

An RPG by CobblePath Games

# LOCUS

## PLAYER GUIDE



A roleplaying game of  
personal horror

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## TEMPTATION

*is the dark descent; lurking in shadows and beckoning you onward.  
Temptation burns, a fire in your gut, your heart, your head, turning  
your sense and logic and restraint to ash.*

## APATHY

*is the void; the hole in your chest, the great weight tying you down.  
Apathy watches, with eyes blinded by fear and futility, doubt and  
strife; for the price is too great, and your pocket too empty.*

## DISCORD

*is the betrayal; the sundered song of friends and family, the rickety  
bridges burned. Discord scorns and holds all in contempt, driving all  
away with nought but the follies of suspicion and pride.*

## MALICE

*is an ugly thing; a hollow husk of unfocused fury and dried up  
compassion. Malice corrupts, and hardens your heart and drowns  
out your love in its despairing, ferocious screams.*

# LOCUS

## PLAYER GUIDE

A ROLEPLAYING GAME OF PERSONAL HORROR AND MYSTERY

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## DEDICATIONS

Jack - To my father, who proved to me that demons can be overcome  
Steph - To my mum, for all the nights she endured terrible horror films with me



<https://www.cobblepathgames.co.uk/>  
First published 2020

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MANY THANKS TO OUR KICKSTARTER BACKERS WITHOUT WHOM THIS BOOK WOULDN'T BE A REALITY!

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# INTRODUCTION



*A wave of cold spilled out of the crack in the door.  
Something sinister lurked in the darkness beyond.  
And all they could do was continue down the path.*

## WHAT IS *LOCUS*?

INTRODUCTION

*Locus* is a tabletop roleplaying system with a focus on personal horror, one which explores themes of guilt, morality, and mystery. Our aim in creating this game was to explore the nature of fear, tension, and stress, and to give Players the means to experience those emotions through their Characters. This game is designed to facilitate the experience of overcoming and combatting that fear in order to survive.

One member of the group will take on the role of the Director—our term for ‘game master’—and the rest become the Players, or the Cast. We recommend that *Locus* be played with anywhere between two and eight people. We have found that a group size of four or five works best.

## THEMES

*The unfortunate group paces anxiously down the street. They sense that they’re being watched, but there isn’t another living soul in sight. In the distance a fog has begun to roll in. The leader of the band swears he sees a familiar face in the mists—that of a lover scorned. Something growls behind them! Their pulses race but their feet feel as though they are stuck in mud...*

The game is built around three central motifs, all of which crop up in mechanics and theme alike.

## GUILT

What have you done? *Locus* Characters have a secret. Each one has done something which weighs upon them. Perhaps they feel repentant, or perhaps they don’t. Their secret could be about something illegal, or just plain immoral, but either way—they are guilty.

## MORALITY

What is right? What is wrong? Who is the judge? Linked closely to guilt, the willingness to explore the concept of morality is key to enjoying the game to its fullest.

## MYSTERY

What’s going on? Why are you here and why is any of this happening to you? How can you survive? These are questions that should be answered as you play.



## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

There are two versions of this guide—a Director’s Guide and a Player Guide. Only the person acting as Director should read the Director’s Guide, as it includes explanations and mechanical elements of the game best left as mysteries to the Players. We strongly recommend that individuals who intend to be Players should read only this guide before their first game, and not the Director’s Guide.

**You will find that information is repeated in different sections, to make it easier to find material when you need it most.**

This guide contains:

- The rules and an explanation of how to play
- A list of materials you need to play
- Instructions for creating a Character
- Rules and advice for interacting with the game world
- A rules summary ([Appendices], Page 58)
- Glossary ([Appendices], Page 62)
- Sample Characters ([Appendices], Page 43)
- Blank Character cards ([Appendices], Page 66).

## THE DIRECTOR

Directors oversee the story and the game. Each game needs one Director. Directors handle the majority of the behind the scenes work in secret, manage the background plot, referee any rules disputes, and play any Characters or entities not controlled by you, the Player.

Typically, a Director’s role in the game is to describe a location, situation, or event. They then allow you to explain how you wish to interact with it and describe the results of this interaction. In addition to this, Directors will control adversaries, and play as any non-Player Characters—what we refer to as Foils. The Director will determine their actions and even roll dice for them where appropriate.

As this is also a mystery game, it is to be expected that the Director will hide things from you. The Director will make dice rolls in secret, and this obfuscation is wholly intentional. One of the greatest fears in life, after all, is of the unknown.

## THE ROLE OF A PLAYER

While we would of course not bar anyone from trying this as their first table-top roleplay experience, we have not written this system to be an introduction to roleplaying. As a Player you will take the role of one of the main Characters in the ‘Cast’ of this tale of horror. The Director creates the world, sets the scenes and guides the pacing, but you are the one with the agency to write the active narrative.

As in other table-top roleplaying adventures, each Player takes on a role of a Character, and those Characters act and react to the events and scenes described by the Director. There is an expectation that you will play your Character as earnestly as possible. When taking actions, consider your Character’s concept and personality and how they would act and respond to the events that happen.

Around the table, while playing, you are expected to make the Director aware of any actions your Character takes (either openly/verbally or covertly, such as by passing notes). Be aware of information the other Players should know and then give the Director as much information as possible about what you want to do and what your goal is. An Outcome Check ([Outcome Checks], Page 11) will determine the result of the action and whether it was successful.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

*Locus* is not a game about fulfilling power fantasies, nor being the hero who saves the day. It is about facing difficult situations, exploring themes of guilt and morality, and it is about survival. *Locus* is designed to contain harrowing content, and it is expected that the Director will have discussed this with Players before the game begins. As a Player you should not expect to be able to always have weapons to hand to defend yourselves. There will always be an alternative way out of a fight—whether that be running for your life or hunkering down in a safe hiding spot.

In *Locus* you are ordinary people, the unfortunate protagonists of a horror story. You have been thrust into a world of your own nightmares and must uncover the mysteries that surround you. Your Characters are here because of who they are, so it is worthwhile really getting to know exactly who that is.

In terms of the setting, when we refer to horror stories we note that we mean more psychological and supernatural stories like *The Descent* (2005), *Triangle* (2009), *Shutter Island* (2010), *Citadel* (2012), and rather than classic slashers like *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), *Friday the 13th* (1980), or *Hostel* (2005).

## GAME CONTENT

*Locus* is designed to be scary, and games created with it will naturally contain heavy themes and events. At the same time, it is also intended to be an enjoyable experience. It is important to make sure that everyone at the table is comfortable with the themes and content that will be tackled in any given *Locus* story.

The Characters in a *Locus* game all have events in their past that will impact the story in a few different ways. It is important to confirm with your Players to be sure that everyone is aware of the types of concepts involved, as well as their tolerance levels for various tropes and scenarios. A conversation prior to or during Character creation can help establish mutually agreed-upon boundaries. Everyone should be made aware that *Locus* includes a mechanic where Characters have experiences akin to hallucinations.

*Locus* aims to provide a personalised experience for your Characters, and as such tries to stay away from the more common horror tropes which demonise the ‘other’, rather than building fear from Character’s own mistakes and transgressions. As such we encourage all who play the game to avoid simplifying personifications of mental illness, mental disability and physical disability and be aware that the Monsters of *Locus* are not and should not be representations of these things.

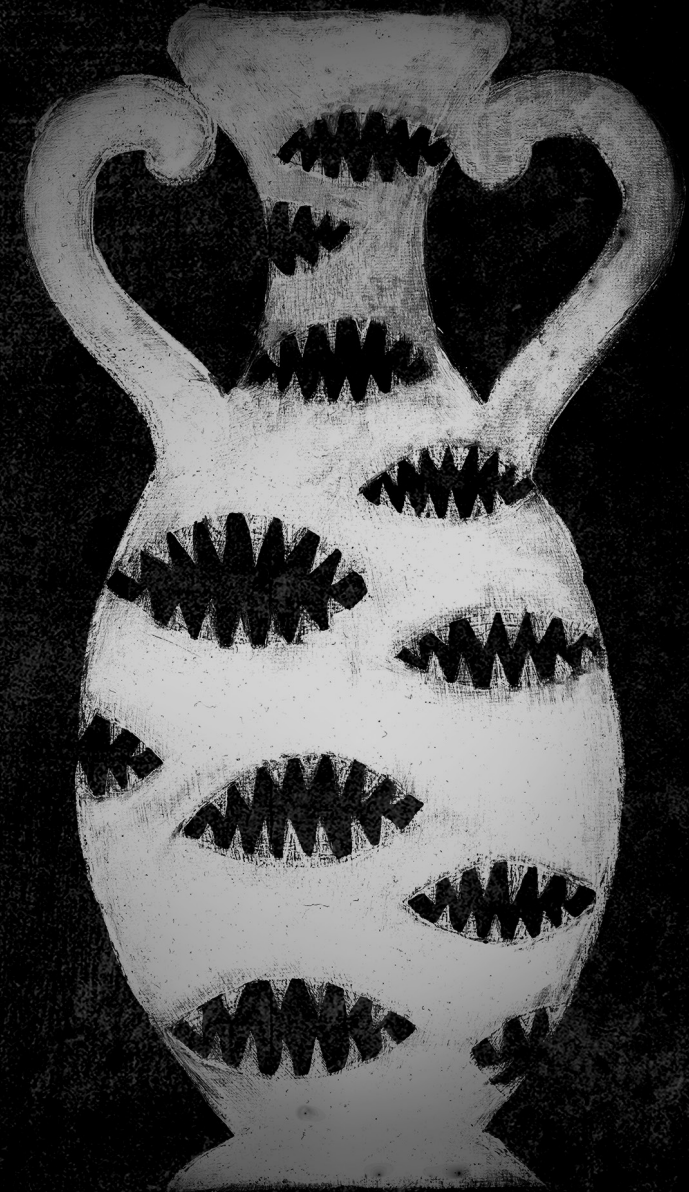
As a Player you should make sure that you bring any concerns, or content you are not comfortable with to the Director’s attention. Make sure you are open and communicating with your Director about this. We strongly recommend having safety tools in place before and during play. Consent to different forms of content can be withdrawn at any time. It is possible that an unanticipated theme or issue may crop up that is distressing to one or more Players, and renegotiation may be required. Players should always feel free to override their prior consent.



## CHAPTER 1 HOW TO PLAY

*Truly a wondrous treasure trove, he thought, so  
many riches and potential for more.*

*To those watching, he walked to his doom.*

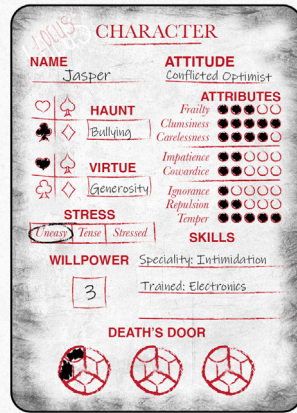


- A Director, who will run the game, and at least one Player.
- One standard deck of playing cards for every four Players. If you have five or more Players you may need an extra deck. The jokers should be removed.
- At least one set of three six-sided dice (“3d6”). Ideally, everyone at the table should have their own set.
  - Alternatively, there are many digital and online options for dice rollers which are just as appropriate.
- A copy of a Character card for each Player. These can be found in [Appendices], Page 66.
- A set of pencils for making notes on the cards.

“THE CAST”

You interact with this world through your Characters, as the Director guides them—and you—through the environment and entities which crawl and creep there. All Characters are recorded on cards, blank copies of which can be found at the back of this guide ([Appendices], Page 66).

At their most basic, Characters are defined by eight Attributes, a Haunt, a Virtue, and an Attitude. These are outlined briefly below, but Chapter 2 will take you through creating your own Character and all of these concepts in detail (Page 30).



All Characters have a set of eight Attributes. These represent their capabilities and their proficiency at accomplishing certain tasks. In *Locus* all Attributes are negative, meaning a higher score represents a lower level of ability. For example, a Frailty of 5 means a Character is extremely fragile, bruises easily and lacks physical strength.

**Frailty**

How weak is your physical body? This Attribute is relevant for attempting anything requiring muscle mass or fitness.

**Clumsiness**

How clumsy are you? This Attribute is relevant for sneaking and attempting anything requiring fine motor skills.

**Carelessness**

How aware of your surroundings are you? This Attribute is relevant for dodging incoming objects, or noticing shadows moving in the night.

**Impatience**

How impatient are you? This Attribute is relevant for your self-control, and how long, for example, you can wait in a cupboard while something stalks past.

**Cowardice**

How much of a coward are you? This Attribute is relevant for standing your ground and keeping your cool when your life is at stake.

**Ignorance**

How foolish are you? This Attribute is relevant for attempting to solve puzzles, apply knowledge, or use common sense.

**Repulsion**

How uncharismatic are you? This Attribute is relevant for conversations and winning people to your side.

**Temper**

How angry are you? This Attribute is relevant for determining your reaction to circumstances in the world.

A Check (further described below) is the act of rolling dice to score a number higher than the value of a designated Attribute. As Players, you will be advised by the Director what types of Checks you need to perform, and which of your Attributes should be rolled to attempt one. The higher the Character’s Attribute score, the more difficult it will be to roll above that number on 1d6.

More information on Attributes and how to calculate them can be found in [Attributes], Page 38.

## HAUNTS AND VIRTUES - OVERVIEW

Your Character's Haunt is a significant event in their past when they did something wrong, that caused harm. It may have been something morally wrong, legally wrong, or just a case of negligence—in all cases, it is something that has left a stain upon their soul.

