

TIMEWATCH



KEVIN KULP

Based on the GUMSHOE System by Robin D. Laws



Pelgrane Press

TIMEWATCH

A roleplaying game of investigation, time travel, and chronal mayhem

**History isn't written by the victors.
History is written by the people with the time machines.**

BY KEVIN KULP

Publishers: Simon Rogers and Cathriona Tobin

Author: Kevin W. Kulp

Contributing authors: John Adamus, Heather Albano, Kennon Bauman, Matthew Breen, Dave Chalker, Kenneth Hite, Christopher Lackey, Cindy Maka, Belton Myers, Michael Rees, Corey Reid, Paul Stefko, Jeff Yaus

GUMSHOE System: Robin D. Laws

Art Direction: Kevin Kulp and Cathriona Tobin

Index: Kevin Kulp

Cover Art: Rich Longmore

Interior Art: Rich Longmore

Cover Layout, Interior Layout and Graphic Design: Charles A. Wright, Michael Chaney *with* Chris Huth

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Aaron Size, Adam Strong-Morse, Ajit George, Alex Otis, Alex White, Allen Cook, Ari Mozes, Ariel Jaffee, Arnis Kletnieks, Belton Myers, Ben Warfield, Ben Wellner, Betsy Rosenblatt, Bill Gerke, Bill Murdock, Brian Kellner, Bruce Kwartler, Chris Noble, Christopher Cotton, Cindy Maka, Cris Shuldiner, Dan Vorhaus, Daniel Gerke, Dave Heron, Ean Moody, Elaine Seeley, Eric Pataciola, Frank Michienzi, Fred Hicks, Gabriel Whitehead, Graham Rowat, Guy Sargeant, Ian McLean, James Stuart, James Unick, Jane Coates, Jeff Foley, Jeff Yaus,

Jennifer H. Swann, Jennifer Jacob, Jennifer Roy, Jesus Rodriguez, Jim Vincent, Jody Kline, Joe Zantek, John Adamus, Jon McCosh, Jonathan Bagelman, Joshua Drobina, Julian Yap, Kay Strock, Keith Knecht, Kenneth Helvig, Kennon Bauman, Kimberly Such, Kit Yona, Kris McCosh, Krista White, Kristin Size, Laura Cole, Laura Yona, Lauren Marino, Lisa Padol, Lisa van Gelder, Lizzie Oldfather, Lori Otis, Manfred Gabriel, Marissa Kelly, Matthew Breen, Matthew Glickman, Max Rothman, Max Saltonstall, Mike Fehlauer, Mike Longfritz, Natalya Waye, Neal Tanner, Nicole Donner, Paul Perkowski, Paul Stefko, Peggy O'Connell, Philippe-Antoine Ménard, Raina Hanson, Rainer Frickanisce, Ric Knutson, Rob Daviau, Rob Zacny, Roko Joko, Sara Lampis, Schyler Versteeg, Scott Moore, Sean Waite, Steve Kunc, Steve Roy, Tim O'Malley, Tom Winter, Tracey Michienzi, Trey Ideker, Tse Yang Lim, William Coffing, and anyone we accidentally didn't document. Thank you so much.

Backers whose work appears herein: Aaron Size, John Adamus, Yvyr Baker, Kennon Bauman, Joseph Bouthiette Jr., Eric Brennan, Matt Bridgeman-Rivett, Jerry Castaldo, Parker Joseph Cestari, Ciaran Conliffe, Robert Cruse, Michael Damecour, Rob Daviau, Liam DiNapoli, Nate Doyle, Roberto Flores, Ken Foster, Phil Francis, Gregory Fyhr, Guy Garnett, Will Goring, Mike Grace, Kim Gronbek, Joe Grzesiak, Kairam Hamdan, Patrick Hart, Werner Hartmann, Chris Hatty, Douglas Haxton, Kyle Hickok, Timothy Hidalgo, Seth Horn, Ariel Jaffee, Jody Kline, Scott Kunian, Marshall Lemon, Tse Yang Lim, Bryan Lyon, Chris Marcellus, Alexander McEmrys, Christopher Menell, Chris Mitsinikos, Chris Noble, Wes Otis, Caroline Pierce, Jerry Prochazka, Simon Proctor, Andrew Raphael, Brett Ritter, Jon Davidson, Bill Sabram, John Sanders, Stephen Seibert, Michael Seidman, Sarah Sheldon, Nikodemus Siivola, Chris Snyder, Emily Thompson, Jonathan Thompson, Charles Tholand, Paul Tomes, Benjamin Warfield, Steven Watkins, Conrad White, Michael Wight, Kit Yona, Michael Zenke

Elite Backers: "Weird Dave" Olson, A V Jones, A. Quentin Murlin, A. Shultz, Aaron, Aaron "WolfSamurai" Roudabush, Aaron Delisio, Aaron Gallagher, Aaron Most, Aaron Size, Abel Menechilla, Ace Fortune, Adam and Anise Strong-Morse, Adam Boisvert, Adam Crossingham, Adam Krump, Adam Longley, Adam Rajski, Adam Roy, Adam Thornsburg, Adam Waggenspack, Adam Waller, Adam Wimsatt, Adam Windsor, Addison Stumpf, adjectivemarcus, Adrian Bigland, Adrian Sant, Adrian Smith, Alain "Tusky" Dame, Alan 'Djinn' Jah' Watson, Alan Kohler, Alan Moore, Alasdair Sinclair, Alastair Bell, Alejandro Diaz, Aleksandr Ermakov, Alex "Ghost" Dell, Alex Bell, Alex Fleming, Alex Jeffries, Alex McEmrys, Alex Otis, Alex Reeves, Alex White, Alexander "Lxndr" Cherry, Alexis Cole, Allan Clifton, Allan Shampine, Allan Sugarbaker, Allister Gittins, Alphastream (Teos Abadia), AlwaysToast, Amanda Zalud, Amélie et Maude Périard, Anders Gillbring, Anders Håkon Gaut, Andrea Renkel, Andrés Ramírez de Arellano, Andrew "S" Mason, Andrew brown, Andrew Byers, Andrew Cherry, Andrew Coombes, Andrew Cowie, Andrew D Devenney, Andrew Kenrick, Andrew Lloyd, Andrew Miller, Andrew Raphael, Andrew Robertson, Andrew Schmitt, Andy Bell, Andy Eaton, Andy Jenkinson, Andy Leighton, Andy Sangar, Andy Terrill, Andy Williams, Angela Craft, Angry Goblin, anonymous1453, Antero Garcia, Anthony Damiani, Antonio "Time Trapper" Manrique, Apollo Haner, Ariel Jaffee, Arlie Alsup, Arne Pietz, Arnis Kletnieks, Arseny Kuznetsov, Arthur Braune, Austin Stanley, Avi Hecht, B Skibell, Barrett Nuzum, Bartosz "Stoperssonn" Stopczyk, battlegrip.com, Bazz Hofijzer, Beau Yarbrough, Ben Brighoff, Ben Felten, Ben Howard, Ben Madden, Ben McCallum, Ben McKenzie, Ben "Red Rook" Nettleship, Ben Wray, Benjamin Blanding, Benjamin Durbin, Benjamin Koch, Benjamin Sennitt, Benjamin Warfield, Benjamin Wellner, Bernard Gravel, Betsy Rosenblatt,

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Backers: Ákasz Matylla, Aaron Alberg, Aaron L. Nuttall, Aaron Mayzes, Aaron Smithics, Aaron Zurbo, Abe Kwiatkowski, Adam Christie, Adam Flynn, Adam Guantlett, Adam Marafioti, Adrian J George III, adumbratus, Aiven O'Leary, AJP, AKA Games, Al Hay, Alex Chalk, Alex Johnston, Alex Manduley, Alex Ristea, Alex Valushko, Alexander Court, Alexander Gräfe, Alexander Semykin, Alexis Sterry, Ali-John Sondossi, Allen Cook, Amanda L. Bennett, AmberKims, Anderberg, Andreas Melhorn, Andrej Voskresenskiy, Andrew "That One GM" Young, Andrew Kirschbaum, Andrew Laliberte, Andrew Millar, Andrew Moreton, Andrew Sturman, Andy May, Andy Rennard, Angi Shearstone, Antaeus Feldspar, Anthony Goldman, Anthony Heman, Anthony Sonntag, Anton G H Nielsen, Antonio Manrique, Antonio Rodriguez, arboricopom, Ardun Low, Art McMahon, August Jokela, Avonelle Wing, Avram R. 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Gewurz, Danny Godin, Darcy Casselman, Darrell and Becky Ottery, Darren Watts, Daryl Gubler, Dave, Dave Cake, Dave Laderoute, Dave Weinstein, David Barrena, David Bert, David Buswell-Wible, David Chart, David Leaman, David Morrison, David Peck, David Peterson, David Tormsen, David Wetzler, David Wolf, Denis Ryan, Dennis Palmero, Derek Brown, Dirk Keinenburg, Dirk Willrodt, Drew (Andrew) South, Dropbear, Dustin Gulledge, DWM Kickstarter, Ed Gibbs, Ed Modugno Jr, Edward D Turner, Edward Kabara, Egor Gurij, Elena Gavrilova, Elise McClellan, Elizabeth Creegan, Elizabeth Oldfather, Emilio Fontaine, eric dodd, Eric Jeppesen, Eric M. Paquette, Eric Thompson, Erich Vereen, Erik Amundsen, Erik Parasiuk, Erik Tengblad, Erin-Talia Skinner, Everett Long, Fish, Flavio Mortarino, Fletcher Haynes, François-Xavier Guillois, Frank B, Frank Froemke, Frank Turfler Jr, Frankschaldt, Fred Furtado, Fred Kieseche, Frederic MOLL., Gabriel Birke, Galen Pejeau, Gareth Hodges, Gareth Ryder-Hanrahan, Gaston R. Goselin, Genevieve Cogman, Geoff Dash, George Kapp, Gerald Rose, Gertie & Mick Nichols, Ghost DM, Glazius, Graeme Comyn, Graf, Graham Poole, Graham Rowat, Grant Greene, Greg Thorne, Greg Hutton, Gregory Adams, Gregory Gee, Gretchen Duhamel, Grigorakakis Panagiotis, Guillermo Heras, Gunner Gawith, Guns_n_Droids, gwathdring, H. M. 'Dain' Lybarger, Hal Mangold / Atomic Overmind Press, Hayakawa Hidetoshi, Hayden Gibbs, Hazardous by Design, Heimi, Herman Duyker, hezamu, Homer Turgeon, Howard "HINForce" Nelson, Hsieh, Wei-Hua, Hypocoe, Ian Griffiths, Ian M Ward, Ian Smith, IlleDice, Ignacio Rencoret Oyarzun, Ivan Tam, JP Grant, Jackson Brunsting, Jacob Dylan Riddle, Jae Walker, Jaime Robertson, Jake Cotter, James, James Chiarello, James DiBenedetto, James Dillane, James Hankinson, James Holden, James O'Shea, James Pottinger, James Willis, James Worley, Jamie Denholm, Jamie Revell, Jan Henning Peters, Jan van der Wielen, Jarrod Farquhar-Nicol, Jason A. Martin, Jason Blalock, Jason Koffler, Jason Kotlir, Jason Schneiderman, Jay Dehlinger, Jay Dugger, Jay Pierce, Jay Shaffstall, Jay Watson, JB jdroche, Jean Harrison, Jean-Philippe Guénard, Jeff, Jeff Becker, Jeff Beeman, Jeff Spencer, Jeff Stolarczyk, Jeffrey Allan Boman, Jeffrey Hosmer, Jeremiah Frye, Jeremy DeVore, Jeremy Forbing, Jeremy Kear, Jeron, Jérôme Bigl Levesque, Jerome Chenu, Jerry, Jerry Ham, Jerry Sköld, Jesse Reynolds, Jim Burrows, Jim Clunie, Jim Ryan, Jim Sweeney, JMSBUYER58, Joe D, Joe Fusion, Joe Geary, Joerg Sterner, John C. Barstow, John C Hay, John Eddy, John F Rauchert, John M. Potts, John Potts, John Smead, John Sneath, John William McDonald, Johnathan Wright, Jon Michaels, Jon Schwartz, Jonas Karlsson, Jonathan Brinow, Jonathan Killsting, Jonathan Newhall, Jonathan Smith, Jonathan Day, Jonathan Lowe, Jordan Deshaies, Jordi Rabionet, José Luiz F. Cardoso, Joseph Baker, Joseph Lockett, Joseph Wittenburg, Josh Rudolph, Joshua Edwards, judas, Juliano De Souza Silva, Julien "Selpoivre" Rothwiler, Jussi Paalanen, Justin Dieter, Kaiser Atreides, Karen Clark, Karl Larsson, Karlooh, Kathryn, Keith Knecht, Kelvin Wood, Ken Hart, Ken Labbe, Ken Pawlik, Ken Taylor, Kenneth Flores, Kenneth Walden, Kevin Flynn, Kevin McCormick, Kevin Quinn, Kevin Schantz, KingCarnival, Kirt Dankmyer, Kjetil Hansen, kmikeym, Krister Looveer, Kwyndig, Kyle Winters, Lance, Larry Hollis, lavonardo, Lee DeBoer, Legendgerry, Leonardo Prunk, Lewis Wakeford, Liam Boureut-Nyffeler, Linus Råde, Lone Shark Games, Lonkeke Booman, Lorenzo Trenti, Lorraine, Loxly, Lucas Nelsen, Luis Ramos (Asajev), Lyndsay Peters, Mackenzie Bryant, Mad Tinker Gnome, Maggie Collier, Marc Margelli, Marco "Journeyman" Bignami, Marcus Good, Marcus Schakowski, Mark, Mark Chu-Carroll, Mark Fagnani, Mark G. Davis & Janna Ostoya, Mark Harris, Mark Leymaster of Grammarye, Mark Miltenburg, Mark Richardson, Markus Raab, Martijn Faassen, Martin Kies, Martin Silver, Matt Sickon, Matt Ward, Matteo Signorini, Matthew Blackwell, Matthew D. Miller, Matthew Hayes, Matthew Knight, Matthew Krykew, Matthew Smitheream, Matti Rintala, Mattias Lygard, Maurice Strubel, Max Kaehn, Maximiliano Marín, Me, Megan McDonald, Michael "The guy with the longest nickname in the credits" Cantor, Michael Beck, Michael Busuttill, Michael Davis-Wilson, Michael G., Michael Machado, Michael Novy, Michael Pureka, Michael Sieber-Baskal, Michel Siskoid Albert, Miguel Sosa, Mikael Andersson, mike bowie, Mike Carlson, Mike Floyd, Mike Oney, Mike Perry, Mikko Västi, Miles Anders, Mindy Tuan, Mischa Wolfinger, Mplk, MustrumRidecully, Myles Corcoran, naas, Nathan Herring, Nathan Hill, Nathaniel Southworth-Barlow, Neall Ramonn Price, Neil Ford, Neil Mahoney, Netobvious, Nicholas Cadigan, Nicholas Cladis, Nicholas Peterson, Nick Bate, Nick the Lemming, NIGEL GEORGE BELL, Niklas, Oh Seung Han, Olav Müller, Oliver "DerKastellan" Korpilla, Oliver Lind, Owen Thompson, Pablo Palacios, pants_ghdorah, Pat Reitz, Patrice Hédé, Patrick B. Lowrey, Patrick Mueller-Best, Paul, Paul Hayes, Paulo Diovani Gonçalves, Pedro Ziviani, Peter Blake, Peter Cobcroft, Peter Dean, Peter Gates, Peter Gursky, Peter O'Brien, Phil Stonerunner, Philip "sipehuz" Espi, Philip Bauer, Philippe Fenot, Philippe Gamache, Phillip Bailey, Quentin A Pongratz, Raf Ceuls, Rafael Luiz Micelli Junior, Raf Schemmann, Ralf Wagner, rampantbicycle, Rebecca Christianson, Revereance Pavane, Rich Franks, Rich Warren, Richard Evans, Richard Percy, RICK PURCELL., Rob Collingwood, Rob Donoghue, Rob Downing, Rob Langlands, Robert Clark, Robert D Rosenthal, Robert Dushay, Robert Frasier, Robert G. Male, Robert Petti, Robert Strangar, Rod Chanas, rogme_jettuce, Roland Bahr, Ross Smith, Ross Snyder Jr, Ryan Freeberg, Ryan Good, Ryan Koppenhaver, Ryan Macklin, Ryan McWilliams, S E Hood, S. Ben Melhuish, S. Justin Wilson, Sam "Chrono" Carter, Sam "Samaritan" Fokker, Sam "ROFLSam" Brnstow, Sam T.G., Sasha Bilton, Saucy Jack, Scott L. Hamilton, Sean Holland, Sean McAllister, Sean Monson, Sean Nittner, Sean Patrick Fannon, Sean Smith, Sergio Rodriguez, Seth Johnson, sev, Shane Duggan, Shane Gregory, Shard73, Shauna Forrester, Shawn Stauffer, Shiiri, shlomi laszko, Simnem, Simon Moore, Simone Colombo, Solid Art Labs, Somnium, Sören, Sören Kohlweyer, Soverm, Sports Mogul, Inc, Staffan Johansson, Stefan Matthias Aust, Stefan Ohrmann, Stefano Liggeri, Stéphan coquelet, Stephane Brochu, Stephen Bradley, Stephen Denison, Steve Dee, Steve Hickey, Steve Kunc, Steve Moore, Steve Sigeaty, Steven Alonso, Steven Carr, Steven Copley, Steven MacEachern, StevenM, Stewart Wiece, Storium / Stephen Hood, Susan "Vella" Davis, Susan Dyer, T. Everett, Tablesaw, Tadanori, Tana Kumar Thayanan, TechnocratJT, Temoore, tengokujin, Teppo Pennanen, The Roach (Roachware), Thef Ridge, Thomas "Generic Vigilante" Gentile, Tiberio Graco, Tijn Rams, Tim Ellis, Tim Keating, Tim Rodriguez, Tim Soholt, Ting Zheng, TJ Root, tobias, Toby Gilham, Toju Xinshu, Tom McCarthy, Tom S, Tomi Sarkkinen, Tony Kemp, Tony Myntinen, Treldar, Tucker McKinnon, Tun Kai Poh, Ty Sawyer, Tyler Dionne, Tyler Hunt, Tyler Stewart, Umberto Lenzi, Vaughan Cockell, Vera Vartanian, Verna Crossman, VexThem, Vic 'Hubris is my drive' Politcs, Victor Hellmaster Perez, Vidal Bairos, Viktor Haag, Vincent Arebalo, Vítězslav Zeman, Vladimir Barash, Will, Will Herrmann, Will McConnell Simpson, William "Bios Element" Chambers, William Garcia, William J. Scott III, William Lowell, William Shibuya, William Vaughn Wright, Willy Wilcox, Wm David Rigdon, xazil, Yohann Delalande, Zachary Kline, zachol, Zw3r3v, 권운준

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CHAPTER ONE:

THE BASICS

You are a defender of history, an elite TimeWatch agent plucked out of your native era and trained to stop saboteurs from ripping history apart.

TimeWatch's GUMSHOE investigative rule system keeps the action moving during an investigation. As a highly skilled agent from somewhere in history, you never fail in your areas of specialty. Your training allows you to diagnose disruptions in the time stream and track down the cause, making conclusions that less capable investigators might just guess at. The *TimeWatch* rules presume that you are a highly competent badass. Who are you to prove them wrong?

WHAT IS ROLEPLAYING?

This book is intended for experienced roleplayers. If you don't know what roleplaying is, perhaps because you're a fan of alternate history and the game interested you, there are lots of resources that can help. Look it up on the Internet or ask a knowledgeable friend to run a game for you.

HOW DO THESE RULES WORK?

TimeWatch uses the GUMSHOE rules system, but it's fine if you've never played a GUMSHOE game before. The crux of *TimeWatch* characters is this:

- ▶ You have Investigative abilities, where even a single rating point makes you an expert and you automatically succeed in discovering a core clue without spending any points if you have even one rating point. Each rating point gives you a pool point you can spend to get an extra-strong success or nifty benefit, but even when you're out of points, the ability isn't "used up," and you're still an expert.
- ▶ You also have General abilities for things where you might succeed or might fail. Each rating point gives you a pool point you can spend to improve die rolls, but once you run out of points, you're no longer exemplary in that ability.

