

FLAMES
of
FREEDOM

GRIM & PERILOUS RPG

POWERED by

ZWEIHÄNDER



FLAMES
of
FREEDOM
GRIM & PERILOUS RPG

Core Rulebook



Andrews McMeel
PUBLISHING®





Sample file

FLAMES OF FREEDOM Grim & Perilous RPG

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*Researched and inspired by history, the characters, world and situations in **FLAMES OF FREEDOM** are a work of fiction. This game was designed, developed and produced by a multicultural team of diverse identities, beliefs and orientation.*

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ON THE COVER

Leading the charge is **Verity Trowbridge**, an African Puritan whose name means *hope*. To her right is **Azar Willington**, a soldier who served with Captain Woodbridge’s Company. Azar’s Persian namesake comes from a friend to his father: a whaler who died at sea. The final person to Verity’s left is **Mendon**, who has no surname in the Massachusetts soldier’s role. Living as a tailor, they volunteered and fought at the battle of Bunker Hill. It is believed Mendon was of Indigenous and Spanish descent, having also fought at the battle of Jamaica Heights.



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FLAMES
— of —
FREEDOM
GRIM & PERILOUS RPG

*Welcome to Flames of Freedom, where your
grim & perilous tale hangs in the balance.*





PREAMBLE

*I*T IS THE DAWN OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR OF 1776. A TANGLED WEB OF CONSPIRACY SPANS NORTH AMERICA. IT DOES NOT MATTER YOUR CREED, COLOR, CULTURE, FAITH OR GENDER—ALL STAND TOGETHER IN THE WAR FOR SURVIVAL. EVERY REBEL PATRIOT HOLDS THOMAS PAINE’S COMMON SENSE ALOFT AS THEY TAKE UP ARMS AGAINST THE BRITISH EMPIRE. THE CITY OF BOSTON IS OCCUPIED BY THE RED COATS, SURROUNDED BY REBEL MILITIAS. BUT AS THE REVOLUTION HAS BEGUN, SOMETHING FAR MORE MYSTERIOUS STIRS.

Agents of the occult entreat both the Continental Army and British Empire. Freemasons conspire in the City of Brotherly Love. Maryland is in the throes of a witch hunt by the Knights Templar.

Amid the chaos, other grim fairy tales have emerged. Ghouls have been tunneling beneath Boston. There are sightings of witches in the Great Dismal Swamp. Indigenous *sachem* speak of devils who walk among the living. The Leeds Devil haunts the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. And worse still, a shadowy collective called ‘the Mandoag’ seeks to consume all, Loyalists and Rebels alike.

In this game, most people have either chosen to deny the supernatural or rationalize it away. A rare few accept it for what it is to act. You are among those heroes and destined for greatness . . . or death.

FLAMES OF FREEDOM is an American gothic horror role-playing game powered by the **ZWEIHÄNDER RPG D100** game engine. Intensely researched and developed by a diverse group of game designers, this tabletop RPG explores cultures beyond North America’s European experience. We created this game with Black writers, cultural consultants and Indigenous scholars of the Nations represented inside in the book. RPG safety and trauma experts guided our development cycle. We hope that this game can show how American gothic horror can be inclusive while also portraying the horrific realities of war and the supernatural.





THE SETTING

It is the eve of the Revolution in 1776, and life is on the verge of drastic change. The Europeans shun folklore and witchcraft as the so-called Age of Reason is upon them. Tucked between missionaries, mutineers and midwives, some know the *actual truth*. Magic—along with monsters, demons and mythological creatures—is real.

This game is also about a different horror; one mired in mysteries, secrets and plots. The horror of 1776 relies heavily upon your imagination and ingenuity, using the tools we provide for you to play the game. As you discover more about the villainy of this world, you'll realize that some enemies are all too human, while others are actual monsters from folklore. Some of these you will uncover for yourself, but there are far more sinister secrets that you will uncover only in the late stages of an adventure or campaign.

USE & ABUSE OF HISTORY

The game will thrust your character into situations where they will stand against enemies who use historically harmful acts to meet their heinous goals. While **FLAMES OF FREEDOM** creates a narrative of liberation and opportunity in-game, this was not the reality for many living within and near North America. We mustn't ignore that the past's terrible truths happened, even in a game centered in colonial America.



GRIM & PERILOUS THEMES

Whatever level of horror you play, the game functions on the premise that everything you can imagine in the supernatural—from the lowly dandelion plant to a sleeping stone giant making her home at the base of the Appalachians and the spirits that haunt Williamsburg—exists. Most people have rationalized the forces of darkness away, ignoring their attacks and picking up the pieces as best they can. Your reputation, mind and faith are all on the line. Your characters are the last line of defense for the innocent.

FLAMES OF FREEDOM draws heavily upon the American Gothic genre, rooted in Christian (specifically Puritan) ideas of good and evil, humanity's sinfulness and the supernatural. However, Christianity is not the only religion practiced in this game, and players can and should play characters from a wide variety of spiritual and religious backgrounds. **Article 10: Life During Wartime** provides a historical context for portraying characters of different faiths.

On a larger scale, there is something *off* about the world: something sinister, malicious and purposeful. No one truly knows what is causing this world to go awry, not even the Indigenous Nations who have lived in this New World for many, many years. Whatever evil has infected the lands, it is up to the player characters to stand together against it.

GENDER NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

Throughout this book, we use the singular *they* along with its inflected forms—them or their—for indeterminate gender. Play examples will reference the pronoun appropriate to the identity of the player or their character.



AS A CHARACTER . . .

One or more people in the gaming group will each create a player **character**, an alternative personality in which you'll take part in a supernatural horror tale set in and around the Thirteen Colonies. As a character, you can change the story's outcome by deciding 'in character'—putting yourself in their shoes to think like the character you've made. Rooted in the themes of grim & perilous gaming, your character's story will be very personal, occupying a morass of conflicting values and credos, while set against the rise of the supernatural and the machinations of secret societies. Although you will come to better understand the game's rules specific for your character, you must also share the load with other players and the referee (the Historian) to make the game enjoyable for everyone.