Haunts are classified into one of four categories:

**TEMPTATION**  $\diamond$ : Haunts born of desire or greed.

**APATHY**  $\heartsuit$ : Haunts driven by a lack of interest or care.

**DISCORD**  $\clubsuit$ : Haunts caused by a dislike of others and the impulse to create conflict.

**MALICE**  $\heartsuit$ : Haunts directed by hatred and a desire to inflict harm.

Your Character's Virtue is, quite simply, the predominant redeeming feature of who they are. Like Haunts, they are categorised into four types: **Temperance**  $\diamond$ , **Motivation**  $\heartsuit$ , **Community**  $\clubsuit$ , and **Compassion**  $\heartsuit$ .

You'll be expected to roleplay these, and will be rewarded for roleplaying them well, as Haunts and Virtues should inform an integral part of your Character's personality.

## ATTITUDES - OVERVIEW

Attitude is closely tied to the concept you will develop during the process of Character creation. It relates specifically to the Character's perspective on their Haunt. Does the guilt eat away at them, or can they sleep soundly at night? Can they cope with the regret, or do they revel in the memory? How easy is it for them to look at themselves in the mirror? For more detail, see [Attitudes], Page 34.

## CHECKS

When your Character encounters challenges where the outcome is uncertain, you must make a Check by rolling the dice to determine what happens. There are four different kinds of Checks used in *Locus*: Outcome Checks, Contested Checks, Initiative Checks, and Untrained Checks.

## OUTCOME CHECKS

Outcome Checks are the standard dice roll in *Locus*. These consist of rolling 3d6 and checking one die against the Attribute on a Character's card that best suits the intended action. The die result used is dependent on the difficulty of the roll. Hard rolls use the lowest result of the three, Medium difficulty rolls the middle, and Easy rolls the highest.

The target is to roll higher than the Attribute's value on the designated die. If the result is higher, then the action is a success and resolves as the Character intends it to. If the result is below the Attribute's value, then the action will usually still succeed, but the outcome will not be as intended and consequences will occur.

In the case of a failed Outcome Check, Characters should typically be allowed to succeed at the broad aim of the action. The wider consequences of that failure will be dependent on the nature of the specific Outcome Check, and may be in their favour or not.

Alongside successful and failed Outcome Checks, it is possible to have more extreme positive results. Rolling 6 on all three dice is a critical success. A critical success acts as a morale boost to the Character, restoring 3 Willpower Points (WP) and allowing the Player to discard a neutral (non-Haunt suit) Card from their Hand.

### A Successful Outcome Check

*Val wants her Character Theresa to convince the spaced-out cashier to listen to her. The Director, Farah, decides that this Outcome Check is linked to the Attribute of Repulsion and that it will be a Medium difficulty Check. Val needs to roll above Theresa's Repulsion of 2, and the die she uses will be the middle-value result on a roll of three dice. Val rolls a 2, a 4, and a 5. The middle result of 4 is above her Repulsion of 2, resulting in a success.*

*In the game, Theresa succeeds in her attempt to snap the cashier out of their haze.*

### A Failed Outcome Check

*Mike decides his Character, Virgil, wants to kick in a door. Farah decides the appropriate attribute to use is Frailty, and the Check will be Medium difficulty. Mike will have to roll above Virgil's Frailty of 4 with the middle result of his three dice to succeed.*

*Mike rolls a 1, 2, and 4 on his three dice. The middle result is 2, which is lower than Virgil's Frailty Attribute of 4. This is a failure. Virgil opens the door with his kick but hurts his foot in the process, taking a Minor Injury.*

### A Critical Success

*Touma's Character Jasper realises that he needs to climb up to an open window. Farah asks him to make a Hard Clumsiness Check, to be exact. Touma rolls and, incredibly, rolls three 6s on his three dice. Not only does he successfully climb up to the window without a hitch. Touma then adds 3 WP to Jasper's Character card and discards a neutral (non-Haunt suit) card from his Hand.*

### FAILURE VS UNPLEASANT SUCCESS

Sometimes it is more narratively appropriate to have failed Outcome Checks result in failed actions.

Consider an example where the Cast were working against a ticking clock to complete a scenario, and the Character failed in their attempt to kick down the door. Making them try again with another Outcome Check (or two, or three...)—rather than succeeding with a Wound—could be a dramatically appropriate way to lose time and build tension.

Sometimes an action a Character attempts is actively opposed by another entity. Whether the opposition is a Character or a Monster, this is resolved using a special type of Check called a Contested Check.

For a Contested Check, both entities involved roll three dice against one of their own Attributes. There is no difficulty level involved, and the results of all three dice are considered. For each result that is higher than the chosen Attribute, the entity scores a point. Whoever gets the most points wins the contest. In the case of a tie, the 'defender' wins. In the case of argument, the final decision as to which entity is the defender is made by the Director. Entities can earn bonus points, awarded by you, by taking in-game actions to set up the situation in their favour, and/or roleplaying appropriately and well.

*Mike decides Virgil needs to hide from the approaching shadows. He carries out what he believes is an Outcome Check to hide. The Director decides the appropriate Attribute here is Cowardice, given that Virgil has seen the remains of whatever it was that the shadows did to the mayor. Mike succeeds his Check by rolling above his Cowardice on one of his three dice.*

*Secretly the Director has rolled a Contested Check with the shadows' opposing Attribute, Search. She succeeds with two of her dice and wins the Contested Check. The shadows find Virgil.*

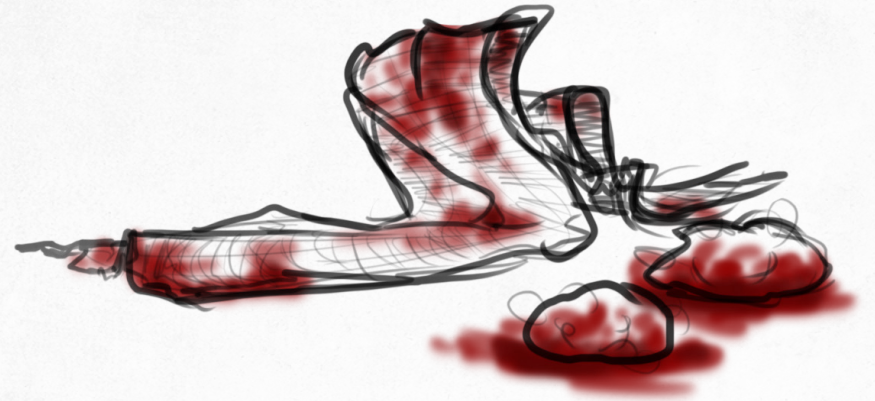
## UNTRAINED CHECKS

If an entity is attempting something that would normally require a Check but for which they have no training (as defined by Skills, see [Trained Skills], Page 40), it requires an Untrained Check. An Untrained Check is series of two consecutive Checks. The first is a Hard Ignorance Check (to work out how to go about the task) and the second is a Hard Check with the linked Attribute for the specific action.

Actions which require Untrained Checks take longer within the game than those which require a standard Outcome Check. It is the Director's discretion as to exactly how long, but the delay represents the time it takes to figure out how to perform the task before actually performing it.

### STRAIGHT CONTESTS

In the case of a tie in a situation where there is no 'defender'—a tug of war, for example—the tie results in a stalemate. Neither entity wins, but neither loses either. If both entities wish to continue the contest, it continues for another round, and both perform another Check.



*Following the run-in with the shadows, Virgil's leg is bleeding. The Director asks Mike to make an Untrained Check for Virgil with First Aid, as Virgil does not have that Skill. Mike rolls 3d6 against Virgil's Ignorance, which is 4. It is a Hard Check, so he must take the lowest of the three dice as his result.*

*Miraculously, he has rolled 6, 6, and 5, so he passes the first hurdle with a 5 compared to his Ignorance of 4. This represents Virgil working out how, in theory, he can stop the bleeding.*

*Mike then rolls another 3d6 for Virgil in Clumsiness. This is another Hard Check, to find out if Virgil has the finesse to perform the task. This time he does not roll so well, getting a 2, 3, and 3. As the check is Hard, he must use the lowest result, which is 2. This is equal to his Clumsiness which is a failure. He does not pass this second Check, so Virgil's attempt at First Aid is ultimately unsuccessful.*

Checks have difficulties that affect which of the three dice results you use. Difficulty is set by the Director, and based on the type of task, training level involved, and other environmental factors.

Easy difficulty represents actions which most people can expect to be successful but those with a lack of skill, talent, or physical ability in the area could still fail. Cooking a simple meal would be Easy, and it is only the most unskilled, careless, or unlucky who will encounter failure. Medium difficulty represents actions which could go either way in terms of success but are generally more likely to succeed. The first attempt at putting together a piece of furniture is something most people might be able to do, but it is entirely possible that things could go wrong—something accidentally breaks, or a hinge gets attached backwards. Sometimes the reason may not be related to skill—perhaps the right number of screws weren't in the box. The results of the dice can be interpreted in many ways.

Hard difficulty represents actions which most people would struggle with—all but the most skilled or capable could expect failure. Examples would include replacing a broken component of a laptop, which requires at least some specialist knowledge or tools, or a very detailed guide for the layman to generally hope to succeed. Relevant Items can reduce the difficulty of a Check by one tier. A Hard Check can become Medium, and a Medium Check can become Easy. Easy Checks cannot become any simpler. On the other hand, Injuries increase the difficulty of Checks (see [Injuries] later in this chapter, Page 21).

You shouldn't be expected to make an Outcome Check for an action which is impossible to succeed – for instance, attempting brain surgery without even having the basics of biology as a Trained Skill.

A final note is that Difficulty is completely separate from Characters. The Difficulty of a Check should be a neutral statement and should be the same for every Character who tries to do the action. Any difficulties the Character has in achieving the action should be reflected by their Attributes rather than the Difficulty of the Check.



Conflicts occur when two entities are at odds with one another—most typically when a Monster is in the vicinity of a Character. Conflicts are generally resolved through a series of Contested Checks between the entities involved. Conflicts can take many forms, from physical combat to a duel of wits, or even running and/or hiding.

Actions that the Cast can take during a Conflict are:

- **Movement:** Contested Check against no-one. This can represent movement up to five metres, or making movement-related actions like pushing over an object to create or block a route.
- **Hiding:** Contested Check versus an opponent. This can be done if appropriate hiding places are available.
- **Attacking with a weapon:** Contested Check against an opponent. Certain weapons may have varying levels of effectiveness against different opponents. Attacking with a weapon cannot be performed without a suitable Item. Attacking a Monster without a weapon will not succeed, and attempts should be treated as Miscellaneous Actions, below.
- **Defending:** Declaring that one is Defending gives the Character +1 success on their next Contested Check when being attacked.
- **Miscellaneous:** Anything not covered by the above. Usually an Outcome Check, but may be a Contested Check depending on action.

While taking any of these Actions other than Movement, a Character may reposition up to a distance of roughly two metres.

### URNS

During a Conflict all entities involved take turns to act, declaring their Actions and making an appropriate Check as required. A full set of turns, one for each entity involved in the conflict, is referred to as a round.

If a Check is Contested, then all other entities involved will also perform Checks during that Action.

For example, if a Monster is searching for the Cast, then it will make a Check against its Search Attribute, while all members of the Cast who could potentially be found must make a Contested Check to avoid detection. If your Character wishes to take action to hide during their turn, then you must make a Contested Check. Any Monsters who are actively searching will make a Contested Search Check. This means that if a group of Characters is hiding from a Monster, then the Monster will get one opportunity per Character per round to detect them.

The order in which turns happen is decided by the result of an Initiative Check when the Conflict begins.

### INITIATIVE CHECKS

When a Conflict begins, all participating entities must make an Initiative Check. This is done with a roll of 3d6 for each entity involved. The results of the 3d6 are added together, then the value of the entity's Carelessness Attribute is subtracted from the total. The totals are then compared and placed in descending order. This is the order in which entities may take actions, one after the other. At the end of a round, the order simply restarts from the top again—do not re-roll for the duration of this Conflict. This continues until the Conflict ends.

*The Cast are investigating a room when they hear a noise coming down the corridor outside. Wary of what it might be, the three Characters opt to find hiding places in the room.*

*As the door swings open and a Monster enters the room, a Conflict begins. Farah asks everyone to roll Initiative.*

*Each Player individually rolls 3d6. They then add those results together and subtract their Carelessness. Farah, as Director, also rolls 3d6 for the Monster.*

*Val's dice results are 4, 5 and 6. She adds these together to make 15, and then subtracts her Carelessness Attribute of 3 to make her Character Theresa's Initiative result 12.*

*Farah rolls 2, 4 and 4 on the dice which add to make 10. As the Monster does not have a Carelessness Attribute, it does not subtract anything from the dice total.*

*Mike's result is 9 for his Character Virgil, and Touma's result is 13 for his Character Jasper. Therefore, when enacting this Conflict, the entities in the scene will act in the order of Jasper first, then Theresa, then the Monster, then lastly Virgil.*

## ENDING CONFLICTS

A Conflict ends when the entities involved are no longer at odds with one another. This could be due to the entities escaping from one another, hiding, or a Monster's failure to detect the Cast. It could also be due to the escape from a Monster (or a Character). If the Conflict did not involve a Monster, for instance with a verbal dispute, it would end when the dispute is over. Once a Conflict ends, the Initiative order no longer needs to be followed. Any new Conflicts that arise will prompt a new Initiative Check.



