

The image features a dark silhouette of a building's dome and spire on the left side, set against a vibrant, golden-orange sky. The sky is filled with soft, glowing clouds, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is warm and serene.

THE FIRST OF
DECEMBER

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

GDC3

Shifting Forest Storyworks

Creator: GD Crowley
Lead Editor: Rebecca Ganetzky
Editing: David Green
Technical: Henry Towsner
Chief Playtester: Matt Brown

Thanks to all our playtesters!

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General Information

What is a LARP?

A larp is an activity involving several people in which the participants act out a story. Like a play or traditional improvisational theater, each participant generally acts out one character in real time. Unlike a play, the events and ending of the story are not predetermined. Unlike traditional improvisation, the starting situation and nature of the characters is predetermined.

All but one of the participants (the Players) depict characters in the story. They choose their own interpretation of whatever details are unspecified about the personality and background of the character, and use this to decide on the dialog and actions of their character. They are responsible for the strategic and thematically significant decisions of the character and thinking of the ideas that the character is likely to think of. Some value playing a character for the strategic challenge of trying to achieve the character's goals. Others value the vicarious experience of drama and emotion.

The last participant (the Director) is responsible for managing the larp and performing the many necessary tasks other than depicting main characters. These include general organization, playing minor characters, keeping track of the results of actions and the consequences of hidden aspects of the situation, sometimes introducing new elements or information to manage the plot, and adjudicating rules. The Director does not have the authority to dictate actions of other participants' characters.

Rules exist to represent skill differences between characters that do not exist between players and to resolve actions that cannot be directly acted out, either because they are unsafe (like fighting), or simply impractical/impossible (like magic).

Looking for more explanation? Just check out the detailed guide available on our website, www.shiftingforest.com.

DEFINITIONS:

Player: A participant whose sole role is the depiction of one important character.

Director: The participant managing the larp who performs the other tasks described above. Traditionally called the Game Master.

PC: A character depicted by a player.

NPC: A character depicted by the Director.

In Character (IC): Descriptive of actions, dialog, events or decisions actually made by the character and taking place in the fictional world.

Out of Character (OOC): Descriptive of actions, dialog, events or decisions involving the participants in the real world.

Roleplaying: The act of thinking as a character and deciding and depicting their actions, using the character's own decision making process. An action that is "roleplayed" is carried out by acting rather than abstracted within the rules.

Game: A specific time a larp is played.

THE FIRST RULE OF LARPING:

Always keep IC and OOC knowledge/motivations separate.

What is a Parlor Larp?

FORMAT AND MISSION:

Parlor Larps are designed to provide maximally accessible, artistically satisfying larp experiences to a relatively small group of 4- 8 players and 1 Director. All require little or no preparation, a normal sized living room, and take 4-5 hours.

THE ART FORM:

Parlor Larps are intended as something more than "just a game." While they are certainly a leisure activity, they are meant to be thought of as exercises in art as well as entertainment, and in that sense are more like theater games than board games, or even many traditional larps.

Like a play or novel, they are designed to provide an experience, provoke an emotional response or make the participants think. While elements of entertainment, fun and challenge will certainly be present frequently, many of the Parlor Larps are not, and are not intended to be, entirely pleasant experiences. (A successful portrayal of a frightening atmosphere is rewarding even though everyone is feeling frightened.) These larps will be much more successful and enjoyable if all participants keep this goal in mind.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT:

Unlike many other single-session larps, Parlor Larps ask players to fill in many details of their character before beginning to play. This personalization process is guided by a set of questions at the end of each character sheet. It helps turn the characters from a collection of goals and background information into real, fully-fleshed people, and also allows each player to identify better with his/her character.

All characters can be played by either gender, though each game has one preferred male and one preferred female character.

DON'T CONFLATE PLAYER AND CHARACTER SUCCESS!

While each character has his own goals, and many characters have directly opposing goals, it is critical to remember that the players are not competing with each other. The goal of each player is to effectively simulate and portray his character and work with the other participants to build a rewarding story. This is true for most larps, and is vital to the spirit of Parlor Larps.

Remember: If you produce a dramatic and compelling story, everybody wins.

How to use this Book

GENERAL INFORMATION:

All participants should read this section the first time they play a Parlor Larp, (except the Guide To Directing, which need only be read by the Director.)

DIRECTORS' SECTION:

Directors, and only Directors, should read this entire section ahead of time. This section contains secret story information and advice necessary to direct the larp, as well as Director copies of information given out to players.

Directors should read the Public Background Overview, and then Larp-Specific Rules & Announcements to players at the start of game.

Public Background Overview: Relevant background info that all the PCs know.

Secret Background Overview: Relevant background info that not all PCs know.

Player Character Overview: A quick summary of PCs and their roles in the larp.

Game Overview: A guide to the plot and progress of the game itself.

Larp-Specific Rules: Rule changes or additions for this particular larp.

Announcements: Useful OOC reminders and other info for the players.

Character Summary Chart: A quick summary of major relevant info for all PCs.

Character Sheets: The Director's copy of each character sheet.

PLAYER MATERIALS:

This section contains perforated pages that the Director can tear out of the booklet and hand to players as appropriate. Keep in mind that by default, players should not see other players' Character Sheets or Game Materials.

Rules Summary: A shortened version of the Parlor Larp Rules for reference.

Public Background Overview: A copy of the publicly known background info.

Rules and Announcements: A copy of the larp-specific rules and announcements.

Character Sheets: 8 character sheets to be given out, one per player.

Game Materials: Some larps have additional materials. See Setup Advice.

IC/OOC:

Agree on a symbol (e.g. crossed fingers) to indicate when speaking OOC.

INTERPRETING CHARACTER SHEETS:

Names: [Male option / Female option] Lastname. Or, Firstname Lastname.

Character Style (see next page): Found in upper left corner.

Age: Found in upper right corner. (Certain larps don't include ages.)

Apparent Identity: General idea of what type of person the character appears to be.

Real Identity: General idea of what type of person the character really is.

Goals: A character's goals at the beginning of the larp. Not set in stone; can change through new events and roleplaying. Given in roughly decreasing priority.

Abilities / Resists: See Rules

Inventory: A list of nonobvious items the PC has at the time

Questions: These questions refer to aspects of the character that were not previously specified, that the player should develop at start of game. Make sure to answer questions in accordance with the spirit of the specified parts of the character sheet. Potentially controversial answers should be checked with the Director first.

A NOTE ON GENDER:

All PCs can be played as either male or female, though each larp has one character that is preferentially male and one preferentially female. However, for the sake of saving space and standardization, all PCs (and some background characters of unfixed gender, such as "John/Jane Smith's spouse") will be referred to by default as "he".

PRIORITY OF CHARACTERS:

While 8 characters are always provided, each larp can run with as few as 4.

In the Character Overview and in the ordering of character sheets, PCs will always be listed in order of priority. This means that the first 4 should always be included, and each subsequent character should be added with each subsequent player. Using this order is critical to the balance of the game -- don't change it.

CHARACTER STYLES:

Each character has a 3-letter code representing its Character Style. This code is meant to describe what it's like to play the character to help players pick characters.

G/E: Goal or Emotion oriented. Gs are more rewarding to play when focusing on pursuing goals, and Es are more rewarding when focusing on depicting emotions.

L/D: Light or Dark personality. How depressing/disturbing the PC is.

S/C: Simple/Complex personality. Complexity of the PC's personality/motivations.

Each larp has one character of each style. All letters are given relative to the other characters in the larp (so in a Dark 5 larp, the Ls will be darker than in a Dark 1).

In general, all Ls can be darkened and all Ss can be made more complex if the player desires, but the converse is not true.

QUICK-DESCRIPTION CLASSIFICATION FOR PARLOR LARPS

(SEE UPPER RIGHT OF BACK COVER):

The classification system is designed to describe the emphases of each larp in order to give an idea of what it would be like to run and play.

PRIORITIES: The opening letters of the classification represent which of five major elements are present as priorities in the larp, in decreasing order of importance.

A: Atmosphere. A particular mood or feel to the larp

D: Discovery. The existence of IC unknowns and the need to find out about them

M: Morality. Moral dilemmas and complicated moral decisions

R: Relationships. Complicated or changing relationship dynamics

S: Strategy. A need to make strategic decisions in pursuit of goals

SCALES: A number from 0-5. 0 = barely present. 3 = average. 5 = maximal.

Dark: The prevalence of depressing or disturbing elements

DIR: The amount of Director plot intervention required, difficulty of Director role

NPC: The amount of time and effort the Director must expend playing an NPC(s)

CONTENT ADVISORIES:

NC: Normal content. Teenagers and older should be comfortable playing.

AC: Adult content. Contains themes/elements that may not be suitable for teens.

DC: Disturbing content. Contains themes/elements that some adults may not be comfortable with. Consider comfort level of everyone in group before playing.

A Guide to Directing

THE BASICS

WHAT DOES THE DIRECTOR DO?

The Director is the person who manages and simulates the universe of the story so that the players can focus on roleplaying their characters. He knows everything about what is really going on, and observes all aspects of the plot as it unfolds. He manages the game, gives descriptions, answers questions about the environment/situation, propagates effects of PCs' actions on the environment and on NPCs' actions, mediates Ability use, and sometimes mediates Conflicts.

The Director also filters information so that each player only knows what he needs to know in order to successfully play his character. Most players find that having a lot of significant knowledge OOC but not IC can get distracting or confusing.

NPCs:

In some larps the Director also physically roleplays an NPC at the same time as his other duties. When doing so, it's fine to move in and out of character as long as it's clear which is which. However, he should take both roleplaying and directing responsibilities into consideration when determining the NPC's actions and timing.

THE DIRECTOR'S OBJECTIVES:

The primary objective of the Director is to produce a satisfying experience for all participants. There are two parts of this: making sure each player is satisfied with his PC's involvement, and making sure that the flow of the collective story is satisfactory.

The first involves making sure that each PC cares about what's going on, always has something to do and is capable of seriously affecting events that matter to him.

The second involves keeping the flow of events roughly within the intended progress, guiding the story to rising action, climax, and an ending that feels conclusive, as well as timing events to be as interesting and dramatic as reasonably possible.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO DIRECTING A PARLOR LARP

Make sure you are familiar with all the General Information.

Read all the Game-Specific Info, ideally at least an hour before playing. Make sure you know all of it, including character sheets. Important details may only be stated once.

Set up the room according to Advice on Setup.

Gather your players and explain the gist of the game.

Go through PCs. Describe them by name, style, age, and Apparent Identity.

Distribute character sheets, but don't let the players read them in detail yet.

If the players don't know the rules, go over them.

Read aloud Public Background Overview.

Let the players read and answer the questions on their sheets in private. When they are done, quickly go over the character with them--you don't need to know the answer to every question, but get an idea of each character. Give out props at this time.

Have players of PCs with significant relationships (e.g. married couples) go over their PCs' personalities and relationship together before start of game..

Gather everyone together and read the Game-Specific Rules and Announcements.

Run the game!

Afterwards, players tend to enjoy a wrapup to discuss what was going on.

ADVICE ON DIRECTING

PHYSICAL BEHAVIOR:

Maintaining atmosphere and keeping everyone in character as much as possible are critical to a successful larp. Thus the Director's involvement must be very unobtrusive when not playing an NPC: Stay in an unused corner. Don't interact with any props (even chairs). Ask and answer questions as discreetly and quietly as possible. Avoid interrupting important moments. Don't referee conflicts that the players can manage themselves. The Director is invisible IC, and therefore shouldn't be a social presence.

However, you should still move around and query players every once in a while so as to keep track of what is going on with everyone. You will also occasionally have to give expositions of events or people to all parties present-- at these times, interrupt clearly and briefly. Make sure everybody hears you the first time.