CHARACTER PERSPECTIVES

Here are some example character types you may experience in this game:

- ☠ As I walk the streets of my new homeland, it is hard not to see the preparations for war. The very air calls for rebellion. Raising the liberty pole, we join in the cries of liberation with our fellow Rebels. Give me a position and show me where the ammunition is!
- ☠ The frontier is fraught with wild animals, robbers and the armies of King George. It takes a stalwart heart, healthy communities and a primed musket when needed to eke out a living. When the sun sets, I've seen glowing eyes in the hills. We bar the door and windows at night to keep us safe. We look to others for guidance, but even they are fearful of what has come from across the sea. Some whisper of an evil that predates our ancestors.
- ☠ I come from a long line of people from Turtle Island, and we have lived here long before the British Empire arrived. Change is in the air. Some of my people live among their own, standing against the invaders. Others live in harmony with the Europeans, keeping our traditions. As tempers flare in the cities, I cannot doubt that a war is coming. There is another war—a secret war—that we have fought for generations. It is against those who call themselves the Mandoag, and they seek to consume all.

- ☠ I am a Black and Indigenous woman. My mother tells me stories of our homeland across the sea, while my father tells one of our ancestors' journey across vast lakes and oceans. I have learned medicine from the elders of my Nation, while my mother teaches me to cultivate the earth. My time as a matriarch approaches quickly—in my dreams, the ancestors tell me to be vigilant, for change is on the horizon.
- ☠ Every parent tends to their little ones, soothing scuffed hands and caring for them after their nightmares. For every nightmare, we administer love and prayer. However, they seem to grow worse. The children speak of 'the skinny monster' dwelling in the cupboards. We, too, are now experiencing the same dreams as the little ones.
- ☠ I walk deer paths and roads carved into the earth from a time before Roanoke. With a gun or bow in hand, I hunt to provide for my family. I have spent many years learning the ways of the woodlands. But among the trees, I have seen something . . . strange. The woods are not what they seem and herald a change that speaks of an evil as old as time itself.
- ☠ Do you ask if I am a Quaker, a member of the Society of Friends? I once was, but I am now a Universal Friend. What is that, you ask? I have walked with Public Universal Friend, but likely you've never heard their story. They were a Quaker who succumbed to typhus but resurrected by God's light. 'The Friend' has attracted several women to their side. Like all Universal Friends, we now spread the word of free will and abolition.
- ☠ We are free . . . in a way. My ancestors came to this land against their will. I, too, spent time in bondage and have family members who remain disenfranchised. However, I am conflicted—there is no going home. I must make a life here now. What the people don't understand is that stowaways of an older age were also in the holds. We have set these monsters loose and they will devour all, limb by limb.



☠ There is an ancient art; one whose roots trace back to ancient times. Though many now have embraced the natural sciences and have used it to define the world, I scoff at it. It is through the crucible, the forge and the elements I create objects that bring purity. If any seek to know the real secrets of this world, they only need to follow me to the forge. It is there I will show them the true face of God.

- ☠ They sometimes call my trade ‘the world’s oldest,’ and its practice dates well before Mary Chilton stepped ashore at Plymouth. I imagine that she’s rolling in her grave, knowing what I have to do to survive. As the conflict calls for people to report on the front lines, I worry for them—and myself.
- ☠ I’ve cared for many women during birth, welcoming these little bundles of joy into the world. And helped the wives convalesce and pray when a child was stillborn. I take this charge seriously, and as the impending war places additional stresses upon women, I hold these labors even more sacred than before.
- ☠ We’ve tended the land, but it has grown sick. My husband says that the trees ‘speak’ to him in his dreams. He’s become addled, growing more despondent. The children and I have taken over his duties, but we can feel something creeping into our dreams.
- ☠ “Believe in God and fear the Devil” is the guiding principle that gives me strength. We shall stand together to protect believers and non-believers alike. We will fight the minions of darkness who linger at the periphery of the world. Fear not this evil, for you stand in the light—and that light is vast and will drive away the devils!
- ☠ As both a partner and trusted *confidante*, the politician I serve is one of incredible influence and means. There is also one made behind closed doors behind every public dealing—necessary for the coming troubles. But I grow worried about darker dealings being done, not made in the light of the Lord, but made with the servants of Lucifer.
- ☠ I have walked the path of the occult; I have made the darkness kneel before me. Others like me understand an ever-present evil over this Age of Reason. A pox on all who think I am delusional! Magic is real, and my people have practiced it for as long as time itself. What do the petty going-on of the Loyalists and Rebels have to do with the greater evil? Despite how many times they call me ‘mad,’ they’ll be begging for my help when they realize the truth of the world, to protect them from things in the darkness.



AS THE HISTORIAN . . .

One person in the gaming group will be the **Historian**. The Historian will create adventures inspired by North American history set in 1776. You'll be responsible as the chief narrator of the character's stories; you'll be the keeper of secret plots and you'll portray other personas (called a non-player character or NPC) and threats. You also serve as a 'fan' of the characters, promoting fun and fairness for players in equal measure. Although you will have to learn more about the game's rules than players, you are not alone, as the players will share the load. A Historian will also be the ultimate arbiter of rules and detail a narrative that encapsulates what the players and their characters are experiencing.

YOUR FIRST ADVENTURE

Using the *Boston Besieged* adventure in the back of this book, the game will start by enlisting the player characters in a conspiracy that spans Boston's city, leading up to the siege of the city by George Washington. With the gaming group, you will explore the story, arbitrate the game rules, enact the NPCs' plans and create your own vision of **FLAMES OF FREEDOM**.

PLAYSTYLE

A Historian will use playstyles to craft stories with the players. Playstyles will evolve with the needs of the story and may change from adventure to adventure. The following refers to various books and films that fit the style. While not all the aforementioned media are perfect in their depictions, they represent a starting point to inspire a sense of historical fantasy.

SUPERNATURAL HORROR

This style exposes the player characters to situations and experiences that give them a new perspective upon reality. They realize supernatural forces have made themselves known to the world. Sorcery is abroad, but

its practice is well-hidden by mages. The Devil and his minions seek to corrupt all. Films like *Brotherhood of the Wolf*, *Bone Tomahawk* and *Edge of the Knife* have dark forces that fit this style. In works of literature, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* also evoke this horror style.

Monsters are at the fore of the game, and players and their characters will use this learning to their advantage against the horrors that stalk the world.