## CARD DRAWS

The playing cards represent the connection between the Cast and the world around them. The size and content of a Player's Hand is affected chiefly by the actions the Cast take. As your Character interact with the world, you will build Hands of cards, the size of which represents the weight of the world upon your Character.

Each of the four suits of the deck represents one of four types of Vice and Virtue.

The Vices are **Temptation** ♠, **Apathy** ♡, **Discord** ♣, and **Malice** ♥

The Virtues are **Temperance** ♠, **Motivation** ♡, **Community** ♣, and **Compassion** ♥

Each Character has a connection to a type of Vice, and, separately, a Virtue ([Haunts], Page 32; [Virtues], page 36).

## THE PLAYER'S HAND

You can consider your Hand size a roleplay prompt. The number of cards in your Hand directly represents the effect the world is having on your Character. The more cards appear in your Hand, the more present in your Character's mind their Haunt is. To alleviate the burden, you must find ways through your in-game actions to discard cards from your Hand.

**Note:** The cards do more than just the above, but many rules surrounding the cards are specifically for Directors' eyes only although you may be able to work these out as you play.

## Accumulating Cards

During the course of the game, Characters will encounter situations which will have a significant impact on them. These are represented by you drawing a card from the deck and adding it to your Hand. The situations that result in a card draw are:

- The end of every hour of real time,
- The Character experiencing jarring visions or hallucinations, and
- The Character acting in accordance with their Vice.

When you draw a card, there are two potential outcomes depending upon what suit is drawn.

- If the card suit matches that of your Character's Virtue, gain 3 WP and discard the card immediately.
- If the card is any of the other three suits, it is added to your Hand.

**Note:** A larger Hand size is a bad thing.

## Shedding Cards

To shed some of the ever-increasing weight of the world bearing down upon them, Characters may find relief either through experiencing things going in their favour, or by showing the world the best of themselves. This translates into the following gameplay.

## PLAYER RESPONSIBILITY

In *Locus*, the onus is on you to keep track of times when you should gain benefits, like gaining WP or the opportunity to discard cards, and flag them for the Director for confirmation. This is to share out the responsibility of keeping track of certain elements of the game—the Director will be keeping track of everything bad that occurs.

You have five opportunities to remove a neutral (non-Haunt) card from your Hand. These are:

- Your Character acts in accordance with a Virtue not their own
- You roll a critical success (i.e. roll a 6 on all three dice in a Check).
- Your Character performs an act in accordance with their own Virtue,
- Your Character resists the urge to act in accordance with their Haunt, or
- Your Character acts in a way notably opposing their Haunt.

The last three opportunities in the list above also give you the option to remove a Haunt-suit card, instead of a neutral card, if you so wish.

What may constitute “an act” will vary according to your Director. Generally, however, it should be an action which is narratively impactful, and has at least one of the following characteristics:

- Displays Character development,
- Ultimately inconveniences or injures the Character or other Cast members, or
- Is roleplayed very effectively.

## THE STARTING HAND

At the start of a game, the Deck is shuffled, and every Player draws two cards in turn. If matching Virtue cards are drawn (see Accumulating Cards, above), the draw will result in the your character gaining 3 WP per Virtue card. You then discard the Virtue card(s), and redraw. Each Player begins the game with two cards in their Hand. The Director will guide this process.

## WILLPOWER AND STRESS

Frightening situations can cause extreme Stress, which can be overcome with an application of Willpower (WP). A Character’s Stress level and their ability to persevere through tough situations are both important elements to many of the narratives which inspired *Locus*. As such, Stress and Willpower have been intertwined and included as features in this system. Stress and Willpower have mechanical impacts on game play, but also offer roleplay cues as to the emotional states of the Characters involved.

The three states of Stress are Uneasy, Tense, and Stressed. Each represents an increase in Willpower (WP) cost to re-roll dice.

### STRESS

Throughout the game, several situations and external factors may cause a spike in Stress for a Character. When these occur, you must perform a Check to keep your Character’s composure, or else become more Stressed. This ‘Stress Check’ is an Outcome Check with Medium difficulty unless otherwise specified.

In the following circumstances, failure means the Character gains a level of Stress. Success means their Stress level remains the same:

- Failing a Check
- Seeing a Monster
- Taking damage from an Injury (Difficulty on this Outcome Check is adjusted depending on the type of Injury as follows: Easy if a Minor Injury, Medium if a Major Injury, and Hard if a Grievous Injury) (see [Death’s Door], Page 21)
- Other situations as per Director’s discretion.

The appropriate Attribute for the Stress Check depends on the situation, and it is ultimately up to the Director to decide. Stress Checks other than damage checks default to Medium difficulty unless otherwise noted.

Here are some common examples of Attribute choices for Stress Checks:

- Cowardice in a frightening situation, e.g. seeing a Monster
- Repulsion in conversations, e.g. failing a Check in a conversation
- Temper in high pressure situations, e.g. when taking damage (See note on difficulty levels and Injury, above)
- Ignorance in intellectual pursuits, e.g. failing a Check to work out a riddle
- Impatience in time-sensitive situations, e.g. failing a Check to open a door while being pursued.

If you fail this Check, your Character’s Stress level increases by one. If Uneasy, they become Tense. If Tense, they become Stressed. If already Stressed, nothing further happens.

### CALMING DOWN

If a Character is Stressed, the following circumstances will reduce their Stress level to Tense, or if they are Tense, it will reduce the level to Uneasy:

- The Characters successfully hide, flee from, or defeat a Monster, or
- The Characters solve a significant mystery or make significant progress through the story.

Note that both situations will need agreement from the Director before you change your Character’s Stress level.

Regardless of the level of Stress they have, if a Character can take an Extended Rest (confirm with the Director if a rest they have taken counts as ‘Extended’), your Character will become Uneasy.

### WILLPOWER

Sometimes when the chips are down, when we know we really need to succeed, when we know everything hinges on this one thing working—we can pull something extra from deep within us and beat the odds. This ability is represented in *Locus* by Willpower Points (WP), and is a powerful mechanic you and your Characters can call upon. Willpower is an important resource for a Character; it is one of the few elements in *Locus* that allows you some control over the outcome of an Action.

Willpower only has one use, but it can be exceedingly potent. After rolling the dice, if the result is not optimal, then a Player can spend WP on a re-roll. Any number of dice can be re-rolled in this way, but Willpower must be spent for each one. The number of WP that a single re-roll costs is determined by the Character’s current Stress level. There is no limit to the number of WP that can be spent on a single series of re-rolls.

- If your Character is Uneasy, it costs 1 WP to re-roll up to three dice.
- If your Character is Tense, it costs 1 WP to re-roll up to two dice.
- If your Character is Stressed, it costs 1 WP to re-roll one die.

*Val's Character Theresa is trapped in a locked room. She is fumbling with keys on a keyring, looking for the right one so that she can unlock the door and escape before she is attacked by the unholy thing shambling up to the busted window.*

*The Director decides that finding the right key will require a Check against Theresa's Clumsiness, of Medium difficulty. This means that the middle value of the three dice she rolls must exceed her Clumsiness. When she rolls, only the highest roll is over the target number, which is a failure at Medium difficulty. Val decides to draw on Theresa's WP to re-roll one of the failures.*

*Theresa is currently Uneasy, thanks to the approaching Monster, so it will cost 1 WP to re-roll up to all three dice. She keeps her success and re-rolls the failures, but both roll beneath her Clumsiness value again. Failing the Check means she now must perform a Stress Check.*

*Rather than take the loss and risk increasing her Stress level to Tense, Val chooses to spend the last of Theresa's WP—1 point—on re-rolling both failures again. This time one succeeds, meaning that two of the die rolls in total are above her Clumsiness, beating the Medium difficulty level.*

*The key slides into the lock, and freedom is in sight.*

### GAINING WILLPOWER

Each of the Cast start a game of *Locus* with the same number of Willpower Points (5), plus any earned by the initial card draws ([The Starting Hand], Page 18). This is not static; there are ways to gain WP during game play.

Characters gain WP in the following circumstances:

- When you draw a Virtue card they gain 3 WP and discard the card.
- When their Stress is lowered to the Uneasy state, they gains 3 WP.
- When you roll a critical success (roll a 6 on all three dice of an Outcome Check) your Character gains 3 WP and you can discard a neutral card card
- When your Character performs a significant action in accordance with their Vice, they gain 3 WP, and you draw a card from the deck. (If you draw a Virtue card as a result of this, you must discard the drawn card but the Character does not receive any additional WP for having drawn a Virtue card in this instance)
- When your Character performs a significant action in accordance with their Virtue they gain 5 WP, and you may discard **any** card from their hand. ([Virtues], Page 36).

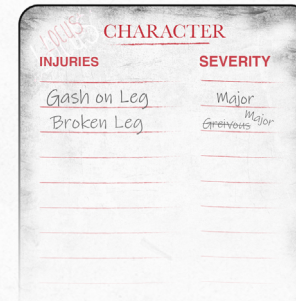
As with the Cards, it is your responsibility to alert your Director to a WP-gaining situation and ask the question, “do I get Willpower for that?”

## DEATH'S DOOR

Unlike many role-playing systems, *Locus* does not use a health point system. There is no adjustable hardness or constitution score—if a bone is broken, it is broken and there will be no magical remedy. If something is fatal, it is fatal. There is only a tracker to monitor the Character's steady creep towards death.

At the bottom of the Character cards you will find the Death's Door tracker: three symbols divided into thirds, and then those sections divided into thirds again for a total of 27 segments. As a Character takes Injuries, you will fill in these sections and symbols. Injuries are added at the Severity the Character received them, and do not “upgrade” through consolidation of lower-severity Injuries. E.g. Three Minor Injuries do not become a Major Injury.

If at any point of the game all three of these symbols are filled through any combination of Injuries received, your Character has died. On the back of the Character cards is space to note down the details should your Character receive a Major or Grievous Injury. A short summary of the Injury and its Severity is all that is required here.



### INJURY TYPES

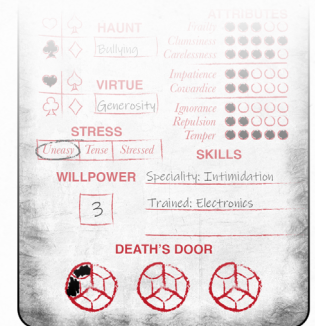
When a Character is injured during the game, either through combat, poor judgement, or sheer misfortune, there will be a Severity. If accrued in Conflict, the Contested Check determines the Injury's Severity—Minor, Major, or Grievous. However, if out of Conflict, Injuries should only ever be Minor and as a consequence for failed Checks.

No matter how small, all Injuries contribute to the decline of a Character's physical well-being.

### Minor Injuries

The Cast can sustain a fair number of Minor Injuries. These range from bruises and small cuts, to sprains and first-degree burns. These are wounds which cause some irritation and pain but will heal in a matter of days or weeks without intervention. On sustaining a Minor Injury, nothing needs to be noted on the back of the Character card, but you must fill in 1 segment of Death's Door.

*After a tense altercation with something only definable as a Monster, Touma's Character Jasper luckily comes away with only a scratch down his arm. Farah tells Touma this counts as a Minor Injury, so doesn't need to be logged on the back of Jasper's Character card, but does need to affect Death's Door. Touma fills in one of the smallest sections of Death's Door and breathes a sigh of relief. That could have gone a lot worse.*



## Major Injuries

Major Injuries are more substantial and begin to impact the Character's ability to function. These are Injuries that cannot be ignored, such as fractures, light concussions, second-degree burns, or sprained ankles. Some may require immediate First Aid or perhaps even the Emergency Department.

Major Injuries can be soldiered through if the Injured Character has access to first aid equipment, or someone with adequate medical training (see Treating Injuries, below). Generally this type of Injury will need more than a month to heal if left alone, and may leave the Character with some form of lasting damage if not followed up on promptly by a medical professional.

On taking a Major Injury, you must note down the details of the Injury on the back of your Character's card and fill in 3 segments of Death's Door. Once a Character has taken a Major Injury, Checks will never be Easy by default unless the Character has Expertise in a situation or an Item as Items can still be used to reduce difficulty levels to Easy). See [Items], Page 25, and [Expertise Skills], Page 40.

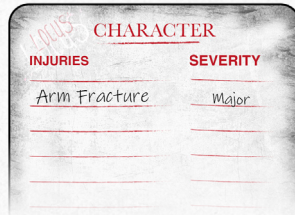
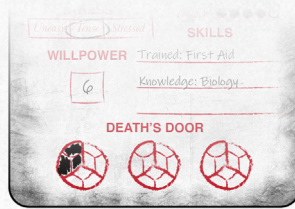
*In the Conflict against the Monster, Theresa's arm receives a hairline fracture. Farah, the Director, tells Val that this Injury is Major, so Val fills in a large section of Death's Door and writes 'Arm fracture' on the back of Theresa's Character card.*

## Grievous Injuries

Grievous Injuries are wounds which will significantly impact a Character's ability to do most tasks. These impact day-to-day activities due not only to the physical damage incurred, but the pain and mental stress. Severely broken bones, losing an eye, or third-degree burns are all examples of Grievous Injuries. Depending on the type of wound received, roleplay actions may need to take place before a Character can perform certain tasks. A badly broken leg, for example, will prevent a Character from walking until it is splinted appropriately and they find a crutch or other form of mobility assistance.

On receiving a Grievous Injury, you must fill in 9 segments (one entire symbol) of Death's Door, as well as recording the Injury details on the back of the card. Furthermore, once a Grievous Injury has been received, Checks will never be Easy or Medium difficulty by default unless the Character has Expertise in a situation (although Items can still be used to reduce difficulty levels).

