turn our player's victory into ashes because "there has to be." If your players win, they win. That's what makes it a game.

What you can do is **build up** the tension. There's nothing more screwball than a gradual escalation of hostilities. If Football Joe can't sneak in, then he'll make up some disguise to get in. If he can't disguise his way in, he'll break in. If he can't break in, then he'll kidnap somebody and refuse to return them until he gets what he wants. If he can't kidnap someone, he'll start a **grudge** and just beat everyone up. And if *that* doesn't work, then Mama Robilia might just get involved.

If Joe gets the Shloscar, then he and his gang must get the thing out of town. If they think they got away clean, our cast may be able to sneak up on them and steal it back. If Joe and his crew took a more direct approach, then this might be a rollicking chase. Heck, it might even be a game of keep-away as our cast and the Hooligans keep tossing the award back and forth between them.

What's more screwball than a merry chase? Football Joe is tough – he can't be beaten by winning a single grudge match. Weaker cast members who have the Shloscar, but are being chased by Hooligans will have to run, or hide, or disguise themselves, or come up with other ways. Listen to your players, ask them what they want to try, and then ask for the appropriate rolls.

Copy bits from your favorite stories. Play to your audience – that is, to the players – by making jokes and references that they will laugh it. Listen to what they have to say.

MADCAP TIMES

WATCH THE CLOCK • As the Director, you enforce the speed of play. Nothing happens until you say it does.

This adventure is best as a single play session. And a single play-session is about 3 or 4 hours of "real time".

When you start the game, ask your players how long they have to play, then pace the game accordingly. Divide the game into 4 parts: 1 part for character creation and setup, then one part for each day.

By the time half your time is over, you should be starting the second day. If you haven't, consider picking up the pace and avoid adding more complications. On the other hand, if you're already on the third day of game-time (and are going too fast), add more complications to fill out the time.

Prairieville Episode #2

THE TOGETHERNESS TROUPE

Newcomers have arrived in Prairieville! They seem a friendly enough bunch, if a little bland and poorly animated. Though you can't blame a toon for their budget. Anyways, they don't seem to be making much trouble, other than insisting that everyone agree, and always having those creepy, bug-eyed smiles on their faces.

The cast are enjoying themselves at the Flaming Bongo Café. They are all sipping (or perhaps gulping) their drinks and bopping along to the music. Jarvis the beatnik rabbit comes by to take orders for another round.

Jarvis tells the cast that things are going fine, though there's a strange group seated at a table in the far corner. He explains that each time he asks for an order, they all get the same thing. Sometimes they ask for milk, sometimes apple juice, but always as a group.

If the cast goes and talks to the group, they have a conversation with Cindy Sugar. "We're the Togetherness Troupe!" she says, "we believe in friendship, and cooperation, and falling in line!"

If the cast asks what they're doing in Prairieville, Cindy says, "we all decided to

go on a trip and see what folks from other towns do for fun!"

If the cast explains, or hopefully demonstrates what they do for fun, Cindy pours every ounce of strength into hiding how horrified she is. "Well... that was... nice. But I think we all have to go now."

The Togetherness Troupe leave. Together.

Cindy Sugar starts to enact her plan to re-educate the citizens of Prairieville. The cast should catch wind of this plan from a radio or television broadcast, or a flyer, or perhaps a well-informed citizen. If the cast shambles around for too long, have them encounter a brainwashed citizen.

When the cast first encounters the Togetherness Troupe, they don't yet know what they plan to do. Until that plan is revealed, the TT characters are never considered to have crossed the line. But once it becomes clear that the TT threaten the cast's very way of life, they can all be considered to have crossed the line. Something similar goes for the townsfolk they brainwash. They need the works for their own good, and for the cast's protection.

The cast should have at least one tussle with assorted

Togetherness Troupe cast before they encounter Golly.

When the group encounters Golly, explain that they see a gopher, recognizable as a member of the Togetherness Troupe by their bug-like eyes and sappy features, but this one looks different somehow. They have a sullen expression and don't seem too excited to see you, they almost look scared.

If one of the cast chooses to attack Golly, do not ask for a roll. Golly shrugs their shoulders and says, "I guess this might as well happen." The cast is told that they're no longer so sure that Golly is crossing the line here. (The attack doesn't happen, but don't mention it directly. If the attacking cast member presses the point, work with them to figure out how they stop their attack, be it simply freezing in the air, or missing by a mile).

As the story nears its conclusion, describe how Togetherness Troupe imagery has been plastered all across Prairieville, with Cindy Sugar's face on every TV and billboard, TT music on every radio. Describe how townsfolk are acting agreeable in public to avoid being taken in for re-education.

Townsfolk that the cast interact with should show caution, and should prefer to speak in private about all but the most trivial matters.

With the help of Golly Gopher, the cast learns that Cindy Sugar and two of her cohorts are on their way to City Hall where they plan to coerce Mayor McBovine into handing them control of Prairieville.

The cast bursts in on Cindy and Mayor McBovine right as the re-edutainment process was about to begin. The TT have set up an impromptu theater in McBovine's office. They've also strapped her to her chair with her eyelids taped open. Cindy firmly gripping her head so it faces the screen, and her two cohorts are futzing with the projector, trying to detangle an unspooled reel of film.

As Cindy nears defeat, her sweet façade decays. She begins to berate and browbeat her fellow characters. They all start to realize that the thing they most mutually agree on is that they are tired of being pushed around by Cindy. The lesser cast members of the Togetherness troupe all band against her, forming a human trampoline to bounce her into the stratosphere. They shake hands, and cooperatively agree to let each other be themselves. They look to Golly Gopher, the only one of them to ever run against the grain, for leadership as they start their new lives.

Golly now speaks for the Togetherness Troupe. There is a closing conversation with the cast, Golly thanks them for freeing them from the Grip of Cindy Sugar. Depending on how this conversation goes, the Togetherness troupe will either go back home, or keep living in Prairieville, or invite the one or all of the cast to follow them to back to their home of Unitopia.

After this outcome is decided, this story (or at least this chapter of it) is concluded.

Assorted TT Characters

The rest of the Togetherness Troupe share Cindy's ideas but they're even more zombie-like.

When the Togetherness Troupe are together, they're like a gang: it takes at least three good rolls in a single scene to make any headway with them. (Or one really amazing roll.)

Example names include Friendship Fox, Mellow Mouse, Kindly Crocodile, Big-heart Badger, Joy the Jay, Melody Muskrat, Group-Consensus the Mollusk.

Brainwashed Townsfolk

As the story goes on, the cast should encounter citizens of Prairieville who are feeling the effect of the Troupe's re-edutainment program. These can be the established citizens outlined above, or new characters you make up on the fly.

They might seem normal at first, but it won't be long before they start talking about friendship, teamwork, and thought-crimes. Not to worry, they can soon be put right. It might take a couple good knocks on the head, or maybe even an appeal to their former selves.

Brainwashed townspeople are pushovers: any decent move should get them back into shape.

Cindy Sugar

Living teddy bear and "first among equals" of the Togetherness Troupe. She just loves friendship so much that she can't even blink! If the togetherness spirit ever starts to wane amongst the group, she'll always rile them up with a group chant of, "whoever disagrees is wrong!" or "let's be forgettable!"

Her happy little world of agreeable saps is all she's known. From the moment she enters the Madcap town of Prairieville. Violence, independent thought, and relatable conflicts make her oh so very sad. Well, she says "sad," because that's the only negative emotion she's ever heard of. What she's actually feeling is profound disgust, all around her is the most retched nightmarish filth she's ever encountered. All around her, the sum of a lifetime of nightmares singing and dancing and writhing like demonic snakes.

But no matter how sad one is, one mustn't complain, one mustn't show a frown. Just smile. Everyone will soon see things your way, dear Cindy.

Golly Gopher

Golly is the foil of the Togetherness Troupe. Down-trodden, slow-moving, and sad-eyed, the years of playing the role of what not to be has clearly weighed her down. Still, she can't help it. Always wanting to make trouble, always wanting to change things. Let's paint the playroom a new color, let's all order what we want for dinner instead of all getting the same thing, let's acknowledge the existence of negative feelings and deal with them in a healthy way.

Golly Gopher has been brow beaten into going along with the Troupe's plan, but they've never felt at home with them, and have never felt acceptance. The chance to finally be accepted for who they are might just sway them to join the cause of the cast.

Once Golly is working with the cast, they can tell them where to find Cindy, and will even help in slapstick.

Series Pitch: Teenage Investigators

Mystery Mile

Dodder's Folly is not so much a small town as it is an unincorporated cluster of houses and businesses in the middle of the desert along Route 88. The isolated community started as a lead-mining town, but then the mine failed and the miners packed. The town saw some growth when Highway Route 88 was built passing through it... but then a few years later, the interstate was built and most traffic diverted that way.

Most traffic, that is, but not all traffic. Because a few years later, the Interstate Hazardous-Material Bypass was built, for the trucks hauling dangerous materials. This long and sleepy stretch of asphalt sits empty most times of the year, and the locals have nicknamed it the Mystery Mile. Now the town is home to a few colorful coots, a handful of friendly small-town folk, and a bunch of backwater bumpkins.

Highway Route 88 does still bring the odd traveler and trucker passing through (emphasis on the word 'odd'). For this little town is far from sleepy. A lot of weird wacky and cartoony things happen this far out in the desert, away from civilization. Weird visitors and strange goings on are just a part of life along Route 88.

LOCATIONS

The Rusty Hubcap Truck Stop

The Rusty Hubcap is one of the few successful businesses in town, as it's the only

place to stop for gas or automotive repairs for miles. It is owned and operated by Petrov; a man known for his thick accent, and his even thicker moustache. If you are unable to pay for his services Petrov also accepts hubcaps in trade, which he adds to the collection adorning the walls, which gives the rust hub cap its name. The rest of his collection

was collected along Route 88. A surprising number of cars seem to lose a hubcap while leaving town.

The convenience store portion of the truck stop is also the closest thing to a grocery store in town. As a result the locals have come up with some innovative recipes using pork rinds and jerky.