OCCULT MYSTERY

This style introduces players and their characters to the mysteries of 1776 but softens the horror. Adventures center on the mysteries of secret societies who pull strings behind the scenes. Video games such as *Assassin's Creed III* and *Never Alone*, along with films like *From Hell*, *Sleepy Hollow* and *The VVitch* share elements suited to an occult mystery campaign. The works of Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Robert E. Howard's *Solomon Kane* also represent a similar tone and scope.

This playstyle encourages investigation of conspiracies and secret societies while downplaying magic and monsters.

HIGH ACTION

Instead of slaying monsters, the characters will fight threats like French traders and the British Imperial military. It is rooted in 'historical gaming,' but without reprehensible actions like the genocide of Indigenous Nations and slavery. This style draws inspiration from the stories of James Fenimore Cooper and Brian Wood's comic book *Rebels*. Films like *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Revenant* and the television series *John Adams* and *TURN: Washington's Spies* are also a great fit. Adventures could also take the shape of a military campaign or a story of spy-versus-spy.

This style implies a greater sense of heroism and spycraft and works well for those who want to explore the natural, mortal world of 1776.



STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY

FLAMES OF FREEDOM represents a mélange of heritages and conflicting beliefs, one where cultures and genders outside traditional standards were equally instrumental in fomenting and conducting the rebellion. And, although traditional games set during the Revolution place English men at the fore of the conflict, this game calls upon the secret history: one where heritage and genders outside the norm were just as important—and, often working behind the scenes—during this pivotal time in America’s founding.



BLACK PERSPECTIVES

Slavery ensured thousands of Black people lived and died in the fields of the New World—a small, but no less tragic, percentage of millions that toiled outside of North America. This gives those players wishing to play Black characters an exciting period to explore. Religious folk spoke against these terrible institutions, while freedmen were building churches and communities of their own. Abolitionist groups are growing, with memories of the New York Insurrection and Stono Rebellion fresh in the current generation’s minds to stoke the fires of freedom. Crispus Attucks was the first casualty of the early American Revolutionary War.

THIS IS AN exciting time in history and one that demands both respect and introspection in the portrayal of the African diaspora. The Rebels work side by side with Black people as spies in the war (consider Cato, a Rebel courier for Hercules Mulligan), and still, more are fleeing to join Indigenous communities, each hoping for a life better than a drastically shorter existence of toil and misery. As a Black character, will you be a preacher with your church, desperate to keep your flock safe from the wolves prowling for conscripts in a war you have no stake in? Perhaps you are a woman looking to rescue her loved ones and so is reaching out to the power of her ancient ancestors to incite her own rebellion? Whether your character is a doctor, evangelist, magistrate or soldier, they will doubtless find themselves on the front lines of many battles, some far beyond human comprehension and others all too painfully human. We’ll help provide tips to help you create interesting Black characters without turning them into caricatures. We’ll provide guidance on how to portray Black people from this period in **Article 10: Life During Wartime**.



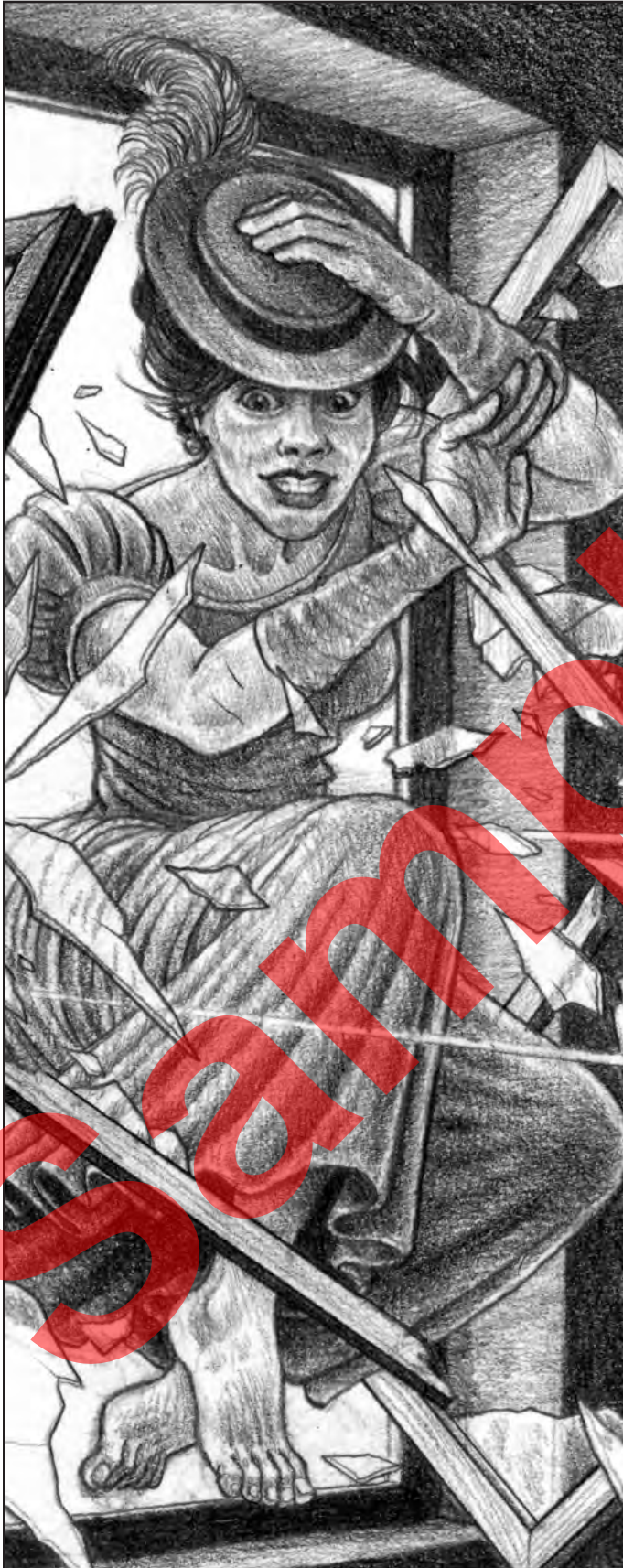
INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

For the people of Turtle Island (North America and Canada), this tumultuous time is rife with conflict and intrigue. The Europeans are encroaching on the lands they have stewarded since before time had a name. Malevolent spirits threaten lives across community and clan lines. While Indigenous people look to their elders, each must choose: will they take a chance on these foreigners' promises? Will they use their talents in medicine to support their own or help these haggard newcomers? Will they intercede with the spirits for their communities and beyond? Or will they swindle the descendants of pilgrims who cheated them first?