*During the escape, Virgil was caught by the Monster, which broke his leg. Farah tells Mike that this is a Grievous Injury. Mike fills in one entire symbol of Death's Door, and writes 'broken leg' on the back of Virgil's Character card. As the severity is Grievous, future Checks will now always be Hard unless he receives proper medical treatment or obtains an Item to assist him. With this Grievous Injury, the roleplay implications are, firstly, that he no longer has the two working legs he was used to, and secondly that he is in an enormous amount of pain that he is not accustomed to.*



## TREATING INJURIES

If Characters are fortunate enough to come across appropriate medical supplies and facilities, or if they have a first aider in the group, they may be able to treat or mitigate their Major and Grievous Injuries.

Treating Injuries does not affect the Death's Door tracker, nor does it allow you to remove Injuries from the back of the Character card. However, it does lower the severity of the Injuries for the purposes of Checks. By extension, this lessens the Difficulty penalty that Major and Grievous Injuries cause. For this reason, there is no mechanical benefit to treating Minor Injuries, as they do not incur a difficulty penalty.

Note that all Injuries can only ever be treated once.

*The next action Theresa takes is searching for something to bind her fractured arm with her First Aid Trained Skill. Due to the game effect of a Major Injury, the Difficulty of the Check Val must make is now Medium, where ordinarily it would have been Easy. Without any Items to improve her chances, the Check stays at Medium Difficulty. Farah explains to Val that unless the Injury is Treated, all future Checks will also begin at Medium Difficulty.*

*Val succeeds the Check to have Theresa bind her arm. Therefore her Major Injury becomes a Minor Injury and Val changes the information on the back of Theresa's Character card to read 'Arm Fracture: Minor'. Despite now being a Minor Injury, the fracture remains on the back of the card as it may still be relevant to roleplay. She does not change her Death's Door.*

*Once her arm is Treated, and her penalty is mitigated (I.e. Checks can now be Easy again) Val realises that her Character can help Virgil by creating and applying a makeshift splint out of debris and ripped clothing. After this is done it makes it easier for Virgil to operate as he is used to with the wound both in terms of physical mobility and the level of pain he is in. Mechanically, the Grievous Injury is Treated to become now a Major Injury, and is changed on the back of his Character card. As a result of this now being a Major Injury, it means the Difficulty penalty is also lessened to that of a Major Injury (I.e checks are now Medium by default rather than Hard). No changes are made to his Death's Door Tracker.*

*Virgil's Injury cannot be Treated again in this story – the broken leg is as good as it is going to get.*

## CHARACTER DEATH

As Injuries accumulate, death draws closer. *Locus* is not designed to be a highly lethal system, but Character death is always a possibility. In this instance, the Character is no longer playable, and unable to continue their story. Unfortunately, given the short-lived nature of *Locus* games, it is not always feasible for you to re-join the game with a new Character unless they died relatively early on in the story.

It is up to you and your Director to decide how you would like to deal with this as an ensemble, but *Locus* stories are not designed to last for many extended sessions.

A Condition is a temporary effect which may be applied to a Character after you fail an Outcome Check, particularly during Conflicts with Monsters ([Conflicts], Page 15). Conditions will generally result in temporary restrictions upon the Character which result in harder Checks, more difficult Contested Checks, or the Character being unable to perform a specific type of action for a limited time.

Possible Conditions could include Blinded, Prone/knocked down, Deafened, Dazed, or Restrained.

The Director will explain the mechanical implications of a Condition as they become appropriate, and should give you a chance to react accordingly. The game effects vary depending on the Condition. Being temporarily blinded could put all sight-related Checks at Hard difficulty, for instance. Having been knocked down in one turn might require that their next turn of Conflict be spent standing up.

Conditions should not be conflated with actual medical conditions. Notable examples of this are: Paralysis represents an inability to move the Character's body, usually through fear, and not paraplegia; Blinded represents a temporary obscuring of vision, rather than being rendered partially or fully medically blind; and Deafened represents the Character's ability to hear being temporarily disrupted, and not it representing the medical condition of deafness.

It should also be noted that in certain circumstances, a Condition may not be able to be applied to a Character - for instance a blind Character cannot be Blinded, a deaf Character cannot be Deafened, a Character who is already bound by something will not be additionally affected if they are Bound by a Condition.



Items in *Locus* are designated for either active use, or passive use. Active use Items are presented to Players on special Item cards and have rules and potentially great benefits attached to them. For example: lanterns, crowbars, firearms.

Passive Items are Items which do not warrant a card but still exist in the universe. For example: house keys, scraps of paper, pocket lint.

ANATOMY OF AN ITEM CARD

**Name** → The top section of the card contains the item's name, 'Crowbar', and a 'SIZE' indicator with a small icon of a crowbar.

**Image of Item/Description of Item** → The central box features a line drawing of a crowbar. Below the drawing, it specifies 'DAMAGE TYPE: Blunt' and a unique effect: 'Items make all connected rolls 1 stage easier'.

**Quality** → A dot scale below the effect shows three filled dots and one empty circle, representing a quality of 3.

**Durability** → At the bottom, a 'DURABILITY' chart consists of eight boxes. The first four are filled with 'X' marks, and the last four are empty. A 'Damaged' label is placed to the right of the chart.

**Size** → A callout explains that 'Small' items can be easily pocketed or thrown into a bag, while 'Large' items are too large to be concealed and usually need to be carried in hands.

**Quality** → A callout explains that the dot scale from 1-3 represents how well the item is made and how easily it will fall apart once it runs out of Durability points.

**Damage Type** → A callout explains that this indicator shows the type of damage the item will do if used to hit something. Most items inflict Blunt damage unless otherwise stated.

**Durability** → A callout explains that when an item is used to make a check easier or to attack a monster, one point of Durability must be filled in. Once no empty boxes remain, the user must succeed on a Durability Check against a target number of 3, or the item crumbles after the next use. For items with ammunition or limited quantities, the chart shows how much of the substance is left.

ACTIVE USE ITEMS

Active Use Items are the Items that the Director gives to you, their statistics recorded on cards. You can use these Items during play to lower the difficulty level of a Check by one grade. If the Check was Hard, an appropriate Item can reduce it to Medium; if the Check was Medium, it becomes Easy. This occurs even if Characters are under the effects of a penalty, such as an Injury ([Injury], Page 21).

There are some actions which may only be possible to attempt (make a Check for), if an appropriate Item is used. For example, a bolted metal gate may not be openable without the assistance of an Item such as a hammer, crowbar, or even blowtorch.

Active Items decay as they are used. Nothing will last long before it falls apart in Characters' hands, breaks, malfunctions, or runs out. Every time an Item is used in a significant manner that requires a Check, it loses one of its durability boxes on the Item card, in order from left to

right. Once the Damaged box is filled, if a Character wishes to use the Item again, they must make an additional Durability Check for the Item following each Action Check.

*Shadows stretch across the room, long and finger-like, distracting in their stark contrast while Virgil tries to search the dark room for paperwork. As his Player, Mike, fails the Hard Outcome Check, he finds the paperwork, but cannot seem to find the correct document in the gloom.*

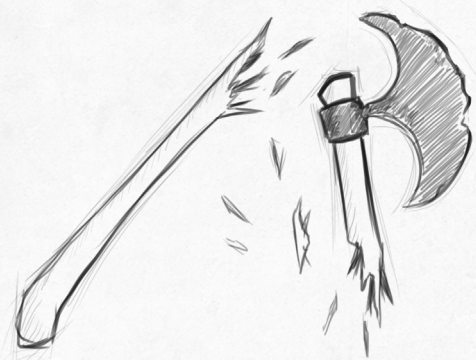
*Touma's Character Jasper follows him in with a lantern and attempts to search the same room. The use of the lantern means his Outcome Check is Medium instead of Hard, and he succeeds. As it has aided him, Touma then crosses off one the empty Durability boxes on the lantern's Item card.*

## DURABILITY CHECKS

You must perform a Check on 3d6 and achieve a result of 4 or higher or the Item will become unusable. The difficulty of this roll depends on the Item's Quality. A Quality of 1 means the Check is Hard, and the lowest result of the 3d6 must be used. A Quality of 2 makes the Check Medium, a success on the middle value of the three, and a Quality 3 Item makes the Check Easy, a success on the highest die roll of the three. Therefore, higher Quality Items are less likely to break.

*Theresa faces down the lurking abomination cloaked in darkness before her. The antique axe she pulled off the wall a scene earlier is her only hope to defend herself. On her turn in the Conflict, she chooses to chance an attack on the creature. She swings and is fortunate enough to knock it aside, giving her a route for escape. When the Item was used, its Durability boxes were already all crossed off, and so instead of crossing any off, Theresa's Player Val needs to make a Durability Check for the Item.*

*Its Quality is 3, which means the Check is Easy, and as is it an Item Durability Check, Val needs a result of 4 or more to succeed. Val rolls 3d6 and the results on the dice are 1, 1 and 3. Since the Check is Easy she can use the highest result, but unfortunately it is not enough. The axe handle splinters and shatters in her hands as it collides with the Monster.*



## WEAPONS

Attacking something is only possible with an Item. You may flail at whatever you wish but it will be ineffective, such that you won't even be asked to carry out a Check. Punches and kicks will be no match against the nightmares you face in *Locus*.

Any Item will enable you to make an attack, but the best results will come from Items specifically designed to be weapons. These will be clearly indicated in Item descriptions. If the weapon's damage type is particularly effective against the particular target, the attacking entity receives +1 success for the attack's Contested Check. If the entity wields an Item not designed to be a weapon, they receive -1 success to their final total.

In sum:

- You need to wield an Item in order to attack.
- If using a non-weapon item to attack, you get -1 success in the Contested Check.
- If using a weapon item to attack, there is no modification to the Contested Check.
- If using a weapon item to attack with an effective damage type, you get +1 success in the Contested Check.

Be aware the Director may not inform you when they apply certain modifiers.

## Ammunition

By default, ammunition is tracked as part of a weapon's Durability. This provides the limited use that having a finite set of ammunition would, so for simplicity's sake, Characters are assumed to have enough ammunition to last until the weapon breaks. If a Director chooses, however, they may ask you to track ammunition use on the back of your cards.

## PASSIVE ITEMS

These are items which are unlikely to be used—your house keys or a mobile phone might be under this category, depending on whether your location has signal. Even photos or documents won't be 'used' in the same way a knife might be, and as such, don't seem to suffer the same degradation effects as those more significant items.

Keep in mind however, that if you suddenly find a common use for one of your passive Items, the Director may end up upgrading the Item and giving you a card for it. This represents the Item beginning to succumb to the pressure of the world.

On a more mechanical level, bear in mind that the *Locus* system is not designed to give you an easy time. If something starts giving you advantages in play without a corresponding drawback, you should expect the Item to be moderated on some level. This is in the interest of maintaining the pressure on you to play smart, and work through the struggle of survival.

**Note:** Accessibility and mobility Items follow the rules for active Items as laid out above **only** if they are used outside of the intended use as accessibility or mobility aids. Therefore, if you would like your Character to use a wheelchair, hearing aid, or walking cane, etc., you can do so freely without worrying about Item degradation. Even if you do use them outside of this purpose to make Checks or attacks, such as using a walking cane as a bludgeoning weapon, the Items will not disintegrate physically once they have degraded. These Items will still be able to be used as accessibility or mobility aids, but will no longer be able to be used for the purposes of Checks or attacks.

## CHAPTER 2: CHARACTERS

*She couldn't shake the feeling of being watched,  
from every doorway, from every shadow.*

*The feeling wouldn't leave,  
and neither would the watcher.*



As a Player, you will experience a *Locus* game through the Character you create and play. This Chapter will introduce you to the Character card and take you through the process of creating a Character. Blank cards can be found in [Appendices], Page 66).

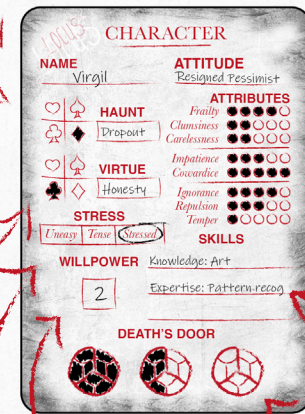
ANATOMY OF A CHARACTER CARD

**Name**  
Your Character's name

**Haunt**  
This is an event that plagues them, weighs on them, and it is what the Locus uses against them. It is usually connected to something they've done.

**Virtue**  
This is the most positive aspect of your Character, the thing that pushes them forward, and drives them to be better.

**Stress**  
Stress is a changing element of the Character that can make situations more difficult. Stress levels will change dynamically throughout a story.



**Willpower**  
Your willpower is a resource that can be spent to aid you in certain circumstances.

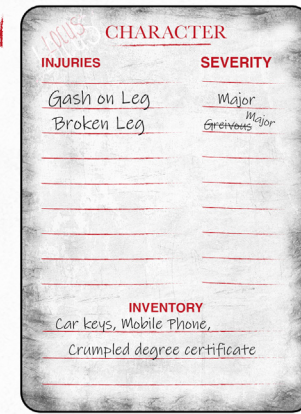
**Death's Door**  
This is a tracker for the damage and trauma your Character has taken throughout the story. If the tracker fills, the Character dies.

**Attitude**  
Your Character's Attitude is an indication of how your Character has reacted to their past: do they feel guilt over their Haunt events? Is their general outlook optimistic or pessimistic?

**Attributes**  
Numerical representations of how capable, or incapable, your Character is at various things—are they particularly Fragile, for instance, or just Clumsy?