Eight rating points or more makes you an expert. You refresh these abilities by turning in the action points you gained from doing cool stuff.

The difference between these two ability types is critical to understanding *TimeWatch* and other GUMSHOE games. It's also unlike most RPG character systems, so it's worth mentioning early on.

WHO ARE YOU, ANYWAYS?

You are a particularly talented individual from some point in history who was recruited by a TimeWatch¹ agent and given an easy choice: live a life of mediocrity and die right on schedule, or become an elite investigator with an extended life span who fixes problems in the true time stream. Unless you like really, really brief roleplaying games and want to go home early, you chose the latter.

You may be a particularly bright Neanderthal, a Mongol raider, a famed aerial ace, a psychic cop from a futuristic megacity, a reprogrammed cyborg, or a notorious interstellar con artist. TimeWatch has trained you in history and choral theory, has given you a time machine and a weapon, and has set you to guarding the history of humankind.

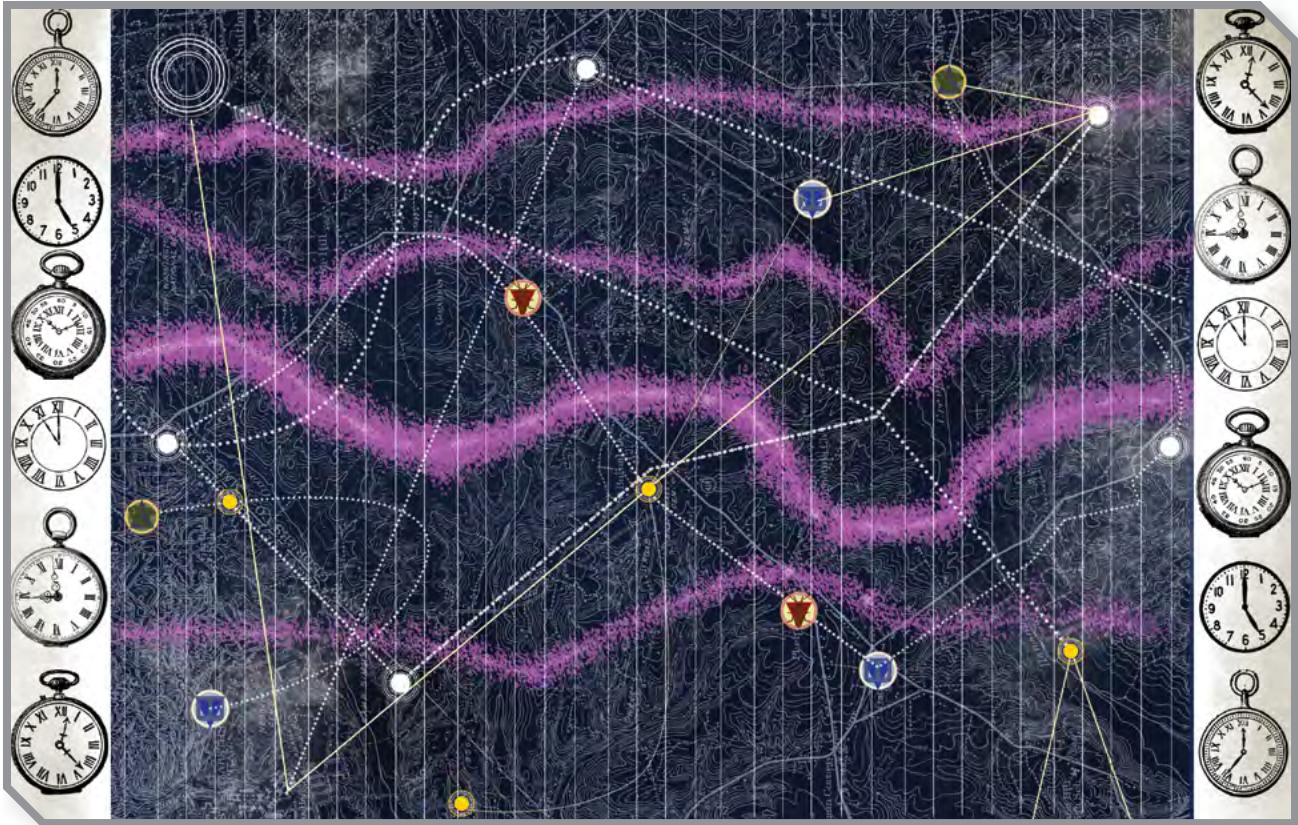
Time travel created innumerable threats to our existence, and if you do your job right, we'll never hear about a single one. If you do your job *wrong*, you may erase history as we know it. So try not to do that.

HOW DOES TIME TRAVEL WORK?

Time isn't a fragile and precise clockwork where one small change destroys the whole of recorded history, any more than splashing your feet in a river stops the river from flowing. Thankfully for humanity, time tends to correct itself in the long run. Here's what to remember:

- ▶ Lasting timeline changes require multiple actions... unless it's one action at exactly the right time.

¹ *TimeWatch* (italicized) refers to this game you're currently reading; TimeWatch (unitalicized) refers to the choral enforcement agency to which the player characters belong.



Time as a river.

- The best way to envision this is through an analogy. Brace yourself. We may get pedantic.

Think of history as a great twisting and turning river, impossible to stop and difficult to redirect. Small tributaries of parallel universes and timelines meander alongside it, occasionally intersecting, merging, and splitting away. Unconnected time streams of distant timelines flow more or less nearby, parallel, but never actually touching the main river directly. It's almost impossible for a time traveler to reach one of those distant parallels without passing through the multiple tributaries that connect them to the main river of time.

Small to medium changes in time can cause odd currents and eddies, but it normally takes extremely significant and concerted action to reroute the whole flow of time out of the main riverbed; think of it as trying to shift an entire river out of a solid part of its riverbank. Impossible to do, right? Changing history is the same way.

If a saboteur strikes at a point where there's a naturally and logically connected branch, the effort becomes much easier. These are the places to head if you want to dam and redirect the river of time. Reroute the channel of time at a branch point by making a critical change, and the flow of history easily slips into a new channel. Reroute it again, or have that new channel slide farther away from the old branching point, and the world as we remember it may fundamentally shift. If no one fixes it, our world fades and disappears and is replaced by new history.

Not many people remember who Aaron Burr is nowadays, but he was a Founding Father of the United States, he killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel — and he was awfully close to becoming a traitor².

Aaron Burr lost the 1800 presidential election to Thomas Jefferson and thus became the third vice president of the United States. If a time traveler made Burr president instead of Jefferson, the flow of time would be shunted onto a new branch. Most likely that branch would soon merge back into the main flow of time, as it is wont to do, and there'd be some minor damage to the time stream... but history overall wouldn't change much in the long run.

But what if someone wanted to shift the timeline entirely? Another change would be needed to force history even farther from its normal path. Let's say that in this alternate tributary of time, greedy time travelers use Burr's position as president to create an independent nation in the center of North America, just as the Burr Conspiracy (and Burr's actual 1807 trial for treason) suggest he was trying to do. That reroutes history even farther away from the main channel and into a parallel path. If they are unable to guard their new nation from American invasion, history will be back to normal within a few decades. If the conspirators are able to maintain a sovereign state, perhaps with the use of futuristic weaponry, history remains on a new course unless TimeWatch is able to set things right.

² You never hear about this stuff in history class, do you? That's a shame; there are *TimeWatch* plot hooks aplenty in any decade you want to name. When planning (and even playing) adventures for *TimeWatch*, Internet searches and Wikipedia will be your friends. Use them early and often.

It is at these junctures that your enemies often strike, and your standard job as a TimeWatch agent is discovering disruptions and restoring history. Your team will identify the problem, deal with your foes, and restore history to its normal course — even if you have to cut back and forth through time to do so.

WHO ARE YOUR ENEMIES?

Your enemies are legion. The easiest to deal with are newly time traveling do-gooders who think that killing Hitler will solve all the world's problems, or who want to earn an easy fortune through compound interest and upset the global economy in the process. Occasionally you encounter rogue TimeWatch agents driven insane by choral instability or whose loyalties have shifted; parallel universe imposters who try to take over their duplicate's life; and saboteurs from parallel and dying time streams who are trying to redirect time to make their particular future spring back into life. Most dangerous are uncaring alien foes such as the European parasitic hivemind or the shape-shifting, insectoid ezeru. They strike at established history from a hundred different angles, and only TimeWatch stands between them and the unraveling of reality.

STRUCTURE OF A MISSION

A typical *TimeWatch* mission has a team of three to seven TimeWatch Agents alerted to a problem in the time stream. Anomalies are detected by technicians in a field office, or more commonly in the TimeWatch Citadel that sits inside of a quantum singularity just before the Big Bang. Minor anomalies ripple slowly forwards before correcting themselves; major changes cascade forward through time like a flood, carrying away everything they pass over as history is erased and rewritten. Whatever the scope of the problem, TimeWatch analysts identify the approximate starting date and location where they first notice a change, then dispatch your Agent into the past or future to discover what has altered and why. The point where history diverges and where TimeWatch notices history diverge are often quite different.

For subtle changes in history, it may take you some investigation to put together exactly how history is now different; other times, the changes may be horribly and brutally obvious. The next (and more important question) is *why* history has changed. To aid your investigation you have a tether (p. 145), a futuristic research and communication device that contains all of known true history and isn't afraid to tell you about it. You'll use local research, spying, logic, and role-playing to track down the problem.

You'll usually end up time traveling one or more jumps to get to the correct time and place where history has been altered. Once there, you will take steps to set things right. This might require additional trips, tasks, or investigation, and probably results in you capturing or killing the antagonists involved. When finished, after making sure that there haven't been any unanticipated side effects that your team can't live with, you'll likely return to TimeWatch's Citadel or to your

favorite point in history for some rest and relaxation prior to your next mission.

That's if everything goes smoothly, of course. When it doesn't, you may be flung into a hostile parallel universe, or be forced to summon reinforcements (including future versions of your own team). You may track down a traitor through political negotiation, or deliberately cause paradoxes that hopefully work themselves out. There's any number of different styles of *TimeWatch* missions, and your GM (Game Moderator) will vary those mission styles regularly to make sure the campaign never grows stale.

CAMPAIGN FRAMES

Movies, books, and shows about time travel tend to follow very different rules from each other, particularly how paradox is concerned. *Doctor Who* is very different from *Looper*, for instance, and the dimension-hopping TV show *Sliders* is quite different from Simon Hawke's classic *Timenars* series.

The default *TimeWatch* setting of “time cops defending history” intersperses action and investigation with fairly realistic consequences and serious challenges. That's not the only way to play, and the game is designed to support campaign styles from simulationist alt-history, to cinematically pulpy, to downright silly. Whether you prefer missions that explore realistic alternate history possibilities, battles against alien saboteurs, heroic explorers venturing out into the vastness of time and space, or lighthearted jumps into parallel realities where famous literary characters act out the stories we tell about them, the different campaign frames in this game can support your GM's campaign.

Patrol (p. 235). The default, classic sci-fi setting for *TimeWatch*. You're a smart and talented time cop who uses futuristic technology and your own wits to stop saboteurs from changing the course of history.

Chronal Horror (p. 245). In a world where the threats are supernatural instead of scientific, the agents of TimeWatch combat vampiric infestations and unnatural possessions that would turn history into a short-lived, screaming hell. In a *Chronal Horror* frame, TimeWatch agents struggle to bring about a future where humanity survives the undead infestation that time travel itself may have unleashed.

Cinematic One-Shot (p. 250). Want to fight your own cyborg assassin, hang out with a race car-driving guitar-playing neurosurgeon, hunt down a missing flux capacitor, or be inspired by a dozen or more other movies? Your game, your rules; pick a movie or TV show and adjust the core rules to match it.

Conspiracy (p. 251). *X-Files* meets Poul Anderson's *Time Patrol*, this campaign frame uses *Patrol*-style missions as a background to the corruptions and intrigues of TimeWatch itself. Can you trust your fellow agents, or are you living a lie? Is TimeWatch manipulating history to its own ends? This is a campaign frame of secrecy, political maneuvering, and investigation.

Humor (p. 260). Drama and action are shoved aside to make way for hilarity and satire. Less investigation and more



For some enemies you need to bring out the big guns. Very, very big guns.

comedy, this style of game is incredibly fun but works much better as a one-shot instead of as a campaign.

Leap of Faith (p. 261). A good campaign frame for solo play or particularly small groups, this setting takes its inspiration from TV shows like *Quantum Leap*. You'll be body-hopping from one time to another, showing up each mission in a different host body. Your Investigative abilities stay the same, but your General abilities may vary wildly depending on whose body you end up inhabiting.

Mythos (p. 267). A merger of *Trail of Cthulhu* and *TimeWatch*, the *Mythos* campaign frame allows you to use ritual magic instead of technology to thwart Cthulhian horrors across history. Time travel here requires soul travel and body possession, and fleeing your host may not be enough to spare you from the sanity-numbing horrors of the outer darkness.

Parallel Realities (p. 282). Instead of time travel, a *Parallel Realities* campaign has you sliding from one parallel universe to the next, either to try and return home or just for the joy of exploring. If you want a campaign world that changes dramatically from game to game, with no worry about continuity or time travel paradoxes, this is a good choice.

Pulp (p. 293). Like a *Patrol* campaign but with more action and less realism, this style of game takes its name from 1930s

adventure magazines. If you love the idea of Nazi dinosaurs rampaging through Berlin, this might be the right campaign frame for you.

Rebellion (p. 297). Sick of always having to save history instead of improving it? A *Rebellion* campaign features underdog freedom fighters who seek to make a better world by changing the official timeline. Your enemies are often agents from TimeWatch itself, along with hostile aliens who use the same methods to seek very different goals. A *Rebellion* campaign may also start you off in a timeline that has already been changed and which is much different than the one you know as a player.

Stranded (p. 306). A *Stranded* campaign takes heroes from the future and maroons them in the past (or vice versa). This campaign frame has little or no actual time travel, and focuses on fish-out-of-water roleplaying while using future technology to defeat enemies in past-tech locations.

Time-Crime (p. 308). Let the suckers save history; your job is to rob it, stealing history's most amazing treasures from across time and space. If you've ever wanted to play a time traveling con artist, *Time-Crime* is the way to go.

Time War (p. 314). Alien war comes to Earth, changing history forever, and it's all hands on deck when the remnants

of TimeWatch have to save anything they can. Forget secrecy; time travel is a well-known tactic, and you won't be the only person using it to try and win the war.

Tourist (p. 320). Rapid time travel takes a backseat as you explore Earth's past and future, including the histories of other alien planets across the galaxy. If the chromomorphic technology of your time machine tends to get stuck in the shape of a blue police box, you're likely in a *Tourist*-style campaign frame.

Wild Times! (p. 324). In the early days of time travel, maverick adventurers braved unstable equipment and unknown hazards to explore history. Venture back to those early days of science, and conquer unknown time streams!

HOW TO PLAY TIMEWATCH: A NEW PLAYER CHEAT SHEET

History may be fairly robust, but apply the right pressure at the right time and everything changes. You travel through time to stop other time travelers from messing up the true timeline. **You're incredibly competent**, you've got a time machine and high-tech gear that hides itself, and you hail from anywhen in the whole of history. You're an agent of TimeWatch.

Doing Stuff

General abilities are how you get stuff done. Sneaking, fighting, running... all these are done with **General abilities**. If you have a General ability rating of 8 or higher, you're extremely talented at that activity (and may get access to cool bonus stuff when using it). If you don't have any rating at all in a General ability, you stink at it and won't generally succeed. A 0 Vehicles, for instance, lets you drive to the store and back but you'd fail at any task difficult enough to require a die roll. An 8 Vehicles would make you a stunt driver. Similarly, a 0 Scuffle means you're no good at hand-to-hand combat, but an 8 or higher Scuffle would make you an expert martial artist.

It's traumatic for your dice bag, but in *TimeWatch* you'll **only need one die: a d6**. Roll it. **Your target Difficulty Number is usually 4**; if you roll a 4 or higher with a General ability like Athletics, you probably succeed.

Obviously, that would mean you only succeed half the time. **You raise these odds by spending points from your**

General ability pools and adding them to your d6 roll. Want to shoot someone? Spend 2 points from your Shooting pool, add it to your d6, and you usually only fail if you roll a 1. Spend 3 points, and you're guaranteed to hit. When your pool drops to 0, you're stuck just rolling a d6 until you can refresh your pool.

You refresh your General ability pools by spending Stitches, *TimeWatch*'s action point. The GM and other players will hand them to you for being awesome, so **remember to be awesome**. While you can also use them for a few other things, Stitches can be turned in at any time to **refresh one pool by 2 points**. When you start running low, turn in some Stitches.

Learning Stuff

Ignore your General abilities for a second and look over at your Investigative abilities. These are broken into three sections to make things easier to find — Academic, Interpersonal, and Technical knowledge — but they all work pretty much the same way. **If you have 1 or more points in any of these, you're an expert at it**. This matters because during the game, all you need to do is **tell the GM that you're using an appropriate ability and you'll automatically get a clue** if there is one. Yes, automatically, no roll required. The fun here is in what you do with that information, not how you get it.

So let's say you're searching old birth records for clues. The GM may ask, "Do you have any rating points in Research?" If you say yes, she'll tell you everything you can find out. No roll is ever required.

You can **spend these points to get cool in-game advantages**. Take the Interpersonal ability Charm, for instance, and pretend for a second that you have a rating of 2 or 3 in it. You meet the evil mastermind's attractive assistant. Tell the GM you're using Charm to flirt with the supporting character, and the assistant will let slip important clues. Tell the GM you're spending 1 or more Charm points to get cool stuff while you're flirting, and the assistant may fall in love with you. Spend 2 points, and the assistant may double-cross the boss out of love for you.

Just remember, spending a point from an Investigative ability doesn't stop you from knowing that topic. It just limits how many times in a game you can ask for special cool stuff.

And really? That's all you need to know before starting play.



CHAPTER TWO:

YOUR CHARACTER

This chapter shows you how to create characters. It's intended for both players and GMs.

Creating a *TimeWatch* character is a simple four-step process. At each step, consult with your GM and the other players to ensure you have covered all the abilities your group needs, and that you have a good variety of characters concepts.

- ▶ **Step one:** Choose a **character concept** and your time and place of origin. You may wish to scan the character competencies on p. 18 for ideas. If you're short on time, ready-to-play digital character sheets with a variety of character competencies are available on the Pelgrane Press web site. Just pick a character concept and go.
- ▶ **Step two:** Choose your **Investigative abilities**, the knowledge and research skills you've learned that help you gather information and drive the plot forward. (These abilities always work when gathering clues. If you spend points from them, they work even better.) You have a certain number of points to distribute when choosing abilities, as detailed on p. 26, and you receive Timecraft 1 for free. You don't have to assign all of these points at the game's start.
- ▶ **Step three:** Assign your **General abilities**, the skills that help you survive while you're gathering information and solving problems. (You roll a single 6-sided die and spend points to see if these work.) You have 50 points to distribute when choosing abilities, as detailed on p. 26, and you receive Health 6 and Chronal Stability 6 for free.
- ▶ **Step four:** Build out your **personality, Drive, background, and secrets**. This tells you why you're risking your life time traveling instead of sleeping on a tranquil tropical beach somewhere, or instead of hijacking time for your own purposes.

Alternatively, you can create your character by starting out with your Agent's personality and history, and then choose Investigative and General abilities to complement it. This method may work best if you have a strong vision you want to try and match.

Lori has been reading about the 16th-century Medici family of Florence, and wishes to play a sly and conniving former assassin and power broker from the family who has instead joined TimeWatch. She already knows what she wants; she just has to choose abilities to match.

Brendan isn't sure yet what he wants to play, so he scans the character competencies. He notices "24th-century cyborg" as an example for "hacker," and that sounds like a lot of fun. He combines it with the character competency "tug" to build a futuristic bruiser, then figures out who he is and where he came from.

"WAIT TILL YOU SEE HOW I DID THAT."