ONE IMPORTANT ASPECT to know about the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island is that they are a varied people and not a monolithic culture. They do not fit the television and cinema tropes of a tanned folk with stern faces on horseback but are individuals who still exist today. Matriarchs, two-spirit people (some of which were healers) and children gifted with dreams made up some of the most influential people in these communities. Some may have been noble in their pursuits, while others look to make a quick sterling before skipping town. While varied, their cultures tended toward respect for the earth and all the living and non-living beings living on it.

There are obvious cases where European and Indigenous peoples have integrated into each other's societies, conforming to new norms. How you juggle these concepts is what will make your Indigenous character of this background believable. We'll provide you with guidance on how to portray a member of the Indigenous Nations prevalent from this period in **Article 11: Indigenous Nations**.





WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES

Despite their culture, women bring strict roles and beliefs with them wherever they came from. They decided what each could or could not do, rather than who they are or what they are capable of. But in the face of war, everything has changed. Those previously strictly bound by their gender find freedom in taking jobs and professions otherwise denied to them. Women now dare to express their true selves, sometimes openly and other times within the private company of those they trust. No one can afford to turn away help, and even fewer can afford to abide by cultural beliefs that no longer serve in the fires of war.

REMEMBER THAT WOMEN have shed the constraints of what should and shouldn't be and dare to be a light in the dark during this tumultuous time. Everyone can feel the pressure from the rising violence, and no one lifts a brow at those who break out of traditional gender roles to embrace themselves and manifest what women are just as capable of as men. Women take jobs as doctors, Indigenous two-spirit people become generals for the Colonies and men stay home to care for frightened children, the supposed 'natural order' forgotten in the battle for survival. Beyond the impending revolution, something else stirs. The darkness wages another war, the kind that destroys any notion of decency for the sake of survival. Evil doesn't care who or what you are. It cares about how it can tempt you into its embrace. We'll provide you guidance on how to portray women from this period in **Article 10: Life During Wartime**.



NO DISCRIMINATION

Let us be clear: **FLAMES OF FREEDOM** is not a tabletop role-playing game where you will discriminate against women, practice slavery and indentured servitude, slaughter innocent people or ‘tame the wilderness’ of Indigenous Nations. It is a game where people come together to fend off a secret war that took root long before the American Revolutionary War. In it, you are a person fighting against unseen powers which mean harm to every person. It is also a game where you’ll blaze your own path, free from outdated thinking. History informs the story, but we do not mean it to be entirely historically accurate. It is up to the gaming group to decide how strictly it will hew to history. Everyone should be a part of this decision, and it should be a unanimous one.

THIS GAME DOES not endorse racial or gender discrimination based on differences in the period. Regardless of their identity, there are no mechanical, intellectual, physical, emotional or spiritual distinctions between women, men, intersex, agender, non-binary and transgender characters. That said, people relate differently to one another, and there is no reason to ignore differences because the game world does not embrace discrimination as its real-world counterpart.

CREATING A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

Hopefully, this game will teach you how to create engaging, meaningful and nuanced stories set during the American Revolutionary War. To do that, everyone at the table must have a positive gaming experience. It is the responsibility of every person at the game table to create an enriching, positive experience for themselves and for each other. It’s important to share our ideas, but doubly so when introducing content that could upset some players. Consent and agreement are vital to collaborative storytelling.

FOR THOSE WHO need RPG safety tools at their game table or for online and convention play, you can download the *Entreat The Darkness* TTRPG Safety Tool from <http://darkness.zweihander.game>. It is designed for role-playing games Powered By **ZWEIHÄNDER RPG**.

Always remember that a positive experience doesn’t have to mean the game isn’t disturbing, horrifying or visceral. It means that everyone at the table works together to make the game they want to play—leaving no one behind—and actively engaging with each other to ensure everyone gets what they want out of the game.





Article 1

BASICS of GAMEPLAY

LIKE OTHER ROLE-PLAYING GAMES POWERED BY ZWEIHÄNDER, THIS GAME ACCOMMODATES A PLAYSTYLE WHERE ROLE-PLAYING DRIVES THE STORY. THE EXCEPTION TO THIS IS WHEN THERE ARE CONSEQUENCES FOR FAILURE. THEN—AND ONLY THEN—ARE DICE CALLED UPON TO DETERMINE THE OUTCOME.

THE GOLDEN RULE

Remember the most important rule: keep the game moving forward! Rulings are far more important than rules. If you have forgotten a specific game rule, ignore it and look it up later. If a rule gets in the way of having fun, your game group should work together to create a 'house rule,' personalizing it for your table.

- ☛ If you rolled a face '00' on the tens die and a face '0' on the units die, you generated a result of 100%.
- ☛ If you rolled a face '00' on the tens die and a face '1' on the units die, it is equal to 01%.
- ☛ If you rolled a face '10' on the tens die and a face '0' on the units die, it is equal to 10%.