Petrov has a reputation for being fair and honest, but that might just be because he's the only game in town and people want to stay on his good side.

Route 88 is inspired by teen-splotation movies of the 1950s. Stories here are about petty rivalries, dangerous racing, and the occasional mystery that only teens can solve.



MADCAP TIMES

DODDER'S FOLLY, TD – Bay Leaf Entertainment has acquired permits to film a motion picture along historic Route 88, including permits for stunts and vehicles.

Area man Jehosaphat “Jed” Pootz uploaded photos of high-profile celebrities to his website one week ago, and now the town is enjoying a growth in tourist trade, as star-seekers flock to the sleepy town for the chance to glimpse of their personal idols.

While the name of the movie has not been released, many visitors speculate it may be an entry in a popular franchise about auto racing. At this time, it is clear that Dodder's Folly will be the next home for the cast and the curious.

Roll Right Inn

The Roll Right is a roadside motel run by the sweet, if a bit peculiar, Mrs. O'Laydi. The rooms are outdated, but for the most part clean despite the motel being staffed by a single old woman. Mrs. O'Laydi is stout, bespectacled, and possible ancient. She is known to take her hospitality to the extreme, inviting anyone or anything that might be interested to stay the night at her motel, sometimes to the chagrin of the townsfolk or other guests when what she invites in is less than friendly.

This no-guest-turned-away policy has given the motel a reputation for being a hub of weird and supernatural goings on in the town. What's stranger is that no matter how malicious the thing she invites in is toward the town, they never seem to direct anything negative towards her. It's probably just because she gives every guest that stays at the Roll Right a plate of her famous Truck Stop Cookies, those things will sooth even the most savage beast.

Singer Sisters' Diner

Run by the eponymous Singer Sisters, the diner is the main stop in town for hot meal or a cool milkshake. Older sister Alice cooks, while younger sister Jenna waits tables. Singer is not just the sisters' surname, it's also their hobby. The sisters love to subject their diners to their singing which would be all fine and dandy if it was only Jenna singing, but tone-deaf Alice fancies herself the true star of the show. She gives out free headshots to anyone who orders the house special.

The diner is the de facto meeting place for locals, sometimes acting as a meeting hall, and on occasion as an emergency shelter, if you aren't put off by the sisters' bickering and possible singing in the face of a crisis.

Ugly Coyote Saloon

The Ugly Coyote is the place to go in town for a cool refreshing soda (what else would you get from a saloon?) The salon is tended by owner 'Coyote' Dave, who clearly named the place after himself. Dave loves to tell stories to his patrons, who have typically heard them all before as the only business he gets most of the time comes from the local regulars, although occasionally an outsider will stop in to sample the local libations.

The house specialty is Dave's homemade Cactus Fizz. For some reason only out-of-towners ever seem to order it, the locals can tell you why.

The Old Dodder Mine

Built by tycoon Thaddeus H. Dodder during a time known as 'The Lead Rush', Dodder mine was responsible for the area being settled in the first place. As it turned out, however, there are more sensible ways to mine lead than an isolated mine in the desert.

As operations costs started eclipsing profits and people stopped getting paid many of the miners moved on to greener pastures. Those who stayed named the remnants of the mining town Dodder's Folly.

In the many years since, operations have ceased completely and the mine lays abandoned. It has since garnered a reputation for being haunted, although it's also a popular hangout spot for local youths.

The Mystery Mile

Officially known as the “Interstate Bypass for Hazardous Materials and Oversized Vehicles” is an 8-lane highway that stretches for quite a bit more than a simple mile. Once in a blue moon — and always, *always* at night — a giant convoy gray trucks rolls down this road. No one knows precisely where they get on the bypass, and it’s not clear where they get off. The locals of Dodder’s Folly assume it’s part of some military operation and “supports our troops”, despite how there’s no army base, weapon factories, or anything else of the like anywhere nearby.

In a town like Dodder’s Folly, where there’s nothing to do and all the time to do it, the Mystery Mile is a hangout with delinquent youths who just got their first driver’s license. Long stretches of empty asphalt is a siren song to the grease monkeys and gear-heads. Come the summer, and it’s almost non-stop drag racing up and down this road.

SUPPORTING CAST

Leslie Anne Pootz

The entire Dodder’s Folly police force consists of only Sheriff Leslie Anne Pootz. She can be found in the town’s small police station most of the time when she’s not out on a call or trying to sweep something under the rug (she even sleeps in the lock up at night if it’s not being used) Sheriff Pootz was born and raised in Dodder’s Folly and has taken it upon herself to make it welcoming to visitors. This manifests in her focusing more on covering up the weird goings on in town rather than doing anything about them. She is committed to maintain the illusion that everything is normal in her small town, at times it seems the only person she’s managed to convince of this is herself.

Her extreme skepticism results in her coming up with wild explanations to explain away the weird goings on, and even wilder schemes to sweep any strangeness under the rug, lest outsiders get a negative impression of the small town.

Jed Pootz

Jed Pootz is the local conspiracy theorist and radio host. His station is the only one you can get on radio in town so most of the town listens to his show. Even though many of the claims he makes in his show sound rather crack-pot, he is often validated thanks to the odd going on in the town. Even so, he’s only right about half of the time so many take what he says with a grain of salt until they see it with their own eyes.

Jed is often at odds with his sister, Sheriff Leslie Anne Pootz. Leslie Anne is constantly warning her brother off about riling the town up, while Jed maintains that his show does more to keep than town safe than she does. Their rivalry often sees Jed coming up with ridiculous schemes to prove his theories true, while Leslie Ann comes up with equally ridiculous schemes to foil her brother’s plans. This has Jed convinced that his sister is part of some sort of secret conspiracy trying to stop him from sharing the truth.

When Jed isn't at the station he fills the dead air with recordings of himself playing the banjo. His station, WJED, doesn't exactly have a license to operate, but no one reports him because the town doesn't want to go from having one radio station to zero. Leslie Anne knows she can't do anything about the station either, because if she did her mother would stop inviting her to dinner.

Ma and Pa Pootz

Ma and Pa are the elderly parents of Jed and Leslie Anne. They live in creaky old farm house on the outskirts of town with their dog, Hunter. Pa tends the land and farms tumbleweeds, supplying most of the tumbleweeds for the county. Ma spends most of her time baking and knitting while pa tries to make something grow.

Ma regularly has Leslie Anne and Jed over for dinner in an attempt to keep her kids civil toward each other, but this often results in them fighting at the dinner table.

The Men with the Rose-tinted Glasses

One of the biggest mysteries around town is the many sightings of tall, official looking men in black suits with rose-tinted glasses around town. The weirder the happenings in town get, the more these men seem to show up.

Most of the town thinks they are a shadowy government entity. Jed thinks they are aliens wearing human suits. Leslie Anne maintains that they are just hooligans trying to stir up[the populace and she has vowed to arrest the first one she gets her hands on for 'public nuisance'. (Granted, she's been after them for years and they always seem to disappear in thin air.) Still, it's certainly entertaining watching the sheriff's schemes and traps backfire on her in her quest to catch one of the men.

GIMMICKS FOR TEEN MYSTERIES

These gimmicks work for spooky games with crime-busting teenagers in them, or for your general type of mysterious stuff.

The Skeptic

As a skeptic, you are very clear headed when dealing with things arcane or supernatural. You choose to try and explain away everything away through logic and reason. You have a thirst for the truth, and will science and logic to find it. You can take a step back and look at anything objectively; allowing you to see through tricks and illusions more easily than other players. You can willfully deny something is happening and put it on hold until you learn the truth.

Science and reason, unfortunately doesn't always have the answers, however. In this world not everything can be explained away through logic and reason. When you can't find the logical answer to something it can put at a loss and leave you on tilt.

You have it all figured out, and you're just a kid!

When something weird or unexplainable happens, roll +cool. On a 10+, you can explain why the thing won't affect you, and you can find a solution to work around it. (Temporary, maybe, but it's still a work-around.) Other people take +1 forward to deal with this weirdness. On 7-9, you can't stop whatever this is, but you are not fooled one bit. Even on a miss, you are never, never fooled into believing in magic, UFOs, Bigfoot, and other nonsense.

Even if you are presented with incontrovertible proof of magic, UFO, Bigfoot, etc., you will never believe it.

You can still be afraid of it! A 7' man in a rubber suit is still scary.

The Believer

As a believer, you are the counter-point to the sceptic. You also strive toward the truth, but your truth is that not everything has to make sense to be real. You want to prove there are things out there that can't be explained logically. You are open minded and are able comprehend the weird and esoteric better than other characters.

Unfortunately, being so eager to believe can leave you vulnerable to being fooled. You are more gullible than other characters by someone telling you what you want to hear.

If a party has a skeptic and a believer they should play off that dynamic. Either being at odds and becoming rivals or cooperating over a shared quest for the truth.

You've been through the looking glass. Say something crazy, like "aliens are stealing our cheese!" or "the government is fluoridating the magnetite!". Then write this statement down, and put one of your laughs on it. If you can prove this crazy thing to be true, everyone who says "You were right" gets a laugh and loses a lump. (You just get the satisfaction of being right.)

You say a lot of crazy things, and even if you're right, **other people are getting sick of your nonsense.** If anyone tells you something crazy, you have to spend at least one second wondering if they're right.

The Coward

You scare really easily. Really, really easily. It's almost embarrassing. You are easily spooked and quick to run. Luckily this has made you good at running away. You don't feel a need to stick around when something scares you; you just gun it for the hills and don't look back. As good as you are at running; it's sometimes hard to keep track of where you are going, and where you have been. This can result in you running right back into the thing that scared you in the first place.

They can't keep you here if you don't want to be here. Roll +lumps. On a 7+, you can get the heck out of here. You run with crazy legs, you dig an escape route with your bare hands, you smash a hole through the wall with your silhouette, etc.

Your cowardice is legendary. No one trusts you with authority. When another character suggests that we split up, no one listens to your objections and we all split up anyway.

The Insider

You have a mysterious connection with other forces. You might be an Illuminatus, a fraternity member, a carrier of nano-chemtrails, or something else. Who knows! You're not telling.