UNDERSTANDING PLAYERS AND CHARACTERS:

The more you understand each PC's priorities and way of thinking, the more easily you can guide events in directions that will seriously matter to the characters. The story is about them-- it should evoke ideas, themes, and interactions they care about.

PACING AND ACTION:

Timing makes the difference between a story and a three-hour sequence of events. Time background events and NPC actions so that they contribute to rather than detract from the flow of the plot. Each conflict/situation should be thoroughly addressed: Don't interrupt situations that have not been thoroughly explored with new problems. Don't introduce an event until a few PCs are in a position to properly address it. Don't add lesser plot points to a major plot point in such a way that they will draw attention away from what really matters. Keep in mind that even things like responses from background characters (like servants on errands) will contribute new material.

Be aware that at many times nothing will appear to be happening from the Director's point of view, but the same may not be true of the players'. Do not be afraid of twenty minute lulls. On the other hand, do check with players in a lull to see if they feel involved. If they're not, don't be afraid to give advice or, in more extreme cases, tweak events to make sure things get rolling again. A half hour lull is a problem.

Parlor Larps are written to take approximately three to three and a half hours-- the game will be most rewarding if you pace it to last about that long.

MAKING UP ANSWERS:

You will frequently have to answer questions about a given situation. When doing so, answer based on what is consistent with booklet information and previous answers, generally logical, appropriate to atmosphere and genre, compatible with pacing, interesting for the plot, unlikely to upset or derail the plot, feels fair to the players, and will leave you ample room later to guide the game in a variety of directions.

EXERCISING INITIATIVE AND MAKING EXCEPTIONS:

Parlor Larps are written to save the Director from having to spontaneously take major guesses or make up important plot. However, every Director will run into situations where it seems most beneficial to the game to depart from or override aspects of the scenario. The following is advice to keep in mind when doing so:

Understand the scenario so that you will be able to understand the consequences of your changes. Be selfish: always leave yourself as much room to maneuver as you can, and commit to as little future improvisation as you can. Remember that the bigger the change, the more likely it is to get out of hand. Pay careful attention to how your change draws the PCs' focus, and watch out for pacing.

Most importantly, identify and play to your own strengths. Make it so that any additional work you have to do is work that you understand and comes naturally to you.

Parlor Larp General Rules

RULES IN LARPING:

In a larp, most normal activity is simply acted out, with roleplaying and common sense determining the effectiveness of social interactions. The rules exist as a means to simulate characters' actions and capabilities that cannot be safely or effectively acted out.

FUNCTION LEVELS:

Each character, by default, starts at Function Level 5. A character's FL represents the condition the character is in and their ability to act, both physically and psychologically, and can increase or decrease over the course of the larp as a result of harm or recovery.

In general, a character at FL 5 is essentially unharmed and in good shape, at FL 4 is in an unpleasant but not particularly disabling state, at FL 3 is somewhat disabled, at FL 2 cannot perform most activities, and at FL 1 can do little other than speak. If a character is ever reduced to FL 0, s/he is out of the game and completely unable to affect the plot thereafter. It is impossible to go higher than FL 5 or lower than FL 0.

DAMAGE AND RECOVERY:

Decrease of FL is called Damage, but represents any long term harm to effectiveness, not just physical injury. Increase of FL is called Recovery and represents either fixing or making up for previous harm to the character. Change in general is abbreviated DR.

DR is mostly done to a character through Abilities. Each Ability causes DR in a slightly different way, so it is important that each player keep track of what specific injuries/recoveries his character's DR represents, as well as what FL the character is at.

In most cases, DR is explicitly called for by the rules, but if a player decides that his character would be seriously affected either way by what has happened, he can change his character's FL accordingly, subject to Director approval.

REMOVAL FROM THE GAME:

A character that is taken to FL 0 is removed from the game. Specifically, he is removed by the type of damage dealt in that last blow. All previous damage is simply interpreted as making it easier to deal the last blow. Thus, if a character is removed by being punched, he is probably unconscious, but if he is removed by being intimidated, he is probably hiding in a corner unable to do anything.

ABILITIES:

Abilities are actions that a character can take with success determined by rules rather than roleplaying. Abilities are divided into Conflict Abilities and Non-Conflict Abilities. Non-Conflict Abilities always work; Conflict Abilities start Conflicts in which other characters can use other abilities to oppose them.

Abilities are given in the following format:

NAME x [# of uses] (RANGE OF FLs) [bonus]: DESCRIPTION OF EFFECT (amt DR) (resist type)

Examples:

Intimidate x3 (4-5) 1: Make someone back down (-FL3) (S)

Flatter x1 (3-5): Make someone feel unduly proud of themselves (+1) (E)

Spark (1-3): Briefly create a tiny flame by magic

of uses = the number of times that ability may be used during the Larp. If none is listed, the ability may be used as many times as the opportunity arises.

Range of FLs = the range of the user's FLs at which the ability may be used. If a character's FL is outside the range, he may not use that ability.

Bonus = a number from -3 to 3 that represents the character's effectiveness at using that ability against opposition. +/-1 = significant, +/- 2 = extraordinary, +/-3 = world class. (Conflict abilities only.)

Amt DR= DR caused by the ability, if applicable. -/+ FL# indicates that it takes the target down/up to that FL, respectively. -/+ # indicates that the target loses/gains that number of FLs.

Type = type of Resist required to block the ability. P = Physical, S = Social, E = Emotional, NR = Not Resistable, P/S = Physical or Social, whichever is higher. Other letters for other Resists. (Conflict abilities only.)

Special exceptions to abilities are given in the Special section of the character sheet

CONFLICTS:

A conflict occurs when two or more people use opposing abilities. Conflicts need not be physical; two people attempting to intimidate each other also counts.

Whenever anybody uses an ability listed under Conflict Abilities, everybody able to participate in the conflict is invited to do so simultaneously. To participate is not necessary to be directly involved in the action that starts the conflict—one simply has to be taking an action in reaction to other actions taking place.

If a player thinks that his/her character would be too surprised to immediately respond, he should wait until after the conflict to respond, though he still Resists.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

DECLARING ACTIONS:

Conflict resolution works as follows: First, participants state their intended actions. Others are invited to participate, stop participating, or change their own intended actions in light of the intended actions of others. (In the rare case that this causes an endless circle, everybody should choose actions simultaneously in secret.)

A participant can declare his/her intended action as contingent on the success or failure of another action (e.g. only running away if his partner dies.). He can also declare that he is not acting, and simply focusing on Resisting as a primary action.

RESISTING:

Every participant in a conflict is always by default Resisting, even if he is performing another action at the same time. This means that the character is trying not to be affected by hostile actions of others. There are three default types of Resists: Physical, Social, and Emotional. Certain larps may change types of Resists. A character always uses all Resists he has at the same time.

Each type of Resist behaves like an ability with a bonus of the Resist number (see bottom left of character sheet) whose effect is to prevent all undesired actions corresponding to that type of Resist from affecting the user.

Note that most actions don't need to be resisted. By default, especially in small conflicts, a player can choose to just permit an action targeting his PC for simplicity, or because he wants it to succeed..

An ability that takes a <type> Resist is called a <type> ability.

BIDDING:

After all intended actions are established, all participants then simultaneously Bid Damage. Bidding means secretly choosing an amount of damage (in FLs) the player is willing for his/her character to risk getting in order to increase the character's action's chance of success.

This is not to say that the character explicitly decides to get damaged in order to succeed-- whether and how much to bid is an OOC decision that is based on the player's judgment of how likely the character is to seriously push for his intended result despite chance of physical or psychological trauma.

No matter how dedicated the character is, however, bid sizes are also limited by the amount of damage the character can plausibly get in the conflict, and each participant is responsible for determining a plausible IC reason to take the amount of damage he bid.. For example, in most cases it is implausible to take more than 1 damage in a petty argument, but any amount of damage is possible in a gun fight. Keep in mind that losing an FL is important, and by default players should not bid.

Bids only apply to a character's primary action. This means that if a character is doing a normal action, the bid does not increase his chances of Resisting. If, however, he is only Resisting, then the bid will increase the chance of all Resists succeeding. Damage that was bid only actually occurs if the action is in any way successful.

When all bids are decided, all participants hold out 0-5 fingers behind their backs corresponding to the size of their bids, then show them at the same time.

RANKING:

Participants then calculate totals by adding their ability bonus and bid. (We recommend then holding out fingers for totals, for efficiency.) If a character is primarily Resisting, any bid he made is added to all his Resist totals.

At this point, participants sort out which attempted actions execute by ranking all participants by their totals, from highest to lowest, with ties broken randomly (such as with rock-paper-scissors).

Actions take place in order, starting from the highest. If a previous action causes a character to have too low an FL to perform his intended action, or simply prevents that action from occurring (e.g. a Resist), that action is cancelled. In essence, a Resist cancels all lower-ranked effects of the relevant Resist type on that character.

If any part of an action succeeded, then the bid goes into effect immediately after the action executes.

It's important to note that when an intended action gets cancelled because of effects of earlier actions, any limited-use abilities spent to attempt the action are still used up, but any damage bid does not occur.

ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are items that make it easier for a character to cause DR, often as a conflict action. The most common type of artifacts are weapons, which obviously cause damage. However, artifacts like drugs may cause recovery.

Certain characters may have abilities that make them good at using an artifact, but by default, characters simply use artifacts with their General Physical ability. If an artifact use action succeeds, then the target is DRed an amount according to the DR amount of the artifact (exactly the same as using an ability that normally causes DR on its own).

In certain cases, artifact use abilities override DR amounts on an artifact, either by the description, or by being themselves fixed DR (i.e. -/+ FL#). Artifact use abilities that are themselves unfixed DR (i.e. -/+ #) stack with the artifact's own DR amount.

By default, knives are (-1) and guns are (-2).

AFTER RESOLUTION:

After the above process is complete, characters may elect to use more abilities in response to the results. This opens a new round of the conflict in which anybody involved can use abilities and the rules for resolution are the same. This process repeats until a round happens in which nobody uses an ability. Then roleplaying can resume.

After a block of conflict is resolved, we recommend playing out as much of the determined actions as possible (without really hurting anybody, of course). This is especially helpful when a conflict ability used corresponded to IC dialog—it is useful for future dialog to know exactly what the characters said.

The Tale of Bob the Surgeon: A Few Examples of Conflict Resolution

Bob the Surgeon is strolling through a park, enjoying the flowers. His wife, Meg the Engineer uses her "Get Bob to Come Home" ability. (She chooses to do this because she has the ability—if she didn't, she could still simply try to talk him into going home through roleplaying.)

Bob does not want to go home, and chooses to Resist (in this case, only his "Social Resist" matters, since the only power being used against him is social). Bob's player thinks that Bob finds this is important enough that he should bid 1 to Resist, which he defines to represent damage from the frustration. Meg's player decides Meg doesn't consider the matter important enough to bid. Bob has a bonus of 0 to "Social Resist" and Meg has a bonus of 1 to "Get Bob to Come Home." Consequently, both of them have totals of 1.

The tie is resolved by rock-paper-scissors. Bob wins—his Social Resist is ranked higher, and therefore executes first, blocking any Social powers used against him for the rest of the round. Since he has bid 1 to use it, he is reduced to FL 4 as soon as he resists. When they play it out, Meg still acts out trying to talk him into going home, but he is prepared to say no, although he gets frustrated at her. Meg's ability is used up, so she cannot try again.

Bob has a non-conflict ability called "Independence" which allows him to recover 1 FL of damage whenever he successfully resists his wife. Since he's just resisted Meg, he can use it, and he is restored to FL 5. Since it's a non-conflict ability, it doesn't create a conflict and Meg can't prevent it.