**Skills**  
Characters have a set of unique Skills, abilities that are usually the result of training and that give them an edge in certain circumstances.

**Injuries and severity**  
Characters may receive Injuries upon taking damage, which can leave them in a state where many actions are more difficult to perform.



**Inventory**  
You will pick up items throughout the story, and this is a place to note down those smaller items that don't warrant a unique Item card.

The first thing to do when beginning to craft your Character is to come up with a concept for them. In broad terms, what kind of person are they? What do they do in their daily life? Many of the decisions you will make as you go through the Character design process will flesh out this core concept, but it helps to have a general idea to start with.

Some questions to consider as a starting point:

- What do they do for a living?
- What kind of background do they have?
- Do they have any defining traits?

**HAUNTS**

The Haunt is an important aspect of a Character in *Locus*. It is the thing that weighs on your Character, a past occurrence or deed that has negatively impacted them in some way. All Characters in a *Locus* game must have a Haunt, as it is one of the reasons they end up in their current situation. Haunts can be legally questionable, morally questionable, or completely unfortunate accidents for which the Character feels responsibility. It does not have to be an evil deed—perhaps inaction or neglect were the problem. See [Sample Characters], Page 42 for sample Characters and Haunts.

*Locus* is not a system designed for completely free-form Character creation—there are other systems for that kind of play. You do not have to play an inherently bad person, but your Character must have done something bad on some measurable level. They do not necessarily need to feel bad about it (see [Attitudes], Page 35), but the Haunt must be something that other people would expect them to feel negatively about.

You should work with your Director to create the story around your Haunt, as it will be an important element they consider while designing the game session(s). While it is quite reasonable for you to keep your Character’s Haunt a secret from other Players and their Characters, the Director should be privy to all the details from the beginning.

Once you have decided on a Haunt for your Character you must, with the Director’s assistance, categorise it under one of the four Vices. It is best to think of the Vices as the ‘root cause’ of the Haunts: where the Haunt is the ‘what’, the Vice is the ‘why’.

Each Vice is connected to a suit of cards: Temptation  $\diamond$ , Apathy  $\heartsuit$ , Discord  $\clubsuit$ , and Malice  $\heartsuit$ .

**Temptation**  $\diamond$  is the dark descent...

Haunts from Temptation are driven by a desire for something which overrides other sensibilities and practicalities. Example Haunts include theft, adultery, addictions or fraud.

**Apathy**  $\heartsuit$  is the void...

Haunts from Apathy are driven by laziness or, more commonly, a lack of interest or consideration. Example Haunts include criminal negligence, being an inactive witness, and wasted potential.

**Discord**  $\clubsuit$  is the betrayal...

Haunts from Discord are driven by a desire to sow division and/or disrupt social structures. Discord is about discontentment with community and groups. Example Haunts include bullying, abandonment of people in need, rumour mongering.

**Malice**  $\heartsuit$  is an ugly thing..

Haunts from Malice tend to be very selfish, born from a desire to do harm - mentally, physically or socially - to another. Example Haunts include assault, murder, bullying, or property damage.

Haunts may well be caused by a mixture of Vices, but it is important to choose one to be the symbolic root cause for your Character’s Haunt. The core Vice is an indicator of the driving intention and motivation behind the Character’s big transgression.

For example, consider two different Haunts and the different Vices which could be associated with them:

A Character has stolen a valuable painting. Did they steal it because they deeply disliked the owner (Malice  $\heartsuit$ ), or because they needed money and wanted to sell it (Temptation  $\diamond$ )?

A Character stood by and watched as a murder was committed. Did they remain passive because they were too scared to act? Or did they not want to be bothered with other people’s problems (Apathy  $\heartsuit$ )? Did they do nothing because in their mind the victim deserved death (Discord  $\clubsuit$ )?

The above show the same (in)actions, the same result (a Haunt), but with very different motivations and different associated gameplay effects.

**SERIAL HAUNTS**

Sometimes people are very, very bad... repeatedly. Haunts are events, but a single Haunt can encompass multiple events of the same or similar type. In the case of a serial killer, for example, they would not have to pick their “worst murder”—their Haunt would be “serial murder” rather than “murder”.

Attitude is closely tied to the concept you've developed and in this case, the term refers specifically to the Character's feelings towards their Haunt. Does guilt eat away at them, or can they sleep soundly at night? Can they cope with the regret, or do they revel in the memory? How easy is it for them to look at themselves in the mirror?

A Character's Attitude is chosen from a defined list, below. Attitudes can be categorized as having either Pessimistic or Optimistic outlooks, and ranked on a scale from Ashamed to Content.

## PESSIMISTIC ATTITUDES

### The Ashamed Pessimist

*The work never amounts to anything, but I'll keep trying to atone even if it's futile. At least if I try, I'm doing something.*

This Character feels guilt over their Haunt, but their attempts to atone have either been unsuccessful, or proven hollow and unfulfilling. They shoulder their guilt as a heavy burden, blaming themselves for being unable to fix the problem. Their deep shame will likely motivate them to at least try to change.

### The Resigned Pessimist

*I know it was wrong, but nothing I can do will make it right. I can't do anything about it now, so why try?*

This Character feels guilt for their Haunt and has concluded that something probably should change (either themselves or the world). There will be reasons why they have not yet put anything into action, however. These reasons are most likely going to be personal blockages, such as feelings of futility or inability, or a fear that even the best effort will be ultimately meaningless.

### The Conflicted Pessimist

*It was shitty of me, but what am I supposed to do? People are shit. I can't change it now.*

This Character acknowledges that the Haunt was wrong, and does occasionally wake up at night with a pit in their stomach. They resist the idea of personal change, however. Evil is an inevitability, bad things happen all the time. They already know that what they did was wrong but they don't want to deal with it, and hate being reminded about the event.

### The Denying Pessimist

*It wasn't like that. I didn't mean to—it couldn't even really be my fault, could it?*

This Character cannot accept that the Haunt happened the way it did. They likely lie to themselves about the event in some way, either with regards to the way it happened or about the level of their own culpability. There is a potential for them to get aggressive in this denial, and defensive when it's brought up. Of course people will blame them, but those people just don't understand the details.

### The Content Pessimist

*The rules are made by idiots, for idiots; it doesn't matter if we break them. If you think what I did then was bad, maybe you should look outside.*

This Character is fully aware that they did a bad thing, but feels no guilt about it. Indeed, they often feel justified in their actions. The world is a terrible place, after all, so why should they try to be good? It doesn't matter that rules were broken—the people who made the rules in the first place were messed up. Content Pessimist Characters are likely to be bullies, or nihilists.

## OPTIMISTIC ATTITUDES

### The Ashamed Optimist

*I can make up for it by making the world a better place, by being a force for good.*

These Characters are the ultimate campaigners, driven by their Haunt to pursue a change they feel needs to happen. They likely have not gained much closure or atonement from their acts thus far, but feel that so long as they can do some good, it will help. In many cases, rather than attempting to change themselves, they try to change the world for the better. They can see the light at the end of the tunnel. It is not uncommon for these types of Characters to throw themselves into a cause—any cause—to try and feel complete.

### The Resigned Optimist

*I think I can make amends. I can see what I have to do. I will get around to it.*

This Character knows that something needs to change, but hasn't been able to act on it. Not yet. They may very well be very positive about their plans, but nothing ever seems to come of them. They are the Character who plans to attend an AA meeting every week, but either something else comes up, or they start feeling better and change their minds about needing the help.

### The Conflicted Optimist

*I've learned my lesson, isn't that enough? It was bad, but it's not like I'll do it again.*

This is a Character who thinks they've learned their lesson, and desperately wants that to be enough. They know the Haunt was bad, but it's not like they'll do it again—so if they've learned their lesson, why does anything need to change? These Characters are usually stubborn, knowingly lying about their guilt to make it go away.

### The Denying Optimist

*Don't believe what they tell you; nothing I did had that much of an impact. It wasn't really my fault at all.*

This Character denies that anything bad happened at all. They might be ruled by arrogance, or by desperation. Unlike their pessimist equivalent, their denial doesn't just serve to mitigate their guilt. Rather, they completely ignore evidence and rewrite events in their mind to suit their own, more favourable, version of events.

### The Content Optimist

*Yeah. I did it, and here's all the reasons why I'm fully justified in having done it. It's a dog-eat-dog world out there, after all.*

For this Character type, the Haunt is bordering on an achievement. They feel no guilt for what they have done and will usually be able to justify their actions quite eloquently. These Characters are likely to subscribe to a worldview of every man for themselves.

Once you have developed your Character's Haunt, you will choose their Virtue. A Virtue is a Character's redeeming feature, and represents the best part of them. Like the Vices, these are also linked to the card suits, though they represent the opposing forces to the Vices.

Choose one of the following four Virtues for your Character:  
Temperance  $\diamond$ , Motivation  $\spadesuit$ , Community  $\clubsuit$ , and Compassion  $\heartsuit$ .

Acting in accordance with your Virtue will net you some Willpower (WP), and the ability to discard a Haunt-suit card from your hand. Acting in accordance with any other Virtue will let you discard a neutral-suit card ([Shedding Cards], Page 17).

### **Virtues of Temperance** $\diamond$

A Character with a Virtue of Temperance might display this positive trait through acts of moderation (showing restraint when consuming something or using resources, not indulging to excess), equilibrium (believing in balance, ensuring people have equal portions/shares), modesty (being unassuming of one's own talents, resisting the temptation to boast), discipline (outright abstaining from things or actions for a righteous cause, even if you really want them) or appropriacy (acting appropriately in context, being socially adept).

### **Virtues of Motivation** $\spadesuit$

A Virtue of Motivation might manifest through acts of diligence (keeping things tidy, doing your duty, taking the time to do it right), resolution (making sure every job is finished, tying up loose ends), actuation (sharing or inspiring motivation in another, even if you don't feel it in yourself), fortitude (weathering adversity, embrace and endure without giving in, readily taking up challenges), or excellence (striving to go above and beyond what is needed, even at personal expense).

### **Virtues of Community** $\clubsuit$

A Character with a Virtue of Community might display this positive trait through acts of honesty (telling the truth even when that truth is inconvenient or dangerous), valour (going out of your way to save someone at risk to yourself), loyalty (honouring commitments to others, even if it means getting into trouble), unity (bringing people together, resolving differences and mediating arguments) or adherence (showing respect for and following the rules).

### **Virtues of Compassion** $\heartsuit$

A display of the Virtue of Compassion might encompass acts of mercy (forgiving someone a significant 'sin', acting with an aim to end suffering or pain), kindness (going out of one's way to be selfless without expecting recompense), sympathy (sharing the burden of someone's pain, making efforts to understand another), tolerance (willingness to listen and to deal with frustrating people calmly and fairly) or generosity (freely giving supplies and time, sharing).

## **DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED**

A Haunt is an action or event fuelled by a Vice, which is a darker side of your Character's personality. A Virtue, on the other hand, represents the best part of the Character. While Haunts and Virtues are presented as opposing suits for the cards, they are not in direct opposition and do not have to be significantly related to one another. These are simply two parts of a Character which make up a complex whole.

## **SHARING A SUIT**

Depending on the Director's discretion you may be able to build a Character with a directly opposing Haunt and Virtue. This represents a very conflicted personality. In terms of game mechanics, the directly opposing Haunt and Virtue require some adjustments to card handling.

For example, if you choose to build a Character with directly opposing traits (i.e. a Virtue of Compassion  $\heartsuit$  and a Haunt rooted in Malice  $\heartsuit$ ), you treat cards from the other three suits—in this example, spades, diamonds, and clubs—as neutral cards to be added to your Hand. If you draw a card from hearts, however, you need to pay attention to the number on the card. If it is between Ace (1) to 7, treat it as a Virtue card. If it is between 8 to King (13), treat it as a Haunt card.



Next you will add numerical values to your Character's Attributes. *Locus* has a different take on Attributes from most table-top roleplaying games, as you will be scoring them negatively. In other words, instead of adding points to indicate a Character's higher strength, you would be adding points to indicate their frailty. A higher score is worse in *Locus* and represents a more dramatic weakness in your Character.

The numbers roughly equate to the following scale:

1. Well trained and/or naturally effective with this Attribute.
2. Above average and solidly capable.
3. Average.
4. Below average, would expect inferior results.
5. Genuinely inept, likely avoids any task using this Attribute in day-to-day life.

You have 16 points that must be spent on these Attributes, at a cost of one point per Attribute level. All Attributes start at 1 point by default, and this is not included in your 16 points.

While it is possible to have a Character that is average in everything (three points in every Attribute), we would encourage you to be as diverse as possible. In practice we have found that more diversity in Attribute scores translates into more interesting gameplay.

**Note:** Attributes do not represent inherent truths of a Character or person, they represent the result of their life experiences up to the point that they are in this game. This can manifest in different ways. A high Ignorance Attribute does not necessarily mean someone who isn't clever, but it could imply someone who has not had significant access to education and/or someone who is unwilling to learn new information for whatever reason. Additionally, this also relates to how Characters can be represented with various disabilities, cognitive or otherwise, or any other less common Character trait. For example, to create a wheelchair using Character, you should not feel like you need to give them a high Attribute score in any physical trait. It is perfectly possible for a wheelchair user to be strong, dextrous and highly physically capable. Likewise, while commonly perceived traits of, for example, Autistic Spectrum Disorder could be interpreted as high Repulsion, Temper, or other social Attribute, but people with this cognitive disability are frequently capable of level-headedness and charisma. Always consider what life experiences have led to a Character's current Attribute spread rather than treating these statistics as immutable truths of them as a person.