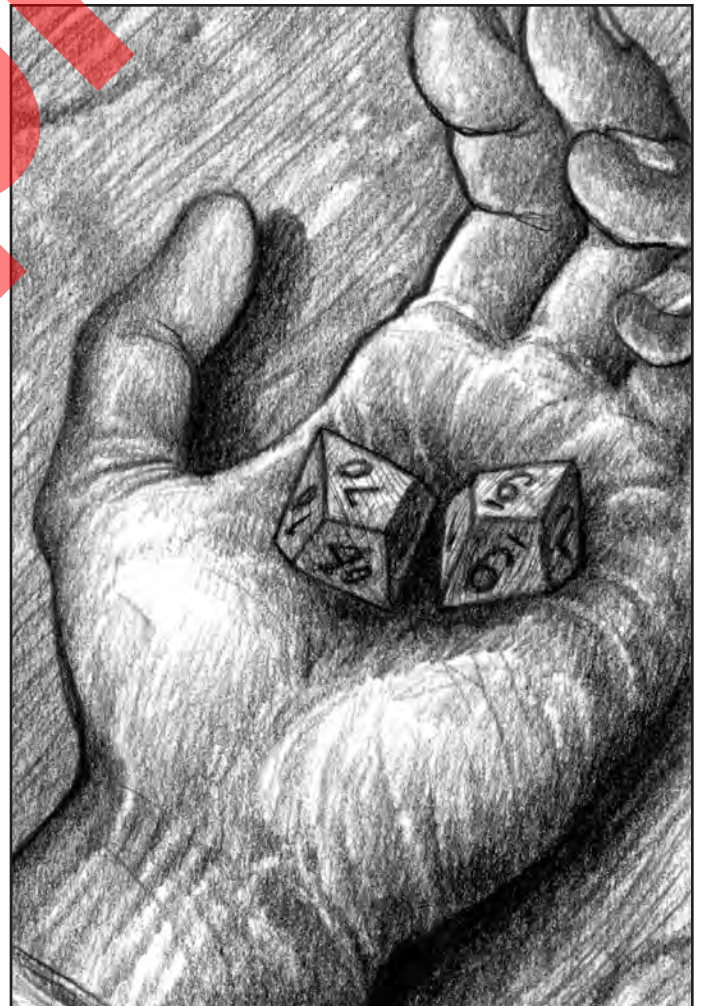
MAKING SKILL TESTS

Melded with traditional narrative gameplay elements, there are four pillars of gameplay: **Social Interaction**, **Chase Scenes**, **Overland Travel** and **Combat Encounters**. All modes require you to roll percentile dice to determine success or failure using a **Skill Test** (also called a *Test*). Rolling equal to or under the **Total Chance** for success means you succeed. Rolling over means you failed.

READING PERCENTILE DICE (D100)

To make a Skill Test, you will roll percentile dice, referred to as **D100** throughout the book. One die is the **tens die** (the die with faces 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 00) and the other is the **units die** (the die with faces 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 0). Given that D100 can sometimes generate odd results for those accustomed to using twenty-sided dice (D20) in other TTRPGs, consider these outcomes:

- ☛ If you rolled a face '60' on the tens die and a face '9' on the units die, you generated a result of 69%.
- ☛ If you rolled a face '60' on the tens die and a face '0' on the units die, you generated a result of 60%.





QUICK GUIDE TO SKILL TESTS

In general, the Historian will call upon you to Test a specific Skill as you role-play within the campaign world. However, you can also request to use a Skill yourself if you want to change events into your or another's favor. Here is how all Skill Tests work:

- ☛ Refer to the **Primary Attribute** percentage value related to the **Skill** you are using.
- ☛ Take account of how many **Skill Ranks** you have in the Skill you are using. Every **Skill Rank** adds a cumulative +10%.
- ☛ Apply any penalties from your **Peril Condition Track**, as it may force you to ignore some or all your **Skill Ranks**.
- ☛ Add modifiers from **Talents, Traits** and **Spells** that may apply to the Skill's use. The maximum modifier that can be applied is +30%, while the minimum total modifier is -30%.
- ☛ The sum of the values above is all added up to determine the **Base Chance**.
- ☛ The Historian will impose the drama of the situation as a final modifier to **Base Chance** called **Difficulty Rating**.
- ☛ Take your **Base Chance**, and add or subtract the **Difficulty Rating** to determine **Total Chance** to succeed in the Skill Test.
- ☛ Grab D100, call out to the Historian what your **Total Chance** is and roll the dice. If the results are equal to or less than your **Total Chance**, you have succeeded at the Skill Test. If the results are greater than the **Total Chance**, you have failed the Skill Test. If the dice match, it is a **Critical Success** or a **Critical Failure**. You'll learn more about this below.

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES

Your character has seven **Primary Attributes**, representing physical, mental and social capabilities. They range in a numeric value between 28% and 55%, with the average value being 42%. The seven Primary Attributes are **Combat, Brawn, Agility, Perception, Intelligence, Willpower** and **Fellowship**. Coupled with Skills, they define your character's baseline chances for succeeding at Skill Tests.

- ☛ **Combat:** This is your ability to use ranged and melee weapons.
- ☛ **Brawn:** This is your physical prowess, durability and overall endurance.
- ☛ **Agility:** This is your speed, nimbleness and physical readiness.
- ☛ **Perception:** This is for your senses and ability to react.
- ☛ **Intelligence:** This is your ability to learn and memorize.
- ☛ **Willpower:** This is your mental wherewithal and force for magic.
- ☛ **Fellowship:** This is your charisma, likability and social savvy.

You will never 'test' against Primary Attributes alone. Here are alternative Skills to consider:

- ☛ **Feats of visual acuity:** Awareness (Perception)
- ☛ **Feats of brute strength:** Athletics (Brawn)
- ☛ **Feats of nimbleness:** Coordination (Agility)
- ☛ **Feats of audial discernment:** Eavesdrop (Perception)



- 👤 **Feats of stoutheartedness:** Resolve (Willpower)
- 👤 **Feats of problem-solving:** Scrutinize (Perception)
- 👤 **Feats of physical wherewithal:** Toughness (Brawn)

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTE BONUSES

Each Primary Attribute has a related benefit called a **Primary Attribute Bonus**, relevant to calculating Secondary Attributes in **Article 2: Creating Characters**. This bonus is equal to the tens digit of the related Primary Attribute, plus any related Bonus Advances you gain from your Profession later on. Below is a breakdown of what they affect and their abbreviated form:

- 👤 **Combat Bonus [CB]** affects Total Damage inflicted with melee and ranged weapons.
- 👤 **Brawn Bonus [BB]** affects Damage Threshold and Encumbrance Limit.
- 👤 **Agility Bonus [AB]** affects Movement.
- 👤 **Perception Bonus [PB]** affects Initiative and Distances for ranged weapons.
- 👤 **Intelligence Bonus [IB]** affects the maximum number of Spells you can learn.
- 👤 **Willpower Bonus [WB]** affects Peril Threshold and miscellaneous modifiers for spells.
- 👤 **Fellowship Bonus [FB]** affects how many people you influence with Fellowship-based Skill Tests and the number of languages you can become fluent in.

For example, if a character has a Willpower of 52% (which results in 5 [WB]) and two Bonus Advances from their Profession, they will have 7 [WB] (5+2). Primary Attribute Bonuses will grow independently from your Primary Attributes, modified by Bonus Advances you earn during Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Tiers.