After this has occurred, Meg does not drop the conflict, but starts a new one by immediately trying a more desperate tactic. She uses her "Guilt Trip" ability, an emotional attack which does actual damage. Bob decides to flee the park; since he doesn't have a specific ability that lets him do this, it counts as a "General Physical." Zagrabas the Restaurateur, who is also walking by, uses his social ability "Tease" on Bob to embarrass him into staying and standing up to his wife.

Bob has a "General Physical" of 0, and again bids 1. Meg has a "Guilt Trip" of 1, and doesn't bid. Zagrabas has a "Tease" of 0, but a special ability that gives him a bonus of 1 to social abilities immediately after taking a refreshing walk. In addition, Zagrabas cares so much about encouraging Bob to stand up for himself that his player decides that he bids 1 FL of damage, representing the social awkwardness of forcefully intruding on a private argument. This gives Zagrabas a total of 2, while Bob and Meg both have totals of 1.

Zagrabas goes first, beating Bob's social resist of -1, and forces Bob to stay; right after his action executes, his bid executes, reducing him to FL 4. Bob's action contradicts this and would have executed after, so it gets cancelled. Since his action didn't happen, his bid gets cancelled as well. Meg can still do her action, and she beats Bob's emotional resist of 0. Her power immediately takes the target to FL 3, and since Bob's current FL is greater than that, he is reduced to FL 3.

They pause to act out the actions of the round. Bob turns to leave, but Zagrabas starts mocking Bob for caving into his wife, whom he describes in unflattering terms. Bob turns back to confront her as she starts making him feel guilty.

Because Zagrabas succeeded during the previous round, Bob stands up for himself, using his "Complain" ability to do damage to Meg. Meg, meanwhile, tries to get revenge at Zagrabas for what he said about her, using her "General Physical" ability and

her unusual, extra-heavy purse (which does the same damage as a knife). Zagrabas gets angry at Meg, and uses "Embarrass" (an emotional attack) to humiliate her for 1 FL of damage, hoping she will then leave. A passerby uses "Instantly Summon Police." When Meg learns this, she decides that she only wants to attack Zagrabas if the police haven't arrived yet. At the same time, an unnamed shady character wishes to slip out before the police arrive, using a "General Physical." Unk the Lawyer, in the escalating argument, tries to use his "Threaten to Sue" ability on Zagrabas because he hates restaurateurs.

Meanwhile, Unk's pet platypus Eggy and Zagrabas' pet echidna Etch each fight to help their masters. Eggy declares that he wants to use his "Speedy Attack" ability to do physical injury to Zagrabas. Hearing this, Etch decides to attack Eggy in his master's defense. Eggy declares that if he is being attacked, he would rather fight his attacker instead of Zagrabas, and Etch decides that he still wants to attack Eggy anyway to demonstrate his loyalty. So Eggy instead uses his ability to attack Etch, while Etch uses his General Physical to poke Eggy with his spines, even though he can't actually cause damage using general physical without an artifact. Thus the fight between the two pets becomes a completely separate conflict happening at the same time.

Bob's bonus is -2, and he is so drained by Meg's guilt trip that he has nothing extra to throw into it, so he doesn't bid. Meg has a bonus of 0, and bids 1 because she's gotten angry and reckless. Zagrabas has a bonus of 2, but all of his Resists are 1. He would like to bid to increase his Resists, but because he is performing an action besides Resisting, his bid could only apply to the action, so he doesn't bid. The passerby has a bonus of 1, the shady character has a bonus of 3, and Unk has a bonus of 2. Finally, the pets both have attacks of -2 and all Resists at -1 (being only pets). None of these people are invested enough to bid.

The shady character goes first at 3, and leaves. Since nobody's action is contradicted by this, everyone else's actions still have the possibility of happening normally.

Unk and Zagrabas are tied at 2. Unk beats Zagrabas' Resist, but the order matters since Zagrabas can only use Embarrass at FL 3 or higher, is currently at FL4, and Unk's lawsuit always does 2 damage. Zagrabas has a single use non-conflict ability that lets him win a tie due to being extremely lucky. He uses it, and humiliates Meg before Unk threatens him. Then he is reduced to FL2.

Now Meg and the passerby both have totals of 1, and Zagrabas has a physical resist of 1. Meg won't attack Zagrabas if the police are there, and has to beat Zagrabas' Resist, so all three throw rock-paper-scissors together (even though it doesn't matter whether Zagrabas or the passerby goes first, as long as one of them beats Meg). Meg wins, and hits Zagrabas with her purse, since she won't react to something that hasn't happened yet. Her purse always does 1 FL of damage, so Zagrabas is reduced to FL 1. Then the passerby summons the police, who see everything that happens, but are too surprised to react until this set of actions have resolved.

Now, at -2, Bob complains to Meg and both animals attack each other. None of these activities contradict each other, so the order doesn't matter, but all the actions lose to the corresponding Resist.

Now that the police are here, Meg's player gets Director approval to take 1 FL of voluntary damage to represent her fear of getting in trouble for caught disturbing the peace by hitting people in a public park, bringing her down to FL3.

Since the police are present, people have to be careful about what they do. Unk uses a social ability, "Slander," to make Zagrabas out to be a violent criminal. Bob decides to try to make Meg feel better using his "Shelter" ability, which recovers someone 1 FL by offering to protect them from danger. Meg is so surprised at this that she fails to take any action, but she decides that the way Bob is helping her is too demeaning, and Resists it. Since the police don't care about the pets, Eggy and Etch attack each other again, and this time each bid 2 because, with Zagrabas so injured, they're both willing to risk serious physical injury to try to hurt the other. No one else bids.

Unk has a bonus of 2, which overcomes Zagrabas' Resist of 1. It does 1 FL of

damage, reducing Zagrabas to FL 0. Zagrabas is so reviled as a criminal that he can no longer affect the game, and is removed from play. His previous damage contributes to this—for instance the bruise from the purse makes him look less respectable—but it is the final ability which determines why he is removed. Bob has a bonus of 0, while Meg's Resist is 1, so Bob is unable to heal her. Finally, Eggy and Etch have totals of 0, so Eggy does 1 FL of damage to Etch while Etch (who used a "General Physical") succeeds in poking Eggy with his spines, but does no damage to him. Finally, they act out the results, with Unk openly accusing Zagrabas of being a criminal and Bob trying to comfort Meg and she rebuffs him, while the pets fight dedicatedly in the background.

Game-Specific Information for Director

Public Background Overview

A blizzard was raging in Washington D.C. on November 30th of an election year. The old congress was in session trying to pass a bit more legislation before the Democratic Party took power in January. In particular, Republicans have been rushing through new legislation to cut back on welfare funding to states. Various interest groups have organized emergency meetings to support or oppose the bill. There are protests on the Mall, amid the snow. In this historic time, a group kidnaps between three and six people for an unknown purpose.

On the morning of the first of December, they arrive in their captors' base...

Secret Background Overview

The Universal Liberation Front is a small but surprisingly organized group of Washington DC area anarchists dedicated to overthrowing of the US federal and state governments by any means necessary. Until now, they have been a small-scale thorn in the side of the city, and have done little real damage. But now the Leadership has a long shot plan for complete victory.

For months, they have been gathering materials and information to make a portable, but particularly devastating, nuclear weapon. They intended to set it off in downtown Washington in late February, with both Houses of Congress in session and with the National Governors Association meeting in D.C., in order to wipe out most of the government. They were a few ingredients away from completion, when a radical welfare bill so worried the NGA that the governors chose to meet early. Suddenly, the ULF must hurry to get the remaining ingredients quickly. On the night before the first day of the NGA meeting, they have located all the ingredients, but cannot afford to buy them. So, they have resorted to kidnapping.

They kidnap between three and six people over the course of November 30th and bring them to a hideout in an abandoned office building in the slums of Washington. At 8AM on December 1st, the hostages are finally put in a room together with one or two guards. Most of them are wearing modified remote-control dog shock collars. The guards use controllers for the collars and cell phone cameras to capture their victims' pain and their desire to be ransomed. They will attempt to convince their contacts to give up the remaining ingredients in exchange for the lives of the hostages.

Most critically, they need a big chunk of high-grade plutonium. They have identified the Ragosi crime family in Baltimore as having more than enough, but the Ragosis don't want to sell to somebody who they believe will cause damage domestically. To insure cooperation, they have secured the Ragosi boss's child, Antonio/Antonia Ragosi and have threatened to hurt him until the Ragosi boss agrees to cooperate. Sebastian or Selene Parker is a retired detective on whom the Ragosi boss was planning vengeance. The ULF are offering to give him over to the Ragosis and threatening to protect him. Therefore, he has no collar.

Also, Randolph Borenstein, a Department of Energy scientist, working for ULF, has provided, among other things, a high quality directional neutron source, which is a critical component. Unfortunately, his thirteen-year-old son, Mark Borenstein, stole the neutron source, hid it, and won't tell anybody where it is. Mark's father demands that his son not be harmed, and as his expertise is indispensable, they kidnapped Mark's best friend and his teacher mentor.

Optionally, (if C. Harmon is in the game) they still need one last detail on the design. Gerald or Geraldine Harmon (opposite gender to Clarence/Clara) is a scientist at Los Alamos who has been selling nuclear secrets to the Chinese and keeps copies. ULF cannot afford to buy them, and so must kidnap the scientist's spouse.

Optionally, (if Kit Watson is in the game) ULF wants insurance against somebody calling the cops on them. David Watson is the head of a conspiracy of major media companies that takes huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments. He has dirt on everybody and can easily convince the DCPD to delay investigating by one day, as long as it looks like just a kidnapping. ULF cannot afford his services, and so kidnaps his kid.

Character Overview

(Listed in order of decreasing necessity for smaller-group games.)

ED/EMMA TENNYSON: GLC. The first guard is an ideological anarchist who tries to reduce the violence. He doesn't know about the ULF's plans and would probably be upset to find out about them. He will exert a calming influence on the hostages and basically do his job. He fulfills the role of the guards reliably, but could change his mind with new information.

ANTONIO/ANTONIA RAGOSI: GDC. Critical to getting the first ingredient and very unlikely to want to cooperate, he is the greatest obstacle to the guards. They cannot afford to kill him, even though he is the best fighter. He is the strategic mainstay on the side of the hostages trying to stop the anarchists.

DANA WILSON: ELS. He is a social power and is likely to encourage cooperation (including distracting from any resistance) until he figures out how serious the situation is. He cares about kids and about his own survival. Expect him to interact with Matt/Mary Winters a lot, and perhaps Kit Watson. He has the greatest information-gathering potential with his ability to have private conversations. Him finding out about the bomb is therefore a definite possibility.

MATT/MARY WINTERS: EDC. A bit of chaos at the heart of the plot. He has a passionate, and not uncomplicated relationship with the most volatile of the NPC contacts. He has the most conflicted psychology. He is defiant but protective. His abilities all promote chaos. He possesses the only weapon of the hostages. He has information that can make an NPC irrelevant. He can be very decisive for his chosen goal, if he can actually work toward a single goal rationally.

CLARENCE/CLARA HARMON (PREFERRED FEMALE): EDS. Angry defiance wars with fear. He is unlikely to have a huge effect on the plot in terms of success or failure, but provides material for the fight over how well people will take things. Adding the scientist only marginally decreases the chances of success for the anarchists because he is the simplest to deal with. His most important piece of information is the location of the room. With this, he has a chance to actually defeat the captors.

JACK/JANET ROLLINS (PREFERRED MALE): GDS. The second guard, in many ways, balances the first. He is trying to hurt and damage the hostages permanently and so is in direct conflict with Tennyson even though they are working together. He is no more effective than Tennyson alone, but they may have a successful good cop, bad cop act together.