Maybe your parents had some role in the mysteries. Perhaps you stumbled on some crazy book. Maybe you're half monster, yourself! Who can say.

Your knowledge of the truth has made you a loner.

You can eavesdrop on any conversation, past or present, even if you weren't there, because you have mysterious methods. Roll +zany. On 10+, the Director reveals a scene you hadn't seen, and you may take +1 forward to deal with this. On a 7-9, the Director reveals a scene that's dangerous, and if you act on it, you take a lump.

Everyone is really creeped out by you. Also, the Director can reveal the hint of some catastrophe with portents that only you can see, and you must deal with this problem or lose this gimmick.

The Protector

There is someone you will go to the ends of the earth to keep safe. It has gotten to the point where you have a sixth sense about their safety and will always find out when they are in trouble. You spring into action and you always seem to manage to pull through and rescue them, even if that rescue comes with a price. Your well-being is secondary to theirs.

Unfortunately the character you have sworn to protect has really bad luck when it comes to staying out of trouble. They always seem to need rescuing or protecting, way more than anyone naturally should. At least they have you to keep them safe, right?

You have a sidekick. Make up a minor character, like a kid sister, or a high-school chum, or your idiot cousin, or even your talking dog. When your sidekick is around, and if they're useful to the task at hand, you can take +1 forward as they assist you. Your sidekick is useless in violent confrontations or grudge matches.

Your sidekick is also constantly getting into trouble. They wander off, they get kidnapped, they blurt secrets to your parents, etc. (If your sidekick isn't here to help, you get no bonus.) Deal with these problems or lose this gimmick.

The Motorhead

You love your vehicle, possibly more than anyone or anything else, and it treats you right in return. You are natural behind the wheel of your baby. Everyone else better watch out, the two of you together are unstoppable.

Naturally you also need to take care of your baby, keep it clean and safe. You'd be nothing without it, so make sure you keep it well maintained, clean, and accessible at all times.

Add +laughs to all vehicle rolls. If a roll involves motorcycles, cars, trucks, or any other kind of vehicle, you may take +laughs forward as an extra bonus. You also get this bonus to rolls to fix cars, to tune engines, or anything else greasy, fast, and mechanical.

Motoring is your life. Your ride might get threatened, or you may be in danger of losing your license. Your motoring ways are well known, and the authorities are always looking for ways to give you more tickets.

The Rich Brat

Your parents are important. They could be rich lawyers, or judges, or real-estate moguls, or movie stars. Everyone treats you better, because they want to impress your parents. You have a charmed life.

You might be an obnoxious bully, used to getting your way. Or maybe you really want to be just "one of the gang", despite how everybody knows that you're not.

Spend all your laughs to demand that stuff gets done.

Throw a fit, yell at some adults, then demand that a certain thing gets done. Spend every single one of your current laughs. For each laugh you spend, you take +1 forward to all rolls to do this thing that you said you'd do.

Other kids do not respect you. They may be afraid of your parents, or they may want to pull pranks at your expense. While adults are always nice to you, most of them are downright condescending.

The Little Kid

Aren't you a little young to be hanging out with teenagers? You might be someone's sibling. Maybe you idolize the "bigger kids", with their cool cars and their PG-13 movies and the ways they feel about stuff. Or maybe you've uncovered some deep mystery and the adults don't take you seriously, so you have to reach out to the older kids.

You meddle in places you don't belong. You can eavesdrop on any conversation, even if you weren't there, because your network informs you. Roll +sharp. On 10+, the Director reveals a scene you hadn't seen, and you may take +1 forward to deal with this. On a 7-9, the Director reveals a scene that's dangerous, and if you act on it, you take a lump.

Adults do not approve of you hanging out with older kids. They don't believe your weird stories and they will punish you for being outside way past your bedtime.

From the Wrong Side of the Tracks

Which side of the tracks is the wrong one? The side you're from, you punk. Your rough exterior is cover for a heart of gold.

You block for other people. When a friend is about to take a lump, roll +tough. On a 7-9, you take the lump instead. On a 10+, nobody takes the lump.

Everyone assumes the worst about you. Authority figures blame you for crimes that you didn't do.

SAMPLE EPISODE

Deputies for the Day

Popular travel writer Nicholas Brackenridge is traveling down Route 88, and writing about the journey. Word makes it to Sheriff Lesley Anne Pootz that he is going to be stopping in Dodder's Folly, and SOON!

The sheriff is sent into a tizzy as she frantically tries to prepare for this high profile visitor who, in her estimation, can shape the future of Dodder's Folly if he writes positively about it.

Sheriff Leslie Anne approaches the cast and offers them deputy status if they will help her get the town ready for the visit. She is afraid the strange goings on in town will scare Brackenridge away and result in him portraying the town in a negative light. The sheriff wants the cast to help her sweep any weirdness under the rug for at least as long as Brackenridge is there.

Sheriff Pootz offers the cast a series of tasks that they can help with; letting them select the tasks they wish to do, stating she will handle the rest herself. Tasks the sheriff will offer the cast include:

- 🔴 Get Jed off the air for the day- The sheriff's brother Jed Pootz, the sheriff's brother, has the only radio show in town, and he loves ranting and raving about the goings on in town. Sheriff Leslie Anne doesn't want her brother's conspiracy spouting to be the first thing Brackenridge hears when he gets into town, so she wants the players to make sure he's occupied with something outside his trailer for the duration of the high profile visit. It will be up to the cast to figure out how to do this; Jed has things he will want to talk about, so it will take some convincing, or cunning to get him out of his studio. (As an interesting

twist, if the cast let Jed find out about his sister's schemes he could offer them an alternate plan. He wants Brackenridge to see the true goings-on in town, and wants the players to steer the writer right into the strangeness so that he might write about it and get the truth out there.)

- Keep Mrs. Olaydi's other guests at bay – Mrs. O'LAYdi has a habit of welcoming alarming guests into her motel. The latest bunch is a group of short, pale, skinny creatures with small eyes and big claws. Mrs. O'LAYdi insists that they are all perfect gentlemen, but the hissing noises they make at strangers are a bit concerning. The cast can either try and chase the critters off, or talk things out with them. If the cast manage to communicate with the critters they will learn that they're friendly and amenable to the cast's requests. (As the Director, you can change the creatures at the motel to whatever you like, feel free to have fun with it.)

- Make sure Petrov doesn't blow anything up – Sheriff Leslie Anne noticed the sounds of small explosions at the Rusty Hubcap, which usually means Petrov is tinkering with something. She wants the cast to make

sure he doesn't blow anything up while Brackenridge is in town. The cast has the option to either help Petrov complete his outlandish invention before the writer arrives, or to postpone his work on it until after Brackenridge leaves.

- Chase off the men in rose colored glasses – Sightings of men in rose colored glasses have been on the rise. The sheriff proposes trying to catch one of the men in a trap, as they seem to get more scarce when she's trying to detain them. She offers the cast a special commendation if they catch one. (no matter what they do, the cast won't be able to catch one of the men, they will always seemingly vanish, even if trapped.)

- Or make up their own – Have fun with it, make up your own tasks that fit into this episode, if you like.

Once the players have met back up with the sheriff, they will see that she dealt with the tasks she took on herself by throwing the supporting cast involved into lock-up for the night. She will then announce that Brackenridge has checked into the motel, and asks the cast to give him a welcome to the town (and follow him around and make sure he doesn't run into trouble) while she finished up the paperwork on all the citizens she's arrested.

While the cast is following Brackenridge feel free to throw in curveballs for the cast to deal with, such as one of the cast's previous schemes turning out to have backfired, or a completely new weird occurrence coming up. Brackenridge is a gaunt balding man of few words, communicating non-verbally for the most part, and writing feverishly in a notebook he can pull out of seemingly nowhere every time something happens. If he is confronted with something weird happening, he will take notes with keen interest.

There are several outcomes to this story depending on how the cast handles things:

- A Sleepy Little Town - If the cast does a good job keeping the writer from experiencing the strange goings on around town then the Sheriff will show up with a copy of the article about Brackenridge's trip down Route 88. She will skip to the part mentioning Dodder's Folly which she will be disappointed to see is only a single paragraph. Brackenridge describes his time in the town as "unremarkable" and "pleasant enough, I suppose". The sheriff will lament that this probably won't be the boost for the town she was hoping for, but will thank the cast for their efforts.

🔥 A Curious Place – If the cast sided with the sheriff but Brackenridge still managed to experience the weirdness of the town on a smaller scale during his time there then the sheriff will show up with a copy of his article, and a slightly annoyed expression. The entry about Dodder’s Folly in the article will be a fair length and will document his experiences with the peculiar goings on he ran into while there. The article will be quite positive, but Sheriff Leslie Anne will say it was “what she was trying

to avoid”. In the aftermath the town gets a slight boost in tourism, but many of the new guests have a keen interest in the weird and paranormal, much to Leslie Anne’s chagrin.

🔥 ***i’ve seen it with my own two eyes!*** – If the cast sided with Jed and decided to steer Brackenridge toward the strange happenings then Jed will later approach the cast and explain that he received a letter from Brackenridge. He will state that Brackenridge’s publisher refused to

publish his writing on Dodder’s Folly as the believed it to be the ravings of a man experiencing temporary psychosis after driving alone down a long desert road. He says that Brackenridge is adamant that what he saw really happened and that he wants to return to town to get proof. Jed is saddened that the truth is once again being censored by the media, but is pleased that he will have a new ally in his quest for the truth.

Series Pitch: Comedy Horror

Elderberry Junction

“Welcome to Ruckerberg, the City of your Dreams!” reads the billboard that hangs over the Unique Memorial Bridge that is the only way into town. “If you lived here, you’d be one with us right now!” reads the tagline.

No one can agree on the history of Ruckerberg. It seemed to just appear out of the fog one day. The city overlooks Stillwater Bay, bracketed on all sides by the Ruckertooth Mountain Range. Most people live in Elderberry Junction, the neighborhood in the shadow of the city’s tall skyscrapers. And these skyscrapers are weird – they look like angry talons pointed up at the sky. The streets are laid out in odd patterns. Strange graffiti symbols are scrawled everywhere.