TimeWatch uses the GUMSHOE rules, and GUMSHOE rules define your character by what he or she can accomplish in an investigative scenario. The rules don't care if your Intimidation ability is terrifying malevolence, sly menace, a spectacular talent for blackmail, or psychic powers that terrify your subject so much that he spills every secret he knows. You can explain how your abilities work however you like when describing your character to others, but the game effect is what's important. All that matters is how you solve cases and overcome other obstacles arising from them. That means that you should have fun and be creative when deciding how your character's abilities work.

This distinction gives you a lot of flexibility when describing your character. It's up to you whether you use precise martial arts or a brutally powerful frenzied flailing, but 8 points in the Scuffling General ability means that your character is going to kick butt in a fistfight either way. Use this to your advantage when creating a fun, memorable character.

RATINGS AND POOLS

The number you assign to each ability is called a **rating**. You may choose to improve it gradually over time, but ratings remain static over the course of the typical game session.

For each ability, your character has a **pool** of points which fluctuates over the course of each session. **Your pool can never be higher than your rating.** Imagine that each ability is a bucket. Your rating is the size of the bucket, and your pool is how full the bucket currently is. You begin each mission, or scenario, with pool points equal to your rating. You will spend points as you carry out the mission, and refresh those points by spending Stitches (action points, explained on p. 65).

TimeWatch agent and former big-game hunter Mace Hunter is in a life-or-death struggle with a Borgia spy in 15th-century Renaissance Italy. He spends 7 of his 8 Scuffling points to knock the spy unconscious. His Scuffling rating remains 8, but his Scuffling pool stays at 1 point until he's able to refresh it back to a maximum of 8. It cannot rise higher than 8.

The distinction between ratings and pools is a crucial one; keep it in mind as you read and interpret the *TimeWatch* rules. See p. 67 for rules on refreshing pools.

STEP ONE: CHOOSE A CONCEPT AND ORIGIN

WHAT YOU DO

You are a member of the secret organization TimeWatch, a group of elite agents from across time that stands between true history and world-altering chaos. You are trained to remove anachronisms, avoid paradox, fix chronal interference, and to use time itself as a weapon against your foes. Your skills and equipment allow you to travel throughout history, fitting in seamlessly and identifying sabotage that changes the flow of history. Your job is usually to change it back, or to stop it from being changed in the first place.

WHAT DEFINES YOU?

The first step is deciding on a character concept. It's much easier to choose your abilities on the character sheet once you have a clear image in your head of what your character looks like, what they sound like, and what they can do. The two easiest ways to quickly define their capabilities is to think about their job and their origin.

If you think your character is best defined by their previous job, decide what that job was: a soldier, a detective, a diplomat, a thief, a scholar? Choose something you think would be fun to play, as your job is going to help define your abilities. A former coal miner will be burly, athletic, and possibly good at Scuffling; a former scientist will be scholarly and inventive; and a former thief will likely be good at Burglary, Unobtrusiveness, and Spying.

If you think your character is best defined by their time and place of origin, decide that first instead. You may be excited to play someone from medieval England, or the American Old West, feudal Japan, ancient Rome, or a futuristic megacity. The culture of the place you come from will help define your character. A Neanderthal will be superb at Outdoor Survival and hunting skills, while a character from the 2120 Lunar colony may be an expert on Science!, Hacking, and similar technological abilities.

One of these choices may suggest the other. "Medieval England" screams out for "noble knight" or "scurrilous outlaw," just as "Old West" suggests "steely-eyed gunslinger," "brilliant wilderness scout," or "slightly crazed prospector who likes to blow things up." Professions give you more range of choice. "Soldier," for instance, suggests any number of possibilities such as ancient Greece or ancient China, the US Civil War, a world war, a future war that you make up, and many other possibilities. "Detective" suggests a modern cop, a 1970s PI, a 19th-century member of Scotland Yard, or a

YOUR ORGANIZATION

TimeWatch is organized by squads, encouraging agents to live and work closely with their teammates. Each squad usually has a handler or briefing officer who assigns them missions. Agents typically disguise themselves as appropriate for the culture and time period they are entering, assuming fake identities for the duration of their stay. TimeWatch forbids its agents to reveal anything about time travel to outsiders, and agents seldom allow their true identity to be publicly known. Mistakes in maintaining cover can lead to disaster: more than one successful agent has been eliminated by an enemy killing off her ancestors, removing her from existence and requiring every mission she ever accomplished to need redoing by other agents.

Most agents sleep and live at the TimeWatch Citadel at the beginning of time, so that they're on site (and unaffected by any historical changes) when their team is scrambled on a mission. Teams stick together and often socialize with their peers between missions. New teammates are shuffled in as old ones are killed and erased from existence by paradox. Agents may be rookies entirely new to TimeWatch, new clones of deceased agents, or seasoned pros who are transferred out of other teams.

Mission alerts at the Citadel are typically triggered by your handler, accompanied by skilled chronal technicians and analysts who monitor the true timeline with chronal sensors. These sensors seldom indicate the exact problem with history, but they're good at providing advance notice of an unexpected change. The sensors are accurate enough to provide agents with a reasonable time and location to begin their investigation.



19th century explorer Mace Hunter, Uurk the Neanderthal, Altani the Mongol Princess, Skegg the sophosaur and starship pilot Kelfala: ready for action!

future freelance law enforcement officer who solves crimes for money.

Some people find it easiest to define their character by what they *can't* do. Deciding “my character is awful at Charm,” or “I’m lousy at anything mechanical,” helps you assign your build points more easily.

Don’t be afraid to think outside of the box, even if that means taking a time and place you don’t know much about yet. You’ll learn. When in doubt, pick something that makes you say “hell yes!” over something that makes you say “meh.” Just remember that TimeWatch tends to recruit the best, and TimeWatch agents are assumed to be extraordinarily competent at their job.

Make sure you talk to your GM before falling in love with your character concept. If she’s using one of the alternate campaign frames, you’ll want to make sure your character concept matches what she has in mind for a game. An intelligent psychic dinosaur from an alternate timeline, for instance, may not fit into a particular GM’s gritty cop drama.

Characters are usually individuals of high potential who vanished, disappeared, or died suddenly without living out a full lifespan. Most characters are wholly imaginary, but that’s not required if you’d rather play someone real who vanished before their time. Searching the Internet for “list of people who disappeared mysteriously” brings up a wealth of

creative ideas. With your GM’s permission, you might play the mysterious skyjacker D. B. Cooper, or Amelia Earhart, or Jimmy Hoffa, or Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt, or a hundred other interesting choices. It’s up to you, and to the style of your GM’s campaign.

EXAMPLES OF CHARACTER CONCEPTS

- ▶ a cynical philosopher from ancient Greece
- ▶ a Roman spy from the time of Emperor Vespasian
- ▶ a samurai from 12th-century Japan
- ▶ a politically adept noble assassin from the Renaissance
- ▶ a Sioux scout from the early 1800s
- ▶ a police detective from Victorian England
- ▶ Nikola Tesla’s former research assistant
- ▶ a 1950s private eye from New York City
- ▶ a late 21st-century genetically engineered, superintelligent spider monkey
- ▶ a 22nd-century Chinese research scientist
- ▶ a 24th-century psychic street rat from a subterranean global megacity

- ▶ a 26th-century suborbital soldier
- ▶ a 31st-century hovering, disembodied psychic brain
- ▶ a memory-damaged clone of a famous slain agent, trying to live up to a reputation she doesn't deserve
- ▶ a TimeWatch lab technician or chronal anthropologist who received a field promotion to full agent

DON'T PANIC

One of the real challenges here is analysis paralysis; there are so many possible choices that it's difficult to pick just one. Glancing at the character competencies below to identify certain core abilities may give you some ideas.

We suggest narrowing down your choices and going for a quirky, specific concept, maybe one based off of a favorite movie or literary character. A quick Internet search may give you ideas, and it's good to look up details of actual historical eras you find interesting. If choosing an Agent who comes from the future, you should make up a few sentences about a future society and propose it to your GM. Chances are she'll say yes, and then together you can add details to make it come alive.

Once you decide on your job and your origin time and place, write them down. Now talk to the other players about what your role in the group might be. You want to make sure that you don't accidentally trod over each other's choices, since two 22nd-century scientists or 19th-century Manhattan socialites might interfere with each other's niche.

Don't worry about picking a character who doesn't seem to be smart or educated enough to function well in TimeWatch. The agency trains everyone; even a Neanderthal recruit will receive neural conditioning and high-intensity cultural instruction that allows her to function well as an agent. A sailor recruited from ancient Greece may consider his high-tech gear to be akin to magic, but he'll still have a solid grounding in "correct" history and will be able to thrive in the field.

WHAT TO AVOID

Health and Chronal Stability both start at a rating of 6 for free, but consider putting at least a few points into both unless you like living dangerously. When assigning General abilities, don't leave a 0 rating in any ability you want to have a chance of succeeding in.

Unless the GM specifically okays it (such as in a "Bill and Ted"-style humor game), don't play anyone who is completely goofy or grossly incompetent. It can be hilarious at the right time, but it doesn't fit the default tone of *TimeWatch* very well, and you're far less likely to have fun.

If you don't have explicit permission from your GM, avoid creating characters who are linked to fictional or literary creations. For instance, you can easily play a London street urchin, but not one of Sherlock Holmes' Baker Street Irregulars; you can play a French musketeer, but not Athos, Porthos, or Aramis. Doing so changes a sci-fi time travel game into more of a fantasy game, which can be fun but might strain suspension of disbelief (and that's saying something in a game

RACISM AND SEXISM SUCK

Using a combination of training and technology, TimeWatch agents can fit in anywhere or anytime so long as they do not attract excessive attention to themselves. This is true regardless of the agent's sex, gender, skin color, or even species. *TimeWatch* isn't a simulation; racism and sexism may be rampant throughout history, but they're no fun whatsoever in a roleplaying game unless that's a historical issue you're specifically looking to address. *TimeWatch*'s Disguise and Unobtrusiveness rules help explain why personal prejudice doesn't have to be the focus of every historical mission. Choose your concept and origin accordingly, and trust your GM not to violate this principle.

Conversely, we suggest that you don't play a racist or prejudiced character without running it past your GM first. For more on historical racism, see p. 215.

which could feature Roman soldiers equipped with ray guns). If the GM gives you permission, of course, all bets are off.

CHARACTER COMPETENCIES

If you want a starting spot for character creation, choose some archetypal **character competencies**. These aren't quite backgrounds or character histories; instead, they're pre-calculated bundles of abilities that let you quickly specialize in different skills. If you want to be good at one or more of these competencies, invest at least that many points in the specified abilities.

You can tweak and change these as much as you'd like. Add or subtract suggested abilities, or hey, completely ignore them and build your character from scratch. Using character competencies doesn't save you or cost you any build points; they're just a shortcut for modeling certain areas of expertise. Feel free to use them as a starting spot when constructing your character.

You can easily combine competencies. When two or more competencies suggest you take points in the same ability, don't add the points together; instead, just take the higher of the two. Note that all *TimeWatch* characters start with Timecraft 1, Health 6, and Chronal Stability 6 for free, so in the point totals for each entry below, Timecraft, Health, and Chronal Stability only count points above this default starting level.

Becky wants a high-tech con artist and thief, a character who is superb at stealing, impersonating people, and hacking. She takes the Chameleon, Hacker, and Thief character competency packages to make sure her character does what she wants it to. Grabbing a

character sheet and referring to the competencies, she lists out the abilities this character should have:

Investigative: Authority 1, Charm 1, Falsehood Detection 1, Forgery 1, Hacking 2, High Society 1, Notice 1, Reassurance 1, Research 1, Science! 1, Spying 1, Streetwise 1, Taunt 1.

General: Athletics 4, Burglary 8, Disguise 8, Preparedness 4, Tinkering 8, Unobtrusiveness 8.

This uses up 14 of her 16 Investigative build points (if there were fewer players she'd have more points to spend, as noted on p. 218). She decides to drop Hacking to 1 and boost Spying to 2, and she adds History (Future) 1 and Paradox Prevention 1. This spends all her Investigative points.

She's used 40 of her 50 General build points, more than she'd like. She still needs to boost her Health and Chronal Stability and add a combat ability. She drops Burglary to 6, freeing up 2 points that she uses to boost Athletics from 4 to 6. She puts 1 point each in Scuffling and Vehicles, 6 points in Shooting, and adds 1 point each to her starting scores of 6 in Chronal Stability and Health.

She's done. Her character is superb at technology (including hacking), stealth, and disguise, and decent at burglary, athletics, and shooting. When Becky gets more build points after she completes missions, she'll use the first few to boost her Athletics and Burglary to 8 each. That gains her useful Boosters that raise her Hit Threshold and help her be a better thief. Then after further missions she'll boost her Health and Chronal Stability from 7 to 8 each, making her harder to kill.

Analyst

You're an expert at combining disparate historical information and on-site field reports to make accurate theories and assumptions. You have the knowledge and analysis skills to weigh theories and draw realistic conclusions.

Specific Examples: 5th-century Egyptian astrologer, 16th-century adviser and counselor to Queen Elizabeth I, 22nd-century NavSci LLC International Security analyst

Investigative Abilities (9 points): Anthropology 1, Bureaucracy 1, Forgery 1, History (Ancient) 1, History (Contemporary) 1, History (Future) 1, Military Tactics 1, Research 2

General Abilities (0 points): None

Chameleon

You're an expert at both short-term and long-term disguise, infiltration, and impersonation. Not only do you fit in anywhere, you can convince complete strangers that they've met you before — and pick their pockets while they're asking you how you've been.

Specific Examples: 14th-century Renaissance con artist, 17th-century Japanese assassin, 21st-century undercover law enforcement agent

Investigative Abilities (9 points): Authority 1, Charm 1, Falsehood Detection 1, Forgery 1, High Society 1, Notice 1, Reassurance 1, Spying 1, Streetwise 1

General Abilities (16 points): Burglary 4, Disguise 8, Preparedness 4

Chronal Expert

You're an expert on time travel; you may even have invented a time machine yourself, the act of which probably got you noticed and recruited by TimeWatch. You can withstand a fair amount of chronal instability, and you're good at helping others withstand it as well.

Specific Examples: crazed and discredited 19th-century scientist, mid-20th-century occult archaeologist, 23rd-century chronal architect

Investigative Abilities (7 points): Hacking 1, History (any) 2, Paradox Prevention 1, Science! 2, Timecraft 2

General Abilities (18 points): Chronal Stability 8, Reality Anchor 8, Tinkering 8

Diplomat

Who needs violence when you can talk your way out of trouble? Not only do you have a silver tongue, you know how to make your enemies furious enough to make stupid mistakes.

Specific Examples: 13th-century ambassador for Genghis Khan, 17th-century Shakespearean actor, 20th-century career politician, 27th-century criminal grifter

Investigative Abilities (7 points): Charm 2, Falsehood Detection 1, High Society 1, Reassurance 2, Taunt 1

General Abilities (4 points): Reality Anchor 4

Explorer

You have few concerns about setting off into an untrammelled wilderness, whether it's a Triassic jungle or a radioactive wasteland.

Specific Examples: 13th-century Native American, 19th-century jungle explorer, 29th-century planetary researcher

Investigative Abilities (7 points): Anthropology 1, Architecture 1, Notice 1, Outdoor Survival 2, Research 1, Trivia 1

General Abilities (32 points): Athletics 8, Burglary 4, Preparedness 4, Scuffling 6, Tinkering 4, Vehicles 6

Gadgeteer

You can build it, fix it, invent it, or hack into it. You're adept at improving your own weapons and subverting other people's machinery.

Specific Examples: one of the three Banū Mūsā scholars from the 9th century, 20th-century race-car mechanic, 29th-century spaceship engineer

Investigative Abilities (4 points): Hacking 1, Notice 1, Science! 2

General Abilities (18 points): Burglary 4, Preparedness 6, Tinkering 8

Hacker

Need to break into computer systems, security systems, and encrypted technology? Most useful when facing antagonists in contemporary and future eras, hacking can gain you information or power. When information is locked away, hacking is your key.

Specific Examples: 20th-century teenaged computer savant, 22nd-century security consultant, 24th-century cyborg.

Investigative Abilities (7 points): Forgery 1, Hacking 2, Notice 1, Research 1, Science! 1, Spying 1

General Abilities (16 points): Burglary 4, Preparedness 4, Tinkering 8

Historian

When you know what should have happened, it's easy to tell what's gone wrong. Historians know history so well that it's easy for them to track down both answers and assistance.

Specific Examples: Greek scribe at the 3rd-century-BCE Library of Alexandria, 19th-century Oxford University librarian, 24th-century escaped genetically engineered bio-computer

Investigative Abilities (8 points): Anthropology 1, Architecture 1, Bureaucracy 1, History (Ancient) 1, History (Contemporary) 1, History (Future) 1, Research 1, Trivia 1

General Abilities (4 points): Unobtrusiveness 4

Physician

Whichever era you're from, you've studied physiology enough to know how the body works. You can diagnose disease, treat injuries, and heal the sick.

Specific Examples: 15th-century Aztec shaman, 19th-century grave robber, 23rd-century cloning technician

Investigative Abilities (7 points): Bureaucracy 1, Falsehood Detection 1, Medical Expertise 2, Notice 1, Reassurance 1, Science! 1

General Abilities (12 points): Medic 8, Preparedness 4

Pilot

You're hell on wheels, and you can drive anything with an engine. Heck, you don't even need an engine! From goat cart to race car to fighter jet to starship, your TimeWatch training will let you pilot it.

Specific Examples: 4th-century-BCE Roman charioteer, 21st-century race car driver, 31st-century starship pilot

Investigative Abilities (3 points): Science! 1, Streetwise 1, Taunt 1

General Abilities (12 points): Tinkering 4, Vehicles 8

Scientist

You're steeped in scientific fundamentals, from astronomy and chemistry to physics and engineering. You recognize clues that less educated (or talented) agents would miss, and you can use your knowledge to produce remarkable technology.

Specific Examples: 15th-century scientific prodigy, 21st-century teenage roboticist, 22nd-century corporate biochemist, 24th-century military weapons designer

Investigative Abilities (5 points): Hacking 1, Notice 1, Research 1, Science! 2

General Abilities (14 points): Medic 2, Preparedness 4, Tinkering 8

Sharpshooter

You're an expert with ranged weapons, able to acquire the best firearms from throughout history, take multiple shots in a round, and use your military knowledge to take better aim.

Specific Examples: 14th-century Mongol archer, 19th-century British sharpshooter, 20th-century police officer, 25th-century starship gunner

Investigative Abilities (3 points): Authority 1, Military Tactics 2

General Abilities (14 points): Preparedness 6, Shooting 8

Soldier

Whether it's hand-to-hand combat, ranged combat, or urban assault, you know how to be a soldier and you know how to defend yourself.

Specific Examples: 6th-century-BCE Spartan warrior, 19th-century South Seas pirate, 20th-century WWII veteran, 25th-century survivor of the second Matriarchy Wars

Investigative Abilities (7 points): Authority 1, Bureaucracy 1, History (any) 1, Intimidation 1, Military Tactics 1, Outdoor Survival 1, Streetwise 1

General Abilities (22 points): Athletics 8, Health 8, Scuffling 6, Shooting 6

Spy

Whether you obtain it through stealth or guile, you're an expert at getting information from people who don't want to give it to you.

Specific Examples: 16th-century palace spy, 20th-century Cold War foreign agent, 21st-century investigative reporter, 22nd-century deep-cover double agent

Investigative Abilities (11 points): Charm 1, Falsehood Detection 1, Forgery 1, Hacking 1, High Society 1, Notice 1, Reassurance 1, Spying 2, Streetwise 1, Trivia 1

General Abilities (28 points): Athletics 6, Burglary 4, Disguise 4, Preparedness 4, Tinkering 4, Unobtrusiveness 6

Thief

You want what others have, and you have the skills to take it. Since they're given access to almost unlimited funds, TimeWatch agents who were professional thieves are reformed... mostly.

Specific Examples: 6th-century-BCE Persian street rat, 18th-century European highway robber, 20th-century urban pickpocket, 28th-century interstellar smuggler

Investigative Abilities (5 points): Falsehood Detection 1, Notice 1, Spying 1, Streetwise 1, Taunt 1

General Abilities (28 points): Athletics 4, Burglary 8, Disguise 4, Preparedness 4, Unobtrusiveness 8

Thug

Sometimes, the most useful talent is to be terrifyingly intimidating and deadly in combat.