### Frailty

Description: Defines the Character's physical bulk and strength.

Used for: Checks requiring physical strength.

Example actions: Battering down a door, climbing a wall, breaking open a locked cabinet.

### Clumsiness

Description: Defines the Character's dexterity and speed.

Used for: Checks requiring physical finesse and agility.

Example actions: Dodging under a swinging hazard, running quickly over difficult terrain, pickpocketing.

### Carelessness

Description: A measure of how aware of their surroundings a Character is in a given situation

Used for: Noticing events and perceiving changes in situations.

Example actions: Noticing a monster sneaking up on them, noticing that a sign on the wall has changed, realising that the mist is thicker down this one path.

### Impatience

Description: A measure of the Character's patience. This is an important skill when dealing with stressful situations.

Used for: Resisting urges to change the current situation.

Example actions: Keeping still and quiet when hiding, keeping attention when someone else is speaking, staying put for an extended length of time.

### Cowardice

Description: A measure of the Character's courage and ability to face their fears.

Used for: Standing one's ground and moving forward into danger.

Example actions: Running through a dangerous corridor, jumping on a strong monster to give an ally a chance to escape, standing up to the Character who is currently screaming in their face.

### Ignorance

Description: A measure of the Character's learning and how well they use it.

Used for: Attempting to think clearly or strategically, or perhaps for attempting to be wilfully ignorant.

Example actions: Figuring out the correct rigging for a trap, recalling information on town plans and how they correlate to the map they have, figuring out the mix of chemicals that will result in a hot and slow-burning flame.

### Repulsion

Description: A measure of the Character's natural charisma and the kind of first impression they give off.

Used for: Making friends and influencing people.

Example actions: Making good first impressions on the tour guide, calming down the panicking man, accurately expressing lack of aggression to the girl coming at them with the knife.

### Temper

Description: A measure of the Character's response to dire circumstances. A low temper score can often manifest as anger, but can equally mean a Character who is prone to bursting into tears.

Used for: Keeping cool under pressure.

Example actions: Untying a knot while warning sirens are blaring, being able to respond calmly in response to shouted questions, being able to undo the door latches in sequence while the Monster creeps ever closer.

## SKILLS

Characters start a *Locus* game with two Skills, which represent previous education or expertise. These are some of the areas your Character excels in and offer bonuses to actions in certain situations.

Skills are split into four types (Trained, Knowledge, Specialty, or Expertise), defined below. Record the Skills you choose on the Character card with the Skill type attached. For example, Knowledge: British History, Expertise: Cooking.

### TRAINED SKILLS

Having a Trained Skill lets a Character do something that usually requires some level of introductory course or previous experience. Being Trained means that a Character does not have to make an Ignorance Check when attempting to perform a task that requires Training.

Some examples of appropriate Trained Skills are plumbing, computer coding or hacking, lock picking, car repair, playing guitar.

### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

A Knowledge Skill means that a Character is particularly learned in a specific topic, usually academic. Functionally, this means that if this topic comes up in play, you can treat the Character's Ignorance stat as 1 for all Checks relating to that topic.

Some example topics include Chinese cuisine, American history, geology, or the French language.

### EXPERTISE SKILLS

Having Expertise means that a Character has a natural aptitude in a field which makes them better at it than most. A Character with Expertise in a subject always makes Checks in that Expertise at Easy difficulty, regardless of other circumstances.

Example areas of Expertise include firearms, melee weapons, researching, working with children, cooking, first aid.

### SPECIALTY SKILLS

Having a Specialty indicates that the Character is particularly adept at using one of their Attributes in a very targeted way. All Specialty skills link to a specific Attribute, and lower that Attribute by 1 when they are used in relation to that specific activity. (Remember that the lower an Attribute is, the higher the chance of a Character's success.)

Example Specialities include weight lifting (-1 to Frailty when lifting heavy objects), intimidation (-1 to Repulsion when intimidating others), puzzles (-1 to Ignorance when faced with logic puzzles), call handling (-1 to Impatience when dealing with an argumentative or frustrating individual), or rope climbing (-1 to Clumsiness when climbing ropes or poles).

## STARTING ITEMS

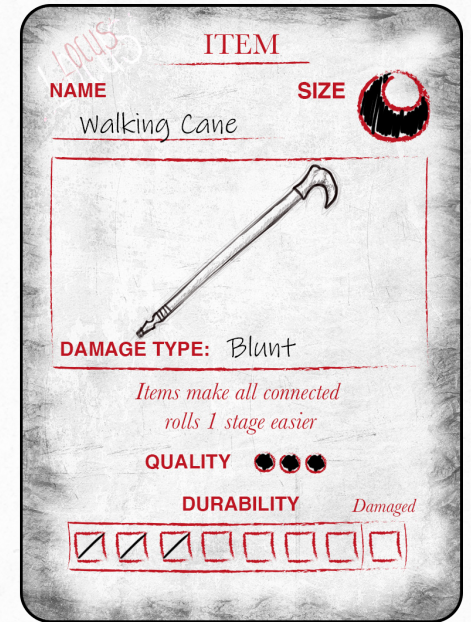
Most of us carry a variety of items around with us every day, and the Characters in *Locus* are no different. The details of the items that Characters start with are firmly in the Director's court, and they make the final decisions on the quantity and types of items available to Characters at the beginning of a game.

Active Items can be used to lower the Difficulty on a Check and will degrade with use, eventually breaking, and will be represented on their own card. Passive items have no mechanical effect on the game and cannot affect Checks and should be listed in the Inventory section of a Character's card. Passive Items, are they are not used in Checks, do not degrade.

Typically speaking you will be offered the opportunity to start with a couple of unique Active Items, though these Items will degrade and break as all Active Items can. You are free to suggest to the Director the kind of objects you feel your Character would carry, and they will produce cards for those Items if accepted.

Depending on the game setting it may make sense for certain utility or accessibility Items (such as mobile phones or hearing aids or even walking sticks) to be allowed to all Characters as Passive Items. In some instances an Item with a Passive accessibility function could become an Active Item if it is used outside of the intended use as an accessibility or mobility aid. In these situations even if it degrades to the point of breaking, it will still be able to serve its Passive function, but it will no longer be able to lower Difficulty on Checks.

For more on Items in play see [Items], Page 25.



If the game lasts more than one session you may be given up to two points of experience for each game session. This facet of the game is optional, and will depend on whether the Director plans for multiple sessions, or for recurring Characters in multiple games.

With these points, you can do the following:

- Buy a new Skill: Each Skill is 1 point and should be something the Character could have learned or used during the session. Characters cannot spontaneously learn the intricacies of plumbing if they have spent no time investigating plumbing, reading plumbing manuals, or being taught by someone who already has the Skill.
- Buy an Item: You can buy an Item, which will turn up in the next session for your Character to find and use. You can request the type of Item you would like, but the final specifics of the Item will be down to the Director. For 1 point of experience, the Item will be of average quality. For 2 points, it will be good, and for 3 points, it will be fantastic.

Please note, you cannot buy improvements to their Attributes, or to Items you already own.

**SAMPLE CHARACTERS**

Here are some example characters so you can see how a card looks when fully filled out. Note that these characters have been filled in as though are during a game or after one. They have received injuries, and have items listed that they have picked up while exploring a Locus. Characters should not start with injuries or any of the Death's Door filled in.



**VIRGIL - PLAYED BY 'MIKE'**

- Frailty:** 4
- Clumsiness:** 2
- Carelessness:** 2
- Impatience:** 3
- Cowardice:** 5
- Ignorance:** 4
- Repulsion:** 3
- Temper:** 1

**Haunt:** Temptation, addiction - dropped out of art school and became an alcoholic

**Virtue:** Community, honesty

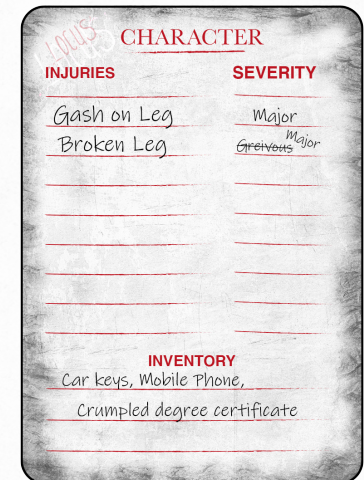
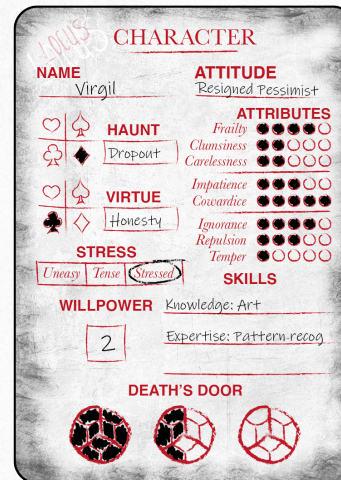
**Attitude:** Resigned pessimist

**Skills:**  
 Knowledge: Art  
 Expertise: Pattern Recognition

**Death's Door:** 1 Major, 1 Minor, 1 Grievous, 13 segments

**Injuries:** Gash on leg (major), broken leg (grievous > major)

**Inventory:** Car keys, mobile phone, crumpled degree certificate



A man approaching 35 years of age, lanky and tall. He wears his heart on his sleeve and has an honest face. He hasn't done much in the last decade and a half apart from trying to survive after dropping out of University. His issues with addiction have taken a toll on his constitution and a fear of further failure makes him tentative to take risks which may pull him out of the gutter.

His Haunt is of his dependency of alcohol which began in his late teens, following in the footsteps of his father. Unable to focus on his grades, he dropped out of his art course and coasted on the generosity of his friends, until their patience wore thin; leaving him with nothing but regret. He knows his addiction has burned bridges and undoubtedly contributed heavily in ruining his life, but there really doesn't seem to be any way out of the spiral, so why try? He'll just fail again.

Virgil's primary goal within the Locus remains the same as it was outside - survive. It is an overarching drive within him to not completely give up on life, even if he has given up on fighting his demons. Escape is also quite high on his priority list.

**THERESA - PLAYED BY 'VAL'**

**Frailty:** 2  
**Clumsiness:** 2  
**Carelessness:** 3  
**Impatience:** 4  
**Cowardice:** 3  
**Ignorance:** 4  
**Repulsion:** 2  
**Temper:** 4

**Haunt:** Apathy, manslaughter

**Virtue:** Community, loyalty

**Attitude:** Ashamed optimist

**Skills:**  
 Trained: First Aid  
 Knowledge: Biology

**Death's Door:** 1 Major, 3 segments

**Injuries:** Arm Fracture (major > minor)

**Inventory:** Ring of keys

**JASPER - PLAYED BY 'TOUMA'**

**Frailty:** 3  
**Clumsiness:** 5  
**Carelessness:** 4  
**Impatience:** 2  
**Cowardice:** 2  
**Ignorance:** 1  
**Repulsion:** 2  
**Temper:** 5

**Haunt:** Discord, bullying

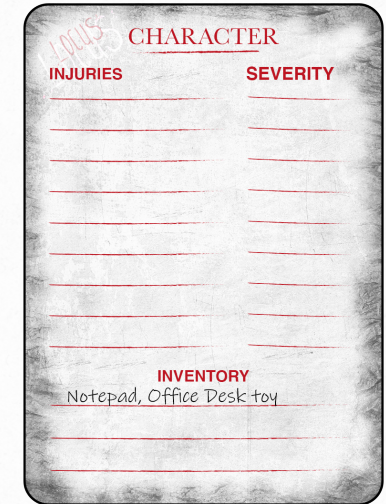
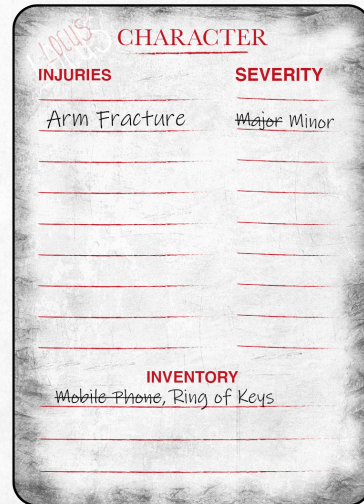
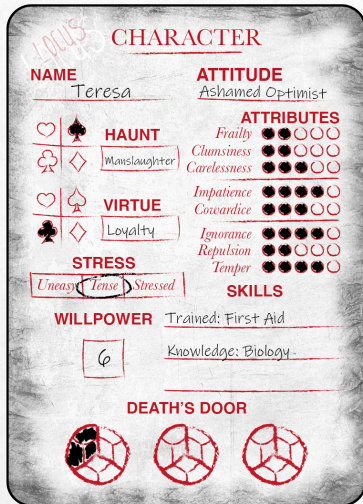
**Virtue:** Compassion, generosity

**Attitude:** Conflicted optimist

**Skills:**  
 Specialty: Intimidation  
 Trained: Electronics

**Death's Door:** 2 minor

**Inventory:** Notepad, office desk toy



The medical professions aren't for the faint of heart. Theresa was a nurse in training, a hard worker who generally tried her best in everything she did. Her hobbies included gym-going and clubbing, though her temper and impatience did tend to escalate when drinking was involved.

Once, after a heavy night out, Theresa made a mistake: a mistake which would become her Haunt. A patient died while she was assisting in theatres and the chain of events which led to the unfortunate death was entirely her fault.

Theresa wants to help the people she has met inside the Locus; they seem troubled in a way she has never seen before. By helping them - by helping everyone - perhaps she can continue chipping away at her guilt until one day it stops.