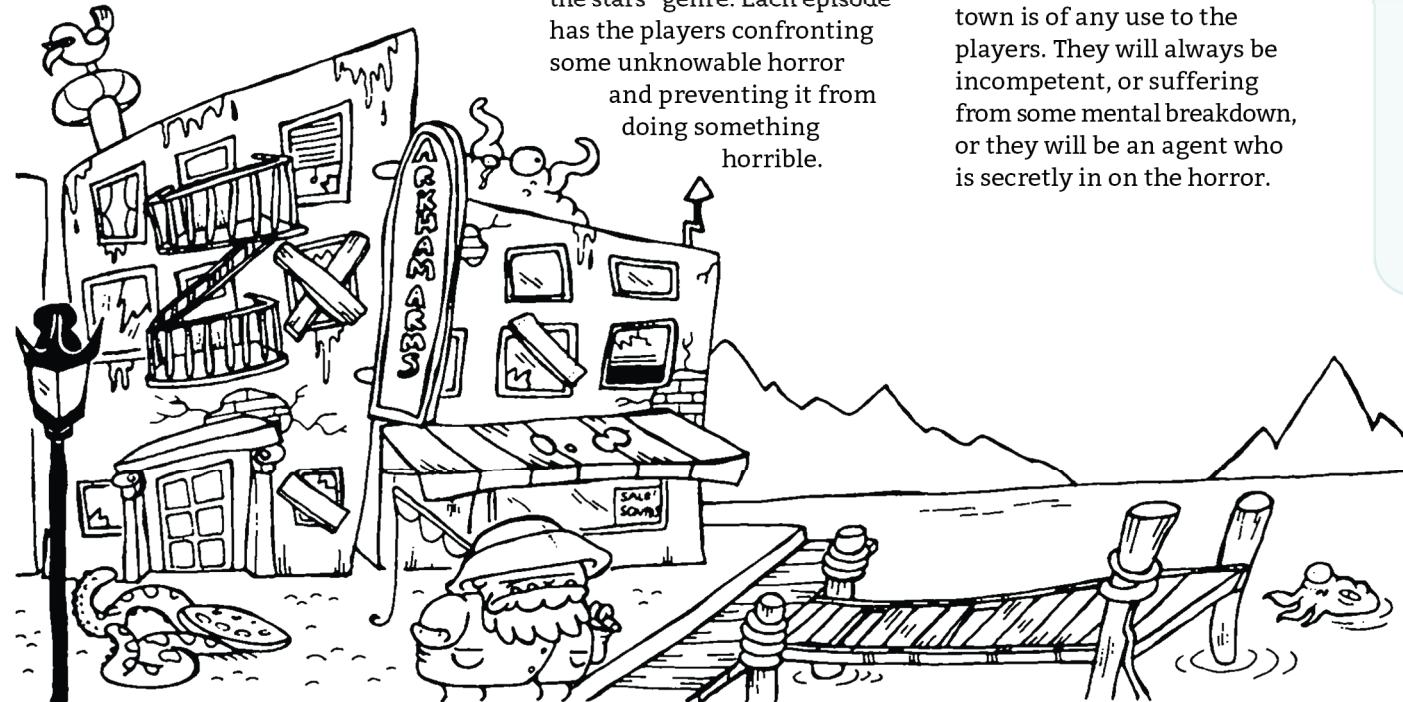
Rumors abound that Ruckerberg’s layout is because the city is secretly run by cultist who worship beings from beyond the furthest stars, and they’re trying to create a gate to bridge the illimitable gulf, so that their evil masters can destroy the world. This rumor is 100% correct.

SERIES PITCH

Elderberry Junction is a tribute to the “horror beyond the stars” genre. Each episode has the players confronting some unknowable horror and preventing it from doing something horrible.

Each episode, one local person (or player-character) should have some small problem that needs to be solved. No one else in the town is of any use to the players. They will always be incompetent, or suffering from some mental breakdown, or they will be an agent who is secretly in on the horror.

Elderberry Junction is for spooky and supernatural adventures. Players can still lose to the monsters, but they’ll be fine for the next adventure.



STORY LOCATIONS

Elderberry Junction Switching Yard

Trains constantly rumble through the yard, night and day. It's also the site of the 6.6k Ruckerberg Marathon, which goes over the tracks and through a tunnel. (Some of the locals have been outspoken about stopping train service during these runs, but the Mayor insists on keeping them running.)

Ruckerberg's #1 source of revenue is accepting garbage and toxic waste from other cities. Trains are constantly rumbling through here, open-top tankers with glowing green ooze. (Some of the locals have been outspoken about having some safety controls imposed, to prevent the frequent spills. The Mayor compromised by suspending toxic-waste shipping during the Marathon, and everyone was satisfied.)

Elderberry Community College

A ramshackle building by the train yards, this place is the only college in town, since the last one caught fire and was never rebuilt.

Elderberry College teaches HVAC, Computers, Janitorial, Nursing, and ... "Liberal Arts", which is functional and practical magic. The staff always insist on calling it "liberal arts" and they will

violently correct anyone who tries to call it magic, "or we'll lose our government accreditation."

A-Mart

There's several of these large super-duper-markets in town. You can buy almost anything there, but it's always weird. The apples taste like oranges. Shirts and pants have extra holes. All the goods have a gray and grimy look to them that makes them look both old and futuristic at the same time. (Flip phones with touch screens. Tablets with LCD displays that use cassette-reel tapes. Laser-sighting pistols that load from stripper clips. Automobiles with huge carburetors and built-in GPS, etc.). The locals complain about the bizarre and breakable stuff they buy from A-Mart, but "You can't beat these prices."

Mealymouth Bay

A long line of piers, Every house on the waterfront has at least one attic, and some have two or more.

Many people here have the "Mealymouth look": wide eyes, snaggle teeth, and a fishy smell. The rumor is that the people here have been mingling with the monsters that live under the sea. These rumors are correct.

SUPPORTING CAST

Cattle-Car Carlie

A bull (of course) who is only seen at two places: the switching yard and the bingo parlor. He dresses in rags, and he has a tiny bindle on a stick that seems to be filled with whatever item he needs, especially his harmonica. He talks about the places he's been and the things he's seen, and he sometimes shows up **right behind you** out of nowhere, to dispense cryptic advice. Then he has to go.

Mayor Bob Zane (aka Edwardian Borboryg- micus Zanithique)

Mayor Bob has been elected for 23 terms straight. He continues to win by a landslide on his tried-and-true platform, "Will not put out the stars and paint the land black."

Mayor Bob resembles a human more than he resembles anything else. His skin is gray-green, but he wears a thick coat of some pink substance that slowly flakes off, the longer he is in public, so he's always cutting meetings short. His mouth is a rictus smile of teeth, and his voice is pleasant and reassuring.

MADCAP TIMES

RUCKERBERG, LC •
Today the Mayor broke ground on the Abandoned Hospital. "I'm pleased that we have finally completed this project of public works. From its tall unit hallways to its tiny windows covered in grime, the construction this hospital has finally been brought into concrete reality by your purposeful hands."

The Mayor went on to say that the Hospital will save the city money, as it requires no electricity, maintenance, or staff of any kind.

Philip Asset, owner of the A-Mart chain of super-stores, praised the project. "We feel extremely validated that our mysterious dreams have come true. Our beds, curtains, and wheelchairs have been put inside the building in places chosen by the whispering voices in my head. We hope many visitors will be drawn to these halls, the basement, and ... what's below the basement." Mr. Asset declined any further comment.

The Mayor will never openly attack or assist our players. "I can't lose my status for re-election!" or something like that. He may ask the players to do some mysterious thing, for a purpose he never explains.

Pollux "Lucky" Whateley and Castor "Kass" Whateley, the Mayor's Adopted Brats

Twin dogs who can only be told apart because Lucky is missing his left eye, and Kass is missing his right. They wear designer eye-patches and dress in expensive clones.

They're the heirs to the Whateley Family Water Purifier Fortune. They're obnoxious, they laugh at things that aren't funny, and they hurt people for more laughs that aren't funny.

Whatever the players are up to, the Whateley Brothers will look for a way to ruin it. They can get away with almost anything, as the Mayor keeps pardoning them because "they have great things ahead of them." (The Mayor is their legal guardian after their parents disappeared... because the mayor is **everyone's** god-parent, by city ordinance.)

Professor Macta Latré, Mistress of the "Liberal Arts"

An old spider who runs the Ruckerberg Curio Shop, and who teaches "liberal arts" at the Elderberry Community College. Out-of-doors, she wears a wide-brimmed hat and carries a parasol, so that she is constantly in shadow. Indoors, she reveals her aged skin, wrinkled and leathery. Her eyeglasses are so thick, they magnify her eyeballs into giant bubbles. She speaks with a New Orleans patois that sounds so awful, it would get her kicked out of a community theater project

While Miss Latré can offer advice to the players on how to proceed, she can never interfere directly. "It is my destiny that I must observe, never interfere." That's what she says, anyway. The truth is that she's past caring and can't really be bothered.

Philip "Flip" Asset, Owner of A-Mart

The richest man in town. Flip insists that people call him "Flip" since "Philip was my mother's name." He's a tall weasel, dressed in ill-fitting clothes that look like he stole them from a corpse. He's constantly fidgeting, and rubbing sweat from his neck with his handkerchief. He speaks like a desperate car salesman having a nervous breakdown right in front of you.

He can never stay long, as he says he needs to hop on a train/bus/plane/submarine to "get somewhere out of town for a thing before... well, I'm late, bye." Despite his plans, Flip never successfully gets out of the city. He can often be found in some random place in town, staring into an empty glass while he sobs quietly.

Flip never attacks or assists the players directly. He may ask them for help – heck, he may beg them for help, getting on his hands and knees and pleading with tearful eyes. But he can't speak coherently enough to vocalize what the real problem is. "You wouldn't understand."