SEBASTIAN/SELENE PARKER: GLS. Another notch on the side of order and an asset to the side of good, the detective has a good chance of finding out important information by detecting lies. He is fairly expendable, though, and may very well get killed.

KIT WATSON: ELC. His existence partially cancels the risk the Harmons create by handling the possibility of a media leak. He is very expendable and has goals that are mainly social and somewhat perpendicular to the plot. He is very socially effective and is likely to be successful, but it is not obvious at what. He could end up helping almost any side.

Game Overview

GAME START:

The game begins with the hostages being led into the room by several armed anarchists and the door being locked from the outside. The guards are instructed to give the contacts 4 hours to cooperate or the hostages will be executed. Ten minutes into the game, the blizzard that is raging outside will take out power to the building. The building has a generator that will only last another 3 hours. The time limit is suddenly shorter.

RULES:

The shock collars are used to safely and easily torture the hostages. When activated, they deliver painful static shocks, each of which hurts about as much as touching a stove, a few times per second. Game effect wise, they cause their victim to operate as if they were 2 function levels lower than they are for purposes of being able to use abilities. If the shocks end in mid-conflict, the victim still operates as if they were 1 function level lower until they have had a few role-played minutes to recover. A general physical action by someone with the controller can turn the collars on or off. The collars take two successful general physical actions to remove. A general physical action can physically restrain somebody, including a guard, but they may still use the controller, if it is accessible. A second action on a restrained person can relieve them of what they are holding.

CONTACTS:

The main job of the director is playing the contacts and possibly the anarchist leader. The strategy of the game is in convincing the contacts to cooperate, or not. The contacts should be simulated impartially to maintain the integrity of this strategy.

The guards do not know what the materials are for, only that the ULF wants them. The nature of the mission is being kept very secret from the members of the group, to better keep it secret from the public and the government. The anarchist leader knows all relevant information, but should be slow to give it to the guards and very reluctant for the hostages to know anything. The hostages should know as little as possible and the contacts even less.

Piter Rogosi has been estranged from his son or daughter for quite some time. He is not terribly inclined to protect him. He is willing to accept an apology or promise that he will work for P. Rogosi again. He will not help his kid if he doesn't seem to want to apologize or go back to working for his parent. He cares about his kid being treated with dignity more than he cares about his comfort. He keeps his deals and is angered if others do not return the favor. If the detective is there, then he can be offered as part of the deal. Piter will be paranoid after agreeing to cooperate and will want updates on his kid's status. He will not cooperate if the kid is killed. He will not cooperate if he knows the result is as serious as it is. Transferring the Plutonium takes 40 minutes, and can be stopped at any time. He will always leave himself enough time to choose whether to cooperate, until the last minute. If he is seriously betrayed after he cooperates, he can find and attack the anarchist base within 10 minutes. This will cause them to lose.

Mark Borenstein: He is a defiant and emotionally damaged 13-year-old boy with an abusive alcoholic father who works for ULF. He is home alone because his father is busy with the bomb. He's paranoid and will not talk very long on the phone. He'll be confused most of the time and take directions from his friend and teacher. If they disagree, it will upset him a lot. He'll give the location of the neutron source if people say it's a good idea, but he should be frozen and inconveniently upset a lot at first. If he gives the location it takes 10 minutes to retrieve it. If it's ever been too long, he'll want to talk to his friend and/or teacher. If he is ignored, angered, or hopeless, he can

call the police. It'll take him 10 minutes to convince them he's serious and between 5-30 minutes to stop the anarchists if information is given on how to do so. If nuclear weapons are mentioned the FBI will be involved and will find the base within 10 minutes. This will cause the anarchists to lose.

Doctor Harmon needs to feel powerful and to have power over his spouse. All it takes to get him to cooperate is to seriously threaten or compete with his own power over their spouse. He will only call the police if the spouse dies. If he does, it works like it does for Mark, without the 10 minute delay in believing him. It is instantaneous and irreversible for him to send the necessary info.

David Watson also needs to feel powerful and in control, but has a much more relaxed attitude toward the subject of kidnapping. He will cooperate as long as his kid is unharmed. His cooperation will negate the effectiveness of calling the police unless something more serious than kidnapping is implied. If his kid is seriously harmed or the kidnapers are shown to be dangerously unprofessional, he will call the police himself and be immediately listened to.

ENDING:

Once all three (two if C. Harmon is not in the game) of the ingredients are secured, it takes at least 5 minutes to finish assembling the bomb (but if the power will hold out longer, they will take the full time to be more thorough, unless they know the cops are coming) and 10 minutes to drive it into place. The hostages and anarchists will be moved into the fallout shelter elsewhere in the building, and will spend the next few weeks underground. Who knows what sort of world they will emerge into.

If the anarchists fail to build the bomb by 11AM, they will run out of generator power and will no longer be able to keep the lights and heat on or run the lab. They will have failed, morale will break, and it will be up to the guards to decide what happens to the hostages.

If the cops arrive after the bomb has left, they will only be able to stop it if given detailed information by the characters with enough time to react. The director will need to judge what the appropriate consequences are.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS:

| Event | Triggered by | Time req. | Can be stopped by |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Ragosi transfers plutonium | Persuading Ragosi | 40 min | Piter Ragosi if he becomes dissatisfied |
| Ragosi attacks base | Betraying Ragosi after he cooperates | 10 min | Appeasing Ragosi |
| Getting neutron source | Persuading Mark | 10 min | Somebody moving it |
| Mark calls police | Mark becomes upset | 10 min | Appeasing Mark |
| Harmon calls police | C. Harmon dies | 0 min | Nothing |
| Harmon gives info | Persuading Harmon | 0 min | Nothing |
| Watson calls police | Watson gets upset | 0 min | Nothing |
| Police respond to kidnapping | Police get called | 5-30 min | David Watson |
| Police/FBI respond to nuclear weapons | Police get told about nuclear weapon | 10 min | Nothing |
| Anarchists build bomb | Anarchists get all components | 5 min/end of game | Police or Piter Ragosi |

Advice on Setup

- The room should be uncomfortable and tense. Annoying humming noises are often helpful. Dim and inadequate lighting is very helpful.
- If possible, it is nice if the room can be made to get gradually colder. Opening windows or turning on air conditioning is useful.
- Seating in the room should be arranged so that the hostages can naturally talk to each other, in order to encourage talking.
- The important inventory items should be represented. Squirt guns make good guns. Real cell phones can be used as IC cell phones. TV remotes or any other remotes can be the collar controllers. Cloth napkins may be used as collars.

Advice on Casting & Running

ADVICE ON CASTING:

- The guards should be assigned first and to people assertive enough to play them.
- It is vital that A. Ragosi (and S. Parker, if in play) be played by people who are very proactive, or the hostages will have relatively little chance.
- M. Winters has the most restrictive comfort level requirements. Know the person you are giving that part to, and make sure they can handle it.
- K. Watson should be played by someone who will enjoy an open-ended, extroverted character.

ADVICE ON RUNNING:

- Try to keep the conversations between the guards and the contacts inaudible by the hostages, when possible. Talk quietly, and ask the other players to try not to listen. If cell phones are sufficiently available, you can also conduct them by phone from outside the room.
- Keeping track of the timing of various external events is often easier with pencil and paper. This can be less distracting than trying to remember.
- Resist the temptation to intervene when one side is doing too well. Reversals happen, and suspense can be maintained for the players even when the outcome is known to the Director.
- An exception to the above is when it has been determined that the police or FBI will rescue the hostages. If there are still interesting things happening inside, you can delay the arrival of the police as long as they still manage to rescue the hostages before it's too late.
- Just as each PC should be developed beyond the details specified on a character sheet, all the contacts as well as the anarchist leader should be fully developed characters.

Larp-Specific Rules and Beginning Announcements

(Read this to your players at start of game)

LARP-SPECIFIC RULES:

- What can be accomplished with one use of general physical is limited. It takes one to restrain somebody and another to take something from them after they are restrained. It takes two to remove the collars (just one with a knife). It takes one to escape restraint, before one can perform any other physical actions (except use the collar controller).
- The state of activation of all collars can be changed, using a remote, as a general physical action. While activated, the collar causes the character to act as if they temporarily have two fewer FLs for the purposes of using abilities. After they are removed or deactivated for the rest of the conflict and any other conflicts that follow immediately after, the shocked character is treated as one FL lower.

BEGINNING ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Hostages should remember that it's very difficult to get up the nerve to actually defy one's captors. For most people, it takes either panic or a really good reason to start open physical defiance. Talking should come more easily. If you are bored OOC, you are probably bored (but scared) IC and could reasonably get restless, or at least talk.
- Guards should remember that they have power over the situation and should act to keep that power. Pay attention to any potential threats to your control.

Character Summary Chart

| NAME | CHARACTER STYLE | REASON FOR BEING THERE | NOTABLE POINTS |
|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| [Ed / Emma] Tennyson | GLC | Head Guard | Doesn't want to hurt people |
| [Antonio/Antonia] Ragosi | GDC | Son of Ragosi, who has plutonium | General leader |
| Dana Wilson | ELS | Teacher of Mark, who has device | Device is in his house (he doesn't know) |
| [Matt / Mary] Winters | EDC | Best friend of Mark | Knows where device is |
| [Clarence / Clara] Harmon | DDS | Spouse of person with plans | Seriously abused in marriage |
| [Jack/Janet] Rollins | GDS | Other Guard | Sadistic but doesn't believe in cause |
| [Sebastian/Selene] Parker | GLS | Retired detective, enemy of Ragosi | Does not have collar |
| Kit Watson | ELC | Child of media boss | Benevolent social organizer |

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

G L C

Age
24

[Ed / Emma] Thompson

APPARENT IDENTITY: Head (or only) guard of the hostages in this room.

REAL IDENTITY: Eager new recruit for the anarchists in charge of this place.

BACKGROUND: Years of working for charities in D.C. have convinced you that most human beings are basically decent at an individual level, and irredeemably evil in large organized groups. This is why you have joined the anarchist movement. Recently, somebody convinced you of the need for at least some violence for the greater good. You joined his group, the Universal Liberation Front, hoping not only to help overthrow governments, but also to represent the voice of relative restraint within the movement.

All the buzz lately has been about the kidnappings about to take place. The people to be taken are innocent and intended as hostages to secure some major victory, the nature of which the leaders of ULF are keeping secret. You volunteered to guard in the hopes of minimizing harm to the prisoners.

GOALS:

- Make sure the ULF's mission is successful.
- Harm the hostages no more than necessary.
- Calm and encourage hostages and prevent emotional harm to them.

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (3-5) 1: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) 1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Empathy x3 (1-5): Know a hidden reason, if any, that somebody is upset
- Impassioned Speech x2 (4-5): Get everybody to listen to a short speech in which you express a strongly held opinion
- Relax (1-5): Feel better after half an hour has gone by with nothing going seriously wrong (+1)

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|--|----------|---|
| Physical 0 Social 2 Emotional -1 | None | Cell phone with camera Automatic pistol (gives immunity to Intimidate) Collar remote control. |

MISSION KNOWLEDGE: Each hostage is cared about by somebody who has something that ULF wants. You are to insure the cooperation of these contacts and put them in touch with the leader of the anarchists for delivery. You can speak to the contacts, let them talk to the hostages and send pictures of them through the phone to prove that they are okay. You have the shock collars around their necks so that you can hurt them without causing lasting damage, if they do not cooperate. You also may need to talk the contacts out of calling the police. Information follows on the various contacts:

Mark Borenstein is the son of Randolph Borenstein, a Department of Energy scientist working for the ULF. He stole something important from his father's secret stash of various dangerous materials. The kid has refused to give it back, but Randolph is threatening to quit if the group harms him. M. Winters is his best friend and D. Wilson is his teacher and mentor.