Specific Examples: 10th-century bandit, 17th-century Ottoman harem guard, 20th-century gang muscle, 23rd-century interrogator

Investigative Abilities (4 points): Intimidation 2, Streetwise 1, Taunt 1

General Abilities (26 points): Athletics 8, Health 8, Scuffling 8, Shooting 4, Vehicles 4

ALTERNATE SPECIES AND CONSTRUCTS

Just about every TimeWatch agent is human, even if they're recruited from a huge range of historical eras. Still, that doesn't have to be the case. If you want to build a nonhuman character such as an uplifted monkey using its native speed and dexterity to stay alive in a world full of humans, or an alien species trying to right old wrongs despite mistrust and suspicion, just build the character using the normal rules and describe their abilities differently.

Kristin decides to play an uplifted squirrel monkey from the future who was previously an astronaut. She focuses on science- and stealth-related abilities, vehicle skills, and abilities that emphasize speed, manual dexterity, and accuracy over brute strength (such as using Athletics for brachiation). She keeps her Scuffling rating low and her Shooting rating high. With the GM's okay, Kristin plans to roleplay her Agent's Taunt ability by staying out of her foes' reach while throwing whatever comes to hand.

Meambhile, Sean wants to play a shape-shifting alien as his TimeWatch character, one who had been captured and imprisoned by the government and who escaped into TimeWatch. He builds his character normally, putting lots of points into Burglary (for oozing under doors), Disguise (for shape-shifting into other people or objects), Preparedness (for actually forming his body into objects), and Unobtrusiveness (for not being noticed when he's trailing someone). He and the GM agree on his species' name and description, as well as a few good behavioral characteristics and plot hooks that make it unique, and he's good to go.

Remember that characters from a parallel universe or timeline may have a slightly more difficult time withstanding choral instability in our own timeline; see p. 89 for details.

You and your GM may have to tweak the game's rules to make your character vision a reality. For instance, an intelligent uplifted canine isn't necessarily going to be wielding pistols with his paws if you don't want him to. You're operating in a world of super-science, however, and *TimeWatch* rules deliberately let you describe an effect however you like so long

as the mechanical effect is the same. Giving the dog genetically engineered venomous saliva that stuns people, but works exactly like a neural disruptor, is a fine solution.

It's the GM's job to make sure you aren't trying to give yourself an advantage over other characters. If you want to be better in combat, assign yourself more points in your Scuffling and Shooting pools instead of trying to invent a character concept that might gain innate combat bonuses.

A few nonhuman species are slightly more common, and have specific characteristics. You'll notice that the unique bonuses and penalties are deliberately kept low powered; unique powers and characteristics should only be assigned when they're otherwise impossible to emulate using the normal rules for abilities, gear, and Investigative spends.

Androids/Synthetics

Robotic characters are typically sentient but are not living organisms.

- ▶ The Medic ability has no effect when used on your android, although you can use your Medic ability on other characters. Androids regain Health by using the Tinkering ability as if it were Medic. Every 1 point of Tinkering spent by the android restores 1 Health to itself; other characters can restore 2 Health to the android for every 1 Tinkering point spent.
- ▶ Androids retain 1 point of Armor even when not wearing their TimeWatch uniform. This armor applies to all Health damage, including energy damage, not just damage incurred through Scuffling and Shooting.
- ▶ An android that fails a Consciousness test due to injury typically shuts down until repaired.
- ▶ Androids can typically spend Science! to give themselves superhuman powers for a scene, such as the ability to jump higher than normal, or greater than normal strength (typically adding +1 to Scuffling damage). These effects are in line with any super-science device that another character would produce with Preparedness, as detailed on p. 48.

Disembodied Brains

When you care more about style than appearance, it's hard to go wrong with playing a psychic or mechanically encased disembodied brain. Showcased in books like Julian May's *Jack the Bodiless* and innumerable comics and movies, and even as disembodied heads in *Futurama*, brains unencumbered by bodies are a classic way to showcase how far humankind may evolve in the far future.

- ▶ Psychic disembodied brains can telekinetically manipulate anything they'd normally use their hands for. This only works at Point-Blank range (i.e., within normal arm's reach). Similarly, brains in their own armored braincase have mechanical tentacles or arms to manipulate items near them.

- ▶ Since they don't have legs, psychic disembodied brains hover about 2 meters off the ground and can maneuver at the pace of a fast walk. The Athletics General ability works normally, representing the brain's ability for finely controlled movement and faster-than-normal hovering speed. Mechanically encased brains either hover or have spider legs attached to their braincase.
- ▶ Disguise — an important ability for a brain! — is typically achieved by projecting a hologram or mental construct. The Unobtrusiveness ability works similarly, with the brain clouding minds so that it cannot be seen.
- ▶ Agents who are actually disembodied brains should expect sudden horror and extremely negative reactions when they fail their Unobtrusiveness or Disguise rolls.
- ▶ Want unique psychic or mind control effects? You can fake it with an Investigative spend. For example, spending a point of Intimidation allows you to describe how you're using your psychic powers to mentally cow and break down your target; spending a Science! point allows you to imitate a super-science device for a scene.
- ▶ Similarly, Preparedness tests create effects directly instead of just producing objects that provide effects. For example, any player character could normally use Preparedness to acquire a jetpack that lets them fly for a scene. A psychic disembodied brain could use Preparedness to temporarily gain the ability to fully fly with no physical jetpack required. Same roll, same effect, slightly different description. A brain within its mechanical armored fishbowl could use Preparedness or Tinkering to temporarily create such a device from its own mechanical attachments.
- ▶ Normal Scuffling or Shooting attacks for a psychic brain are described as purely mental psychic attacks; armor protects against them as per normal. A Preparedness or Tinkering test can supply different weapon effects for a scene, just as Preparedness or Tinkering would be used by a more traditional character to acquire or build a unique weapon.
- ▶ Most standard issue TimeWatch gear is assumed to be incorporated into the psychic brain's normal abilities; for instance, language translation for a disembodied brain doesn't need a device to function. The Armor 1 gained from TimeWatch armor can either be described as a hovering, physical damage-resistant braincase or as an invisible psychic shield, at the player's preference. For mechanically encased brains, the crystalline fishbowl around the brain protects it like normal armor.
- ▶ Disembodied brains are considerably more vulnerable to Stun effects than most creatures. All Stun tests made by the brain have their Difficulty increased by 1; for example, shooting a brain with a Pacifist instigates a Stun 6 test instead of the normal Stun 5 test to remain conscious.

Great Apes

No *Pulp* game of time travel would be complete without a hyper-intelligent gorilla scientist as an antihero. It's unclear why they often end up as albinos — tradition, perhaps — but they have a predilection for brilliant scientific experiments and an

underdeveloped sense of humor. Any scurrilous rumors that they're *required* to engage in ethically questionable experiments on humanity are just that, and should clearly be disregarded.

- ▶ An Anthropology Investigative spend by an ape character can recruit a troop of apes, instead of an isolated tribe of humans, that respects your dominance or worships you as divine; see p. 36.
- ▶ Unarmed Scuffling damage from an uplifted ape has a Damage Modifier of +0, not -1 as with default species.
- ▶ The Difficulty of Athletics tests to climb or swing is typically reduced by -1 for great apes.
- ▶ Unless the ape is using specially made tools, the Difficulty for time-sensitive Tinkering tasks that require delicate manipulation and human-sized fingers may rise by +1.
- ▶ Apes may need to get their clothing custom-tailored (if they prefer to wear clothing), and they likely use holographic generators for disguise when in the field.

Sophosaurs

Intelligent psychic dinosaurs from an alternate timeline, sophosaurs (Greek for “wise lizards”) are one of the most persistent enemies that humanity never expected. Like the iconic character Skegg, you can play one that is working



Skegg finds out that Mongols and sophosaurs don't necessarily mix.

for TimeWatch as a full agent. Detailed information about sophosaurs can be found on p. 184.

- ▶ Most sophosaur Interpersonal abilities are described as psychic powers, even if they do not differ mechanically from normal use of those abilities. For instance, a sophosaur spending a point of Charm to have a supporting character become infatuated with him does so by psychically manipulating the pleasure centers of the character's brain, instead of through flirting like a human might.
- ▶ Sophosaurs are never considered unarmed when using Scuffling, and have a +1 Damage Modifier (equivalent to a sword) with their bite or claws.
- ▶ Sophosaurs typically use a mental blast that is mechanically identical to a Stun 5 PaciFist neural disruptor.
- ▶ Disguise becomes particularly important for a sophosaur. You can decide that you disguise your true form psychically (in which case you'll likely be seen by video cameras), with a holographic projector, or with some other method.
- ▶ Sophosaurs originate from a parallel dimension, and thus may suffer a 1-point penalty to the Difficulty and potential Loss of Paradox tests while in our timeline. See p. 89 for details.

STEP TWO: CHOOSE YOUR INVESTIGATIVE ABILITIES

Investigative abilities are central to any *TimeWatch* character; they enable you to gather information and drive the plot forward.

INVESTIGATIVE BUILD POINTS

The number of points each player spends on Investigative abilities varies according to the number of regularly attending players, according to the following table.

# of players	Investigative Build Points
1-2	23
3	20
4	18
5+	16

TimeWatch thoroughly trains agents in basic choral theory and proper time travel procedures. Every TimeWatch Agent gains Timecraft 1 for free.

Players who can only attend every now and then get the same number of Investigative build points as everyone else, but are not counted toward the total when deciding how many points to allocate. New players joining an existing group get the same number of points as everyone else had to start their characters. The GM leads the group through the list of

Investigative abilities, checking whether each one is covered by at least one member of the crew. It's not mandatory for that to be the case, as you can often draw on resources to cover your weak areas, but your GM will want to know what Investigative abilities your group is lacking.

GM OPTION: EXPERIENCED AND NOVICE AGENTS

These build points are for competent but new, relatively inexperienced characters. If you wish to model more experienced Agents, simply add 3 Investigative build points to each starting character. If you wish to model less competent Agents, subtract 3 build points from each starting character.

If you're planning a multi-session series of *TimeWatch* games, remember that Agents gain experience as they complete missions. Rules for advancing characters are on p. 34.

COVERING THE BASES

TimeWatch is designed to make sure that your characters discover clues that you're looking for. Your GM may require that every Investigative ability be covered by at least one member of your team; investigations are more fun to play and are easier to design when your GM knows that you've got the bases covered. The number of Investigative build points you get when creating your character takes this into account.

If your GM doesn't require you to have every Investigative ability covered by at least one team member, assign your points freely. You'll just need to be more creative with investigations and problem-solving, coming at mysteries from slightly more angles to find the clues that your enemies have left behind.

GMs should see p. 218 for more information and advice for altering this rule.

SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIVE ABILITIES

This is a list of Investigative abilities, along with a brief summary of each. Detailed descriptions are found on p. 36, where you'll find sample spends.

Anthropology (Academic): You're an expert on ancient cultures and artifacts, probably because you've gone back in time to watch them in person.

Architecture (Academic): You know buildings and construction, whether you're trying to find an exit, find a hiding place, or find the best way to blow one up.

Authority (Interpersonal): You know how to present yourself as the person in charge. Armed forces and law enforcement officers accept you as one of their own.

Bureaucracy (Interpersonal): You know how to navigate labyrinthine organizations and cut through red tape. Bureaucrats either fear or love you — sometimes both.

Charm (Interpersonal): Whether through flattery or flirting, you're so charming that other people are willing to reveal their secrets just to get your attention.

Falsehood Detection (Interpersonal): You can usually tell when you're being lied to.

Forgery (Technical): From official identification to ancient art, you can probably fake it or tell when it's been faked.

Hacking (Technical): You're a computer genius who's skilled at math, logic, and digital infiltration.

High Society (Interpersonal): You fit in with the upper crust, who accept you as one of their own.

History (Ancient) (Academic): You're familiar with history from the start of recorded civilization to the end of the 13th century, and you have a working knowledge of the periods of history prior to human civilization.

History (Contemporary) (Academic): You're familiar with history from the start of the Renaissance in the 14th century to the mid-21st century.

History (Future) (Academic): You're familiar with history from the mid-21st century onwards.

Intimidation (Interpersonal): You can terrify others into doing what you want or into telling you what they know.

Medical Expertise (Technical): You have the medical training to diagnose diseases, treat illnesses, and determine cause of death.

Military Tactics (Academic): You understand troop movements, military logistics, and the tactics of both minor skirmishes and large-scale battles.

Notice (Technical): You have a remarkable eye for detail and notice small and unusual details around you, seeing clues that others might miss.

Outdoor Survival (Technical): You can survive in the great outdoors without starving or freezing to death.

Paradox Prevention (Technical): You recognize when time has become twisted, and you know how to use paradoxes to your own advantage.

Reassurance (Interpersonal): You keep people calm and relaxed even in the most stressful of circumstances.

Research (Academic): When you don't know a fact, you know how to look it up or find someone who does.

Science! (Technical): You're a knowledgeable scientist with a wide range of expertise; you can run experiments, synthesize chemicals, and create high-tech devices. This blanket ability covers astronomy, chemistry, physics, electrical engineering, and just about every other science-type ability you can name.

Spying (Technical): You're an expert at spying and surveillance.

Streetwise (Interpersonal): You're good at interacting with low-status individuals, and you thrive in urban environments.

Taunt (Interpersonal): You can make people so furious they reveal their secrets.

Timecraft (Academic): You know how time travel and chronal theory works. You start with Timecraft 1 for free.

Trivia (Academic): A catchall knowledge ability; you know a ridiculous amount about myriad, unrelated subjects.

HOW DO YOU PICK INVESTIGATIVE ABILITIES?

Think about the character you envisioned in step one. If they're tech-based, start adding 1 or more points to appropriate tech abilities. If they're scholarly, starting adding scholarly abilities that you think are interesting. Consider how your character interacts with people, and put points in the appropriate Interpersonal abilities.

Similarly, decide what your character probably stinks at, and don't put any points in those Investigative abilities. If you have no talent with computers, for instance, you won't want to put any points in Hacking.

You'll probably want at least one History ability, Research (which helps you look up things you don't already know), and 1 point or more in Paradox Prevention so that you know when history changes around you. Don't worry too much about this process. It's a little daunting, but your GM will likely let you move points around after your first game if you aren't happy with your choices. You can save points and assign them during your game instead, if you prefer.

HOW DO INVESTIGATIVE ABILITIES WORK?

TimeWatch is a game that assumes excellence and expertise. Players used to moderately competent characters in other investigative game systems may be surprised to learn how effective even a single rating point is.

Any rating in an Investigative ability indicates a high degree of professional accomplishment, technological support, or impressive natural talent. If you have an ability relevant to the task at hand, you automatically succeed in discovering any information or overcoming any obstacles necessary to propel you from the current scene further into the story. All you'll need to do during a game is tell the GM that you're using that Investigative ability. After all, a certain popular regenerating time traveler never bumbles around for half an episode unaware of his surroundings; he's an expert in

all eras of history, and that means quickly identifying whatever time and place he finds himself in.

You may ask to spend points to gain special benefits. Sometimes the GM will offer you the chance to spend points. In other circumstances she may accept your suggestions of ways to gain special benefits. Use them wisely; spent Investigative points do not return until the next mission begins. Regardless, spending Investigative points does not stop you from using that Investigative ability to gather clues.

The Interpersonal ability Taunt works by making a supporting character so angry that they blurt out clues. If you spend a point in Taunt, however, you can use the ability to draw an enemy's attention to you in battle, perhaps saving the life of a fellow agent at the expense of being targeted yourself.

Spending that point doesn't stop you from continuing to goad supporting characters into giving you useful clues for the rest of the mission. Your spent point is refreshed at the end of the mission.

When creating characters, it is useful that you coordinate with your fellow players to make sure that at least one member of the group possesses each of the Investigative abilities — or, at least, that you and your GM know where your gaps in knowledge lie. Successful groups also ensure that the various General abilities are all accounted for. When in doubt, perform a roll call of abilities to make sure you've covered all the abilities.

Once all of the abilities are covered, if you wish you may save any remaining build points to spend as situations arise during play. You may assign yourself additional abilities, or increase your ratings in the ones you've chosen, as seems appropriate to your character and the situations he finds herself in. When you choose to do this, you are not suddenly acquiring abilities on the spot, but simply revealing for the first time what the character has been able to do all along. If your GM is running an ongoing series of *TimeWatch* games, you will accumulate additional build points during play that you can spend immediately or save to spend during play.

INVESTIGATIVE ABILITY BENCHMARKS: WHAT'S A GOOD RATING?

When choosing Investigative abilities it is better to get a large number of abilities with fairly low ratings. Even a 1-point rating is worth having. You'll rarely want to spend more than 3 points on any one Investigative ability, and it may be worth leaving a few points unspent so that you can assign them during play.

INTERPERSONAL ABILITIES AFFECT YOUR PERSONALITY

The Interpersonal abilities you choose — and perhaps more to the point, the ones you skip — say something about your character's demeanor and behavior. When your rating in an ability is 0, you can never get information or other benefits by using that persuasive tactic. So if you, as the player, are convincingly buttering up a contact but then have no Charm to back that up, you can't succeed. This reveals something about his ability to impress his personality on others.

How this expresses itself is up to you. Having no Charm, for example, might suggest that:

- ▶ you're a lousy liar
- ▶ you're too tongue-tied to let loose a flow of soothing compliments
- ▶ you can't stand to cater to others' transparent emotional needs
- ▶ egotism forbids you from shining the spotlight on anyone but yourself
- ▶ you're not empathetic enough to tell what those needs might be
- ▶ you get nervous when romancing someone who might otherwise find you attractive

Likewise, a Falsehood Detection of 0 might imply that you're gullible, bad at reading subtle emotional cues, or prefer to take people at face value. Intimidation 0 could suggest that you're not particularly scary, that you dislike leaning on people, or that you're so frightening that witnesses freeze up in your presence. Taunt 0 might mean that you don't tend to annoy or anger people, or that when you try you're just no good at insults.

You can work out the implications of your Interpersonal ability choices in advance, or you can wait until your use of, or lack of, an ability comes up in play, and then explore how that manifests itself in your actual behavior.

WHAT DOES A ZERO INVESTIGATIVE ABILITY RATING MEAN?

If you have a 0 rating in an Investigative ability, you aren't knowledgeable enough to use it for gathering clues. With a 0 Streetwise, for instance, you won't easily know where to find a trustworthy local informant in ancient Tyre, and you'd be at a loss when stranded in the 22nd-century urban megalopolis of New Tokyo.

If you put 1 or more points into an Investigative ability, you have a rating in it. You must have a rating in an Investigative ability to get useful information from it. However, as noted above, if you have a positive rating but spend the point for a special benefit you still get all core clues associated with the ability.

A few Investigative abilities are particularly useful for a TimeWatch Agent. Science! gives you access to super-science devices. Timecraft pays off when trying to sort out the twists and turns of time, and even when you aren't familiar with History, the Research ability will make sure you can track down the information you need. Likewise, Paradox Prevention can pull your fat from the fire if things go horribly wrong. An Agent with a 0 rating in these abilities may be at a disadvantage when forced to work alone.

TRADING POINTS

One *optional* rule to knit together a team allows players to swap points among themselves. Ask your GM for permission if you have interest in doing this. When using this rule, a player may trade 1 Investigative build point for 3 General build points from another player — or, obviously, vice versa. Thus, the cerebral roboticist can give 6 General ability points to the menacing soldier (for Athletics and Scuffling, say), and get 2 Investigative ability points from that Agent's pool (for, say, Science! and Hacking). Both players get to increase their Agents' "spotlight" abilities, and the team becomes more focused. Everybody wins.

STEP THREE: ASSIGN GENERAL ABILITIES

General abilities use different rules than Investigative ones, and allow for possible failure. They help you survive while you are investigating and adventuring. When choosing General abilities, you'll want to concentrate your points among a few abilities, giving you comparatively higher ratings than you want in the Investigative category.

GENERAL BUILD POINTS

Each player gets **50 points** to spend on General abilities, regardless of group size. You start the game with an additional 6 free points each in Health and Chronal Stability.