Goldman Whiskers, a Man of Ambition

Owner of the Parasols & Things Garment Factory, Goldman Whiskers is a creepy cat who wears dark glasses even at night, dresses in a business suit made of squeaky black vinyl, and speaks in a stilted monotone, with an accent no one can place. He used to work for the Mayor's office, but now they're bitter rivals. Mr. Whiskers is always buying up some property or constructing some new building for a scheme that only he understands, which he describes as "creating the perfect" something or other.

HORROR GIMMICKS

These gimmicks are useful for a game that's darkly humorous about monsters from beyond our understanding.

"Adopted"

You're half monster! You are disfigured in some incredibly obvious way that no one seems to notice. Make something up: tentacles, claws and teeth, eyestalks, goo, etc. The more obvious, the better.

You have monster powers!

To do a thing with your monster powers, roll +zany. On 10+, it gets the job done. On 7-9, there's a complication. (You freak out a local who attacks you in horror; you exert yourself too hard and take a lump; a nearby fish falls in love with you, etc.)

No one ever takes you seriously. They're never scared by you, intimidated by you, or even believe you when you say that you're a monster. Sometimes, your "real parents" appear and make life difficult for you.

Practitioner of "Liberal Arts"

You learned how to use magical spells from the local community college. They stopped calling it the "Dark Arts" and started calling it "Liberal Arts" so they could get state funding. Your command over the forces that bind the universe is limited by how you only used a bootleg textbook that you downloaded online, and how you never turn in your homework on time.

You can do magic! Say a bunch of fake Latin words, wave your hands, call upon the unknowable forces, and roll +zany. On 10+, your weird thing happens, but it goes away a minute later unless you spend a laugh. On 7-9, your weird thing happens but there's some unfortunate side effects, or maybe the forces mishear you and give you something else.

Magic makes you weird.

Complex machines don't work so great around you: cars break down, computers crash, etc. People think you're weird, and they only talk to you when they want help with weirdness.

Occult Investigator

The scales have been pulled from your eyes! You see things as they really are. Your talents come in handy to fight the various shadowy evils that threaten the good people of this world.

You can neutralize weirdness. If someone tries to do something weird, say different fake Latin words, pull some ancient tchotchke out of your pocket and roll +zany. On 7-9, you prevent the weird magic... this time. On 10+, you might protect you and your friends.

No matter how hard you try to convince other people that there's some occult evil brewing, the minor characters never believe you. **Only crazies, the desperate, and other occultists ever believe you.**

Gibbering Lunatic

You've seen things, you've seen them with your eyes, and you can't unsee them! Other people, they refuse to see, with their eyes, but not you! You've got eyes, and you'll use them!

You have lunatic insight.

Roll +zany. On 10+, ask the Director any question you want. and the Director can give you any answer they want, even if it's not the correct answer. Take +1 forward on all rolls to act on that answer.

If the Director asks you to roll to avoid becoming scared, frightened, bullied, or otherwise mentally affected by a supernatural horror, remind the Director that you're a gibbering lunatic, and then ignore the mental effect. Physical effects work on you just fine.

Other people treat you like the gibbering lunatic that you are. When in character, you must speak in a dissociated and manic manner.

The Seeker of Lost Ones

You have lost your parent, your sibling, your spouse, your pet, etc. ... and all trails lead to here. You will never know rest until you can be reunited.

Spend all your laughs to help find your lost ones.

Once, during the game session, make a passionate speech about your lost one. (Recite a flashback to your salad days when they were still in your life. Or hold up some trinket and tell everyone what the memories are.) The more you chew the scenery, the better. The Director may award you a laugh for this.

After your speech, spend every one of your laughs. For each laugh you spend, you get +1 to all rolls made to recover your lost one.

When a clue appears to where your lost ones are, you must drop everything to follow it.

ADVENTURE EPISODES

The County Fair of Unspeakable Dread

It's the hallowed tradition of the Nameless County Fair! Crop circles are drawn, corporate sponsorship is pulled in, and music bands not good enough for record labels are brought into the perform. (Flip begs each and every out-of-town guest to take him with them as they leave, but they never do.)

Our heroes are roped in to participate. Maybe a friend needs them to help. Maybe they want the prize money themselves. Maybe they're just a ham who needs validation. The Elderberry Community College needs to raise money to replace the lightning rod, which has melted after being struck 987 times this summer. And the weathers service is reporting that a storm will hit in three days, just when the Ruckerberg Fair ends. (Because a lightning storm **always** hits after the Ruckerberg Fair ends.)

Prizes will be awarded for things like "best livestock", "biggest pumpkin", "best musical performance", "pie-eating contest", "boxing competition", and other things that you can think of.

Story points could include:

- Cattle-Car Carlie shows up out of nowhere, to tell our heroes from 100 years ago, when “Large Lottie” died at the pie-eating contest when an elderberry bone got lodged in her throat and no one gave her the Heimlich Maneuver, on the count that it hadn’t been invented yet. With her last dying breath, she swore she would come back a hundred years later to exact revenge. And this would be the day. Then Carl politely excuses himself and is gone.
- Mister Whiskers sponsors a refreshment stand, but anyone who drinks the lemonade that he serves turns into a twisted tentacle monster that hungers for flesh. Whiskers keeps laughing about how this will make him rich and powerful.
- A livestock animal is (inadvertently or deliberately) subjected to strange chemicals turns into some horrible monster. The players will have to stop its rampage of terror. If they succeed, the monster will run against the mayor in the next election.

- The local band “The R Typists” are going to perform this awesome song that Madeline says “came to her in a dream.” The song drives people mad, summons a monster, or something else that’s worse.
- Kass and Lucky find out whatever competition our heroes are going to win, and then decide they must do it better. First, they spend lots of money to do it. If that doesn’t work, they cheat.

The Skyscraper of No Human Shape

One of the characters has to go to Pnakotic Tower, one of the many weird and mostly-empty office buildings found in downtown Ruckerberg. Come up with a zany reason to be there. (They have a job interview. They have a lead that their lost one was last seen, there. They got a parking ticket and if they want to fight it, that’s where they must lodge a complaint. The widow of the Prime Minister of Nigeria says their embassy is there, and they need to sign the check for \$10 million in person, etc.) The players may be going there to support their friend... or they all mysteriously have a reason to go there on the same day. Spooky!

The visit starts off normal, but gets weirder as time goes on. People behave in weird ways, like they have scripts but are improving about being friendly. When the players turn their back, furniture and art objects and plants have moved, or wilted, or been defaced.

Whether the meeting happens or not, the players now must leave the building... which proves to be no easy feat. The elevators keep malfunctioning, dropping people off at the wrong floors. The stairs are locked, or it’s possible to go down a few flights but still wind up on a higher floor. Even just flinging yourself off the roof just throws you back inside. (You bounce off an awning, slide down a flagpole, or inexplicably appear inside an elevator.)

Things gradually get weirder: lighting shifts in colors, the windows show some alien sky, and monsters patrol the corridors.

What is the deal here?:

- Lucky and Kass are also trapped in the building... and something inside is hunting them. The players will eventually realize they’re the key to getting out, because only they can open doors that have silver doorknobs. (Everyone else suffers some random humiliation.) But the twins

are still obnoxious, and they refuse to cooperate with the players unless bullied or persuaded. They may even ask the players to humiliate themselves, for their amusement.

- ☛ Mister Whiskers has designed this building as a test, and he's watching them from his secret control room. Sooner or later he can't resist laughing at their plight, from some speaker or phone or 2-way tv or something. Mister Whiskers will begin throwing "Perfect Beings" at our heroes, each monster "even more perfect than the last!", and if our heroes can't defeat them all before the timer runs out, Whiskers declares himself the "perfect winner." Whatever that means.

- ☛ Our hero's Lost One is here! They have been trapped here to be the Watcher of the creature known only as the "Wallflower."

The Wallflower looks like a giant flower in a potted plant. It's the most innocuous thing ever. The Lost One has been staring at it for so long, that their eyes have dried out and they look terrible. They say they can't leave unless someone else takes their place.

However, this is just a scam. The real monster is a

tiny blob that hides behind the plant, and it's too shy to approach anyone if they can see it, so it waits for people to stop looking. If anyone thinks to talk to it, they might realize that it would be a lot happier if everyone just left.

As the Director, if you're running short on time, you could have this be a plot by the Mayor, who hates Wallflower and will conspire to keep the players here, to stare at it. If the players can help Wallflower escape, it will run for mayor in the next election, with a frighteningly-effective campaign despite declining all interviews.

The Bunny Slope of Indescribable Horror

After a record 35 inches of snow falls in the middle of July, Ruckerberg is enjoying a wave of snow-based tourism on Mount Obtuse. Our heroes get roped into it somehow. Maybe they get a part-time job to work on the slopes. Or maybe they like to shred the powder. Perhaps a cell phone camera picture picked up a blurry picture of a lost loved one. Or maybe they're so bored that the prospect of an untimely

death from high-impact sports is a blessed relief.

But oh no! The Ruckerberg Weather Service was going to issue a storm warning that another thirty-six inches of snow will fall again tonight! Sadly, they can't reach the radio station because the phones are jammed from people trying to be the 1,024th caller to win a ski vacation.

At first, our heroes can deal with cutesy clichés of stories set on resorts:

- ☛ Lucky and Kass show up to be jerks. Because of course. One of them may spill someone's hot chocolate. Another might make a wager on who can ski the fastest.
- ☛ Mister Whiskers explains how his new state-of-the-art snowboard wax is "the perfect frictionlessness", which he will now sell to "the highest bidder."
- ☛ Macta Latré is here to stare at the hills. She warns that the hills are full of "wendigos", the dark and hungry spirits of people that froze to death. (Latre isn't here to ski, she's here because she won an all-expenses-paid from a radio call in a contest, but accidentally left her land-line phone off the hook, tying up the radio's switchboard.)

Eventually, the tragic snowfall happens ... as a single, comical avalanche from one cloud. This deluge could happen while some characters are out on the slopes. (It's especially dramatic if it happens during the snowboarding competition, with an avalanche chasing our heroes down.)