Dr. Gerald/Geraldine Harmon is a scientist at Los Alamos. He has recently sold several nuclear secrets to the Chinese, but has kept a copy to potentially sell to others. While many groups are trying to bid for the info, so far only governments have been able to afford it. Any small organization that acquired the information could very quickly enrich itself. C. Harmon is his spouse.

David Watson is the head of a conspiracy of major media companies that take huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments. His services may be called for today. His only child is Kit Watson.

Piter Ragosi is the head of the Ragosi family, a criminal organization that controls the underworld of Baltimore. Its major source of income is controlling smuggling of various contraband, mainly drugs, through Baltimore Harbor. December is the most important month for smuggling in Baltimore, because the toy shipments for Christmas are a particularly well-developed cover. We want weapons materials from him, which he has tried to overcharge us for. He is the father of A. Ragosi.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

Who have you killed for the ULF before, and why did you decide that it was okay?

How far do you trust the intentions of the organization? What are you willing to do for them?

What sorts of charities did you work for and how did each kind affect you?

What's your personal life like?

What do you fall back on when under lots of stress?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

G
D
C

Age
26

[Antonio / Antonia] Ragosi

APPARENT IDENTITY: Young restaurant owner.

REAL IDENTITY: Son or daughter of Mob Boss Piter Ragosi, no longer working for him.

BACKGROUND: You grew up a scion of the Ragosis, the crime family controlling Baltimore. You had always expected to be a part of the family business until college, where you met your first set of close friends outside of it, which made you question how good of a life it was. Still, you kept working for your father, rising up in the ranks right up until one year ago. That was when you had to have your younger sister killed because she was planning to rat out the family, acting out of guilt for all the people the family had killed. Then you quit. Your father has been cold to you ever since, although he has made it clear that there's still a place for you in his organization. You've started a perfectly legitimate restaurant in D.C. and are waiting for your own opportunity to make up for all the terrible suffering you've helped cause.

You were on your way back from shopping for Christmas presents for your other family members, in the hopes of keeping in their good graces, when you were captured.

GOALS:

- Do not allow yourself to be a part of doing something terrible.
- Take any opportunity to stop the evils of your father.
- Get through this and have a normal life.

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (3-5) 1: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Fist fight (3-5) 1: Seriously hurt somebody while unarmed (-1) (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) 1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)
- Take Cover (1-5) 1: Take a position where you cannot be hit by firearms (NR)
- Intimidate (4-5) 0: Get somebody to be scared of you. A weapon adds its damage to the ability bonus (-FL2) (S)
- Pressure (4-5) 1: Force somebody you have successfully intimidated to do what you say (S)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Streetwise x1 (1-5): Ask Director a question about the underworld

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Physical 1 Social 1 Emotional 1 | None | None |

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT RAGOSI FAMILY: The Ragosi family is a criminal organization that controls the underworld of Baltimore. Its major source of income comes from controlling the smuggling of various contraband, mainly drugs, through Baltimore Harbor. December is the most important month for smuggling in Baltimore because the toy shipments for Christmas are a particularly well-developed cover.

Piter Ragosi, the current leader, is known for his patient and elaborate vengefulness. Other bosses, traitors and others who have thwarted him receive slow and painful deaths, often years later when they think they are safe.

Lately, the Ragosi family has come into possession of some stolen weapons-grade Plutonium and is considering who to sell it to, or even whether to sell it, balancing the potentially immense payoff with the risks to their interests if somebody makes and uses a nuclear weapon.

OTHER INFO:

The Main Guard is Chris Tennyson. You've seen him around D.C. doing charity work. He wouldn't know you though.

K. Watson's father, David Watson, is the head of a conspiracy of major media companies that takes huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments.

S. Parker is a retired cop who gave your father a lot of trouble, but has escaped vengeance thus far.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

Do you intend to betray your father's organization? Why and how?

What's the restaurant like? Do you enjoy yourself?

What is your fondest memory of your father? How about your sister?

What were the Christmas presents?

What are your political beliefs?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

E
L
S

Age
39

Dana Wilson

APPARENT IDENTITY: Middle School Teacher

REAL IDENTITY: Generally benevolent mentor of kids

BACKGROUND: You teach Science in a Maryland Public school. You love your job and care about kids in general. M. Winters goes to your school but is not in your class, though his best friend Mark is. You have a very close mentoring relationship with Mark. He really needs you, because he has an awful home life and only one friend (M. Winters), who is a bit of a delinquent. You often pick up strays like that. You've tried to work on M. Winters, but with little success. Maybe now is your chance. Perhaps, this bad experience will bring you closer together through this common ground. Maybe that is the silver lining. Maybe that's what this is for.
You were kidnapped in your sleep, last night.

GOALS:

- Do what's best for all relevant kids
- Survive to come home for Mark
- Strive to understand what is the meaning of this happening to you

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical Actions (3-5) -1: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) -1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)
- Guilt Trip (2-5) 1: Force somebody to do what you say or become seriously ashamed (must be relatively reasonable request) (-FL3) (S)
- Confidante (2-5) 2: Convince somebody who likes you to tell you a secret (E)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Benign (1-5): Convince guards that a private conversation is not a threat to them. Usable only if you are truly not planning anything against them
- Feel useful (1-5): Feel useful whenever somebody allows you to comfort them. (+1)

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Physical 0 Social 0 Emotional 0 | None | None |

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MARK BORENSTEIN: Mark is your student and has been best friends with Matt/Mary for a long time. You have been a mentor for Mark, who has a very scary home life. His father, Randolph, is a Department of Energy scientist, but is rumored to be secretly working for the anarchist group, the Universal Liberation Front. In any case, he is an angry alcoholic who is probably abusive. Mark often flees to your house at odd hours when things get bad. When your captors came, last night, you thought it was him and opened the door.

OTHER RUMORS: The Ragosi family is a criminal organization that controls the underworld of Baltimore. Its major source of income is controlling the smuggling of various contraband, mainly drugs through Baltimore Harbor. December is the most important month for smuggling in Baltimore, because the toy shipments for Christmas are a particularly well-developed cover.

S. Parker was part of a group of corrupt cops who are paid by rich important people to frame other important people for various crimes.

Somebody is selling Los Alamos nuclear secrets to international terrorist groups.

K. Watson's father, David Watson, is the head of a conspiracy of major media companies that takes huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

Why do you teach middle school and not some other age?

Tell a story about a kid that you helped?

What religion are you and how does it affect your life?

Why do bad things happen to good people?

What are you most afraid of?

Do you have a family of your own? How does this affect your work?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

E
D
C

Age
14

[Matt / Mary] Winters

APPARENT IDENTITY: Eighth grader

REAL IDENTITY: Defiant, messed up teen

BACKGROUND: December. You and Mark were born in December, a few days apart. Since you were toddlers you spent all your time together; your parents were never around. December, you spent Christmases together, getting beat up together by his father, drunk off his ass on eggnog. You carried out your mischief together and got yelled at in school together. December, you hid out together in the cold meaning to not ever go home. But in the end you always had each other and nowhere else to go but back. December, you promised you'd never abandon each other. But this first of December, you are here, and he is somewhere else, safe. When the kidnappers came, he ran away. You are here, without him. December first, the beginning of the end.

GOALS:

- Figure out what is going on and how you feel about it
- Avoid getting back into the life you lived before
- Get back at abusive or just mean adults

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (3-5) -1: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Slight of Hand (2-5) 2: Slight of hand or other feats of manual dexterity (P)
- Fight (3-5) 1: Overrides General Physical when causing damage (-1) (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) -1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)
- Piss off (3-5) 2: Cause somebody to act on unrestrained anger toward you (E)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Be really annoying (2-5): Seriously irritate everyone in the room with 5 minutes of non-stop talking (+FL4)
- Improvise weapon (3-5): Use any heavy or sharp object as a (-FL3) weapon.
- Bully (2-5): Feel better by physically hurting somebody (+1)

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Physical 0 Social 1 Emotional 2 | None | Small knife in hair |

KNOWLEDGE: Mark Borenstein is your best friend since forever and you've been through a lot together. His father, Randolph Borenstein is a Department of Energy scientist who is working for the ULF, the Universal Liberation Front, some crazy anarchist group. Recently, Mark told you that he was going through his dad's basement and that he stole some device. He said it was because he was scared of what the anarchists would do with it. He hid it in his teacher-friend, Dana's house. Since then Mark's dad has beat both of you up more than usual, but Mark hasn't told him where it is. You don't think Randolph knows that you know where it is. You don't know what it does, but if you describe it to the right person maybe they will.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

Do you feel betrayed by Mark for running away? Would you have done the same?

What does December represent to you?

Does the thought of Mark having other people that he cares about make you jealous?

How do you cope with getting beaten up?

Would you rather be helpless or guilty? Why?

What do you think of Dana Wilson as a teacher and as a person?

What do you think of professional criminals?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

E D S

Age
43

[Clarence / Clara] Harmon

APPARENT IDENTITY: Housewife (or husband) (preferred female).

REAL IDENTITY: Spouse of traitorous scientist

BACKGROUND: Your spouse Gerald/Geraldine is a horrible person. They control every aspect of your life and beat you up when you try to argue. You never had the courage to stand up to them. A couple of terrorists are nothing compared to your spouse in terms of scary. On top of it all, your spouse is a traitor. He works on nuclear weapons at Los Alamos for the government. He sold secrets to the Chinese. He got away with it and brags about it to you all the time. You had finally gotten up the courage to tell the police what he was up to, but on the way to the police station, you got kidnapped. This is fairly typical of your luck in life.

GOALS:

- Stick up for yourself, finally
- Hurt your spouse somehow, if you can
- Avoid getting hurt to save your emotional strength for your spouse

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (2-5) 0: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Fight (2-5) 0: Overrides General Physical when causing damage (-1) (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) -1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)
- Shout x3 (1-5) 0: Cow somebody by sheer noise (-FL3) (S)
- Placate (1-4) 2: Cause people to stop being angry at you (S)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Decisive Action x1: Perform one normally conflict provoking action that does not cause damage before others can react (can only be used when no conflict is happening)

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Physical 2 Social 2 Emotional 2 | None | None |

KNOWLEDGE: Gerald/Geraldine Harmon, your spouse, is a scientist at Los Alamos. He has recently sold several nuclear secrets to the Chinese, but has kept a copy to potentially sell to others. While, many groups are trying to bid for the info, so far only governments have been able to afford it.

You were conscious and lucid for the entirety of your capture and know that you are being held in a mostly deserted office building in the slums of Washington D.C. You could give an address.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

What changed to give you the courage to go to the police? Could you do it again?

What do you dream about?

Why did you marry your spouse?

What do you do with your time and what do you wish you did?

Do you like kids?

What are some little ways you rebel against your spouse?

Do you have other relatives or friends you care about?

Do you feel empathy or hate for others like you?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

| | | |
|-------------|------------------------|-----------|
| S D G | [Jack / Janet] Rollins | Age 28 |
|-------------|------------------------|-----------|

APPARENT IDENTITY: Second Guard of the hostages in this room

REAL IDENTITY: Sadistic anarchist of convenience

BACKGROUND: You've been working for the Universal Liberation Front (an anarchist group) for years, but not because you particularly believe anarchy is a good thing. Maybe you did once, but now you mainly like the thrill of breaking things, ideally people. You like to watch emotional collapse. After each of your acts of violence for the group, you've stalked a few of the owners of the ruined lives. You volunteered to be a guard on this mission to watch these people get broken and to help break them.