GM ADVICE: HARDENED AGENTS

These build points are for new, relatively inexperienced characters. If you wish to model more experienced Agents without unbalancing the game, simply add 2 free General ability build points to the starting Health and Chronal Stability for each new character, giving them a rating of 8 instead of 6 in these abilities. Use this optional rule in conjunction with the "Experienced and Novice Agents" sidebar on p. 23 to create more powerful, veteran Agents.

Although there is no set cap on abilities, the second highest rating must be at least half that of the highest rating.

Aaron wants his character to have a Shooting rating of 20. This requires him to take at least one other ability at 10. This would leave him only 20 points to spend on all of the other General abilities. Aaron reconsiders, opting for a lower but still impressive Shooting rating of 12 so he can spend his other points more freely.

SUMMARY OF GENERAL ABILITIES

This is a list of General abilities, along with a brief summary of each. Full descriptions are found on p. 46.

Athletics: You can run, jump, duck, throw, and climb.

Burglary: You can go where you're not wanted and steal what's there.

Chronal Stability: These points represent your ability to stay anchored in reality, even when the river of time threatens to sweep you away.

Disguise: You can make yourself look like a different person.

Health: These points represent how hard you are to kill.

Medic: You can restore lost health to yourself and others.

Preparedness: Either you have exactly what you need, or you know how to get it.

Reality Anchor: When you or others become chronally unstable, this ability stops them from fading out of existence.

Scuffling: Whether with your fists or a weapon, this combat ability is how you kill, knock out, or restrain your foe.

Shooting: You are adept with firearms, ranged weapons such as crossbows, beam weapons, and your nonlethal Pacifist neural disruptor.

Tinkering: This engineering ability lets you both create and destroy, whether programming computers, building mechanical devices, or blowing things up.

Unobtrusiveness: Sometimes it's better not to be seen or noticed, and that's where Unobtrusiveness comes in.

Spotting an ambush and avoiding surprise also falls under this ability.

Vehicles: From a farm wagon to a space ship, this ability lets you drive and pilot vehicles.

HOW DO YOU PICK GENERAL ABILITIES?

Think about the character you envisioned in step one. How athletic are they? Are they good at sneaking and infiltration? Are they always prepared; are they good with machines; are they incredibly sneaky?

Once you think of a rough idea, start putting in a rating from 1 to 8 for each General ability you want. You can adjust them later to hit exactly 50 assigned points; don't worry about that fine-tuning just yet. You certainly don't need a rating in every General ability, but it's worth investing 1 point in any ability you don't want to be completely hopeless at. Don't forget to add points to Health and Chronal Stability as well. You can go higher than 8, but save that for the abilities you want to be best at. A good rule of thumb is that 8 or more points in a General ability makes you an expert. For most General abilities an 8+ rating also gets you a **Booster**, an additional benefit that is only available to experts (see p. 45).

Once you have an approximate rating in every General ability you're interested in, including Health and Chronal Stability, count them up and see how far over (or under) you are from 50 points. Now you make the hard decisions, fine-tuning your selections to hit exactly 50 points. You can also save some points and assign them during play. Remember that you also start with 6 free points in both Health and Chronal Stability.

LOW-MEDIUM-HIGH

Having trouble deciding? Start by only putting a 0, a 4, or an 8 in your General abilities ratings. This helps you discover the abilities that are important, that are only sort of important, and that aren't important at all. Once you know this, you can adjust your ratings up and down as you like, but it quickly breaks through the decision logjam caused by too many choices.

Why those numbers? They're a shorthand for lousy (a rating of 0 means that you can't succeed in that ability), okay (a rating of 4 means that you can succeed in that ability at least once before needing to refresh your ability pool), and good (a rating of 8 means that you get a Booster, and that you can succeed in that ability at least 2-3 times before needing to refresh your ability pool).

WHAT ARE GOOD GENERAL RATINGS?

General abilities use a different set of rules and are measured on a different scale than Investigative abilities; while Investigative abilities run from 1 to perhaps 5, General abilities run from 1 to 14 or higher, with a rating of 8 or higher usually indicating an expert.

The two ability sets are handled differently because they do different things. The rules governing General abilities introduce the possibility of failure into the game, creating suspense and uncertainty. Uncertain outcomes make scenes of physical action more exciting, but can stop a mystery story dead if applied to the collection of information. This division may seem a little odd when you first encounter it, but as you grow used to the GUMSHOE system you'll see that it works well.

GUMSHOE focuses not on your character's innate traits, but on what they can actually do in the course of a storyline. Why they can do it is up to each player. Your characters are as strong, fast, and good looking as you want them to be.

GENERAL ABILITY BENCHMARKS

A rating of 1-3 indicates that the ability is a sideline, 4-7 is solid but not off the charts, and 8 or more suggests a dedicated talent that will be immediately apparent to observers when they see you in action.

We recommend ratings of at least 7 in core abilities, such as Health, Chronal Stability, and Shooting or Scuffling, and 4 in important ones such as Athletics, Disguise, Unobtrusiveness, and Reality Anchor. A rating higher than 10 in a General ability other than Health indicates an impressive level of specialization.

A 3 MEANS ONE AUTO-SUCCESS

Since you'll normally be aiming for a Difficulty Number of 4, it's good to remember that putting a rating of 3 in a General ability means that you'll usually be able to manage at least one auto-success if you spend all those points at once. When you're using Athletics to try and avoid falling to your death, that can be particularly handy.

WHAT DOES A GENERAL RATING OF ZERO MEAN?

If you have no rating in a General ability, you have put no build points into it, and you cannot make a test on that ability. There's one exception, detailed on p. 148: you can still try to fight (or more accurately, flail about poorly) with a 0 rating in Scuffling or Shooting. That is not to say you can't do the thing at all; it's only if you want to attempt something requiring a test that you will not succeed. Your character might be able to drive, but with a Vehicles rating of 0 you will not be able to deal with a car chase or potential crash. A 0 pool in an ability with a positive rating allows you to test — you just won't have points to spend.

When you choose to have ratings of 0 in certain basic abilities, you're defining your character. An Athletics of 0 implies a surprising feebleness and lack of coordination for a TimeWatch agent. A Chronal Stability of 6 puts you at more risk of being destroyed by an accidental paradox, and a Reality Anchor of 0 means that you have difficulty settling in and adjusting to any time period you visit.

GM ADVICE: ZERO RATINGS AND A CHANCE AT SUCCESS

There's a strong argument that characters should be allowed to just plain be bad at some things. It's certainly true in cinema and literature; having some characters be useless at certain abilities allows niche protection for the characters who are good at them. TimeWatch agents work as a team, and that means depending on your fellow Agents when you don't have the skills to accomplish something yourself.

We suggest you stick with this rule, especially because 0-rated abilities can be improved with experience gained after completing missions. If you disagree, allow a character with a 0 rating to still attempt a test at +2 Difficulty. That means a normal Difficulty 4 task only succeeds on a roll of 6, and tasks that are more difficult than normal are out of the Agent's reach unless other Agents offer assistance. This alternate rule gives Agents a 1-in-6 chance at succeeding on most tasks they have no training in. See p. 219 for other ways to tweak this rule.

STEP FOUR: BUILD OUT YOUR PERSONALITY, APPEARANCE, DRIVE, BACKGROUND, AND SECRETS

PERSONALITY

You may have done some of this in step one, but a character is a lot more than a page of statistics. It's a tone of voice, an attitude, a way of holding yourself, a code of honor, a collection of grudges and resentments, all driven by who you think that person really is. A bully is a different person than a meek, shy victim; consider who your character is and how they act around others.

A good way to do this is to think about what actor might play him or her in a movie. Then start thinking about your character as if they were that actor. You don't have to do this slavishly, but it's a good way to begin if you need a shortcut. "Dr. Leah Breen would be played by Tina Fey" is a good way to quickly get a quick visual on her appearance, personality, and possible quirks. Change things from there.

We recommend you write three or more adjectives to describe your character's personality. The 1840s TimeWatch Agent Mace Hunter, big game hunter, might have adjectives like *Bold*, *Risk-taker*, *Hunter*, *Brutally honest*, *Womanizer*, *Lovelorn*. Dr. Leah Breen, a TimeWatch Agent from 2219, might have adjectives like *Self-involved*, *Brilliant*, *Amoral*, *Creative*, *Lone*, *Vindictive*.

You only need enough to define your PC and remind both your GM and yourself when you're doing a great job roleplaying.

APPEARANCE

Be prepared to describe your appearance to the other players around the table. Most agents are (or appear) human, but explaining your Disguise ability as a holographic projector means that you don't have to be human if you don't wish to be. What do you look like; how do you dress; what mannerisms do you have? TimeWatch agents have a vastly extended lifespan, but what's your apparent age? Do you sport visible tattoos or wear jewelry, and do you have any customized gear? What kind of clothing do you prefer to wear when you aren't on a mission?

One reminder: *TimeWatch* doesn't have a Size stat, but think carefully before you make a character that is particularly small or particularly large if your Agent is nonhuman. Smaller than a dog means that you're going to have some challenges with weaponry and doorknobs, and larger than a gorilla means that you'll have trouble fitting through doors or into cars.

DRIVE

Drive is a key to personality. Your Drive is a fundamental personal quality that pushes you into adventuring and sets you to saving the world. A good Drive rewards boldness and discourages boring, cowardly choices; pick or create one that you think will be fun to roleplay.

Choosing Your Drive

You choose your character's Drive at the beginning of play. It should be something that defines you and pushes you into action. The more memorable and personalized, the better. "Paying for My Many Sins" is a more interesting name than "Altruism," for instance, because it suggests that the character has many past sins that need to be repaid. Drives can change over time; when dramatically appropriate, and with your GM's approval, feel free to change your Drive.

Mace Hunter's first love has been inextricably executed by villains hoping to teach Mace a lesson about interfering with their plans. Mace temporarily discards his current Drive in favor of Vengeance. He'll likely return to his earlier Drive once his new enemies have been dealt with, painfully and with malice aforethought.

There's no official list; use the following generically named Drives as suggestions, and feel free to propose to the GM a custom Drive that fills the same function as the ones given here. Write up an explanatory paragraph in the same vein as the supplied Drives. If not immediately apparent, your GM may ask you to supply hypothetical examples of situations in which the Drive will keep the Agent making active, interesting choices in solving the mystery or advancing the operation at hand.

Altruism: You're trying to help others, and there's no better way to do so than TimeWatch. If you can thwart minor regulations enough to help a few folks during missions, you'll make the world a better place. *Samples:* Charity Is Next to Godliness; Death to the Strong, Kindness to the Weak

Ambition: You're tired of being under-recognized, under-appreciated, or under-challenged, and you're ready to start clambering up the ladder of success. You strive to achieve for personal reasons, to prove to others that you're as worthy as you know (or hope) yourself to be. *Samples:* King of the Hill; Agent of Change

Atonement: You, or an alternate timeline version of you, did something truly awful. Every day you seek to make up for that sin, atoning as best you can for a debt you'll never truly repay. *Samples:* Begging for Forgiveness; Unworthy and Unclean

Curiosity: If there's a secret of the ages, you're determined to ferret it out. There are near-infinite worlds out there, a multitude of different choices and fascinating people you can meet, and you have the technology to see it all! *Samples:* A Boring Life Is Poorly Lived; Secrets Are Meant To Be Shared

Duty: You signed on to TimeWatch, and you're determined to see it through no matter what the cost. You're a loyal agent; you'll do your duty, follow the rules, capture the miscreant, punish the guilty, and save the world. *Samples:* Refer to the Rulebook; Code of Honor

Experimenter: What would happen if North American diseases wiped out European explorers instead of the other way around? Would the Mongols conquer North America if Kublai Khan's emissaries discovered the Pacific Gyre and reached the west coast of North America? In TimeWatch, you can find these things out — and still set time back on its proper path. *Samples:* In the Name of Knowledge!; It Looked Good on Paper

Exploration: You have so very much left to see. The explosion of Krakatoa, the Gibraltar Falls, the lost kingdoms of South America: you may not be able to save them, but you can walk amongst them again. *Samples:* Where No One Has Gone Before; See Where the Road Leads

Former Enemy: You were a rebel trying to destabilize time, and you were recruited by TimeWatch. They convinced you that they were on the side of the angels, and they showed you how your actions could destroy the world. Your old friends haven't forgiven you, though, and your new allies don't necessarily trust you. It's a lonely place to be, and you'll have to prove yourself to overcome it. *Samples:* Forced Into Friendship; Traitor to Your People

Friendship: You both like and trust your fellow Agents, and there's at least one person on your team that you'd give your life for. If your team is willing to risk their lives for TimeWatch, who are you to do otherwise? *Samples:* Loyalty Before Life; Unbreakable Bonds

Hubris: Who dares set their will against TimeWatch, and why? They are no match for the technology, experience, and skill that has been set against them. Teach them this lesson, and teach it well. *Samples:* How Dare They?; Always Teach a Lesson

Lovestruck: You became an agent because of love, either because you're smitten by someone else in TimeWatch or because the person you love rejected you and there's no other real choice. One way or another, anything you do, you do for them. *Samples:* Anything for Love; Heartbroken and Hunting

Nowhere Else to Go: You live a long time as a TimeWatch agent, and you're forbidden by regulations to go back and see the people you love. There's nothing left for you there, anyways; your love married your best friend, your family's fortunes have crumbled, and now that you're a time traveler you know exactly how small a difference you really made. Your old life is dead, cold and buried. Your new family is TimeWatch. *Samples:* Unwelcome Elsewhere; Hunted

Risk-Taker: You vastly prefer to live on the edge; gambling — with your safety, your life, your money, or your reputation — makes you feel alive, and you yearn for the chance to test your luck and throw yourself into danger. You consider setbacks a personal insult, one you're determined to overcome no matter what the odds. *Samples:* Never Tell Me the Odds; Good Idea at the Time

Thrill-Seeker: You can ski down prehistoric mountains, surf tsunamis, ride a dinosaur, and run with (or from) the Zulu. You may not love coming face-to-face with death, but the adrenaline-filled excitement from new experiences that accompanies your work is too much of a rush to ignore. *Samples:* Safety Is for Cowards; Just Do It

Vengeance: Someone has wronged you, and you're not the forgiving type. You may stop when you settle the score, or you may not be able to stop until their evil is wiped out for good. Working on a mission that aids your enemy is one of the roughest challenges you can face. *Samples:* They'll Rue the Day; Vengeance Is Best Served Cold

Make Up Your Own: None of these quite right? Come up with your own and have your GM approve it. As long as it pushes you into action, it will be fine.

Not all campaign frames require Drives, and not all Drives are appropriate for all campaign frames. For instance, a humorous game full of funny anachronisms and time-related mayhem wouldn't use a Drive called "bitter vengeance," and a gritty futuristic cop drama wouldn't have a Drive named "Hey baby, there's a hot alpaca in my pantaloons, if you know what I mean, and I think you do." Well, no setting should have that Drive. But you see our point. Use good judgment.

Following Your Drive

Drives are a huge help in any scene where you aren't sure what to do next. If your imagination is lacking or you have too many choices in front of you, following your Drive gives you a foundation to forge ahead.

If you really dive in and roleplay your character's Drive, possibly at great risk to your character, you should be rewarded. When this happens, another player or the GM should hand you a **Stitch** (*TimeWatch's* action points; see p. 65), rewarding your character's inner certainty that comes from following deep-seated psychological motivations. Don't be shy about reminding the GM if no one tosses you a Stitch! Nobody but you remembers what your Drive is, especially at first, so it's fine to tell the GM. It's unlikely you'll have to do this more than a few times before people start remembering your Drive. Also, get in the habit of handing Stitches to other players when they roleplay their Drives, too.

Avoiding Your Drive

Drives don't encourage suicidal recklessness, but they remind you not to over-protect your character when you'd really be having more fun leaping into a crisis armed with loaded guns or a confident swagger.

Most of the time, a GM who realizes you've slipped into over-cautious mode and are holding up the progress of the story can spur you to action simply by reminding you of your Drive. She might explain to you why your Drive would spur you to action. Better yet, she could prompt you to explain why you're hanging back.

When invoking Drives, GMs should take care not to guide the player's specific response to the situation. The goal is to lead the player to move forward, not to force a particular choice. Avoid this by listing several viable choices, if the player has been stumped by his own caution.

If the player digs in and refuses to have his character move, the GM may assess a stress penalty. This reflects the Agent's loss of concentration as he acts against his fundamental nature. The cost of all Investigative spends increases by 1, as does the Difficulty of all General tests, until the Agent returns to form. Most games unfold without a single stress penalty coming into play, as players willingly follow the path they themselves have chosen.

Dr. Leah Breen's Drive is Hubris, fitting in to the player's evolving theme of creating something of a mad scientist. She

approaches missions with the intent of humiliating those who dare stand against her and TimeWatch. Clearly, Dr. Breen has a few issues to work out.

BACKGROUND

You won't want to fill this in with too much detail, because it's most fun to discover during play, but you'll want a few-sentence description of your background. Who were your family members, and who were your friends? Did you leave behind anyone that you loved, or any unfinished business? Why (and where) were you recruited? Answering these questions will help you roleplay, and giving this information to your GM will help her create missions that are particularly relevant to you.

For example, Dr. Breen's player jots down her background:

"Some ignoramuses used to call me mad. Me, mad? Ha ha ha ha ha! Hardly. They just said that because I don't often brush my hair or pay attention to ethics or talk in terms that the uneducated can understand. Or perhaps it's that I'm a great inventor who happens to produce extraordinary inventions on a whim. Mad? Hardly. I am not mad. I am a genius, and I'm helping save the world.

"There's a very good chance I invented time travel. I was one of the inventors, at least, and I was in the process of sabotaging other people's chronal experiments to make sure I was the only inventor when I was stopped by TimeWatch. Since there was clearly a great deal I didn't know, I jumped at the opportunity to become a TimeWatch agent and fix tears in the continuity of the space-time continuum. It's been tremendously satisfying. I love my job as a time agent, and the experiences I gather help satisfy my boundless curiosity. I like to interview other agents from varying times, finding out how they're fitting in and offering to experiment on them. History fascinates me, and I miss the days when I could change it on a whim to see what happened.

"It's a lonely life, though. Someday I hope to settle down. I'll have to find the right person first. Someone who can stand up to me. Someone bright, and strong of will."

That's a background that's fun to play, eccentric enough to stay interesting, and which gives the GM plenty of fodder to bring in interesting plot complications. Not all have to be that detailed, just so long as you know where the character came from.

SECRETS

These are secrets that you keep from the other Agents on your team. They're probably secrets from before your life in TimeWatch, and they can be as large or small as you like. Having a secret is far from mandatory, but you'll find it's fun, and often ties into compelling story arcs for your character. A character with a secret has something to live for and something to hide, making for more interesting interactions. Secrets are no use unless they come up in play,

so chose them with the expectation that your GM will make use of them.

Dr. Leah Breen's secret:

"Back when I was busy sabotaging other inventors' time machines, I may have slightly flung a few scientists randomly through the time stream. I worry a bit that this might have made things more difficult for TimeWatch, and always wonder if that's going to come back to bite me."