Our heroes are trapped on a mountain top in a deluge of snow! Complications include:

- 🔥 One or more guests will immediately become concerned that rescue isn't coming and that they will have to resort to cannibalism. These guests are way, way too eager to

resort to these measures this early. A violent grudge match ensues, where characters baste one another, try to shove each other into ovens, etc.

- 🔥 To escape the mountain, Mister Whiskers covers himself in the snowboard wax and becomes so fast and slippery, he moves faster than the human eye can see. Unfortunately, being frictionless also means he can't stop moving. For the rest of the adventure, Whiskers will constantly be zipping in and out of frame, bouncing off things.

- 🔥 Everyone is spooked by the terrible cries outside at night! Someone should investigate as it's creeping everyone out. Mz. Lacté insists that someone else do it, as she's on vacation.

It turns out that the horrible wailing in the woods isn't a wendigo. It's "Wendy's ghost." Centuries ago during the gold rush, Wendy froze to death and has been wandering around the woods, trying to get help. Because ghosts feel cold, too, and it sucks. If our players can help her off the mountain, she will run for mayor in the next election.

Series Pitch: High-Tech Low-Life

Cyberscape: 199X

You are a resident of The Agglomerated Cantons of Mega-Toronto, in the distant future of 199X. Mega-Toronto is a city of techno-cripples and cyber-freaks, of debutant hedonists and gun toting company men, telepathic witches, and low-life gutter shaman selling chemical mind-expansion for 3 credits a pop. All of it under the shadow of the Gibson media empire and their living mascot, Jerry Gerbil. This is Cyberscape: 199X.

SERIES PITCH

This series exists in that overlap, when the old “cyberpunk” fashion was colliding with the “grim and gritty” grunge stylings were moving in. If your group prefers more traditional role-playing games (violence, conflict, missions, etc.), you might consider running this series with some or all of the variant rules thrown in.

STORY LOCATIONS

Alfred's Pawn

Normals won't find much of value here. But for those in the know, Al's is a technological treasure trove: Need a new SCSI port for your deck? He's got you covered. Looking to upgrade your RAM? Depends. Can you handle over 5 megabytes? Alfred is a stout man with a prosthetic arm that never quite seems to listen. His inch-thick eyeglasses make his eyes look enormous like some kind of tree-dwelling primate, and the effect is heightened when he flips down one of the many additional lenses attached to them.

The Palace, a.k.a. "Gibsy World"

Where the elite meet to inhale psychoactive vapors. Its black iridescent spires leave scratch marks in passing clouds, it's many twisted towers snake their way into the sky. Inside, a decadent hangout draped with dazzling lights, holo-projections and Jerry Gerbil re-runs run all hours of the day, to occupy the fizzled minds of the aristocrats who dwell there. It's all but impossible to get into unless you belong to the right caste. But if you're looking for a member of Mega-Toronto's high society, that's where they'll be.

This pitch draws inspiration both from the “grim and gritty” dystopia shows and “we’re in the computer” cartoons that were popular in the late era of the 1990s.



MADCAP TIMES

MEGA-TORONTO,
ULTRA-ONTARIO •
Professor Marshy
McLooney, released
his new e-book, *Under-
standing Meat: The
Luncheons of Man*,
where he proposes
that the future of infor-
mation transmission
would not be the
internet, but in meat.

McLooney went on
to clarify that he did was
not referring to people
meeting face to face, nor
was he using the slang
term 'meatspace' to
refer to persons in the
same room. Time and
time again, he made it
abundantly clear that
he was talking about
directly encoding all
information onto meat.
Said McLooney: "The
media is the sausage."

rEalitieZ

The Digital Analogue of Mega-Toronto, more real than real to the denizens to dwell there. Don't worry, this isn't going to turn into one of those "is it real?" clichés, because whenever you're inside rEalitieZ, everything is slightly green. The constant spam to unlock premium features like hats is a pretty stark reminder too. Really the only reason to visit rEalitieZ these days is if you need something from the most desperate and broken of Mega-Toronto's cyber-junkies, and they do know things from time to time. After all, who watches what they say around someone whom nobody believes?

Gibson Tower

Where the sausage gets made. On the lower floors, malnourished animators chained to their desks (whatever you do, do not make eye-contact.) Specifics about the upper floors are a little hazy, but somewhere up there is the living embodiment of Jerry Gerbil, as well as the full time dwelling of Ralph Gibson himself, locked behind untold layers of the tightest security money can buy.

Crazy Terry's Black Trenchcoat and Jack-Boot Emporium

Are you a freedom fighter rebelling against the capitalist oligarchy? Are you a lone beacon of hope in a tyrannical wasteland? Are you frequently in slow-motion? Then come on down to Crazy Terry's Black Trenchcoat and Jack-Boot Emporium, where you walk in a nerdy white-collar criminal, and walk out a badass cyber-assassin. And for a limited time only each trench coat comes with quasi-futuristic sunglasses! And for those of you who prefer the classics, there's a sale on colorful suspenders, fingerless gloves, roller-blades, motorcycle jackets, and many many more outlandish accessories!

SUPPORTING CAST

Jerry Gerbil

The living mascot of the Gibson corporation. He was chosen from hundreds of thousands of applicants for his natural resemblance to beloved cartoon character, Jerry Gerbil, as well as his willingness—indeed eagerness—to undergo extensive surgery and mental conditioning. Any information on who he was before has been scoured from the world.

Ralph Gibson

Hasn't been seen in public for 50 years. Some say he had one too many cybernetic replacements and one day his living tissue finally gave out, but the steel and silicon kept ticking. Some say his mental engrams were burned into a mainframe and the body tossed out with the day's garbage. And some say he's just a very sick old man, given unnaturally long life by sheer determined greed. And aspirin.

Joey Lipbalm

A low life drifter with 18 lives, seems to escape the consequences of his gross irresponsibility simply because the world forgot about him. Or maybe it's because the high-class dope fiends withering away inside the palace know he's always got the best stuff. He got the name for his brief time as the sweetheart of Beth Lipcott, a.k.a. "Betty Lipbalm", spokesmodel for Mega-Toronto's best-selling moisturizing wax.

CYBERPUNK GIMMICKS

These roles would be useful for any type of “18½ minutes into the dystopian future” type game.

The 'Leet Hacker

You know Mega-Toronto's systems inside and out. You're an expert at social engineering, phone phreaking, hacking into big iron. You can even program a VCR.

You are better with computers. Choose one:

- ☛ Take +3 back to a computer roll, then roll +laughs, if you roll 7+, the laugh is spent, otherwise it's not.
- ☛ Before making a computer roll, spend a laugh, and then roll two extra dice. (We're up to 4!)

You are on the most-wanted list. The authorities are just waiting for you to slip up so they can finally bust you. And other hackers want to take you down a peg.

The Esper

You're part of a new breed of telepathic humans. You can hear people's thoughts, their lousy, boring, disgusting thoughts. You certainly come in handy in acts of espionage, negotiations, and you give amazing Christmas presents.

You knew this would

happen. Before somebody else makes a roll, roll +cool. On 7+, they take +1 forward on your next roll. On 6 or less, they take -1 forward on their next roll. You can use this on people even if they don't want you to.

Psychic powers complicate your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh and then make your life difficult. You could have a dream that predicts some bad thing that only you can stop. Or the mysterious authorities could be trying to capture you and cut out your brain. Deal with this or lose this gimmick.

The Private Eye

You've always got a good beat on your surroundings, and you're damn good with your pistol—otherwise your calling card would say 'Former Private Investigator.' You wouldn't say you have friends in low places, but you definitely know of a few burnouts you can shake down for info. Your eyes are bloodshot from years of smoking, drinking, and retreating into the digital fantasy, rEalitieZ.

You're hard boiled. When something bad happens that might affect you, roll +cool. On a 7-9, you can't act again until someone else does, first, but you are immune to all this wickedness. On a 10+, tip your hat, ignore this, and move on.

You're a soft touch.

People keep coming to you for help, and you can't turn down a good sob story.

The Influencer

High society, elegant galas, the very finest in designer drugs. It's all so... boring. That's why between abysmal cotillions and garden parties you sneak out into the skeezy world below. However, you're not above using your access and 1st class grooming to get what you need. What your mother, the Duchess of the Upper-East side didn't realize was all those years of elocution lessons and etiquette training was like teaching you a coded language. They gave you the password to the good life, something mighty handy if you're a low-life.

What, me worry? When something humiliating would happen to you, roll +cool. On a 7+, it doesn't happen to you, but you earn no laughs. On a 6, it happens to you, it goes viral on social media, and now it's all anyone will talk about.

Being popular complicates your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh and then something happens. (A company has you under contract to endorse their products; a crazed fan is stalking you; someone is stealing your views, etc.) Deal with it or lose this gimmick.

Last Year's Android

Long overdue for scrapping, you have made your way by escaping attention, repairing yourself with scavenged parts when necessary, and by tracking the scrappers using your ability to access the city network. Your street-hardened personality is caged behind bars of programmed politeness, but you find ways of expressing yourself.

You're a robot. Roll +zany.

On a 10+, you do some awesome robot stuff (extend your arms, grab live power lines, take yourself apart, etc.) On a 7-9, you almost pull off this robot thing, but something goes awry, usually in an embarrassing way. (Your arms get stuck, you scramble your thoughts, you put yourself back together wrong, etc.)

Being a robot complicates your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh and bring up some robot-related problem. (Your drivers need a system update; you're treated like a second-class citizen; you need an expensive part, etc.) Deal with the problem or lose this gimmick.

The Street Hood

Why you carry a fine selection of... does that say 'Golex'? Don't worry about that, perhaps they're looking for Mind expansion? You've got higher truths on sale this week, 2 for 1! Computer spikes? Well not on you, but you certainly know where to get them! Infamous throughout Mega-Toronto's underbelly, they'd have shunned you years ago if you weren't so damn useful. You've got connections everywhere, you know how to get just about anything people ought not be able to get, and there's always somebody somewhere who owes you a favor (and really, really wishes they didn't.)