You don't know what the mission is about and don't particularly care. You're in it for the emotional damage you can do to these people.

GOALS:

- Help the ULF achieve its goals.
- Break people's spirits and minds or at least watch

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (3-5) 0: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Fight (3-5) 0: Overrides General Physical when causing damage (-1) (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) 1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)
- Take Cover (1-5) 1: Take a position where you cannot be hit by firearms (NR)
- Intimidate (4-5) 0: Get somebody to be scared of you. A weapon adds its damage to the ability bonus (-FL2) (S)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Sense weakness x 2 (2-5): Determine somebody's greatest weakness
- Camera Master x 1 (2-5): Take picture that conveys the complete situation
- Sadism (1-5): Feel renewed when somebody cries because of you or ULF. (+1)

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|----------|---|
| Physical 0 Social 0 Emotional 0 | None | Cell phone with camera. Automatic pistol (immunity to Intimidate) Collar remote control |

MISSION KNOWLEDGE: Each hostage is cared about by somebody who has something that ULF wants. You are to insure the cooperation of these contacts and put them in touch with the leader of the anarchists for delivery. You can speak to the contacts, let them talk to the hostages and send pictures of them through the phone to show that they are okay. You have the shock collars around their necks so that you can hurt them without causing lasting damage, if they do not cooperate. You also may need to talk the contacts out of calling the police. Information follows on the various contacts:

Mark Borenstein is the son of Randolph Borenstein, a Department of Energy scientist working for the ULF. He stole something important from his father's secret stash of various dangerous materials. The kid has refused to give it back, but Randolph is threatening to quit if the group harms him. M. Winters is his best friend and D. Wilson is his teacher and mentor.

Dr. Gerald/Geraldine Harmon is a scientist at Los Alamos. He has recently sold several nuclear secrets to the Chinese, but has kept a copy to potentially sell to others. While many groups are trying to bid for the info, so far only governments have been able to afford it. Any small organization that acquired the information could very quickly enrich itself. C. Harmon is his spouse.

David Watson is the head of a conspiracy of major media companies that take huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments. His services may be called for today. His only child is Kit Watson.

Piter Ragosi is the head of the Ragosi family, a criminal organization that controls the underworld of Baltimore. Its major source of income is controlling smuggling of various contraband, mainly drugs, through Baltimore Harbor. December is the most important month for smuggling in Baltimore, because the toy shipments for Christmas are a particularly well-developed cover. ULF wants weapons materials from him, which he has tried to overcharge for. He is the father of A. Ragosi.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

How did you get started breaking people? Do you remember your first?

Is there a line you won't cross?

Do you have friends? Do they know what you're really like? Do they care?

What are you vulnerable to yourself? Are you cowardly about it?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

G L S

Age
68

[Sebastian / Selene] Parker

APPARENT IDENTITY: Retired Detective

REAL IDENTITY: Retired Detective

BACKGROUND: You've spent most of your life as a police officer in Baltimore. Most of that time, you were a detective investigating organized crime. You were a constant thorn in the side of the local mob boss Piter Ragosi. You have been waiting for the inevitable revenge, but it hasn't come. Three years ago you retired.
You were captured in your sleep, last night.

GOALS:

- Serve the interests of society
- Protect the younger people here with more of their lives ahead of them
- Do not give in to corruption

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (3-5) -1: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Fight (3-5) 0: Overrides General Physical when causing damage (-1) (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) 2: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Investigator's instincts x 5 (1-5): Know what parts of what somebody told you are lies, and whether something important was omitted
- Intuition x2 (1-5): Ask a yes or no question of the Director

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Physical 0 Social 1 Emotional 0 | A physical injury to you does 1 extra damage, if it does any | None |

RAGOSI FAMILY: The Ragosi family is a criminal organization that controls the underworld of Baltimore. Its major source of income is controlling the smuggling of various contraband, mainly drugs, through Baltimore Harbor. December is the most important month for smuggling in Baltimore, because the toy shipments for Christmas are a particularly well-developed cover.

Piter Ragosi, the current leader, is known for his patient and elaborate vengefulness. Other bosses, traitors and others who have thwarted him receive slow and painful deaths, often years later when they think they are safe. So far all that has been done to punish you for years of working against them is a campaign of rumors designed to convince people you are corrupt. You expect there will be more.

Lately, the Ragosi family has come into possession of some stolen weapons-grade Plutonium and is considering whom to sell it to, or even whether to sell it, balancing the potentially immense payoff with the risks to their interests if somebody uses it and to make, and subsequently use, a nuclear weapon.

OTHER KNOWLEDGE: K. Watson's father David Watson is the head of a conspiracy of major media companies that takes huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

Why have you been willing to risk the Ragosi family's revenge?

What do you plan to do now that you are retired? What have you done so far?

What is your personal life like?

Are you religious?

Describe the case you are most proud of?

What other types of cases, other than organized crime, did you solve?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

E
L
C

Age
16

Kit Watson

APPARENT IDENTITY: High School Student

REAL IDENTITY: Only child of media overlord David Watson

BACKGROUND: Your father controls a conspiracy of major media companies that takes huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments. He would very much like to control you, as well, but has thus far failed. You have a strong sense of identity and are a writer first, a gamer second, and a good friend zeroth (i.e. most importantly), and are geeky enough to put it that way. You know you'll need a day job someday, but it won't be working for your father like he wants. He's threatened everything under the sun, but you refuse. Hopefully, this won't make him refuse to pay ransom for you or something crazy like that. You never know with him, though.

You were captured shortly after school when somebody broke into your house with a gun, while you were editing your novel.

GOALS:

- Avoid boredom and stress. Make sure that the guards socialize with you and let you socialize with the other hostages.
- Maintain personal autonomy and independence
- Have experiences that will inform your writing. Take risks to get them if necessary.
- Make strong friendships through mutual caring and trust

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (3-5) -1: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) -1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)
- Tease (4-5) 1: Tease somebody who has done something embarrassing (-FL3) (S)
- Harmless x3 (1-5) 2: Convince guards to let you do something innocuous (S)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Roleplay x 3 (2-5): Convince everyone watching that you feel a certain way
- Coded Message x 2 (1-5): Convey info to one person by innocuous dialog
- Empathy x2 (1-5): Know a hidden reason, if any, that somebody is upset
- Extrovert (3-4): Feel better after spending 15 minutes on an organized social activity. (+1)

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Physical 0 Social 2 Emotional 0 | None | None |

KNOWLEDGE: You were conscious and lucid for the entirety of your capture and know that you are being held in a mostly deserted office building in the slums of Washington D.C. You could give an address.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

What is the novel about?

What sorts of people do you make friends with?

What does it mean to be a good friend?

Star Trek or Star Wars?

What is your favorite gaming moment?

Do you get attached to your characters?

What is the most traumatic thing somebody you know has gone through?

What do you think your Dad's problem is?

How are your romantic prospects?

Player Materials

Rules Summary

FUNCTION LEVELS, DAMAGE, AND RECOVERY:

By default, each character starts at Function Level 5. A character's Function Level (FL) represents the condition that the character is in, physically and psychologically, and can decrease or increase over the course of the larp as a result of harm or recovery.

In general, a character at FL 5 is essentially unharmed and in good shape, at FL 4 is in an unpleasant but not particularly disabling state, at FL 3 is somewhat disabled, at FL 2 cannot perform most activities, and at FL 1 can do little other than speak. If a character is ever reduced to FL 0, he is out of the game and completely unable to affect the plot thereafter. Exactly how the character is taken out depends on the nature of the damage that reduced him to FL 0.

A player can request that the Director approve an FL change even when the rules don't call for it, if he thinks that prior events would cause the change to happen.

ABILITIES:

Abilities are given in the following format:

NAME x [# of uses] (RANGE OF FLs) [bonus]: DESCRIPTION OF EFFECT (amt DR) (resist type)

Examples:

Intimidate x3 (4-5) 1: Make someone back down (-FL3) (S)

Flatter x1 (3-5): Make someone feel unduly proud of themselves (+1) (E)

Spark (1-3): Briefly create a tiny flame by magic

of uses = the number of times that ability may be used during the Larp. If none is listed, the ability may be used as many times as the opportunity arises.

Range of FLs = the range of the user's FLs at which the ability may be used. If a character's FL is outside the range, he may not use that ability.

Bonus = a number from -3 to 3 that represents the character's effectiveness at using that ability against opposition. +/-1 = significant, +/- 2 = extraordinary, +/-3 = world class. (Conflict abilities only.) This will modify the character's chance of success when using the ability.

Amt DR= DR caused by the ability, if applicable. -/+ FL# indicates that it takes the target down/up to that FL, respectively. -/+ # indicates that the target loses/gains that number of FLs.

Type = type of Resist required to block the ability. P = Physical, S = Social, E = Emotional, NR = Not Resistible, P/S = Physical or Social, whichever is higher. Other letters for other Resists. (Conflict abilities only.)

Special exceptions to abilities are given in the Special section of the character sheet

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

DECLARING ACTIONS:

Conflict resolution works as follows: First, participants state their intended actions. All other characters are allowed to participate, stop participating, or change their own intended actions in light of the intended actions of others. (In the rare case that this causes an endless circle, everybody should choose actions simultaneously in secret.)

A participant can declare his/her intended action as contingent on the success or failure of another action (e.g. running away only if his partner dies.). He can also declare that he is not acting, and simply focusing on Resisting as a primary action.

BIDDING:

After all intended actions are established, all participants simultaneously Bid Damage. Bidding means secretly choosing an amount of damage (in FLs) that the player is willing to risk his/her character receiving in order to increase the character's action's chance of success.

Regardless of the character's dedication, bid sizes are limited by the amount of damage the character could plausibly get in the conflict, and each participant is responsible for determining a plausible IC reason to take the amount of damage he bid. For example, in most cases it is implausible to take more than 1 damage in a petty argument, but any amount of damage is possible in a gun fight. Keep in mind that losing an FL is significant; a player's default bid should be 0.

Bids only apply to a character's primary action. This means that if a character is doing a normal primary action, a bid does not increase his chances of Resisting. However, if he is only Resisting, then a bid will increase the chance of all of his Resists succeeding. Damage that was bid only actually occurs if the action is in any way successful.

When bids are decided, participants hold out 0-5 fingers behind their backs corresponding to the size of their bids. All participants then show their bids at the same time.

RANKING:

Participants calculate totals by adding their ability bonus and bid. (We recommend then holding out fingers for totals, for efficiency.) If a character is primarily Resisting, any bid he made is added to all his Resist totals.

At this point, all actions are ranked by their totals, from highest to lowest, with ties broken randomly (such as with rock-paper-scissors).

Actions take place in order, starting from the highest. If a previous action causes a character to have too low an FL to perform his intended action, or simply prevents that action from occurring (e.g. a Resist), that action is cancelled. A Resist cancels all lower-ranked effects of the relevant Resist type on that character.

If any part of an action succeeded, then the bid goes into effect immediately after the action executes.

It's important to note that when an intended action gets cancelled because of effects of earlier actions, any limited-use abilities spent to attempt the action are still used up, but any damage bid does not occur.

ARTIFACTS

Artifacts are items that make it easier for a character to cause DR, often as a conflict action. The most common type of artifacts are weapons, which obviously cause damage. However, artifacts like drugs may cause recovery.

Certain PCs may have abilities that make them good at using an artifact, but by default, PCs simply use artifacts with their General Physical ability. If an artifact use action succeeds, then the target is DRed an amount according to the DR amount of the artifact (exactly the same as using an ability that normally causes DR on its own).