HINTS FOR CHARACTER CREATION

You'll also find hints for general play on p. 54, but here are some ideas and hints to get you started:

- ▶ Pick a fun concept that makes you think "hell yeah!" Having all of time and space to play with can be overwhelming, but don't suffer from analysis paralysis. Just pick something that you think would be fun to play, hit the Internet to learn a little bit about the origin time and culture, and get started. There are a lot of TimeWatch agents out there, and teams get shuffled all the time; if for some reason your character concept turns out to not be as interesting as you hoped, your GM will likely let you swap out the Agent at the end of a mission or adjust your character's point distributions. For an ongoing series or campaign, you're probably best off playing a character from a historical time (past or future) that you're particularly interested in.
- ▶ For General abilities, put at least 1 point into any ability you want to have a chance of using. You may not be very good at picking locks with a Burglary of 1, but you'll have a chance! If your Burglary was 0, you'd simply be unable to succeed. That's fine if it's part of your character concept (and you may have to make some tough choices), but you don't want to do this by mistake.
- ▶ As long as one member of your group is loaded down with 8+ points of Unobtrusiveness or Vehicles, their ability Boosters (see p. 45) and the Piggybacking rules may allow you to get away with assigning relatively few points to these important abilities. That will only help when you're close enough to your fellow Agents for them to help hide you, or when they're leading a chase. If you head off solo, you're on your own.
- ▶ If you want to play a particularly intellectual character and your friend wants to play a more physical one, or vice versa, consider trading points (see p. 26.)
- ▶ Have enough Health. Pacifist-style neural disruptors only knock your character unconscious, but your Agent will encounter plenty of people enthusiastic about killing them in other interesting and painfully creative ways. Keeping your Health at 6 points may lead to a short-lived PC, while much over 14 Health might be overkill.
- ▶ Don't disappear into time. Your Chronal Stability pool allows you to survive time damage when aliens or paradoxes start cropping up, and the ability Reality Anchor helps keep your team robust even when reality starts to unravel. Keeping your Chronal Stability at 6 points can be dangerous, and at least a few points of Reality Anchor might just save the day when other time travelers try to erase you from the universe.
 - ▶ Another way to remember this: think of Chronal Stability as Health points for your ability to stay anchored in space and time, and Reality Anchor as the Medic ability that keeps you there.
- ▶ High Athletics means a better chance to dodge when a Spanish conquistador or a Roman centurion is trying to impale you on the end of a pointy sword. Hit Thresholds, the target Difficulty Number that foes need to equal or exceed to hit your character in combat, start at 3 and rise to 4 when you have 8+ points of Athletics; and Athletics can be spent on Evasive Maneuvers to go on the defensive in a fight, making yourself harder to hit (see p. 82). Unless you're playing a notably frail or out-of-shape character, this may be a worthwhile investment of points. High Athletics allows more exciting maneuvers in combat and adds significantly to your character's survival.
- ▶ Invest in Paradox Prevention. This Investigative ability tells you when a paradox has occurred, and spending Paradox Prevention points can let you get away with time tricks like having your future self help you directly. If you have excess Investigative points left over after character creation and you don't want to save them for future use, you could do worse than putting them here.
- ▶ Balance your Investigative points. You'll seldom want more than 2 or 3 points in any ability unless your Agent is a world-class specialist. A TimeWatch team tends to have every Investigative ability covered by at least one Agent, so you may wish to learn a wide array of Academic, Interpersonal, and Technical abilities.
- ▶ After creating your character, save some Investigative points if you can spare them. It's nice to have the flexibility of assigning them on the fly when you really need them.
- ▶ If you need to break some minor rules to achieve your vision of your character, talk to the GM. She may allow you to do so if she thinks the change is balanced and doesn't give you an advantage over other Agents. She's very unlikely to give you extra build points, but she may be willing to interpret an ability in a new and particularly fun way; giving your rocketeer from the future an easier-than-normal-to-obtain jet pack that uses Vehicles points, for instance, might pass muster.
- ▶ Remember, the *TimeWatch* rules don't care *how* your Investigative and General abilities work so long as they *do* work. If you have the Interpersonal ability Taunt, for instance, it doesn't matter whether you decide you're using pheromones, mind control, or a bitter and insulting sarcasm to goad other people into giving you clues; the ability works regardless. That means you have great flexibility in describing how your character interacts with the world. Just make sure you and the GM share the same vision, as you don't want to try playing "Bill and Ted" if your GM's campaign is about gritty time-based investigation.

EXAMPLE OF CHARACTER CREATION

Cindy knows exactly what she wants in a character, and it's a little unusual. She wants to model a T-1000 from the *Terminator* movies. Can the core *TimeWatch* rules model a liquid metal shape-shifting assassin cyborg from the future? She decides to find out.

First she decides to change the background. Her cyborg is Punjabi in origin, a relic of an India-Pakistani limited nuclear exchange in 2043 that she makes up on the spot. She makes a note to tell her GM about it so that she can change the date if necessary. Cindy decides that her assassin cyborg was designed to function in the radioactive zone, that it achieved sentience and was recruited into *TimeWatch*, that it was reprogrammed by *TimeWatch* to be less about assassination and more about investigation, and that the cyborg doesn't remember much from those times; the memories have somehow been wiped.

Her next step is to assign Investigative abilities. Cindy is going to be in a big group of five players, so she gets 16 Investigative points to spend (see p. 23). So the question is, what does a near-future assassin cyborg know?

For Academic abilities she puts 1 point each in History (Contemporary), History (Future), Military Tactics, Research, and Trivia. She gets 1 point of *Timecraft* for free. These choices will let her be good at research, knowledgeable about recent history, and an expert on military tactics. Five points (plus 1 free point) of her 16 point budget are spent so far.

For Interpersonal abilities she puts 1 point each into Authority, Falsehood Detection, Intimidation, and Streetwise. She lacks a lot of human emotions, but can emulate stern when needed. She decides that the cyborg's biometrics measure bio-signs such as heartbeat and skin temperature, telling her when someone is lying. The point in Streetwise will help her quickly adapt to unfamiliar cities. She's spent a total of 9 Investigative points.

For Technical abilities she puts 2 points in Hacking, an ability she wants to excel in as a cyborg. She puts 1 point each in Forgery, Notice, Paradox Prevention, Science!, and Spying. With that, she has a pretty good emulation of a T-1000's skill set, at least the version of one she wants to play. She's spent all 16 Investigative points.

Now, General abilities. These are trickier; how is she going to model the cyborg's ability to run quickly, heal instantly, and shape-shift? She gets 50 points to distribute. She starts with raising Health to 12 and keeping Chronal Stability at a fairly low 6; since she starts with 6 Health and 6 Chronal Stability automatically, she only spends 6 points to get this. Those ratings will keep her alive, but she doesn't have a lot of leeway if a paradox or an enemy causes her chronal instability. She decides to take the risk.

She puts 8 in Athletics, 3 in Burglary (since Burglary includes infiltration, she decides this models shape-shifting through or under doors), and 3 in Disguise (since she can instantly change her appearance). She'd like that to be higher but probably won't



*A viking learns the hard way that liquid metal shapeshifting cyborgs can be *TimeWatch* agents, too.*

Name: Vidhvansaka-5

Nationality: Punjabi

Origin Time: 2047

Profession: Assassin

Age: 4 (physical age 27)

Drive: Duty

Hit Threshold: **Armor:**

Chronal Stability

	6	5	4
3	2	1	0
-1	-2	-3	-4
-5	-6	-7	-8
-9	-10	-11	-12
Max:			6

Health

			12
11	10	9	8
7	6	5	4
3	2	1	0
-1	-2	-3	-4
-5	-6	-7	-8
-9	-10	-11	-12
Max:			12

Investigative Abilities

Academic Abilities

Anthropology	
Architecture	
History (Ancient)	
History (Contemporary)	1
History (Future)	1
Military Tactics	1
Research	1
Timecraft*	1
Trivia	1

Interpersonal Abilities

Authority	1
Bureaucracy	
Charm	
Falsehood Detection	1
High Society	
Intimidation	1
Reassurance	
Streetwise	1
Taunt	

Technical Abilities

Forgery	1
Hacking	2
Medical Expertise	
Notice	1
Outdoor Survival	
Paradox Prevention	
Science!	1
Spying	1

Gear

- Autochron (portable 1-man time machine)

- Impersonator mesh (+3 Unobtrusiveness until drawing notice)

- MedKit (lets you use Medical skill effectively)

- MEM-Tags (for memory modification of unconscious subjects)

- PaciFist disruptor (Close range, Stun 5, subtle)

- Tether (holographic PDA linked to subdermal earbud)

- TimeWatch Uniform (chromomorphic, armor 1)

- Translator (instant, 2-way, unnoticeable)

Stitches

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Extra Investigative Points?

Extra General Points?

General Abilities

Athletics	8
Burglary	3
Chronal Stability**	6
Disguise	3
Health**	12
Medic	4
Preparedness	5
Reality Anchor	0
Scuffling	8
Shooting	4
Tinkering	3
Unobtrusiveness	3
Vehicles	3

Special Boosters:

Hard to Hit (Athletics):
Hit Threshold = 4, not 3

That's Gotta Hurt (Scuffling): Scuffling Pool spend = min base dmg



need a lot of different disguises quickly, so she can use Stitches to refresh the pool when needed. She's spent 20 points so far from her budget of 50.

Four points go into Medic; normally Medic only heals you 1 Health per point spent on yourself and 2 Health per point spent on someone else, but modeling the T-1000's ability to quickly heal is really important. Cindy decides to ask her GM if she can break the rules a bit: is it okay if her Medic ability heals her 2 points per point spent if she can't heal anyone else at all? The GM considers it and provisionally says yes.

Preparedness gets 5 points, as it models her liquid metal cyborg's ability to make simple tools and weapons out of its own body parts. Cindy puts no points into Reality Anchor, deciding to depend on her friends instead (a decision that may be risky). She puts 8 points in Scuffling and 4 points in Shooting, 3 points in Tinkering (since her Hacking and Science! abilities make Tinkering more flexible), 3 points in Unobtrusiveness (so she can hide in plain sight by flattening herself against the floor), and 3 points in Vehicles. With luck, her GM will let her count her own robotic legs as a vehicle to occasionally run faster than normal. If not, no huge loss.

That's 50 points. Her Boosters are *Hard to Hit* (from her Athletics 8), raising her Hit Threshold from 3 to 4, and *That's Gotta Hurt* (from her Scuffling 8), allowing her Scuffling spends during combat to set her minimum damage. She notes them down on her character sheet.

Cindy's in trouble if paradoxes or time travel knock down her character's Chronal Stability when she isn't near a friend with Reality Anchor to help restore it. But what's adventure without risk? When she gains build points through completing missions (see p. 34), Cindy can use those to build up her lower rankings.

This is a character whose concept depends more on General abilities than Investigative abilities. Cindy may want to ask her GM if she and another player can trade points (as described on p. 26). If the answer is yes, Cindy would trade about 3 Investigative points for 9 General points, which she'd spread across her General abilities.

Cindy scribbles down her gear, names her cyborg "Vidhvansaka-5," picks a Drive, notes a few personality adjectives, writes down a secret, and she's ready to play.

IMPROVING YOUR CHARACTER AFTER EACH MISSION

At the end of each mission, each player gets 1 build point for each session they participated in. This assumes a small number of three-to-four hour sessions; if you play in shorter bursts the GM will reduce the total amount. GMs may give an additional 1-point bonus at a mission's end for a challenging mission or for particularly entertaining play. Players who had characters die in the course of the investigation only get points for each session involving their current character.

Your GM may increase or decrease the base number of build points awarded, depending on the expected length of her campaign. The longer the campaign, the fewer build points per mission.

These build points can be spent to increase either Investigative or General abilities. You may acquire new abilities or bolster existing ones. If necessary to preserve credibility, rationalize new abilities as areas of expertise you've had all along but are only revealing at the time, abilities that TimeWatch has educated you on using their futuristic teaching devices, or skills that you've specifically gone back in time to practice.

After every mission you may also reassign 1 or 2 build points from one ability to another, justifying it as skill atrophy: "I've let my Outdoor Survival become quite rusty, what with all the Tinkering I've been doing." This may reflect in-game experiences, or just your changed priorities for the character.

GM ADVICE: REASSIGNING POINTS

It's our experience that GMs should allow players a more liberal point reassignment after the first session with any new character, letting them move points around freely to achieve the character they were shooting for, so long as all Investigative abilities remain covered by at least one team member. This makes the game more fun for everybody.

GM ADVICE: THE FLEXIBILITY OF BUILD POINTS

When building a new character, Investigative ability points are worth roughly 3 General ability points. So why can points acquired through play be used for either Investigative or General abilities? Two reasons. Simplicity, certainly, and because *TimeWatch* is an investigative game. Having the value of earned build points apply equally to either Investigative or General abilities encourages players to stay focused on investigation.

As a player, there are worse tactics than keeping earned build points unassigned until needed. This flexibility can be incredibly effective during a crisis.

INVESTIGATIVE ABILITY DETAILS

The following abilities are what make *TimeWatch* tick (yeah, we're sorry about the pun, too). Using these abilities, just telling the GM that you're using them or roleplaying them out, will gain you clues if there are any clues to be had.

You only need to read this section when you want more detail on Investigative abilities, what they do, and what you might get for spending them. Ability descriptions consist of a brief general description, followed by examples of their use in an investigation. Creative players should be able to propose additional uses for their abilities as unexpected situations confront their characters. Examples are given for possible benefits when spending one or more points; benefits are certainly not limited to these suggestions, and it's important to remember that spending points from an Investigative pool does not stop the character from still using that Investigative ability.

Certain specific actions may overlap between a couple of abilities. For example, you can identify a uniformed soldier's allegiance from either Military Tactics or a History ability.

Some abilities, like Research and the History skills, are broadly useful and will crop up constantly. Others, like Hacking or Anthropology, may be called for many times in the course of one scenario and not at all in others. When building your character, strike a balance between the reliable workhorse abilities and their exotic, specialized counterparts.

Investigative abilities are divided into the following subgroups: Academic, Interpersonal, and Technical. The purpose of the subgroups is to allow you to quickly find the best ability for the task during play, by scanning the most likely portion of the overall list.

USING INVESTIGATIVE ABILITIES TO, WELL, INVESTIGATE

During play, you'll use your Investigative abilities to uncover clues over the course of the mission. You never need to roll a die or spend any points to succeed in this; as long as you have at least 1 rating point in the ability, and you tell the GM you're using the ability, she'll give you a clue if there's one to be had.

In Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, Holmes never misses a clue because he rolls badly. Holmes has at least 1 point of Notice (and almost certainly more). If Holmes examines the ground, he'll notice the suspicious pipe ash scattered beside a tree, and because he has at least 1 point of Trivia, he'll be able to automatically identify exactly what type of tobacco produced it.

Sometimes you'll want to tell your GM you're using an ability. Sometimes your GM will tell you something she thinks you'd automatically know due to your abilities.

TimeWatch agents are investigating a murder scene in the late 21st century, where a computer scientist has vanished utterly, changing the future of computing.

GM: *The purple light from your autochrons fades, and you're standing in her apartment, crammed into the bathroom with the door open. Using your Charm on the door attendant means you know she came up the elevator five minutes ago, and you already know that she's reported missing when she skips her dinner date tonight. The lights in the apartment are off. What do you do?*

Altani, Mongolian Warrior Princess: *I have Notice. I sniff the air and listen. Is she in the apartment?*

GM: *You don't think so. You don't hear anything except for some people walking by out in the hallway near the elevator. There's a strange acrid smell in the air, and it smells fresh.*

Altani: *"Listen! ... You smell something? Careful, it could be poison gas." Hey, what kind of strange is it? I don't have Science! or Medical Expertise, so if it actually is poison gas, I probably can't identify it. If it's a creature, I probably can.*

Dr. Leah Breen, Chrono-Scientist: *I have both those abilities. I say, "Silence, fool! Let me work!" and I check my tether. I'm using the chemistry part of Science! to check the air quality.*

GM: *That totally works. Your tether instantly spits back the answer: There's been a chemical dump in the next room within the past five minutes. You detect a slight abundance of oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium, and phosphorus, but it's equalizing and diffusing by the second.*

Dr. Breen: *Uh-oh. No abundance of carbon? I walk into the living room and flip on the lights. What do I see?*

GM: *Most of the apartment looks untouched, other than the owner being a slob. There's a puddle of something shiny over by the front door.*

Altani: *I go check it out.*

GM: *Altani, it shimmers and bubbles slightly as you walk over; it looks like greyish slime. You don't have Science! or Hacking, Altani, but Dr. Breen does. Hey, Breen, have you ever heard the phrase "grey goo" before?*

Dr. Breen: *Dammit! "Altani, don't touch that! Back off!" I use Hacking to have my tether check for nanorobotic electromagnetic signals. Am I looking at what's left of a human being, dissolved by carbon-consuming nanobots? Because if I am, we're going to have a tough time saving her life.*

GM: *You are, and yes.*

Dr. Breen: *Well, at least now we know where she disappeared to.*

Altani: *I have Spying. Tomorrow I'm going to go back in time to yesterday and plant micro-cameras all over this apartment. So let's download that video right now to my tether and see who placed the nanites. I don't want to watch her get eaten, though.*

Dr. Breen: *Why not? Squeamish?*

Altani: *Nope. If we don't see her get eaten, we can still save her life without causing any paradox. Someone got eaten, but it wasn't necessarily the woman we're trying to protect. We can always go back in time to five minutes ago and meet her in the hallway instead to save her.*

GM: *Good thinking. So make your Travel tests for the time travel to place those cameras, and let's see what's on that video!*

Not all those terms will be familiar to you yet, but you get the idea: when you have a non-0 rating in an Investigative ability, you can find clues linked to it. Sometimes you'll want to mention your ability use first, and sometimes the GM will ask you, but she can't remember everything; don't be shy about telling the GM what you want to look for and how you're going about looking. She'll give you clues if they're there to be found. This is how you'll piece together mysteries, and how you'll advance the investigation.

SPENDING INVESTIGATIVE ABILITY POINTS FOR SPECIAL BENEFITS

Each Investigative ability below has an example of a benefit that might be gained by spending a point, but there are many other possibilities. Spending a point never makes you less knowledgeable in that subject; it just limits the number of times you can get special benefits related to that ability during the mission.

The other thing that spending an Investigative ability point can do is put the narrative focus on your character. Like a sci-fi movie that spends a few minutes following everything a particular character is doing, spending a point is your way of telling the GM, "I want to do something particularly cool with this, so please pay attention!" It's a means of grabbing narrative control to accomplish something exciting you may not have otherwise been able to pull off.

The following general advantages apply to most Investigative abilities. Spend an Investigative point to:

- ▶ gain a +3 bonus on a related General ability test (this can be a suboptimal use of an Investigative point spend, but there will be times when your Agent is out of options and can't risk failure; gaining +3 means you'll auto-succeed at most tests)
- ▶ completely obviate the need for a Difficulty 4 General ability roll, such as spending a point of Science! instead of making a Tinkering roll, or spending a point of Paradox Prevention to succeed at a Difficulty 4 Paradox test
- ▶ gain an advantage (such as +1 on every roll, or +2 on a handful of rolls) in a future contest of General abilities, such as a chase through time or a fight
- ▶ give supporting characters a favorable impression of you
- ▶ time travel to meet a supporting character who's influential or an expert on an appropriate topic
- ▶ stretch the definition of the ability you're using, granting you a core clue that would ordinarily be gained with a different ability than the one you have (assuming you can rationalize the crossover)
- ▶ securely plant or hide physical and data evidence
- ▶ persuade people to keep quiet about the truth, or feed them a different version of events that they'll believe
- ▶ speed up an investigation, such as running DNA samples or chemical analyses in minutes instead of hours

ANTHROPOLOGY (ACADEMIC)

You are an expert in anthropology and archaeology, making you knowledgeable about the study of historical artifacts, historical structures, and human cultures across time. You can:

- ▶ identify artifacts, customs, and rituals of a given culture
- ▶ distinguish real artifacts from fakes
- ▶ extrapolate the practices of an unknown culture from similar examples
- ▶ spot well-disguised graves and underground hiding places
- ▶ unerringly time travel to surreptitiously observe a culture, then return to the point in time that you'd just left

Sample spend: Spending 1 or more points of Anthropology may get you an isolated ancient or postapocalyptic civilization that worships you like a god, but does so in a way that doesn't ripple through the timeline. You can take refuge there to heal or recover without fear of being betrayed, and for 2 points (or 1 point and a point of Military Tactics) you might briefly recruit its citizens to act as cannon fodder for your own personal army.

ARCHITECTURE (ACADEMIC)

You know how buildings are planned and constructed. You can:

- ▶ navigate unknown structures
- ▶ judge the relative strength of building materials
- ▶ identify a building's age, architectural style, original use, and history of modifications
- ▶ construct stable makeshift structures
- ▶ identify elements vital to a building's structural integrity
- ▶ travel back in time to stealthily observe the building in question being built

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Architecture lets you go back in time after the mission is over, swap out architectural plans, and surreptitiously insert a secret room, hidden wall compartment, or back door into the construction. Obviously, this is more plausible in large buildings than small houses or shacks.