PENALIZED PRIMARY & SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

There are times when game mechanics will temporarily penalize these values. Never reduce them below a value of 1.

SKILLS

Skills define what your character can do, such as fire a musket, bluff your way past a Red Coat patrol, distinguish between safe and poisonous herbs and so forth. Each Primary Attribute has a series of related Skills (a breakdown of what these Skills are in **Article 4: Skills & Talents**):

- 👤 **Combat:** Martial Melee, Martial Ranged, Simple Melee & Simple Ranged
- 👤 **Brawn:** Athletics, Drive, Intimidate & Toughness
- 👤 **Agility:** Coordination, Pilot, Ride, Skulduggery & Stealth
- 👤 **Perception:** Awareness, Eavesdrop, Scrutinize & Survival
- 👤 **Intelligence:** Alchemy, Counterfeit, Education, Folklore, Gamble, Heal, Navigation & Warfare
- 👤 **Willpower:** Incantation, Interrogation, Resolve & Tradecraft
- 👤 **Fellowship:** Bargain, Charm, Disguise, Guile, Handle Animal, Leadership & Rumor

SKILL RANKS

Skill Ranks represent a dedication to a Skill, providing mechanical bonuses beyond mere raw ability. In addition to their mechanical modifiers, they also inform the level of experience a character possesses with the skill. If you're using the official character sheet, you will see three circles beside each Skill. Each Skill Rank marked grants a cumulative +10% bonus when using the Skill.

FLIP THE RESULTS TO FAIL

When your character wants to use a **Special Skill** they do not have any Skill Ranks in or during other rare circumstances, you will **flip the results to fail** at a Skill Test and take the worst result. Simply roll your units and tens dice together, but do not designate which die is the tens die and the units die. Compare both potential outcomes and accept the *worst* of the results.



MENDON PICKS UP an enemy's sabre. This particular weapon requires the use of the Martial Melee Skill, which they possess no Skill Ranks in. Their Total Chance for success is 34%. Mendon rolls D100, generating 34%. Unfortunately, Mendon's player must flip the results to fail, so Mendon instead has an output of 43%, failing their Martial Melee Skill Test.

FLIP THE RESULTS TO SUCCEED

Under some circumstances, an ability will allow you to **flip the results to succeed** at a Skill Test and take the best results. Simply roll your units and tens dice together, but do not designate which die is the tens die and the units die. Compare both potential outcomes and accept the *best* of the two results. If you have two or more Traits that confer the ability to flip dice, you can only take advantage of one or the other, not both.

AZAR WILLINGTON IS housing Red Coats. Inside, the officers are secretly plotting against General George Washington and his army at Whitemarsh. Their murmurs arouse Azar's suspicions. Azar attempts to listen in on a conversation between the Red Coats through a keyhole. Their player knows this is an Eavesdrop Test, and Azar has a pretty good chance of succeeding. However, they fail at Azar's Skill Test by rolling an 81%. Fortunately, Azar also possesses a particular Trait, which allows the player to flip the results to succeed at Eavesdrop Tests. Azar's player flips the dice, making the 18% instead, which means they succeed, hearing what the Loyalist's plans are.

EDGE CASES

Should you possess an ability that allows you to flip the results to succeed and is opposed by another's ability or situation that forces you to flip the results to fail, they simply cancel each other out, meaning that you attempt a regular Skill Test.

USING COMMON SKILLS

Skills that require no training to use are called **Common Skills**. Even though you may not have any Skill Ranks in a Common Skill, refer to your Primary Attribute to determine your Base Chance. However, some of the Talents and Traits you gain from your Profession may further modify the Base Chance.

AZAR WILLINGTON'S TENT has been set ablaze, and he is also On Fire. The Historian announces that it will be an (Easy +20%) Coordination Test to snuff out the flames. Given that Azar does not have any Skill Ranks in the Common Skill of Coordination, he can only refer to his Agility to determine his Total Chance of success.

USING SPECIAL SKILLS

Skills that require formal training are called **Special Skills**. These are on your character sheet with an asterisk (*) beside them. If you do not possess at least one Skill Rank in a Special Skill, refer to your Primary Attribute to determine your Base Chance and you must flip the results to fail the Test.

VERITY TROWBRIDGE STEALS a foe's pistol and aims at her foe. The Historian announces that it will be a (Hard -20%) Martial Ranged Test to fire the pistol, and she successfully shoots the enemy. Given that Verity doesn't have any Skill Ranks in Martial Ranged, her player can only refer to Verity's Combat Primary Attribute to determine her Total Chance of success. Furthermore, when calculating results, Verity's player must flip the results to fail this Skill Test.



DIFFICULTY RATING

Circumstances directly impact your ability to succeed or fail with a Skill Test, and the Historian will assign a **Difficulty Rating** to any particular task you wish to attempt. A Historian will generally call out the Difficulty Rating for the Skill Test instead of telling you the bonus or penalty.

DIFF. RATING	BASE CHANCE MODIFIER
Arduous	-30% Base Chance
Hard	-20% Base Chance
Challenging	-10% Base Chance
Standard	+/-0% Base Chance
Routine	+10% Base Chance
Easy	+20% Base Chance
Trivial	+30% Base Chance

MENDON WATCHES ALONG the edge of the woods for signs that anyone followed them when they left for the Penobscot truck house to declare the nation's allegiance to the Continental Army. It is dark outside, and Mendon has no light. The Historian considers the situation to determine the Difficulty Rating, telling Mendon's player that it is a (Hard -20%) Awareness Test.

ADJUDICATING DIFFICULTY RATING

Here are the three most important considerations that a Historian will use to determine the level of hardship or ease of a Skill Test:

DISTRACTION: Would something in the area prohibit you from doing things quickly? Would being surrounded cause you to load an arrow poorly or a raging fire be a distraction?

TIME: How much time does it take to complete the task? Do you need an immediate result (like steering a cart away from tumbling off a cliff using Drive) or can you take your time to get it right (spending an extra few minutes to unlock a door using Skulduggery)?

TOOLS: Do you have the right tool to get the job done? If not, are there available substitutes that would do in a pinch? A crowbar or mallet would break down a door (using Athletics), but a knife or a fire poker can remove the hinges (using Coordination).