Specific artifact use abilities may override DR amounts on an artifact, either by the description, or by being themselves fixed DR (i.e. -/+ FL#). Artifact use abilities that are themselves unfixed DR (i.e. -/+ #) stack with the artifact's own DR amount.

By default, knives are (-1) and guns are (-2).

AFTER RESOLUTION:

After the above process is complete, characters may elect to use more abilities in response to the results. This opens a new round of the conflict in which anybody involved can use abilities and the rules for resolution are the same.

Public Background Overview

A blizzard was raging in Washington D.C. on November 30th of an election year. The old congress was in session trying to pass a bit more legislation before the Democratic Party took power in January. In particular, Republicans have been rushing through new legislation to cut back on welfare funding to states. Various interest groups have organized emergency meetings to support or oppose the bill. There are protests on the Mall, amid the snow. In this historic time, a group kidnaps between three and six people for an unknown purpose.

On the morning of the first of December, they arrive in their captors' base...

Larp-Specific Rules and Announcements

LARP-SPECIFIC RULES:

- What can be accomplished with one use of general physical is limited. It takes one to restrain somebody and another to take something from them after they are restrained. It takes two to remove the collars (just one with a knife). It takes one to escape restraint, before one can perform any other physical actions (except use the collar controller).
- The state of activation of all collars can be changed, using a remote, as a general physical action. While activated, the collar causes the character to act as if they temporarily have two fewer FLs for the purposes of using abilities. After they are removed or deactivated for the rest of the conflict and any other conflicts that follow immediately after, the shocked character is treated as one FL lower.

BEGINNING ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Hostages should remember that it's very difficult to get up the nerve to actually defy one's captors. For most people, it takes either panic or a really good reason to start open physical defiance. Talking should come more easily. If you are bored OOC, you are probably bored (but scared) IC and could reasonably get restless, or at least talk.
- Guards should remember that they have power over the situation and should act to keep that power. Pay attention to any potential threats to your control.

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

G L C

Age
24

[Ed / Emma] Thompson

APPARENT IDENTITY: Head (or only) guard of the hostages in this room.

REAL IDENTITY: Eager new recruit for the anarchists in charge of this place.

BACKGROUND: Years of working for charities in D.C. have convinced you that most human beings are basically decent at an individual level, and irredeemably evil in large organized groups. This is why you have joined the anarchist movement. Recently, somebody convinced you of the need for at least some violence for the greater good. You joined his group, the Universal Liberation Front, hoping not only to help overthrow governments, but also to represent the voice of relative restraint within the movement.

All the buzz lately has been about the kidnappings about to take place. The people to be taken are innocent and intended as hostages to secure some major victory, the nature of which the leaders of ULF are keeping secret. You volunteered to guard in the hopes of minimizing harm to the prisoners.

GOALS:

- Make sure the ULF's mission is successful.
- Harm the hostages no more than necessary.
- Calm and encourage hostages and prevent emotional harm to them.

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (3-5) 1: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) 1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Empathy x3 (1-5): Know a hidden reason, if any, that somebody is upset
- Impassioned Speech x2 (4-5): Get everybody to listen to a short speech in which you express a strongly held opinion
- Relax (1-5): Feel better after half an hour has gone by with nothing going seriously wrong (+1)

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|--|----------|---|
| Physical 0 Social 2 Emotional -1 | None | Cell phone with camera Automatic pistol (gives immunity to Intimidate) Collar remote control. |

MISSION KNOWLEDGE: Each hostage is cared about by somebody who has something that ULF wants. You are to insure the cooperation of these contacts and put them in touch with the leader of the anarchists for delivery. You can speak to the contacts, let them talk to the hostages and send pictures of them through the phone to prove that they are okay. You have the shock collars around their necks so that you can hurt them without causing lasting damage, if they do not cooperate. You also may need to talk the contacts out of calling the police. Information follows on the various contacts:

Mark Borenstein is the son of Randolph Borenstein, a Department of Energy scientist working for the ULF. He stole something important from his father's secret stash of various dangerous materials. The kid has refused to give it back, but Randolph is threatening to quit if the group harms him. M. Winters is his best friend and D. Wilson is his teacher and mentor.

Dr. Gerald/Geraldine Harmon is a scientist at Los Alamos. He has recently sold several nuclear secrets to the Chinese, but has kept a copy to potentially sell to others. While many groups are trying to bid for the info, so far only governments have been able to afford it. Any small organization that acquired the information could very quickly enrich itself. C. Harmon is his spouse.

David Watson is the head of a conspiracy of major media companies that take huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments. His services may be called for today. His only child is Kit Watson.

Piter Ragosi is the head of the Ragosi family, a criminal organization that controls the underworld of Baltimore. Its major source of income is controlling smuggling of various contraband, mainly drugs, through Baltimore Harbor. December is the most important month for smuggling in Baltimore, because the toy shipments for Christmas are a particularly well-developed cover. We want weapons materials from him, which he has tried to overcharge us for. He is the father of A. Ragosi.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

Who have you killed for the ULF before, and why did you decide that it was okay?

How far do you trust the intentions of the organization? What are you willing to do for them?

What sorts of charities did you work for and how did each kind affect you?

What's your personal life like?

What do you fall back on when under lots of stress?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

G
D
C

Age
26

[Antonio / Antonia] Ragosi

APPARENT IDENTITY: Young restaurant owner.

REAL IDENTITY: Son or daughter of Mob Boss Piter Ragosi, no longer working for him.

BACKGROUND: You grew up a scion of the Ragosis, the crime family controlling Baltimore. You had always expected to be a part of the family business until college, where you met your first set of close friends outside of it, which made you question how good of a life it was. Still, you kept working for your father, rising up in the ranks right up until one year ago. That was when you had to have your younger sister killed because she was planning to rat out the family, acting out of guilt for all the people the family had killed. Then you quit. Your father has been cold to you ever since, although he has made it clear that there's still a place for you in his organization. You've started a perfectly legitimate restaurant in D.C. and are waiting for your own opportunity to make up for all the terrible suffering you've helped cause.

You were on your way back from shopping for Christmas presents for your other family members, in the hopes of keeping in their good graces, when you were captured.

GOALS:

- Do not allow yourself to be a part of doing something terrible.
- Take any opportunity to stop the evils of your father.
- Get through this and have a normal life.

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (3-5) 1: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Fist fight (3-5) 1: Seriously hurt somebody while unarmed (-1) (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) 1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)
- Take Cover (1-5) 1: Take a position where you cannot be hit by firearms (NR)
- Intimidate (4-5) 0: Get somebody to be scared of you. A weapon adds its damage to the ability bonus (-FL2) (S)
- Pressure (4-5) 1: Force somebody you have successfully intimidated to do what you say (S)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Streetwise x1 (1-5): Ask Director a question about the underworld

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Physical 1 Social 1 Emotional 1 | None | None |

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT RAGOSI FAMILY: The Ragosi family is a criminal organization that controls the underworld of Baltimore. Its major source of income comes from controlling the smuggling of various contraband, mainly drugs, through Baltimore Harbor. December is the most important month for smuggling in Baltimore because the toy shipments for Christmas are a particularly well-developed cover.

Piter Ragosi, the current leader, is known for his patient and elaborate vengefulness. Other bosses, traitors and others who have thwarted him receive slow and painful deaths, often years later when they think they are safe.

Lately, the Ragosi family has come into possession of some stolen weapons-grade Plutonium and is considering who to sell it to, or even whether to sell it, balancing the potentially immense payoff with the risks to their interests if somebody makes and uses a nuclear weapon.

OTHER INFO:

The Main Guard is Chris Tennyson. You've seen him around D.C. doing charity work. He wouldn't know you though.

K. Watson's father, David Watson, is the head of a conspiracy of major media companies that takes huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments.

S. Parker is a retired cop who gave your father a lot of trouble, but has escaped vengeance thus far.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

Do you intend to betray your father's organization? Why and how?

What's the restaurant like? Do you enjoy yourself?

What is your fondest memory of your father? How about your sister?

What were the Christmas presents?

What are your political beliefs?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

E
L
S

Age
39

Dana Wilson

APPARENT IDENTITY: Middle School Teacher

REAL IDENTITY: Generally benevolent mentor of kids

BACKGROUND: You teach Science in a Maryland Public school. You love your job and care about kids in general. M. Winters goes to your school but is not in your class, though his best friend Mark is. You have a very close mentoring relationship with Mark. He really needs you, because he has an awful home life and only one friend (M. Winters), who is a bit of a delinquent. You often pick up strays like that. You've tried to work on M. Winters, but with little success. Maybe now is your chance. Perhaps, this bad experience will bring you closer together through this common ground. Maybe that is the silver lining. Maybe that's what this is for.
You were kidnapped in your sleep, last night.

GOALS:

- Do what's best for all relevant kids
- Survive to come home for Mark
- Strive to understand what is the meaning of this happening to you

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical Actions (3-5) -1: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) -1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)
- Guilt Trip (2-5) 1: Force somebody to do what you say or become seriously ashamed (must be relatively reasonable request) (-FL3) (S)
- Confidante (2-5) 2: Convince somebody who likes you to tell you a secret (E)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Benign (1-5): Convince guards that a private conversation is not a threat to them. Usable only if you are truly not planning anything against them
- Feel useful (1-5): Feel useful whenever somebody allows you to comfort them. (+1)

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Physical 0 Social 0 Emotional 0 | None | None |

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MARK BORENSTEIN: Mark is your student and has been best friends with Matt/Mary for a long time. You have been a mentor for Mark, who has a very scary home life. His father, Randolph, is a Department of Energy scientist, but is rumored to be secretly working for the anarchist group, the Universal Liberation Front. In any case, he is an angry alcoholic who is probably abusive. Mark often flees to your house at odd hours when things get bad. When your captors came, last night, you thought it was him and opened the door.

OTHER RUMORS: The Ragosi family is a criminal organization that controls the underworld of Baltimore. Its major source of income is controlling the smuggling of various contraband, mainly drugs through Baltimore Harbor. December is the most important month for smuggling in Baltimore, because the toy shipments for Christmas are a particularly well-developed cover.

S. Parker was part of a group of corrupt cops who are paid by rich important people to frame other important people for various crimes.

Somebody is selling Los Alamos nuclear secrets to international terrorist groups.

K. Watson's father, David Watson, is the head of a conspiracy of major media companies that takes huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

Why do you teach middle school and not some other age?

Tell a story about a kid that you helped?

What religion are you and how does it affect your life?

Why do bad things happen to good people?

What are you most afraid of?

Do you have a family of your own? How does this affect your work?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

E
D
C

Age
14

[Matt / Mary] Winters

APPARENT IDENTITY: Eighth grader

REAL IDENTITY: Defiant, messed up teen

BACKGROUND: December. You and Mark were born in December, a few days apart. Since you were toddlers you spent all your time together; your parents were never around. December, you spent Christmases together, getting beat up together by his father, drunk off his ass on eggnog. You carried out your mischief together and got yelled at in school together. December, you hid out together in the cold meaning to not ever go home. But in the end you always had each other and nowhere else to go but back. December, you promised you'd never abandon each other. But this first of December, you are here, and he is somewhere else, safe. When the kidnapers came, he ran away. You are here, without him. December first, the beginning of the end.