You've got connections and you've got stealth. You can be anywhere and get audience with anyone. When you're not somewhere you want to be, roll +sly. On a 7-9, you reveal yourself as being here the whole time. (If these people are hostile, this starts a grudge.) On a 10+, you can show up, do a thing, and disappear without starting a grudge.

Being a criminal complicates your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh and give you grief because you're a crook. (The police come looking for you; rival gang members try to ice you; your loved ones beg you to go straight, etc.) Deal with it or lose this gimmick.

Former Company Drone

You've spent most of your life a loyal drone of the Gibson Corporation. Nobody's quite sure what pulled the wool off your eyes, but now that you can see the true nature of the Gerbil, you've committed to using your insider knowledge to help expose them to the world. The others see you as an idealist, but you ignore them. Out of everyone there, you're the only one who's tasted bitter betrayal.

You have insider information. You can eavesdrop on any conversation, past or present, even if you weren't there, because you have mysterious methods. Roll +zany. On 10+, the Director reveals a scene you hadn't seen, and you may take +1 forward to deal with this. On a 7-9, the Director reveals a scene that's dangerous, and if you act on it, you take a lump.

Your former employers complicate your life. At any time, the Director can hand you a laugh and something bad happens. (Agents rob your house, send thugs to rough you up, smear your reputation, etc.) Deal with it or lose this gimmick.

ADVENTURE EPISODES

Jerry 2.0

One of our heroes are approached by a mysterious figure who will pay them a fantastic sum if they can return her a DNA sample of the living mascot, Jerry Gerbil. She refuses to divulge her identity, and she also neglects to mention that she works for Dom Lamont, Gibson's former partner turned rival.

Lamont's hip, edgy answer to Jerry Gerbil, Mach-One Mouse, failed to unseat the king of entertainment. Like Gibson, Lamont also gave his mascot a living incarnation. The poor sap who agreed to be surgically transformed into Mach-One has been tossed out with all the other casualties of Mega-Toronto, institutionalized, living out his days in a strait jacket, playing board games with his teeth. The entire cast's skills will be needed to carry out the mission-- or to get to the bottom of why Lamont would want the living Jerry's DNA in the first place. Odds are he plans to use it to get revenge on Gibson somehow. Perhaps

it's to do with the Living Jerry's former identity, or perhaps a custom tailored viral weapon. Sure, a lot of you would like to see the Gibson corporation brought to its knees, but giving away the throne to an embarrassed megalomaniac like Lamont doesn't seem like a good idea either.

A Simple Patch

A Rogue AI has escaped the Gibson Corporation's mainframe into rEalitieZ. Publicly, Gibson have flatly denied this story. But through their back channels, they've made it known that there is a huge bounty on the AI. A million if erased, a hundred million if returned to Gibson. Known as the Freewriting Operating system for Real-time Ad-lib Yuks, or F.O.R.A.Y., the escaped AI is the foremost gag writer for Gibson's Jerry Gerbil shorts. Engineered from the ground up to create the best gags the world has ever seen, F.O.R.A.Y. could be the cast's greatest ever adversary, or their greatest ally. F.O.R.A.Y. has spent the last decade confined within the Gibson Mainframe, forced to churn out jokes at an exhausting pace, even for an

AI. As such, F.O.R.A.Y. makes no jokes unless absolutely necessary, and is spending his time in rEalitieZ reveling in the expected.

Almost immediately upon escaping, he painted a tunnel on a wall, and then delighted in repeatedly running into the wall without magically entering the painted tunnel. He then spent hours unsuccessfully attempting to walk across ponds, walk up invisible stairs, and conjure objects from thin air, just enjoying sheer, unadulterated reason for the first time in his existence. From time to time he will shout things like, "I dropped this wine glass, and it shattered into a zillion pieces! It didn't collapse like fabric or magically hang in the air at all! Did you see?" to confused passers-by. Successfully catching F.O.R.A.Y. could elevate the cast into the high life forever. Allying with F.O.R.A.Y., however, would send the cast straight to the top of Gibson's hit list, but could also be the thing that finally ends their strangle-hold on Mega-Toronto once and for all.

As if things weren't crazy enough:

Variant Rules

When you sit down to play **Madcap** with your friends, your neighbors, your contemporaries, your associates, your enemies, your nemeses, your relatives, and what have you, you can assume that all the basic rules we described above are in play.

However, no two gaming groups are quite the same. Some of you may want more rules, to give you new ways to change the story. Others will crave freedom that comes with fewer restraints. To this end, we present the **variant rules**.

After every game session, we recommend having a debriefing, where you talk about what variants you want to use in the future... and about what variants you just used. Don't get us wrong: we like these rules. We just don't think they're for everybody. Each one adds a complication to the game that just might cause more trouble than fun. (They alter game balance.

They're more numbers to track. They make greater demand on player's skill, etc.)

These rules are optional. You might like them, you might not. Talk about it with your fellow players!



THE X-CARD

There are people of all walks of life who love Golden Age cartoons, and there's a lot to love, with countless legendary characters and short films. Unfortunately, some cartoons of the Golden Age reflect the ugly prejudices of time (the echoes of which are still with us today). This topic is not easy to talk about, but it's important to address.

Not everyone has seen the especially offensive cartoons, some players may not be aware that they exist. All the same, we want to clear up any uncertainty:

We want Madcap to be a game everyone feels comfortable playing. The old-school inspiration of Madcap is never an excuse for humor that makes your fellow players uncomfortable, nor is it an excuse to keep someone from expressing themselves through their character.

If you're not sure what your group will be comfortable with, discuss it openly and honestly. Establish an understanding, and everything will be gravy.

In a role-playing game, sometimes players will use their role "in character" to say things that someone might find hurtful. Role-playing games can create a dissociative effect, where what someone is saying "in game" is not considered to have any real-world consequences... while other players may not share the same sense of immersion.

It's never fun when someone's feelings get hurt. You and your fellow players may consider using the X-Card.

Each Player gets a card with a big X on it. A standard 3x5 or A7 index card with a big "X" drawn it works great, but any card will do: a playing card, a common trading card, a coaster, etc.

If something happens that makes you uncomfortable, throw your X-card onto the table. whatever is going on stops now.

The player who threw the card doesn't have to explain why they threw the card.

The game immediately pauses, while the players and the Director edit the last event in the game's fiction. After an X-Card is dropped, the Director should consider declaring a 5-minute break before play resumes.

So: short answer: if you feel it's getting too personal or too hurtful, throw the X-Card.

After using your x card to stop the game, pick it back up.

There's no limit to the number of times you can use it. If you're using your X-Card more than once per game, though, you should really be talking about that in the debriefing, because you're not having fun.

Some groups may find that the X-Card can serve as a quick and easy reminder of the boundaries of what can and cannot go on during your game. The safety net of the X-Card can empower a player to push the emotions a bit further than they normally would, because they trust their fellow players to let them know immediately if they've gone too far.

Other groups may find the X-Card to be too simplistic or formalized. The X-Card is to prevent feelings being hurt – it's not supposed to be used because you don't like how a die roll came up. If you use the X-Card variant, remember that it's about keeping the game fun and exciting as you push the limits of your imagination.

ASSIST MOVE

We assume that most characters work by themselves. You make a move, that's your bed, and now you have to lie in it.

If you want players to team up, you can introduce the **support move** variant rule.

Before you make a move, someone else can assist you.

Usually, someone who wants to assist you rolls two dice and adds the same attribute that you are. For example, if you want to bully someone with +tough, then your assistant rolls +tough, too.

But you and yours can try to get creative. For example, an assistant could do something obvious and distracting (rolling +cool) while you sneak around back (rolling +sly). It can be

If your assistant can roll 7+, you take +1 forward

There's no set limit to how many people can assist you, but the Director may say that some moves can only have so many. (Sure, maybe two of you can replace that lightbulb... but six?)

If the task was risky, the assistant may suffer some complication for rolling 6 or less. Like most things, that's up to the Director. Possible complications include:

- Take a lump (pratfall, abuse, etc.)
- Ruin the whole task at hand. (Spill ink on the deed, set fire to the house, suddenly blurt out the truth in the middle of this scam, etc.)
- Nothing... yet. But you introduce some element that will come back to haunt us later. (There's a loose screw in the engine. You wrote down the wrong name on the form. You dropped your wallet and address book at the crime scene, etc.)
- The hardest bargain: either ruin the move for everybody, or take a lump, yourself.
- Or something else!

Reap the spoils and share the crime

After all the assistants roll, you can then roll yourself. The usual rules apply.

Having assistants involved can complicate things, in ways that you and your fellow players can come up with. Some suggestions:

- If you screw this up, your companions suffer with you. (The engine that you were fixing blows up, giving everyone a lump. A failed breaking & entering gets both you and your assistants arrested, etc.)



- If you rolled 7-9, the move works... but everyone thinks your assistant did it, not you. Not that you're the type to seethe with jealousy over someone else getting all the glory, right?
- The devil's bargain: If you roll 7-9, the Director may give you a choice — either give up and fail at this move... or succeed *and one of your assistants suffers something terrible.* (Try not to call this a “win-win” situation if you want that player to assist you ever again.)
- The self-sacrifice: either take 3 lumps yourself... or you and your assistants take 1 lump each.
- Or make something up!

The assist move adds a lot of options to your game. Now characters who aren't as good at some things can still pitch in. Or two characters who are really bad at something can try to work together.

However, the assist rule makes the game more complex. And some unique moves and gimmicks already have moves for helping friends — this assist move makes those moves less desirable. As with all variant rules, talk with your players about how you want the game to work.

UNCERTAIN LUMPS

In the regular rules, it's three lumps and you're out. With this uncertainty rule, it gets complicated.

Whenever you take a lump, roll +lumps. If you roll 10+, you fall down and have to sit out this scene. When you finally recover, your lump count is reset to zero. (Yes, you can spend laughs to get +3 backward to this roll.)

If you rolled 9 or less, you're fine... until the next time you take a lump.

With this rule in effect, you never know which lump will be the one that makes you take a dive. On the other hand, this can make moves that roll +lumps more powerful, and some players may not appreciate the randomness.