PERIL CONDITION TRACK PENALTIES

Your **Peril Condition Track** may impose penalties on your Total Chance for success. If you are Unhindered or Imperiled, you suffer no additional penalties. However, if your status on the Peril Condition Track is **Ignore 1 Skill Rank, Ignore 2 Skill Ranks** or **Ignore 3 Skill Ranks**, you must subtract the bonuses your Skill Ranks typically confer to you.

AFTER MANY WEEKS at sea, Verity Trowbridge prepares to step off the ship *Sea Dragon*. As the ship docks at Plymouth's Wharf, she sees the famed Plymouth Rock. Faced with nervousness and excitement at the prospect of a New World unknown to Verity, the Historian tells their player they will need to make a Resolve Test. Resolve is a Willpower-based Skill. Verity's Willpower is 55%, while they have three total Skill Ranks in Resolve. This gives her a Base Chance of 85% (55+10+10+10). However, Verity is suffering from 'Ignore 2 Skill Ranks' on the Peril Condition Track. This means that her Base Chance is now only 65% (55+10).

When your status on the Peril Condition Track is at **Incapacitated!**, do not roll D100, as you cannot succeed at any Skill Test until recovering. You will learn more about how your Peril Condition Track works and the effect it will have on your character in **Article 7: Combat Encounters**.



TOTAL CHANCE

Once the Historian tells you the Difficulty Rating, you will announce your **Total Chance** to succeed in the Skill Test. After rolling, announce whether you succeed or fail the Skill Test.

VERITY TROWBRIDGE NEEDS to make a Bargain to convince a group of Loyalist soldiers to let her enter Boston. Verity's Base Chance is 76%, but the Historian has deemed it an (Arduous -30%) Skill Test. Her Total Chance for success is 46%. Grabbing D100, Verity's player rolls a 45% and succeeds! If she had rolled a 46% or lower, Verity would still have been successful. However, rolling 47% or higher would have failed.

COMMITTING TO YOUR ACTIONS

Once you have announced what your character intends to do and the Historian calls out the Difficulty Rating, you must commit to your intended action.

This game does not provide a complete list of every single Difficulty Rating for the situations your character may find themselves in. These decisions rely on the Historian's adjudication of the rules. However, **Article 4: Skills & Talents** include example Difficulty Ratings to consider.

MATCHING DICE

In some instances, you may generate *matching dice* results with D100. It occurs whenever you generate the same die result on both the tens and units dice (for example, 11, 22, 33, 44, 55, 66, 77, 88, 99, 00). In these cases, it is either a **Critical Success** or **Critical Failure**.

CRITICAL SUCCESS

If you succeed at your Skill Test and the dice match, it is a **Critical Success**. The effects are always to your benefit. These are contextual, and the Historian will announce any additional help or penalties tied to a match result.

VERITY TROWBRIDGE IS fighting the Loyalist army at the Battle of Great Bridge. To keep the Red Coats from crossing the bridge, she attempts to rip up one of its massive planks, despite being under heavy musket fire. Verity has a 55% Total Chance for success. Rolling D100, her player rolls a 33%! Because it is below the Total Chance for success, it qualifies as a Critical Success. The Historian notes that it is a Critically Successful Skill Test and considers other benefits. If Verity's player rolled a 55%, 44%, 33%, 22%, 11% or 01%, it would be treated as a Critical Success.

CRITICAL FAILURE

Conversely, should you fail your Skill Test and the dice match, it is a **Critical Failure**. The effects are always to your detriment, determined by the Historian.

UNDER A HAIL of gunfire, the Red Coats storm the Barren Hill, where Azar Willington defends the approach in a thicket of bayonets. Azar has a 55% Total Chance for success. Rolling D100, his player rolls a 66%! But, because it is above his Total Chance for success and it is a match, it qualifies as a Critical Failure. The Historian notes that it is a Critically Failed Skill Test and considers other complications. If Azar's player had rolled a 66%, 77%, 88%, 99% or 100%, it would be a Critical Failure.



SKILL TESTS OVER 100%

It is possible to have a Total Chance for success over 100%. However, the Total Chance for success is *capped at 99%*. A result of 100% on D100 is always treated as a Critical Failure.

SKILL TESTS LOWER THAN 1%

At other times, it is possible to have a Total Chance for success less than 1%. Roll a Skill Test regardless. A result of 01% on D100 is always treated as a Critical Success, despite not being a match.

NO RISK? NO TEST!

Tasks without risk, such as climbing up ladders, maintaining a trusty musket, impressively riding your horse or writing in your character's journal, are good examples of when not to Test. The Historian will be the final judge, merely asking the player to narrate what happens.

RE-ATTEMPTING FAILED TESTS

Whenever you re-attempt a failed Skill Test, the penalties rely on narrative changes or the imposition of other mitigating factors that the Historian decides. Only by gaining help, finding better tools, waiting an appropriate amount of time or increasing the Difficulty Rating allows you to re-attempt a failed Test.

VERITY TROWBRIDGE'S NEW house has been set on fire by the Sons of Liberty, angry that she has continued distributing stamped paper upon the Stamp Act order. Verity has been fighting a furious battle against the flames spreading across her foyer. Narratively, Verity is trying to beat out the fire, but it is growing too big to snuff out independently. Mechanically, this means that Verity's player has failed at her Coordination Test. With this consideration in mind, Verity begins running as quickly as possible to fetch water from a nearby well. With a few buckets of water in-hand, the Historian allows Verity to attempt another Coordination Test to put out the flames.

There are some exceptions to this rule for combat, as every swing and shot promotes a new set of circumstances. We will talk more about how this works in **Article 7: Combat Encounters**.

ASSISTED SKILL TESTS

Other characters can Assist your Skill Tests. Follow these steps whenever you receive or assist in others' Skill Tests:

- ☠ Only one ally can assist a Test. The Historian may adjust the Difficulty Rating if multiple allies try to help, however.
- ☠ The Assisting ally must have at least one Skill Rank in the Skill they are assisting you with but cannot Assist if they are Incapacitated!.
- ☠ The assisting player must describe their character's action to illustrate to the Historian how they intend to help.
- ☠ Another player can announce assistance with a Test before or after the Difficulty Rating has been called out.
- ☠ An Assisting player hands one of their D100 (their tens die) to you. This Assist Die can replace the tens die result of the next Skill Test you make.
- ☠ Roll both your D100 and the Assist Die together. When determining results, refer to either the original tens die or the Assist Die for the results you prefer (typically the lowest result). If you had rolled a 45%, and your Assist Die comes up as face '30,' your new derived result is 35%.
- ☠ Always assume the best result when gaining assistance with an Assist Die, unless it is a Critical Failure. If the results are both a Critical Success and a Critical Failure, re-roll the Skill Test.