AUTHORITY (INTERPERSONAL)

You know how to present yourself as the person in charge, whether that's a CEO, a government official, a military commander, or a police officer. You speak the lingo of soldiers and law enforcement authorities from Roman centurions to freelance interstellar investigators, and you know how to make people feel confident and relaxed in your presence. You can:

- ▶ command the attention of people who need problems solved
- ▶ impersonate a law enforcement officer
- ▶ coolly ply cops and soldiers for confidential information
- ▶ fit in smoothly in any sort of military organization, with people assuming you're a soldier or an officer

- ▶ get excused for minor infractions

Sample spend: You can spend 1 point of Authority to get crowds to follow your orders, particularly in chaotic circumstances. Spending 1 point of Authority might get you put in charge of your own body of troops, or gain you access to a local law enforcement authority's supply of weaponry and armor without needing to use Preparedness. You might also spend 1 point when impersonating a cop or military officer to have any irregular orders be unerringly obeyed.

BUREAUCRACY (INTERPERSONAL)

You know how to navigate a bureaucratic organization, whether it's Queen Elizabeth's court or the governmental peons controlling security access to a 24th-century arcology. You know how to get what you want in an expeditious manner and with a minimum of ruffled feathers. You can:

- ▶ convince officials to provide sensitive information
- ▶ gain credentials on false pretences
- ▶ convince people you're an official government or corporate bureaucrat
- ▶ find the person who really knows what's going on
- ▶ locate offices and files



A Neanderthal without Charm and High Society is a lonely Neanderthal indeed.

- ▶ borrow equipment or supplies
- ▶ show familiarity with the criminal and civil laws of your origin's time period, and be broadly acquainted with legal systems from throughout history

Bureaucracy is not a catchall information-gathering ability. Bureaucrats usually wish to convey the impression that they are busy and harried, whether or not they actually are. Most take a profound, secret joy in directing inquiries elsewhere. When you repeatedly attempt to use Bureaucracy to gain information more easily accessible via other abilities (such as Research), your contacts may snidely advise you to look elsewhere.

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Bureaucracy allows you to manipulate someone specific in the mid-level bureaucratic chain of command, whether you decide they're your friend or blackmailed enemy. Whether freely or grudgingly, this person will attempt to help you and speed you on your way.

In a less-serious game, spending 1 point of Bureaucracy may also gain you better perks as a TimeWatch agent, including more attractive uniforms, a trendier autochron model, friendlier AI in your devices, better food and lodging back at base, and a shorter wait in any lines. These benefits don't have much of a mechanical effect but are fun for someone who wishes to rub in their inimitable sense of style.

CHARM (INTERPERSONAL)

You're good at making people *want* to help you, whether you utilize compliments, flattery, or flirting. You can get them to:

- ▶ reveal information
- ▶ perform minor favors
- ▶ regard you as trustworthy
- ▶ become enamored with you

Some Agents with Charm are devious and coldly manipulating; others may be genuinely likeable. It's up to you whether a high rating in Charm means that you are physically alluring, charismatic, and delightful to talk to, or simply exude a sexual magnetism unrelated to your looks.

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Charm might cause your target to consider you a trusted friend, loyal servant, or reliable resource. They may entrust you with information or resources without ever considering that you might not have their best interests in mind.

Spending one or more points of Charm while flirting with someone attracted to you is likely to cause that person to fall in love (or lust) with you, with everything that entails. For a 2+ point spend, don't be surprised if a henchperson betrays his or her boss for you, revealing their treason at the most dramatic opportunity.

It is worth noting that procreation while time traveling is strictly forbidden by TimeWatch regulations, as becoming your own grandparent leads to some really annoying paradoxes. People will mock you, and TimeWatch may pull you from active service. Try to avoid it.

FALSEHOOD DETECTION (INTERPERSONAL)

Whether through high-tech sensors, psychological insight, or by trusting your own intuition, you can tell when most people are lying. You can:

- ▶ tell when most people say something they believe to be untrue
- ▶ detect when a person is acting out of character due to stress or coercion
- ▶ detect when a human is mind controlled or is part of an alien hivemind

You must usually be interacting with them or observing them from a close distance, but sometimes you can spot liars on audio or video, too. Unfortunately, nearly everyone lies, especially when facing possible trouble from the authorities. Sometimes you can infer why they're lying, but it's hard to reliably discern motive or get at the facts they're actively working to obscure. This sense doesn't tell you what they're lying about, specifically, or see through their lies to the truth.

Not all lies are verbal. You can tell when a person is attempting to project a false impression through body language. This also usually tells you when a nonhuman, such as an alien or parallel timeline species, is impersonating a human. All but the most skilled impersonators leave subtle signs and clues about their origin species that you can detect.

Certain individuals may be so adept at lying that they never set off your falsehood detector. Some people believe their own falsehoods. Psychopathic personality types lie reflexively and without shame, depriving you of the telltale tics and gestures you use to sense when a person is deceiving you.

While Falsehood Detection will not function on everyone, it will never give you a false positive or false negative.

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Falsehood Detection might give you great insight into why a person may be lying, even if it doesn't tell you what the truth actually is. This shared knowledge of the lie may allow you to manipulate them or pry out the truth.

WHY NO LYING ABILITY?

TimeWatch does not treat lying as an ability unto itself. Instead, characters employ it as a tactic while using any of the various Interpersonal abilities. With *Bureaucracy*, you tell functionaries what they want to hear. Using *Authority*, you convince commanders that you're their kind of soldier, and so on. There's a little bit of deception in nearly every successful interpersonal interaction — particularly when you're tasked with unobtrusively stopping reality from unraveling itself and you can't reveal that you're a time traveler.

Need to lie to someone and really have it stick? A spent point of Falsehood Detection makes it less likely that other people question your lie, because your body language and delivery are flawless. Improbable information may still be questioned, but others are unlikely to believe that you're deliberately telling a falsehood. This is how to pass lie detector tests.

FORGERY (TECHNICAL)

You fake documents, art, and identification. Given time, originals (or good copies), suitable materials, and work space, you can:

- ▶ create a false identification, license, traveling paper, or other government credential
- ▶ quickly create digital records and a false Internet history
- ▶ forge handwriting with a sample to work from
- ▶ fake a book, pamphlet, newspaper, or other published work
- ▶ forge a sculpture, painting, or other objet d'art
- ▶ artificially age paper and ink (or authentically age paper and ink through the use of a time machine)
- ▶ spot forgeries, and make intelligent deductions about the forger
- ▶ undetectably open and reseal a sealed envelope, document, pouch, or other "soft" container
- ▶ create an attractive, if somewhat uninspired, work of art on a subject of your choosing

Forgery is also useful for larger, detail-oriented investigative work. You can also use Forgery to construct a fake crime scene, or to clean up an actual crime scene so as to make it look as if no crime occurred. After secretly searching a room, the visual memory you gain from Forgery will tell you if you've accidentally left any item out of place.

Sample spend: A 1-point Forgery spend could make a forged identity completely legitimate by actually going back in time to establish your bona fides years in the past. Spending 1 point could allow you to create art forgeries without access to the original work by "borrowing" it from the future or past to use as an example. Alternatively, a 1-point spend, along with spending 1 point of *Paradox Prevention*, might allow you to avoid extra work by simply stealing the artwork from a parallel dimension that's unlikely to miss it.

HACKING (TECHNICAL)

You use computer and electronic technology to retrieve and enhance information on computers and other information devices, from punch cards to far-future technology. Your tether (a personal holographic information system described on p. 112) allows you to hack most equipment wirelessly.

You're also an expert in math, logic, and the making and breaking of codes. Given time and computing power, you can unravel everything from simple ciphers to the supercomputer algorithms of the future. You can:

- ▶ hack into secure computer systems to gather clues

- ▶ recover hidden, erased, or corrupted computer files
- ▶ increase the clarity of audio or video recordings, zeroing in on desired elements
- ▶ break codes in any language you can read
- ▶ deduce logic puzzles and calculate complex mathematical formulas
- ▶ use Burglary to break into particularly high-tech security systems
- ▶ use Tinkering as a computer skill, should a Hacking-related General ability test be needed for any reason (such as active opposition by an opposed hacker)

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Hacking gives you a previously prepared back door through the firewall of online computer systems, allowing you instant access later in the mission. What you do with that access is up to you.

HIGH SOCIETY (INTERPERSONAL)

You know how to interact with the rich and powerful, and can make small talk with them without triggering their suspicions. You are as comfortable with the 13th-century Mongol Khans as you are with the 7th-century Japanese Imperial Court, the 19th-century French aristocracy, or 21st-century merchant bankers. You can:

- ▶ dress fashionably for any occasion or culture
- ▶ pass gatekeepers to gain access to exclusive parties, gatherings, and clubs
- ▶ blend in culturally with the rich, dropping names or mentioning trends as needed
- ▶ identify the best wine, liquor, food, jewelry, and other luxury goods
- ▶ successfully arrange an introduction to someone rich, powerful, or famous
- ▶ recall specific or relevant gossip or news about the tastes, lifestyle, or predilections of a rich or famous person
- ▶ know where and when the best parties, most culturally important openings, or other gala events in any location are due to happen
- ▶ obtain drugs or otherwise find the seamy side of any high-society functions

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of High Society might cement your cover identity's reputation as a prestigious and well-regarded figure who is best to be respected, admired, or feared. If you want to be renowned for throwing a celebrity party that the rich and powerful want to attend, or to have a reputation as a reclusive foreign princess, the easiest way to gain that is through a point spend. A spent point could also establish that you know how to play the piano, cello, violin, or other musical instrument associated with the upper crust; these instruments may occasionally overlap with those gained through a Streetwise spend.

HISTORY (ANCIENT) (ACADEMIC)

Note that the designation "History (Ancient)" is to help *players* quickly remember which history ability is which; the time period it references is absolute. Whether your character is a Neanderthal or a space pilot, History (Ancient) knowledge ends in the 1300s.

With an emphasis on political, military, and economic and technological developments, you're an expert in recorded human history from the beginning of human recorded history up until the start of the European Renaissance in the 14th-century. You also have a good working knowledge of prehuman history, from the formation of Earth up until the birth of humanity. You can:

- ▶ know what geological period a particular extinct plant or animal originates from
- ▶ follow the chronological cause and effect of chained historical events
- ▶ recognize obscure historical allusions
- ▶ recall capsule biographies of famous historical figures
- ▶ tell where and when an object made during historical times was fashioned
- ▶ identify the period of an article of dress or costume

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of History (Ancient) might let you instantly create a residence, reputation, and identity in a particular ancient time, establishing that you've already been living there (make a note to be sure you do so after the mission concludes). Spending 1 point might also give you an old friend in an ancient era; you can befriend the person instantly by making sure after the fact that you've known them for years. If you like, that friend can be a merchant who will sell you a particular type of object (like armaments).

HISTORY (CONTEMPORARY) (ACADEMIC)

With an emphasis on political, military, economic and technological developments, you're an expert in recorded human history from the start of the Renaissance in the 14th-century up until the mid-21st century.

This ability functions like History (Ancient), but for the more recent time period. As before, the name History (Contemporary) refers to a specific period in time, and the eras it covers do not vary based on the origin of your character.

HISTORY (FUTURE) (ACADEMIC)

You're an expert in all recorded human history from the mid-21st century until the end of recorded time, whenever the GM declares that to be. Benefits and sample spends mirror what's possible with the prior two History abilities. For instance, spending a History (Future) point might gain you friendship with a subject-matter expert in the 26th century who'd be pleased to give you advice on her area of expertise.

As with the prior abilities, the name History (Future) refers to the specific period in time after the mid-21st century, and the eras it covers do not vary based on the origin of your character.



*Altani doesn't have to use a firearm for Intimidation. .
But it helps.*

INTIMIDATION (INTERPERSONAL)

You elicit cooperation from suspects by frightening them. Usually this is accomplished by seeming physically imposing, invading their personal space, and adopting a psychologically commanding manner. Intimidation may involve implied or direct threats of physical violence but is just as often an act of mental dominance. You can:

- ▶ gain information
- ▶ inspire the subject to leave the area
- ▶ encourage a particular behavior (“or else!”)
- ▶ quell a subject’s desire to attempt violence against you or others

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Intimidation might cow a supporting character into continuing to obey you even after you have departed the area, as the supporting character is terrified by your possible reprisal and remains eager to carry out your instructions.

PSYCHIC TALENTS AND INTERPERSONAL ABILITIES

These rules don’t care how you utilize your Interpersonal abilities to gain clues. As a result, it’s easy to link their effectiveness to psychic ability instead of native talent. If your Agent is from the future and you’d like to have developed mental talents, and the GM approves, go for it! You’ll just want to ascribe your use of Falsehood Detection to a psychic probe, your use of Intimidation to psychic fear generation, your use of Charm to pheromones, and so on. Any limitation of an Interpersonal ability continues to apply.

A psychic explanation of Investigative abilities carries no further default benefits such as precognition, telepathy, or object reading, although a GM may wish to allow such effects with the expenditure of an appropriate pool point. When in doubt, the GM and players should choose whatever solution is most fun for the style of game you wish to play.

MEDICAL EXPERTISE (TECHNICAL)

You are trained in carrying out medical examinations of living human subjects, performing autopsies on the deceased, and forming diagnoses based on your findings. With 2 or more points of Medical Expertise you are likely a trained and certified doctor. You can:

- ▶ establish a person’s general level of health
- ▶ prescribe treatment for a treatable condition
- ▶ perform autopsies
- ▶ diagnose probable causes of addiction, disease, sickness, injury, poisoning, or death
- ▶ tell if a subject is a shape-shifted nonhuman
- ▶ perform DNA analysis on subjects, identifying their likely ancestors or descendants
- ▶ interact with medical professionals as a peer, understanding medical jargon and practices from throughout history
- ▶ with a rating of Medical Expertise 2 or higher, accelerate the recuperation time for Seriously Wounded Agents (see p. 87)

Sample spend: A 1-point spend might tell you the most painful place to hurt someone, allowing all your attacks to inflict +1 damage for the remainder of the fight. Spending 1 point of Medical Expertise might let you fake someone’s death, pharmaceutically suppressing their vital signs long enough for them to be pronounced dead and letting you secretly revive them up to several days later. As long as you have a rating of 1

or more in Medic, spending 1 point of Medical Expertise gives you a pool of 3 Medic points to immediately spend healing yourself or an ally, if you have a non-0 Medic rating.

MILITARY TACTICS (ACADEMIC)

You are a student of warfare, probably trained as such in a military academy or through hard experience on a battlefield. This expertise includes a knowledge of military history, strategy, and tactics, and the weapons, technologies, and engineering techniques of the battlefield. You can:

- ▶ identify an unknown military or paramilitary force by examining the weapons, uniforms, or insignia they use
- ▶ deduce a soldier's training and assignment history from his demeanor and use of slang and jargon
- ▶ spot weaknesses in an enemy's fortifications or tactics
- ▶ know the key turning point of a historical battle
- ▶ deduce whether a battle is being won through the use of anachronistic technology or tactics
- ▶ analyze the effectiveness of an enemy's battle tactics
- ▶ examine traces of a hand-to-hand skirmish and recreate the fight

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Military Tactics might give you a +1 on all Shooting rolls for the session by linking a futuristic (and possibly obviously anachronistic) holographic gun sight to your tether and your firearm. When commanding troops, a spent point also might allow you to avoid the classic battlefield problems of incompetency, mutiny, or misunderstood orders in your troops. For the duration of a scene, it might alternatively be used to give a small bonus to the Shooting or Scuffling rolls of generic troops (but not your fellow Agents) under your command. If you somehow find yourself promoted to the rank of general and needing to win a Civil War battle to preserve history, there are worse uses you could pick.

NOTICE (TECHNICAL)

You are adept at noticing subtle details and finding important clues. This is the generic ability for spotting a hidden clue or a disguised imposter, maintaining general situational awareness, or noticing a nonthreatening visual anomaly. You can:

- ▶ spot hidden objects and objects of interest at an investigation site
- ▶ notice subtle errors in a disguise
- ▶ case a location to spot guards, cameras, multiple entrances, potential security response, and the like
- ▶ notice signs of a previous search of the location
- ▶ find anachronistic technology that is currently in use, or signs of future tech that has recently been used in a location
- ▶ note relationships between objects at a crime scene, reconstructing sequences of events

- ▶ cold read someone, analyzing their body language and behavior to draw conclusions about them

Sample spend: The most common use of a Notice spend is to gain an Alertness Modifier of +3 on your Unobtrusiveness test to notice hidden or unexpected foes, or to notice non-clue items. Although she's unlikely to tell you why, your GM may occasionally ask you if you wish to spend a point to help notice something.

Spending 1 point of Notice prior to a fight might ensure that you get to act first in the initiative order; an alternate use usually offered by the GM might be noticing that your vehicle has been sabotaged before you start up its engines.

Against an armored enemy during a fight, spending 1 or more points of Notice might allow you to target unarmored portions of their body for several rounds, ignoring part or all of their armor when calculating damage.

OUTDOOR SURVIVAL (TECHNICAL)

You have lived and worked outdoors and in the wild, possibly during a rural upbringing or isolated military service. You can:

- ▶ accurately determine the weather for the next day
- ▶ tell when an animal is acting strangely
- ▶ tell whether an animal or plant is natural to a given area and time
- ▶ hunt, fish, and find edible plants
- ▶ ride a horse (using Athletics to determine how well)
- ▶ make fire and survive outdoors at night or in bad weather
- ▶ navigate overland
- ▶ track people, animals, or vehicles across grass or through forests

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Outdoor Survival might allow you to thrive outdoors, instead of merely surviving. Spending 1 point allows you to stave off the penalties for extreme heat or cold for one scene. An alternate use would be to identify the best method for triggering a devastating avalanche or landslide.

PARADOX PREVENTION (TECHNICAL)

If you're a time traveler, you're bound to run into paradoxes. This ability allows you to recognize them, predict them, solve them, and even use them to your advantage. When a historical change ripples through everyone around you, you'll notice and remember true history.

You can:

- ▶ know what sort of actions might cause paradoxes and choral instability
- ▶ notice when time has changed around you, and retain a memory of previous timelines (although that memory may be fuzzy or incomplete)
- ▶ sense when you interact with a change in the correct timeline

- ▶ determine methods for fixing disrupted timelines
- ▶ recognize anachronisms by touch (such as neural disruptor rifles disguised as blunderbusses)
- ▶ recognize an anachronistic individual by touch (and occasionally sight), regardless of their disguise
- ▶ by touch (and occasionally sight), recognize an individual who has been absorbed by the timeline due to choral instability or paradox (see p. 95)

Sample spend: Spending a point of Paradox Prevention can have a number of uses. You can:

- ▶ spend 1 point to add +3 to a Paradox test (automatically making most tests)
- ▶ spend 1 point to gain aid from your future self when that aid would normally result in a paradox, such as your future self writing your past self a note with useful information (your GM may limit this information to avoid ruining the adventure, may write something that could be misleading, may ask you to make a Paradox test as well, or may charge

GM ADVICE: WHEN SHOULD PARADOX PREVENTION BE SPENT?

TimeWatch is a game where players can try some remarkably creative tactics for solving problems, including doubling back to help themselves in combat or risking paradox by stopping a known assassination before it ever occurs. You want these solutions to be possible, but as exceptions instead of the rule; done too often they can destroy both game balance and suspension of disbelief.

As a result, **Paradox Prevention point spends are a gating mechanism for game balance.** Every time a player wants to do something time related and your first reaction is “even with a Paradox test, that’s ridiculously overpowered. I’d never let them do that all the time,” charge 1–2 Paradox Prevention points to allow it. That means that players will save these tactics for dramatically appropriate scenes, just as you’d want. If your first impression is “I’d never allow that at all,” you can disallow the action entirely or (more amusingly) allow it with unintended consequences.