GOALS:

- Figure out what is going on and how you feel about it
- Avoid getting back into the life you lived before
- Get back at abusive or just mean adults

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (3-5) -1: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Slight of Hand (2-5) 2: Slight of hand or other feats of manual dexterity (P)
- Fight (3-5) 1: Overrides General Physical when causing damage (-1) (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) -1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)
- Piss off (3-5) 2: Cause somebody to act on unrestrained anger toward you (E)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Be really annoying (2-5): Seriously irritate everyone in the room with 5 minutes of non-stop talking (+FL4)
- Improvise weapon (3-5): Use any heavy or sharp object as a (-FL3) weapon.
- Bully (2-5): Feel better by physically hurting somebody (+1)

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Physical 0 Social 1 Emotional 2 | None | Small knife in hair |

KNOWLEDGE: Mark Borenstein is your best friend since forever and you've been through a lot together. His father, Randolph Borenstein is a Department of Energy scientist who is working for the ULF, the Universal Liberation Front, some crazy anarchist group. Recently, Mark told you that he was going through his dad's basement and that he stole some device. He said it was because he was scared of what the anarchists would do with it. He hid it in his teacher-friend, Dana's house. Since then Mark's dad has beat both of you up more than usual, but Mark hasn't told him where it is. You don't think Randolph knows that you know where it is. You don't know what it does, but if you describe it to the right person maybe they will.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

Do you feel betrayed by Mark for running away? Would you have done the same?

What does December represent to you?

Does the thought of Mark having other people that he cares about make you jealous?

How do you cope with getting beaten up?

Would you rather be helpless or guilty? Why?

What do you think of Dana Wilson as a teacher and as a person?

What do you think of professional criminals?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

E
D
S

Age
43

[Clarence / Clara] Harmon

APPARENT IDENTITY: Housewife (or husband) (preferred female).

REAL IDENTITY: Spouse of traitorous scientist

BACKGROUND: Your spouse Gerald/Geraldine is a horrible person. They control every aspect of your life and beat you up when you try to argue. You never had the courage to stand up to them. A couple of terrorists are nothing compared to your spouse in terms of scary. On top of it all, your spouse is a traitor. He works on nuclear weapons at Los Alamos for the government. He sold secrets to the Chinese. He got away with it and brags about it to you all the time. You had finally gotten up the courage to tell the police what he was up to, but on the way to the police station, you got kidnapped. This is fairly typical of your luck in life.

GOALS:

- Stick up for yourself, finally
- Hurt your spouse somehow, if you can
- Avoid getting hurt to save your emotional strength for your spouse

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (2-5) 0: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Fight (2-5) 0: Overrides General Physical when causing damage (-1) (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) -1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)
- Shout x3 (1-5) 0: Cow somebody by sheer noise (-FL3) (S)
- Placate (1-4) 2: Cause people to stop being angry at you (S)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Decisive Action x1: Perform one normally conflict provoking action that does not cause damage before others can react (can only be used when no conflict is happening)

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Physical 2 Social 2 Emotional 2 | None | None |

KNOWLEDGE: Gerald/Geraldine Harmon, your spouse, is a scientist at Los Alamos. He has recently sold several nuclear secrets to the Chinese, but has kept a copy to potentially sell to others. While, many groups are trying to bid for the info, so far only governments have been able to afford it.

You were conscious and lucid for the entirety of your capture and know that you are being held in a mostly deserted office building in the slums of Washington D.C. You could give an address.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

What changed to give you the courage to go to the police? Could you do it again?

What do you dream about?

Why did you marry your spouse?

What do you do with your time and what do you wish you did?

Do you like kids?

What are some little ways you rebel against your spouse?

Do you have other relatives or friends you care about?

Do you feel empathy or hate for others like you?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

| | | |
|-------------|------------------------|-----------|
| S D G | [Jack / Janet] Rollins | Age 28 |
|-------------|------------------------|-----------|

APPARENT IDENTITY: Second Guard of the hostages in this room

REAL IDENTITY: Sadistic anarchist of convenience

BACKGROUND: You've been working for the Universal Liberation Front (an anarchist group) for years, but not because you particularly believe anarchy is a good thing. Maybe you did once, but now you mainly like the thrill of breaking things, ideally people. You like to watch emotional collapse. After each of your acts of violence for the group, you've stalked a few of the owners of the ruined lives. You volunteered to be a guard on this mission to watch these people get broken and to help break them.

You don't know what the mission is about and don't particularly care. You're in it for the emotional damage you can do to these people.

GOALS:

- Help the ULF achieve its goals.
- Break people's spirits and minds or at least watch

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (3-5) 0: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Fight (3-5) 0: Overrides General Physical when causing damage (-1) (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) 1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)
- Take Cover (1-5) 1: Take a position where you cannot be hit by firearms (NR)
- Intimidate (4-5) 0: Get somebody to be scared of you. A weapon adds its damage to the ability bonus (-FL2) (S)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Sense weakness x 2 (2-5): Determine somebody's greatest weakness
- Camera Master x 1 (2-5): Take picture that conveys the complete situation
- Sadism (1-5): Feel renewed when somebody cries because of you or ULF. (+1)

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|----------|---|
| Physical 0 Social 0 Emotional 0 | None | Cell phone with camera. Automatic pistol (immunity to Intimidate) Collar remote control |

MISSION KNOWLEDGE: Each hostage is cared about by somebody who has something that ULF wants. You are to insure the cooperation of these contacts and put them in touch with the leader of the anarchists for delivery. You can speak to the contacts, let them talk to the hostages and send pictures of them through the phone to show that they are okay. You have the shock collars around their necks so that you can hurt them without causing lasting damage, if they do not cooperate. You also may need to talk the contacts out of calling the police. Information follows on the various contacts:

Mark Borenstein is the son of Randolph Borenstein, a Department of Energy scientist working for the ULF. He stole something important from his father's secret stash of various dangerous materials. The kid has refused to give it back, but Randolph is threatening to quit if the group harms him. M. Winters is his best friend and D. Wilson is his teacher and mentor.

Dr. Gerald/Geraldine Harmon is a scientist at Los Alamos. He has recently sold several nuclear secrets to the Chinese, but has kept a copy to potentially sell to others. While many groups are trying to bid for the info, so far only governments have been able to afford it. Any small organization that acquired the information could very quickly enrich itself. C. Harmon is his spouse.

David Watson is the head of a conspiracy of major media companies that take huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments. His services may be called for today. His only child is Kit Watson.

Piter Ragosi is the head of the Ragosi family, a criminal organization that controls the underworld of Baltimore. Its major source of income is controlling smuggling of various contraband, mainly drugs, through Baltimore Harbor. December is the most important month for smuggling in Baltimore, because the toy shipments for Christmas are a particularly well-developed cover. ULF wants weapons materials from him, which he has tried to overcharge for. He is the father of A. Ragosi.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

How did you get started breaking people? Do you remember your first?

Is there a line you won't cross?

Do you have friends? Do they know what you're really like? Do they care?

What are you vulnerable to yourself? Are you cowardly about it?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

| | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| S L G | [Sebastian / Selene] Parker | Age 68 |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------|

APPARENT IDENTITY: Retired Detective

REAL IDENTITY: Retired Detective

BACKGROUND: You've spent most of your life as a police officer in Baltimore. Most of that time, you were a detective investigating organized crime. You were a constant thorn in the side of the local mob boss Piter Ragosi. You have been waiting for the inevitable revenge, but it hasn't come. Three years ago you retired.

You were captured in your sleep, last night.

GOALS:

- Serve the interests of society
- Protect the younger people here with more of their lives ahead of them
- Do not give in to corruption

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (3-5) -1: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Fight (3-5) 0: Overrides General Physical when causing damage (-1) (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) 2: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Investigator's instincts x 5 (1-5): Know what parts of what somebody told you are lies, and whether something important was omitted
- Intuition x2 (1-5): Ask a yes or no question of the Director

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Physical 0 Social 1 Emotional 0 | A physical injury to you does 1 extra damage, if it does any | None |

RAGOSI FAMILY: The Ragosi family is a criminal organization that controls the underworld of Baltimore. Its major source of income is controlling the smuggling of various contraband, mainly drugs, through Baltimore Harbor. December is the most important month for smuggling in Baltimore, because the toy shipments for Christmas are a particularly well-developed cover.

Piter Ragosi, the current leader, is known for his patient and elaborate vengefulness. Other bosses, traitors and others who have thwarted him receive slow and painful deaths, often years later when they think they are safe. So far all that has been done to punish you for years of working against them is a campaign of rumors designed to convince people you are corrupt. You expect there will be more.

Lately, the Ragosi family has come into possession of some stolen weapons-grade Plutonium and is considering whom to sell it to, or even whether to sell it, balancing the potentially immense payoff with the risks to their interests if somebody uses it and to make, and subsequently use, a nuclear weapon.

OTHER KNOWLEDGE: K. Watson's father David Watson is the head of a conspiracy of major media companies that takes huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

Why have you been willing to risk the Ragosi family's revenge?

What do you plan to do now that you are retired? What have you done so far?

What is your personal life like?

Are you religious?

Describe the case you are most proud of?

What other types of cases, other than organized crime, did you solve?

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

E
L
C

Age
16

Kit Watson

APPARENT IDENTITY: High School Student

REAL IDENTITY: Only child of media overlord David Watson

BACKGROUND: Your father controls a conspiracy of major media companies that takes huge bribes to suppress stories that are inconvenient for large companies or governments. He would very much like to control you, as well, but has thus far failed. You have a strong sense of identity and are a writer first, a gamer second, and a good friend zeroth (i.e. most importantly), and are geeky enough to put it that way. You know you'll need a day job someday, but it won't be working for your father like he wants. He's threatened everything under the sun, but you refuse. Hopefully, this won't make him refuse to pay ransom for you or something crazy like that. You never know with him, though.

You were captured shortly after school when somebody broke into your house with a gun, while you were editing your novel.

GOALS:

- Avoid boredom and stress. Make sure that the guards socialize with you and let you socialize with the other hostages.
- Maintain personal autonomy and independence
- Have experiences that will inform your writing. Take risks to get them if necessary.
- Make strong friendships through mutual caring and trust

CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- General Physical (3-5) -1: Physical actions, not otherwise covered (P)
- Use Gun (2-5) -1: Shoot somebody with a gun (-your choice) (P)
- Tease (4-5) 1: Tease somebody who has done something embarrassing (-FL3) (S)
- Harmless x3 (1-5) 2: Convince guards to let you do something innocuous (S)

NON-CONFLICT ABILITIES:

- Roleplay x 3 (2-5): Convince everyone watching that you feel a certain way
- Coded Message x 2 (1-5): Convey info to one person by innocuous dialog
- Empathy x2 (1-5): Know a hidden reason, if any, that somebody is upset
- Extrovert (3-4): Feel better after spending 15 minutes on an organized social activity. (+1)

| RESISTS | SPECIALS | INVENTORY |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Physical 0 Social 2 Emotional 0 | None | None |

KNOWLEDGE: You were conscious and lucid for the entirety of your capture and know that you are being held in a mostly deserted office building in the slums of Washington D.C. You could give an address.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

What is the novel about?

What sorts of people do you make friends with?

What does it mean to be a good friend?

Star Trek or Star Wars?

What is your favorite gaming moment?

Do you get attached to your characters?

What is the most traumatic thing somebody you know has gone through?

What do you think your Dad's problem is?

How are your romantic prospects?

Parlor Larps

1 Living Room
1 Evening
1 Director
4-8 Players

ADSM

NPC 4

DIR 3

Dark 4

- DC -

(See Page 8)

THE FIRST OF DECEMBER

The beginning of winter in Washington D.C. is marked by a huge snowstorm that blankets the city, stopping traffic, blurring vision and turning grey to white. Amid it all, a group of hostages from seemingly unrelated backgrounds are kidnapped out of their daily lives. Their captors affix them with electronic collars and lock them in a room under guard.

During the next few hours, a series of tense and obscure negotiations will take place via telephone. As urgency rises and fates are decided, the issue of just how much to cooperate gets called sharply into question.

Player Characters include both hostages and guards.

Standard
Requirements

\$10.00

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