Jasper was once a technician by trade, before working up the corporate ladder. His capacity for learning more than made up for his chronic clumsiness and was unrivalled among his peers, always seeking to know and to understand more. He felt himself much more suited to the team leader role - especially with his willingness to share all his knowledge with his team.

His own intelligence, though, was also his downfall, leading Jasper to have true contempt for people who he saw as having no drive to improve themselves. The seeds of his Haunt were sown in a quiet corner of his busy mind, building the contempt into something uglier, spilling out in the form of some truly awful workplace bullying. After several coworkers quit due to his actions - one of them having been driven to breaking point - he was pulled up by senior management. The slap on the wrist he received is, in his eyes, plenty of punishment: he has duly learned his lesson. Or so he thinks.

The Locus is a mystery which confounds reality and everything Jasper knows to be true, and he hates it. His goal is to work out what is going on and solve that mystery.

# CHAPTER 3: INTERACTING WITH THE WORLD WITH THE WORLD

*Don't move.*

*Don't move.*

*Don't move.*

*Don't move.*




As previously discussed, the core of the game can be boiled down to Characters reacting to the environments, events, and situations which the Director presents to them. As a Player, your sphere of influence is your Character and their reactions. You will find this section repeats much of what is summarised in Chapter One.

## ROLEPLAYING

This game is not designed for people new to the roleplaying genre of game. It is assumed going into this guide that you will have had some experience of roleplay, be it through table top games like *Locus*, video games, or L.A.R.P. Even choose-your-own-adventure books can be a good introduction to the concept of getting into a Character's head and pretending to be them. Given this, a thorough guide to roleplay is not contained within these pages.

Below, we outline some brief, general advice on roleplaying some more specific aspects of a Character in the world of *Locus*.

- **Attitude:** While a Character's Attitude is connected to their Haunt, that personality trait will bleed over and impact how a Character might react to other situations as well.
- **Stress:** A Character's Stress level will change as the game progresses, for better and for worse. Stress makes it harder to think rationally. It could make someone irritable, or just very tired. It could give them a headache, or make them forgetful. How Stress manifests in the Character is up to you, and can be a useful tool for determining a Character's reactions at any given moment.
- **Virtue:** A Character's Virtue might not make itself known in any direct or obvious way most of the time. A Character with the virtue of Justice (under Community ) won't be declaring that they are doing everything with fairness and justness in mind. Perhaps they believe in moral justice rather than the letter of the law itself, and so it is only when relevant situations crop up that their opinion might make itself known. Don't feel pressured to have your Character be a paragon of their Virtue. It is the best part of the Character, but it is not the only part.
- **Vice:** The Vice which motivates a Character's Haunt is the devil on their shoulder, which might occasionally pull a Character to act a certain way. Like the Virtue, however, it probably won't affect every single action a Character takes unless their Vice is part of an all-consuming obsession.
- **Madness:** By design this game does not feature a mechanic for madness, nor should you expect it become a significant factor in the game, beyond any themes decided upon by the Director or individual Players.

## PERFORMING ACTIONS

Many of the actions that Characters will perform during sessions are simple actions in response to a situation, be that be opening the next door, speaking to other Characters present in a room, or picking up an Item. When there is no a time limit or outside pressure, or the actions themselves are simple enough that there is no chance of failure, they will happen as intended without need for a Check. The Director will alert you to any unforeseen outcomes.

It is very unlikely, however, that your Character will ever have all the information necessary to fully understand about the consequences of significant actions they may make. Likewise, there will be things that the Director will deliberately conceal from the Players. When Checks are requested or Outcomes seem random, there will be a reason, and there ought to be clues to help you figure it out. A large part of a game of *Locus* is solving the mystery of what is going on.

To perform any action, you must let the Director know what you are doing, and, ideally, clarify your goal for the outcome. It is far more likely you will get a satisfactory description of the Outcome Check (whether you passed or failed) if the Director understands your intentions.

While some Players do enjoy the theatrics of roleplay, and will speak 'In Character' and in the first person consistently, it is not mandatory to do so if you are not comfortable or confident. It is just as permissible to say, "my Character does this," as "I do this." This should not impact rewards such as roleplaying benefits (like 'significant roleplay' for Willpower gain). As long as the in-game intentions and actions are clear, it will count.

## ALTERNATE ATTRIBUTES

There may be situations where you feel your Character could use a different Attribute than the one the Director has suggested for a Check. Maybe you want to climb a wall and feel your Character could Check against their Clumsiness to hop up the wall, rather than the Director's suggestion of Frailty to pull themselves up. Feel free to suggest this and make sure you explain how your Character is using that Attribute. It is the Director's decision whether your Character can perform that action, and whether the Difficulty changes as a result.

## COVERT ACTIONS

Sometimes, it may not be appropriate to perform an action in full view of the rest of the group. In these instances, it is usually best to send a text or write a note to the Director to describe what you would like to do, and at that point dice rolls can be undertaken in secret. This works both ways. Sometimes the Director may pass you a note, unseen by the eyes of your fellow Players. As a Player you should be conscious of whether it is appropriate to share the contents with the rest of the group.

**OVERVIEW**

It is very likely that there will be situations where your Character will have to physically defend themselves. This is called a Conflict. All Conflicts are broken up into rounds in which each participant is able to make a single action, the order of which is determined by the result of the Initiative Check. A round generally represents around five seconds of time passing in-game. After a Conflict is concluded, the turn order is no longer relevant.

**THE INITIATIVE CHECK**

Once, at the beginning of any Conflict, all Players involved perform an Initiative Check. You will roll 3d6 and add up the three results, then subtract your Character's Carelessness score. The Director performs this Check for all non-Player entities. The entity with the highest total is placed first in the Initiative order, and the lowest goes last. If any two entities have the same score, they act simultaneously.

**ACTIONS**

Your Character may make one Action on your turn in each round. There are a number of possible options for Actions you can take, as described below. More detail can be found in the following paragraphs.

- **Move:** A Contested Check against no one. Can move 5 meters or make a small, move-related action per point.
- **Hide:** A Contested Check against the opposing entity to conceal themselves.
- **Attack with a weapon:** A Contested Check against a target entity, aiming to cause Injury. Characters cannot attack without a weapon.
- **Defend:** Grants an additional +1 in the Contested Check against Attacks until the defending entity's next turn.
- **Miscellaneous action:** A standard Outcome Check to achieve something not covered by the above.

**Movement**

A Contested Check typically based on Clumsiness, but could also be based on Ignorance, Carelessness, or Frailty. Each point of success allows your Character to move 5 meters within the 5 second round. You can also use these individual successes to do small actions, such as knocking something over as you pass, or pushing someone along. These small actions should either help others move or hinder others moving, and be related in some way to your movement.

Certain situations or terrains may require successes for navigating obstacles. For example, one success may not represent 5 meters of movement while climbing a ladder. You may need to spend a success to climb onto or over an object or obstacle.

**Hiding**

A Contested Check typically based on Carelessness or Clumsiness to get into the hiding position, and will often require an Impatience Check to remain undetected. Consider the type of entity that is hunting your Character when choosing the most appropriate way to hide from them.

**Attacking**

You cannot initiate this Action without a weapon or an Item you could feasibly wield in an offensive manner.

Attacks are a Contested Check, typically based on Frailty or Clumsiness, but also potentially Ignorance, Carelessness, or Temper. In conversational Conflicts it could even be Repulsion.

Certain types of damage may be more effective than others. Items designed as weapons are much more useful than items that aren't. This means that items designed as weapons are the best options against most creatures. Items not designed as a weapon, such as a chair, will give you -1 success on your Contested Attack Check. Remember all Items lose Durability from each attack. ([Items], Page 25).

**Defending yourself**

Bracing yourself for impact, or focusing on the enemy to prepare to dodge, gives you +1 success on Contested Checks when you are defending against that attack, until your next turn.

**Miscellaneous Actions**

These will typically require an Outcome Check to achieve something, such as moving an obstacle, or finding the right key on a ring to open a door. Depending on the Action, this may result in you or other Characters gaining advantages or disadvantages on their next Actions.

**Attacks outside of conflict**

Sometimes attacks may occur outside of conflict rounds. These will be resolved as a Contested Check, followed by an Initiative Check after the attack is resolved.

**CONCLUDING CONFLICT**

In *Locus*, Conflict rounds end once the two opposing forces are no longer in direct opposition to one another. The Director will inform you when this is the case.



## SIGNIFICANT ROLEPLAY

Whether you have roleplayed a facet of your Character's personality 'significantly' enough to warrant one of the Willpower benefits is, ultimately, subjective. It will come down to the Director to be fair and balanced with their decision. While 'significantly' is difficult to quantify, one guideline that can be helpful is that significant actions regarding Haunts are usually roleplayed out to the detriment of the long-term goals of the Cast, in exchange for the short-term gain of one Character.

The case is reversed for Virtues. If a Virtue impacts an action—perhaps a Character is valorous to the point of self-sacrifice—and does not benefit the Character but does benefit the group, it could qualify as 'significant' for the purposes of gaining Willpower. Another example would be a Character putting themselves at risk undergoing something for morality's own sake.

Virgil's virtue is Community 🌀. There comes a point in the story where the Cast are accosted by a screaming woman. She accuses them of stealing her keys, which they are guilty of. If they lie they could probably convince her to leave them alone, as she seems fairly gullible. Virgil just can't bring himself to do this, however, even though it will likely mean giving back the keys they desperately need. Held at knifepoint, he opts to tell the truth, and is attacked for his trouble. Farah, the Director, rules that his choice to sacrifice an easy way out for the sake of being a better person counts as a significant act of honesty, which counts for his Virtue.

Some Virtues may seem easier to 'gain WP' for than others, but this is not really the case. It should be quite difficult to achieve this, regardless of the Virtue. As per the example above, simple honesty isn't enough for the Virtue of Community 🌀. Telling the truth even when it would benefit you to lie, however, especially if lying would prevent hardship or injury, would count.



## REACTING TO CONDITIONS AND INJURIES

For more about Conditions see [Conditions], (Page 24). These will often be encountered during Conflicts, but occasionally they may occur in the regular course of play.

Should your Character receive a Condition, it will impact how you play your Character while the Condition is active. Being Disoriented for a turn, for instance, will likely change the Action you had planned prior as it becomes unlikely they will make sound strategic decisions or be confident about which direction they are facing. These unforeseen interruptions can be frustrating, but figuring out how to work with and around them is all part of the game. Working through these obstacles and carrying on is an excellent test of teamwork and resourcefulness.

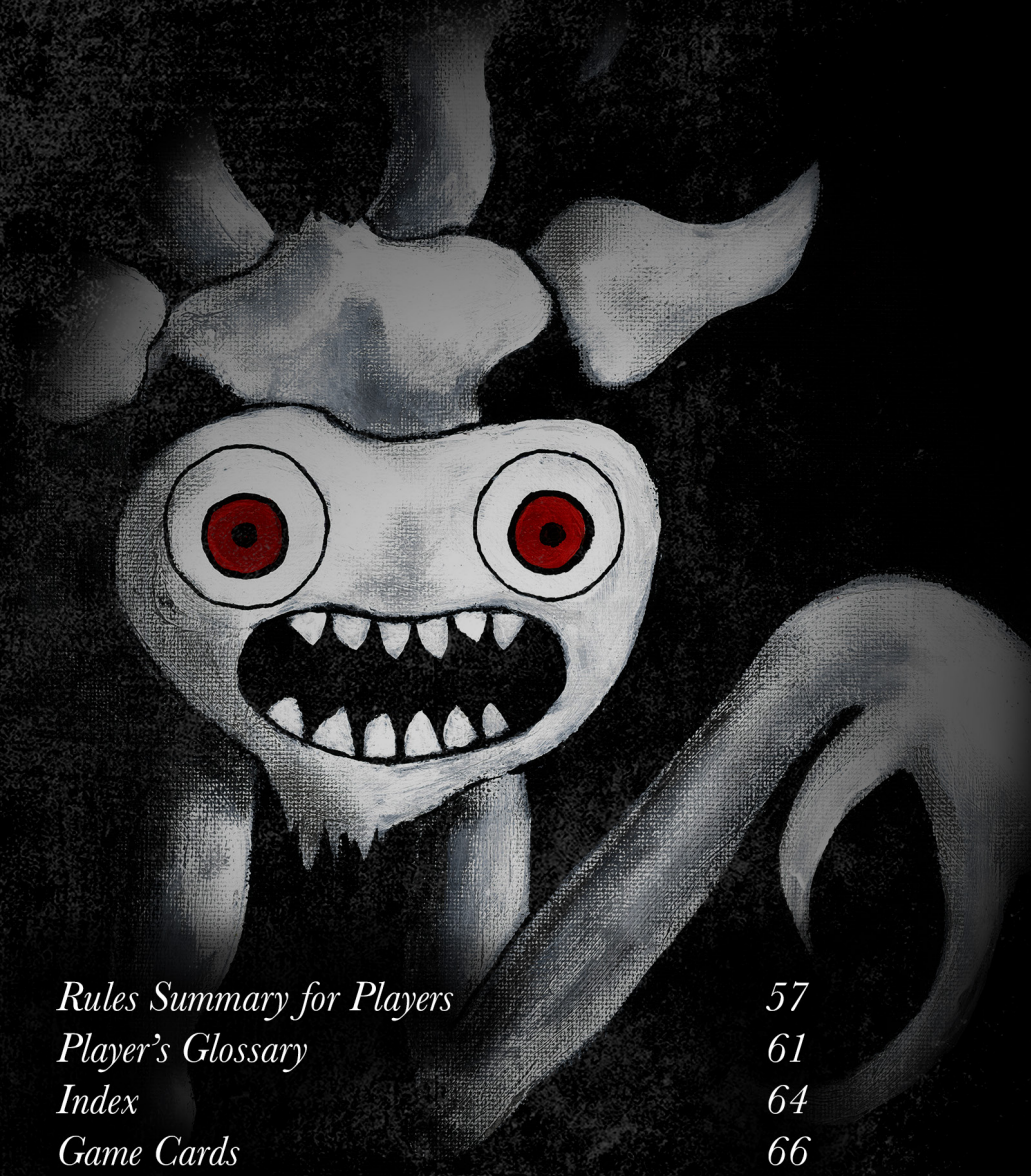
For rules regarding Injuries, including treatment and Death's Door, please refer to [Injury Types], (Page 21).