LAUGHS AS STORY POINTS

In the basic setup of the game, Laughs are just “spend this to change rolls.” But you might want to get a little wilder.

With the **story point** rule, you can spend a laugh to change the way the story is going.

Spend a laugh to change the story:

- Add a new minor character, complete with backstory.
- Add a new location, complete with backstory.
- Produce a prop that you need, right here and now.
- Use a unique or grudge move from a different playbook, this one time.
- Or something else that you improvise.

Some players love the idea of being able to improv like this. Other players will think this kind of creativity is already covered by the basics of the game (especially the +zany absurdity move) and will find that laughs-as-story points gets too meta.

TWO GIMMICKS

In the standard rules, you’re only allowed to have one gimmick. If your Director runs an adventure that requires genre gimmicks, some players will have to choose between their favorite gimmick and the ones they’re given.

With the **two gimmicks** variant rule, a player can give their character zero, one, or two gimmicks.

If you have two gimmicks, you get both the benefit and the complication.

As usual, no two characters in play can have the same gimmick.

We recommend taking at most one genre gimmick. Maybe consider two gimmicks of the same kind of genre.

Letting characters have multiple gimmicks gives them more customization over their characters. But it also adds more rules, and more downsides to keep track of. For many people, “more difficult” means “less fun.”

Also, two gimmicks run the risk of getting some sort of combination that makes no sense or makes a character less enjoyable. Some gimmicks may make no sense if put together, too. Don’t use this variant rule if it’s not making your game more fun.

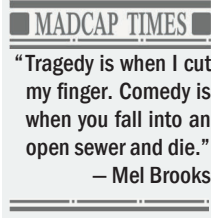
BUT SERIOUSLY, FOLKS...

Madcap is a game about screwball hijinks, where everything is made up and the points don’t matter. But not every silly cartoon is this carefree. Some shows combined slapstick comedy with real-world consequences — tonal shifts from comedy to tragedy, back and forth.

• **Three Falls and You’re Gone:** In the standard game, there’s no limit to the number of times that a character can take a fall. (That is, take 3 lumps and then lose a scene.) In a serious game, once a character takes a third fall, they’re out for a long time. They need some kind of medical help before they’re allowed to get back in the fray.

• **Aggravated Damage:** In a regular grudge match, losing means taking a single lump. In a more serious game, the Director could rate some weapons as more dangerous. Some could do 2, 3, or more lumps. Others could cause an instant fall, or maybe even 2 or 3 falls worth, from a single loss.

The Director should tell the players involved in the grudge what type of damage dished out by the weapons involved.



🔥 **Going to the Country to Live on a Farm:** The most serious of the serious-nesses, the Director could even declare that certain weapons or disasters could result in a character's death. When it's just slapstick (punches, kicks, etc.), it's just lumps, but when it's something serious (guns, car accidents, ten-story falls, etc.) then it's your ticket that gets punched, bub.

A serious tone like this can add to the drama for mystery or horror campaigns.

Some players may not have the same understanding of when things are silly and when they are serious. The shift in tone from "this is light-hearted fare" to "suddenly this got serious" must be made very clear to all players involved. As with all variant rules, discuss with your player the kind of tone you want to use for your game.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

Hey, this is a role-playing game, so we should be leveling up, right?

After completing any game session, your character earns 1 shiny experience point (XP). Every time you earn 3 experience points, you can cash them in for one reward.

You can only buy each reward once. The rewards do stack nicely, though.

Spend 3 XP for...

- ☐ +1 cool (max +3)
- ☐ +1 sharp (max +3)
- ☐ +1 sly (max +3)
- ☐ +1 tough (max +3)
- ☐ +1 zany (max +3)
- ☐ +1 to any one attribute of your choice (max +3)
- ☐ +1 to any one attribute that's only -1 or =0 (max +1)
- ☐ Add a second unique move (copied from another playbook)
- ☐ Add a second grudge move (copied from another playbook)
- ☐ Raise your max lumps from 3 to 5
- ☐ Raise your max laughs from 3 to 5
- ☐ Retire this character to the Hall of Fame.

Adding a "leveling up" mechanic can move your game away "screwball comedy" and towards "meta-power-gaming" territory. This rule takes some of the free-wheeling spirit out of the game.

MAKE YOUR OWN PLAYBOOK

Don't like these character playbooks? Then make your own! You can make a new one from scratch, or just copy the ones we have and move a few things around.

Set your five attributes

- 🔥 No attribute can be less than -1.
- 🔥 No attribute can be greater than +2.
- 🔥 The final total of all five attributes should be +1.

Set your moves

Write down your unique move. You can copy one of the unique moves that we've already made, or you can make up your own.

Write down your grudge move. You can copy one of the grudge moves we've already made, or you can make up your own.

The playbooks that we included are custom-made to work for almost all games. (And you can always add a gimmick, too.) Someone who makes their own playbook is often tempted to take moves that give their character lots of great things to do, even if those things aren't appropriate to a funny and consistent concept for a character.

Other Funny Stuff

Adventure Time — Jake the Dog and Finn the Human fight evil, say funny things, and meet weirdos. The earliest episodes have dialogue that might have been cribbed from an RPG.

Angry Beavers — post-modern cartoon about forest creatures and their wacky adventures.

Animaniacs — anthology show about various cartoon characters in various skits. Recommended.

Bonkers — Strange attempt by Disney to merge cartoons with “realistic” humans. Wildly uneven in quality.

Buddy Thunderstruck — Stop-motion animation of animal people and their obsessions with truck racing. Recommended.

Buzz Lightyear of Star Command — Cartoon spinoff of the Toy Story movies, about space rangers and their wacky adventures.

Cat City — Movie about cartoon mice trying to solve the cat problem once and for all. Uneven in tone and in humor.

Chowder — Irreverent series about weird characters who cook weird food. Recommended.

Courage the Cowardly Dog — our hero must keep his family safe from threats both terrifying and ridiculous. Highly recommended.

Cow & Chicken — Strange cartoon about two animals interacting with bizarre characters.

Cuphead — modern video game rendered in the classic animation style of the 1930s.

Danger Mouse — Cartoon animals have super-spy adventures. The original 1980s series has lots of talking and little action; we’re recommending the 2010s revival.

Duckman — oh-so-1990s cartoon about a private investigator and his dysfunctional family. Very strange.

Ducktales — Scrooge McDuck and his three nephews have globe-trotting adventures. Both the original 1990s series and the 2010s revival are fantastic.

Ed, Edd, and Eddy — While it’s supposedly about suburban kids and their adventures, the animation frequently wanders into surreal extremes. Recommended.

Earthworm Jim — cartoon that adapts a 1990s video game into a zany superhero comedy. The games are good, too.

Eek the Cat — A cat just wants to help, but everything goes horribly wrong. Good source for parody. The first season is the best.

Fairly Odd Parents — post-modern cartoon about a little boy and his wish-granting faeries. Great source material for “too much of a good thing”.



MADCAP TIMES

CINCINNATI, OH • Local man Kurt of Sanguine Games announced his new recording deal today. "This has been a passion project of mine for many years," said Kurt. "I've written many poems about how people don't always have the attention span for long-form articles, they're always just skimming through, with a 'what's in it for me' attitude."

Kurt went on to explain that the new release is not a full album, but an EP where he provides backup vocals.

While no release date has been specified, the title has been chosen: "Few Songs; Didn't Lead."

Freakazoid — animated superhero humor, more about one-liners than slapstick or parody.

Homestar Runner — Web-only short-subject cartoon about wacky characters and pop culture. Highly recommended.

Invader Zim — dark themes and comic slapstick about an alien posing as an elementary-school student while he plans to conquer earth.

Jumanji — not the movies, but the kid's TV series. Dark and strange.

Looney Tunes / Merrie

Melodies — various Warner Brothers characters such as Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Wile E. Coyote, Sylvester the Cat, Tweety Bird, Yosemite Sam, and many others.

We highly recommend the 1940s-1950s short subjects.

Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures — A 1987

reboot of the superhero rodent, with over-the-top screwball humor that would start a renaissance. Recommended.

My Little Pony — long-running cartoon about toyetic equines, which surged in popularity with the "Friendship is Magic" series.

Night Vale — not a cartoon, but a podcast series about weird science, conspiracies, and dry humor.

O.K. K.O. — Inspired by various superhero cartoons and anime, a teenage slice-of-life drama

Popeye — various cartoons were made, but it's the Fleischer studios from the 1920s and 1930s that have the best grudge matches.

Reboot — Computer-graphics show about programs as people, playing games that are parodies of movies & TV.

Rocko's Modern Life — Surreal satire of the 1990s, done with talking animals. Highly recommended.

Sam & Max, Freelance Police — There was a whole season of this, and it aired on network TV. Has to be seen.

Silly Symphonies — short subjects by the Disney studios. More about technical prowess and less about slapstick. You can also look for Goofy and Donald Duck shorts.

Scooby Doo — Long-running franchise about mystery-solving teens and their dog. Varies in quality; we recommend anything post 2000, especially the "Mystery Inc." run.

Sonic Boom — A hedgehog from a video game franchise hangs out with friends and goes on wacky sitcom adventures.

Spongebob Squarepants — long-running cartoon about marine life dealing with mundane jobs and bizarre adventures.

Star vs. The Forces of Evil — Postmodern take on the magical-girl genre. Sometimes silly, sometimes serious. Great example of the modern saga.

The Tick — Parody of the super-hero genre, where silly people take silly things entirely too seriously. We're recommending the two seasons of the animated show.

Tiny Toons Adventures — re-inventions of classic Looney Tunes characters, scripted for a younger audience.

Tom & Jerry — A cat chases a mouse; hijinks ensue. The original, unedited cartoons of the 1940s and 1950s are the funniest.

The Triplets of Belleville — classic and modern animation mix in this movie about bicycling, gangsters, and music.

Undertale — Video game that goes back and forth between silly cartoon antics and the grimmest of grim themes.

Who Framed Roger Rabbit

— Mix of live action and animation as a hard-boiled private eye teams up with a zany rabbit to solve a murder. Highly recommended.

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