VERITY TROWBRIDGE HAS bottomed out a wagon on the bed of a river as she attempted a crossing. The horses are struggling, and she and her friends are trying to drag it out without harming the draught animals. Verity knows how to ready oxen to hitch up to a wagon, having spent time loading trunks for ‘bigwigs’ in the city. Hence, her player asks the Historian if she can roll a Handle Animal Test to determine whether there is an easier way to unhitch the horses without further Injury. The Historian announces that the Skill Test’s Difficulty Rating will be (Challenging -10%), which means Verity’s Total Chance for success is 55%. Another player immediately pipes up, indicating that Mendon has raised horses and may provide some assistance with the work. The Historian tells Mendon’s player they can confer an Assist Die to Verity’s Skill Test. Verity’s player rolls a 63% on their D100 and a face ‘30’ on the other player’s Assist Die. Verity swaps the face ‘60’ for a face ‘30,’ with Verity’s derived result now a 33%—a Critical Success!

OPPOSED TESTS

Most Skill Tests assess a binary outcome of success or failure. Should there ever be a time when an **Opposed Test** is required (such as in a leg wrestling contest or competitive games of chance), not only do you need to succeed at the Skill Test, you must also refer to your Degrees of Success.

DEGREES OF SUCCESS

You determine **Degrees of Success** by adding the tens die (a result between 1 and 10) and the relevant Primary Attribute Bonus the Skill is derived from. Whoever succeeds at their Skill Test and has the highest Degrees of Success automatically wins the Opposed Test. If the Degrees of Success match, make another Opposed Test until one side is declared the winner. In cases where you automatically succeed at a Skill Test, simply roll a 1D10 and add the related Primary Attribute Bonus as above.

Any time a Skill Test in an Opposed Test results in **Critical Success**, that participant automatically wins the contest. If both participants roll a Critical Success, refer to the Degrees of Success to determine the winner. But, if the Opposed Test results in a **Critical Failure**, the participant automatically loses the contest.

AZAR WILLINGTON IS posing as a schoolmaster while surveying the Loyalist defenses in Huntington. However, Major Robert Rogers of the British military has grown suspicious, so he corners Azar and interrogates him. The Historian decides to have Azar and Major Robert make an Opposed Test. Azar has an [FB] of 4. He then rolls 25%, succeeding at his Skill Test; he has generated 6 Degrees of Success (2+6). Major Robert has a [PB] of 2. He then rolls a 22%, a Critical Success. A Critical Success always wins in an Opposed Test—Azar Willington has been discovered!



TARGET NUMBER

In some cases, the Historian may rule that the Opposed Test should play out dramatically. These sorts of Opposed Tests take place over several rolls. The Historian will announce how many Degrees of Success is required to win (called the **Target Number**). Each participant will take Turns making the relevant Skill Test, counting up their respective Degrees of Success. The first to exceed the Target Number with their total Degrees of Success wins.

VERITY TROWBRIDGE IS engaging in propaganda against the Loyalists. Key to this is the war of words to remove Thomas Hutchinson as governor of the Province of Massachusetts Bay. Using her propaganda against Hutchinson's own, the Historian says that the first to succeed in their Charm Tests and reach the Target Number of 20 wins. Both Verity and Thomas roll opposed Charm Tests. Both succeed at their Charm Tests, so it is time to compare Degrees of Success. Verity rolls a 45% and adds her Fellowship Bonus [FB] of 5. Her total Degrees of Success is 9 (4+5). Thomas Hutchinson rolls a 35% and adds his [FB] of 7. His total Degrees of Success is 10 (3+7). The Historian makes a note of the current Degrees of Success, and the political bout continues. Verity rolls her Charm and **Critically Succeeds!** Unable to roll any longer due to Verity's Critical Success, Thomas Hutchinson **lost** the political contest and is recalled to London, never to return to the Thirteen Colonies.

Under these circumstances, you will already have described what your character is doing. **Should** you possess a Talent or Trait, which allows you to flip or otherwise modify the Skill, be sure to tell the Historian. Under these circumstances, the Historian will not reveal the Difficulty Rating to you but **keep it a secret**. Simply announce your Base Chance and then roll the dice; the Historian will record the results secretly from you.

The Historian will obfuscate the result within the narrative without directly revealing if you succeeded at the Test or not. The **only exception is** if you Critically Succeeded or Critically Failed, in which case the Historian will immediately reveal the results. No matter the situation, you cannot Assist a Secret Test.

MENDON IS ATTEMPTING to contact a spirit to reveal to them the location of a Freemason hideout. Although they have taken the proper precautions, spirits rarely bow so easily to human demands. After successfully casting their Spell, the creature appears, clad in chains and ectoplasm. The Historian secretly determines what the Difficulty Rating is and asks Mendon's player to make a Secret Test using their character's Bargain Skill to determine if Mendon's force of will is enough to command the ghost to do their bidding. Recording the result in secret, the Historian will narrate the outcome.

SECRET TESTS

Sometimes, the Historian may not want you to know whether you were successful or not. **Secret Tests** hide the mechanics beneath the narrative, ensuring that you, as a player, do not know the immediate result. Examples include:

- ☠ **Determine motivations** (Scrutinize)
- ☠ **Forge a document** (Counterfeit)
- ☠ **Holdout a weapon** (Skulduggery)
- ☠ **Change your appearance** (Disguise)

FAIL FORWARD TESTS

There are times where a failed Skill Test does not always equate to failure. For instance, when you are sneaking, a Historian will ask for a Stealth Test. However, the circumstances may be so much in your favor that failing the Test will not reveal your location: this is an example of a **Fail Forward Test**. If you failed the Stealth Test and the Historian felt it was appropriate, you instead suffer 1D10+1 Peril due to the anxiety of being caught. Similarly, a Historian can call for an Athletics Test to climb up a wall. However, the wall is riddled with outcroppings, putting circumstances mostly in your favor. Failing the Skill Test to climb would result in additional fatigue, as you suffer 2D10+2 Peril.