Characters will accrue Injuries as the game progresses. The world itself is dangerous, and such things will be almost unavoidable. Alongside the mechanical impacts of Injuries—adjustments in the Difficulty of Checks—is the roleplay impact. Injuries never go away, so you could treat them as a permanent Conditions, which may change the way your Character interacts with the world and entities around them. Consider the symptoms of the Injury as you make roleplay decisions. Concussions will result in headaches, for example, but may also include confusion or amnesia, and possibly nausea. This may also result in your Character getting more easily irritated by people and events until they get some pain killers.

While they may be frustrating, Injuries and Conditions are not arbitrary hindrances. They are a part of the narrative, and this is a horror storytelling game where, fundamentally, bad things will happen.

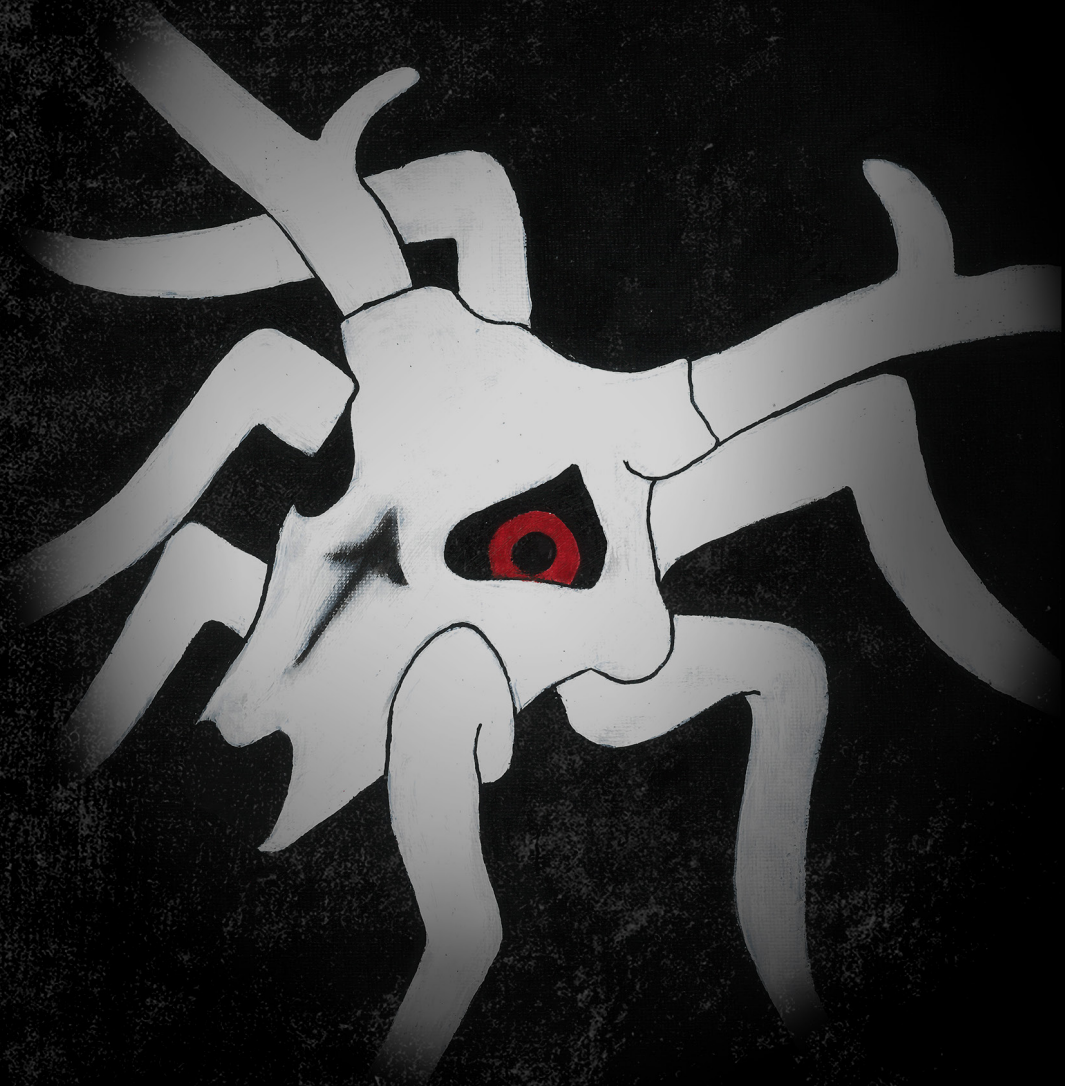
If you feel an Injury or Condition significantly detracts from your enjoyment of your Character, do raise this with the Director. They should be able to make adjustments to help you in some way.

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# RULES SUMMARY



## CHECKS

**Outcome Check:** Roll 3d6, aiming to get a value on one die above that of a specified Attribute score. Difficulty determines which die result to use.

**Contested Check:** Two opposing entities roll 3d6 each, versus their own specified Attribute. For every die result with a value higher than the associated Attribute, the entity scores a point. The winner of the Contest has the most points. In the case of a tie, 'defender' wins.

**Untrained Check:** Perform a Hard Ignorance Outcome Check to work out how to perform the Action. If the first Check is successful, make a Hard Outcome Check linked to a specified Attribute to successfully perform the Action.

**Difficulty:** Easy = use highest die result, Medium = use middle die result, Hard = use lowest die result.

## CARDS

Players draw a card when:

- Every hour of real-world time passes.
- Characters experience something relating to their Haunt.
- Characters act in accordance with their Haunt.

If you draw a card matching your Virtue suit, gain 3 WP and discard the card, except at the start of the game, when you would draw again.

If you draw a card matching any other suit, add it to your Hand.

To remove a Haunt suit card or a neutral suite card from your Hand:

- Perform a significant act in accordance with your own Virtue,
- Resist the urge to act in accordance with your Haunt, or
- Act in a way notably opposing your Haunt.

To remove a card from your Hand which doesn't match your Haunt suit:

- Roll a critical success on a Check (roll a 6 on all three dice),
- Act significantly in accordance with a Virtue which is not your own.

## CARD SUITS

◇ = Temptation/Temperance

♠ = Apathy/Motivation

♣ = Discord/Community

♥ = Malice/Compassion

## WILLPOWER AND STRESS

Willpower is used to reroll one of the three dice used in a Check. Cost is determined by Stress level.

- If the Character is Uneasy, it costs 1 WP to re-roll up to three dice.
- If the Character is Tense, it costs 1 WP to re-roll up to two dice.
- If the Character is Stressed, it costs 1 WP to re-roll one die.

**Stress Check:** Medium Difficulty Outcome Check vs. Director-specified Attribute. If Check succeeds, there is no change to Stress level. If failed, raise Stress level by 1 unless Character is already at the maximum value (Stressed).

Roll every time you:

- Fail a Check
- See a Monster
- Take damage
- At Director's discretion.

If a Character is Stressed or Tense, the following circumstances will reduce their Stress level by one:

- The Character successfully hides, flee from, or defeat a Monster, or
- They solve a significant mystery or making significant progress through the story.

Note that both situations will need agreement from the Director before you change your Stress level. Regardless of the level of stress you have, if you can take an Extended Rest (ask the Director if a rest you have taken counts), your Character will become Uneasy.

You can regain Willpower through the following mechanisms:

- When you draw a matching Virtue card, gain 3 WP and discard the card.
- When Stress is lowered to the Uneasy State, gain 3 WP.
- When you roll a critical success (roll a 6 on all three dice of an Outcome Check) your Character gains 3 WP and you can discard a non-Haunt suit card
- When a Character performs a significant action in accordance with their Vice, gain 3 WP (and draw a card from the deck).
- When a Character performs a significant action in accordance with their Virtue, gain 5 WP (and may discard a card from your hand).

For more information on roleplaying significant actions, see [Significant Roleplay], Page 52.

## CONFLICTS

Roll Initiative Checks to determine turn order of the round (3d6, add results, subtract entity's Clumsiness).

Players choose Action when it is their turn:

- Move = Contested Check versus no one
- Hide = Contested Check(s) versus an opponent (opponent gets -1 success)
- Attack with weapon = Contested Check against opponent
- Defend = +1 on next defensive Contested Check
- Miscellaneous = Anything not covered by the above.

Opponents will choose Action when it is their turn, Director resolves. Repeat rounds until end of Conflict.

Conflict ends when the opposing entities are no longer in direct opposition—Director will confirm.

## DEATH'S DOOR

Minor Injury: Fill in 1 of the smallest segments of a symbol.

Major Injury: Fill 1/3 of a symbol and note details on back of Character card. Severity is Major. Character cannot make Easy difficulty Checks in any instance unless they have a relevant Item or Expertise.

Grievous Injury: Fill in 1 symbol and note details on back of Character card. Severity is Grievous. Character cannot make Medium or Easy difficulty Checks in any instance unless they have a relevant Item or Expertise.

3 Minor Injuries does not convert into 1 Major; 3 Majors do not convert into a Grievous. They simply stack in the tracker symbol.

When all three symbols are filled in, the Character dies.

Characters can treat an Injury to negate the Difficulty Penalty but the Injury will not go away, and the Death's Door symbols remain filled in.

## ITEMS

Using a relevant “active use” Item for an Action = lower difficulty by 1 if possible. After each use, lower Item Durability by 1. When Durability reaches the final stage, after each use, perform an Outcome Check for Durability. Difficulty depends on Quality of Item (1 = Hard, 2 = Medium, 3 = Easy). On rolling a 4, 5, or 6 (which die to use is dependent on Difficulty), the Item will break.

# PLAYER'S GLOSSARY



**Active Use Item:** A useful object represented upon a card that can be used to make Checks one tier easier.

**Attitude:** A phrase summarising how a Character feels about their Haunt across a spectrum of Optimism vs Pessimism and Contentedness vs Shame.

**Attribute:** Statistics which define a Character and determine which targets they need to use for Checks. These are: Frailty, Clumsiness, Carelessness, Impatience, Cowardice, Ignorance, Repulsion, Temper

**Cast:** The group of Characters controlled by the Players.

**Character:** A single Character controlled by a Player.

**Check:** Any time dice would be rolled to decide the outcome of an action in the game.

**Condition:** A detrimental but temporary effect that can be applied to a Character.

**Conflict:** A distinct mode of play that happens when a number of entities are at odds with another and must take turns to resolve their actions.

**Contested Checks:** A Check where two entities roll against their own Attribute and compare outcomes in an attempt to overcome one another.

**Death's Door:** A tracker upon the Character cards that fills as Characters take damage. When it is full, Characters die. It has 27 segments.

**Director:** The storyteller; the main facilitator of play, the narrator of the story and final arbiter of a number of decisions while playing *Locus*.

**Durability Checks:** A Check that is made when an Item is used while having its last Durability box filled to see whether the Item is irreparably damaged or not.

**Durability:** A tracker upon the Item cards that represents how close to breaking it is.

**Entity:** Nonspecific singular term referring to a Character, Foil, or Monster.

**Foil:** A human entity controlled by the Director.

**Hand:** The selection of cards held by a Player.

**Haunt:** An event in a Character or Foil's past which weighs heavily on them.

**Initiative Checks:** A Check made at the beginning of Conflict to determine turn order during that Conflict.

**Injury:** A wound received usually in a Conflict. Its Severity can set the minimum difficulty for a Character's Checks. Injuries can be Minor, Major, or Grievous.

**Locus:** A site that is significant enough, no matter how small, to have its own identity.

**Monster:** A creature manifested by a Malus Locus, based on the Haunt of a Character or Foil.

**Outcome Check:** A single Check, rolled against an Attribute, with a Difficulty, in an attempt to complete an action

**Passive Use Item:** A notable object that may come up in roleplay but has no mechanical effect.

**Player:** A controller of a specific Character who reacts to situations described by the Director.

**Skill:** An ability that Characters may have. These usually represent learned capabilities and have a positive effect on Outcome Checks in specific circumstances.

**Stress:** A three tier measure of a Character's emotional state which effects how efficiently they can spend Willpower.

**Untrained Checks:** A Check made when a Character lacks the knowledge that would normally be required to undertake an action. It involves a Hard Ignorance Check followed by an Outcome Check.

**Vice:** A category which Haunts are sorted into which represent the driving force which caused the Haunt. These are Temptation, Apathy, Discord, and Malice.

**Virtue:** A positive aspect of a Character or Foil's persona. All Virtues are specific but fall into one of four categories. These are Temperance, Motivation, Community, and Compassion.

**Willpower:** A resource which Characters have that can be spend to reroll dice on Checks.

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