Tactics that require Paradox Prevention point spends often trigger a Paradox test as well. See p. 89 for details on when this is appropriate.

you more than 1 Paradox Prevention point)

- ▶ spend 1 or more points to arrange a convenient circumstance in your favor, such as a usefully timed rainstorm caused by a particular butterfly’s wing-flap or a short-lived, newly created holiday resulting in a parade that blocks your quarry’s escape route
- ▶ spend 1 or more points to literally have your future self come back and help you fight; this will still trigger a Paradox test (see p. 89), and requires permission from your GM
- ▶ obtain other sorts of brief assistance from your future self through a 1-point spend, such as picking a door lock from the other side of the door
- ▶ travel to a parallel timeline (with the GM’s permission and assuming they exist in your game) by spending 1 or more points of Paradox Prevention when time traveling

REASSURANCE (INTERPERSONAL)

You get people to do what you want by putting them at ease. This may involve a convincing lie, genuine sympathy, or just a calming presence. You can:

- ▶ elicit information and minor favors
- ▶ allay fear or panic in others
- ▶ keep a mob from exploding into violence
- ▶ convince frightened or worried witnesses that they saw nothing unusual
- ▶ instill a sense of calm during a crisis

Sample spend: When someone is terrified or suspicious of you, particularly if you’ve done something inexplicable in their time period, a 1-point Reassurance spend can keep your reputation intact and convince them they saw something completely normal. A 1-point Reassurance spend can calm a panicking crowd, and a 2- or 3-point spend can calm a large angry mob.

A 1-point spend in the middle of a fight can often get your antagonist to stop and talk to you for at least a few seconds instead of continuing to attack. This conversation lasts until anyone attacks the reassured enemy, or until it’s dramatically appropriate for the conversation to conclude. This use of Reassurance is handy for buying time when it’s needed the most, and for solving misunderstandings that led to combat.

RESEARCH (ACADEMIC)

You know how to find factual information from books, records, your tether, and official sources. You’re as comfortable with wall niches of ancient scrolls as you are with public libraries and holographic search engines. When trying to determine what has changed in a given time period, conducting Research in a library or newspaper repository will often give you clues, although such research can require mere minutes to several days worth of work. When you need information and don’t have an appropriate History ability, Research is a good way to

obtain the background you need. You can:

- ▶ Learn obscure information not generally contained in the official historical record
- ▶ Find a clue as to how a given time period might be different from the original timeline
- ▶ Locate a particular individual, along with their vital records and family's historical data

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Research might get you instantaneous information with no delay whatsoever, or perhaps access to an expert on the subject who will be happy to pontificate and theorize at length.

SCIENCE! (TECHNICAL)

You're a scientific and engineering expert, knowledgeable about astronomy, biology, chemistry, physics, and other forms of science. If you have 1 or more points in this ability you may use the General ability Tinkering to fix advanced, high-tech machinery that the GM might otherwise not let you repair.

This ability does not cover choral mechanics, which fall under the ability Timecraft. Computer-related knowledge falls under the ability Hacking.

You can:

- ▶ quickly develop theories and conclusions about scientific phenomena
- ▶ make rapid mathematical calculations and determine orbital mechanics
- ▶ identify drugs and synthesize most chemical compounds if given an adequate laboratory
- ▶ determine the usage of mysterious scientific equipment or control panels in an unfamiliar ship or laboratory

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Science! allows you to activate or deactivate an unfamiliar scientific device, or temporarily improve your existing equipment. Spending a Science! point can give you a 3-point General ability pool for use in a Preparedness or Tinkering test to acquire or build a super-science device. Such devices aren't limited to what's in this book's *Gear* chapter, and details on adjudicating this type of device can be found on p. 126.

The GM may also ask you to both spend 1 or more Science! points and roll Preparedness if you request something particularly powerful or unlikely, and may ask you to roll Tinkering if there's any question of how well constructed your device is.

Dr. Breen wants a Xen plasma rifle (see p. 122), but with a Difficulty 9 test needed (and worth it!), she doesn't currently have a high enough Tinkering pool to easily build one herself. She spends a point of Science! to gain +3 to her Tinkering test, spends 4 Tinkering, and with a +7 bonus she hopes to roll a 2 or higher.

SPYING (TECHNICAL)

You're adept with the art of spying, including spycraft, countersigns, safe houses, electronic surveillance, and the use of surreptitious photographic and sound-recording equipment. Using either your tether or contemporary technology, you can:

- ▶ trace phone calls
- ▶ hijack security cameras
- ▶ plant secret listening devices, and locate devices planted by others
- ▶ make and enhance high-quality visual records and audio recordings
- ▶ realistically manipulate audio, photographs, or video images
- ▶ ensure with some certainty that you are not being spied upon
- ▶ pass as a spy, whether to someone looking to hire a spy or to an actual agent in the intelligence community

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Spying could ensure that you get crystal-clear recordings of whatever interactions you need, even if doing so requires time travel into the past to plant the hidden cameras. It could also provide you with a much-needed safe house where you won't easily be detected or disturbed, or show you that an otherwise secure internment camp has a gap in its fence. A 1-point spend can also give you a +3 Stealth Modifier on an Unobtrusiveness test used to infiltrate a location or shadow someone without being seen, which is useful when guards are particularly alert.

STREETWISE (INTERPERSONAL)

You know how to behave among crooks, gangs, thugs, assassins, cults, grifters, and other inhabitants of the criminal underworld throughout history. You can:

- ▶ deploy criminal etiquette to avoid fights and conflicts (or start them)
- ▶ identify unsafe locations and dangerous people
- ▶ tell when crowds or passersby are behaving oddly
- ▶ deal with fences, black marketers, arms runners, and so forth
- ▶ get hired for a criminal operation
- ▶ interact on friendly terms with the local poor, homeless, or vagrant community
- ▶ tell when practiced criminals and con artists are lying, as with Falsehood Detection
- ▶ gather underworld rumors

Even when you aren't using it as an Interpersonal ability, Streetwise is also useful for surviving in cities. You can:

- ▶ navigate an unfamiliar urban street layout and locate buildings without looking like a stranger to the city

- ▶ find open sewer gratings, easily climbed walls, and conveniently unlocked doors
- ▶ navigate the megacities and arcologies of the future, avoiding streets by using public transportation and public-works conduits

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Streetwise might allow you to manipulate a street gang into gathering useful intelligence for you, acting as spies or combatants to harass your foe. A spent point could also establish that you know how to play the harmonica, guitar, banjo, drums, or other musical instrument associated with street musicians or dive bars; these instruments may overlap with those gained through a High Society spend.

TAUNT (INTERPERSONAL)

Don't expect this ability to make you many friends. You are an expert at infuriating others, driving them to such fury that they let their secrets slip. This may be accomplished through sarcasm, disdain, mocking, insults, public humiliation, or (when appropriate to your character background) such methods as psychic manipulation or cybernetically enhanced pheromone manipulation.

However you manage it, you know how to make people angry enough to talk before thinking, and you know how to steer the conversation once you do. You can:

- ▶ gain clues by making a subject too angry to think straight
- ▶ drive an antagonist into a furious monologue
- ▶ know when a threat is sincere, and when it's just posturing
- ▶ cause a supporting character to boast about her plans while insulting or threatening you in return
- ▶ make a subject desire to attempt violence against you or others

Sample spend: You can spend 1 point of Taunt to manipulate an individual into following a precise pattern of behavior over the next 24 hours, such as performing an assassination attempt or heroic sacrifice that the Agent knows is historically appropriate.

Spending 1 point of Taunt can incite a large crowd to chant insulting slogans or erupt into mob violence against someone you wish targeted. If you want the entire crowd at a Roman coliseum to shout insults to someone, this is how you would get them to do so. Spending 1 point of Taunt will also draw

a particular enemy's attention to you in a fight, making them hate you so much that they will usually forego wiser plans in order to punish you. This usually results in you needing significant medical attention, but can be extremely useful for luring enemies into traps or distracting them away from an injured ally. Consider using Evasive Maneuvers (see p. 82) when using Taunt in this way.

If you announce "I've got aggro!" after spending a point of Taunt, the GM is cordially invited to throw a d6 at you just on general principle. Plan accordingly.

TIMECRAFT (ACADEMIC)

You know the official rules and procedures of TimeWatch, including techniques for cleanly re-establishing a diverted timeline and how to operate all official TimeWatch technology. If you have two or more points of Timecraft, you are an expert on chronal theory, including the knowledge of other nonhuman species and organizations that are opposed or allied with TimeWatch.

Every player character begins with 1 free point in Timecraft.

You can:

- ▶ operate a time machine
- ▶ operate chromomorphic technology to disguise futuristic devices
- ▶ identify timeline changes that create parallel timelines or paradoxical time loops
- ▶ predict how timeline changes ripple outwards, and predict the scope and strength of those timeline changes
- ▶ identify signs of alien influence and mind control in others
- ▶ use a time machine to reach the Citadel, TimeWatch's secret headquarters that resides outside of the normal flow of history
- ▶ use a time machine to track a quarry through time by following their time vortices (see p. 76)
- ▶ if your GM and campaign frame allow it, identify the location and existence of parallel dimensions and time streams
- ▶ use the MEM-tagging process to remove anachronistic knowledge from unconscious witnesses (see p. 111.)
- ▶ remove traces of your true identity and origin before departing a timeline
- ▶ with 2 points of Timecraft and the Tinkering ability, repair a time machine or install chromomorphic technology

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Timecraft might allow you to:

- ▶ gain a +1 bonus on every Vehicles roll during a time chase
- ▶ eliminate the need for repeated Travel tests during a time chase
- ▶ time travel to the precise physical location you desire, no matter how far through time you travel to get there

APPORTIONING YOUR POINTS

Paradox Prevention, Science!, and Timecraft are three Investigative abilities where more than 3 points may be particularly fun, especially if you love creating future-tech and time travel-related mayhem. No need to start that high during your first game, though. You'll receive at least 1 build point after each mission; you can always add points then.

A 2-point spend might allow you to:

- ▶ set up a temporary chrontal dampening field that, for one scene, prevents anyone within Long range from time traveling into or out of the area
- ▶ break through someone else's chrontal dampening field
- ▶ see alternate futures and pick the one you prefer. When spending two points, pick a single General ability. For the rest of the scene, any time you use that ability you can roll two d6s and choose the result you prefer. This can work for combat abilities (such as Shooting) and noncombat abilities (such as Unobtrusiveness); it has no effect on General abilities where you don't roll a die to make a test, such as Medic or Reality Anchor
- ▶ travel into parallel and alternate timelines if your GM and campaign frame allow it, by spending multiple Timecraft points

TRIVIA (ACADEMIC)

You're a font of eclectic information from throughout history that would stand you in good stead on a quiz show. You're especially good with names, dates, music, and seemingly useless historical tidbits that turn out to be incredibly important.

This catchall ability also allows you to know any obscure fact not covered by another GUMSHOE ability. (In moments of improvisational desperation, your GM may allow you to overlap with abilities which none of the players at the current session possess, or which no one is thinking to use.)

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Trivia might allow you to know enough technical music theory to conduct an orchestra or write an opera, to rattle off an essential piece of knowledge off the top of your head without having to look anything up, or to win a pub quiz.

GENERAL ABILITY DETAILS

General abilities use a different set of rules than Investigative abilities. General ability pools run on a linear scale from 0 (completely unskilled) to 8 (an expert) or higher, potentially reaching 15 or more. Larger pools give you more options and effectiveness in an action scene. You roll to succeed in a General ability against a target Difficulty Number (or Difficulty). The normal Difficulty is 4, but this may rise or lower depending on the challenge of the task.

In *TimeWatch*, target Difficulty Numbers are sometimes abbreviated with a D, so a Difficulty 4 test might be noted as D4. Unlike other RPGs, this doesn't refer to types of dice. Go figure.

You may spend points from a General ability pool to increase your die roll, giving you a better chance of success. General abilities refresh during the operation, but you spend them faster during combats, chases, and other action scenes.

GM ADVICE: WHY TWO TYPES OF ABILITIES?

The two ability sets are handled in different way because they fulfill distinct narrative functions. The goal of any *TimeWatch* mission is to solve a problem — stop an assassination, uncover a mystery, identify a saboteur — and then confront the forces behind it. That confrontation must be suspenseful, which is why General abilities have a possibility of failure. But the confrontation must also occur for the story to satisfy, which is why investigating the problem — in order to get to the confrontation — must succeed. A well-designed *TimeWatch* scenario rewards players for cleverly or stylishly solving the mystery by making the confrontation more exciting, more survivable, or more intellectually interesting. (For more on scenario design, see p. 197.)

FINDING CLUES WITH GENERAL ABILITIES

Many General abilities also function as Investigative abilities, either when used to gather a clue (rather than to overcome opposition) or to interact with people devoted to those abilities' use. Scuffling, for example, can be used as an Investigative ability to infiltrate a 5th-century Shaolin temple and to gather information or gossip from the monks within. A minimum rating of 4 in the General ability, indicating that you are more skilled than a casual dabbler, is needed to gain this benefit.

BOOSTERS: REWARDING SPECIALIZATION

Almost every General ability has a **Booster**, a feature that kicks in when the character has 8 or more rating points in it. Most Boosters function constantly; Agents can always use a Booster's special benefit, even if their pool in that ability has dropped to 0. Boosters exist to reward specialization, to mark the point where "competent" becomes "expert," and to make sure that players get more bang for their buck when they focus on a limited number of General abilities.

Higher Booster Thresholds

GMs interested in slightly less action-y action can raise the threshold for Boosters from 8 to 10 or 12 rating points. This also increases niche protection, as individual players have to spend more to specialize in their favorite abilities, rather than building full-spectrum, well-rounded Agents.

Even if the GM raises the level for other Boosters and options, though, an Athletics rating of 8 or more still provides a Hit Threshold of 4.

GIDDY-UP!

The ability to ride horses effectively is covered under the Investigative ability Outdoor Survival; with Outdoor Survival, a mounted character can use Athletics points to determine the winner of a chase. Without it, a character can use Athletics to stay perched on a moving horse's back, but not a whole lot more. At the GM's discretion, a player might be able to make a reasonable argument that their character background or a point spend from another Investigative ability such as Military Tactics should grant the ability to ride effectively. If so, the player can simply spend an Investigative point to gain the ability for the scene and be ready to go.

A character in a horse cart, chariot, or wagon uses Vehicles instead, and Outdoor Survival isn't needed to pilot the vehicle effectively.

ATHLETICS

Athletics allows you to perform general acts of physical derring-do, from running and jumping to throwing dynamite to swinging off the rigging of a pirate ship. Any physical action not covered by another ability probably falls under the rubric of Athletics. With a successful Athletics test, you can:

- ▶ throw a grenade
- ▶ race after someone
- ▶ climb walls
- ▶ jump between cars on a speeding train
- ▶ dive for cover without using an action
- ▶ ride a horse (particularly well if you also have 1 or more points of Outdoor Survival)
- ▶ use the Evasive Maneuvers combat action to make yourself harder to hit; see details on p. 82

Booster: Hard to Hit. If your Athletics rating is 8 or more, your Hit Threshold — the Difficulty Number your enemies use when attempting to hit you in combat — is 4. Otherwise, your Hit Threshold is 3.

BURGLARY

You're good at placing yourself inside places you have no right to be, and you're good at taking things once you're there. With a successful Burglary test, you can:

- ▶ pick pockets
- ▶ unobtrusively search a target's pockets

- ▶ plant objects on unsuspecting subjects
- ▶ pick locks
- ▶ deactivate or evade security systems (although particularly high-tech security systems might require you to have a point in the Investigative ability Hacking)
- ▶ find suitable places for forced entry, and use them

Many locks require specialized tools that can be produced with a Preparedness test; such tools range from simple lock picks to sonic high-tech multi-tools. Complex or tricky locks may have a higher than usual Difficulty to open them speedily, to avoid noise or damage, or to relock afterward.

If locked in jail and lacking your lock picks, don't forget that you're in a time travel game. Your GM might allow you to make a Burglary test to open doors you'd otherwise be unable to reach, if you pay a Paradox Prevention point and state that your future self has come to break you out of prison (see p. 41).

Booster: Fast Hands. Once per round when in a close-quarters fight, you can pick one antagonist's pocket without taking an action to do so. The Difficulty of this Burglary test is usually Difficulty 4 but may be higher or lower depending on your GM's judgment. If you don't mind your antagonist noticing that you just picked their pocket, the Difficulty is typically 1 point lower.

Your target must be at Point-Blank range, and you can try to pick their pocket either when they make a Scuffling attack, or when you do — your choice. You can use your Burglary action to either remove something or add something to their pockets. For this reason alone, it's useful to use Preparedness to have a grenade handy... assuming you can get out of the blast radius in time!

CHRONAL STABILITY

Chronal Stability is a measurement of your ability to stay anchored in time, even when paradox and chronal forces try to jar you loose and erase you from reality. A combination of personal resolve and inherent attachment to the fabric of reality, it's as important an ability as Health; dropping far below 0 Chronal Stability can literally turn you into a different person or erase you from existence. The higher your Chronal Stability, the better your ability to adapt to new time eras without accidentally becoming trapped in time or removed from history.

See p. 89 for details on Paradox tests.

Lost Chronal Stability does not come back with rest and cannot be restored with standard pool refreshes. It must be restored with the General ability Reality Anchor (see below), and is otherwise restored at the end of a mission.

All *TimeWatch* characters start with Chronal Stability 6 for free.

Booster: None.

GM ADVICE: STOP HITTING YOURSELF! STOP HITTING YOURSELF!

Want an Agent to get in a fistfight with himself? If you want to run a less stringent treatment of causality, something closer to *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, *Futurama*, or *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, one way to do so is to lower the Difficulty Numbers and potential Loss for Paradox tests, or even remove them (and the Chronal Stability ability) entirely. Less danger encourages goofier, wilder abuses of time travel. If you want players to ride a *T. rex* through the Old West, this is a good strategy to use. Just be sure to tell your players up front, so that they don't invest lots of points in an ability that's less essential.

DISGUISE

Disguise is the skill of using technology or stagecraft to alter your own appearance, posture, and voice. You can make yourself unrecognizable, or you can fit in seamlessly with any given location and time period. This ability also covers selling yourself as a different person: vocal mannerisms, altered body language, dress, motion sense, and realistic-seeming reactions. This is how you pretend to be a Roman soldier, Civil War general, Elizabethan noble, Chinese peasant, or pagan priest when your Unobtrusiveness fails and people take note of you (proper costumes or identification papers obtained with Burglary or Forgery can help with that). If everyone needs to disguise themselves as Spanish conquistadores to infiltrate Montezuma's palace, use a Piggybacked Disguise test (see p. 71) to make sure nobody screws up.

You don't roll for Disguise when you first decide how you want to change your appearance. Instead, you roll at the moment a stranger of consequence notices you. This prevents a loop of "do I look disguised? No? I'll try again" tests, and ramps up the tension for when that Disguise roll really matters to a mission's success. Additional Disguise tests may be required when the disguise seems somewhat compromised, such as when a fake hairpiece goes astray or when your sophosaur Agent using a hologram to look like a kind old lady decides to eat a passing pet. Your common sense will tell you when, or if, additional Disguise tests are needed.

The nice thing about being a time traveler is that you have access to high technology. While it doesn't affect your roll, feel free to describe your disguise as stemming from chromomorphic fabric and a personal holo generator instead of makeup. It's your character, so use whatever explanation you think is the most fun.



Skegg uses a holographic generator for Disguise. After all, who would want to try and zip up a human suit?

Successfully disguising yourself as an actual person already known to those you're interacting with is extraordinarily difficult. Brief voice-only mimicry pits you against a Difficulty of 4. Face-to-face impersonation requires a successful roll against a Difficulty of 7 for every five minutes of sustained contact between you and the object of your impersonation.

Disguise doubles as an Investigative ability when used to gain a clue, such as when you:

- ▶ create and maintain a cover identity among unsuspecting people, in order to learn important information
- ▶ impersonate a generic figure, such as a security guard, waiter, or messenger, in order to eavesdrop
- ▶ briefly misrepresent yourself, such as on the telephone or in a vestibule

As always with Investigative abilities used to find clues, you won't need to roll a Disguise test in these sorts of cases.

Uurrk uses Disguise as an Investigative ability when he impersonates a eunuch guard to infiltrate a 15th-century Ottoman sultan's bed chambers, hoping to find proof that the sultan's close adviser is a rogue time traveler. In finding the proof, he accidentally sets off a high-tech alarm — proof enough right there! He now must escape the palace with his life. Since he's no longer obtaining a clue, Uurrk's Disguise use while escaping is a standard General ability test, and he'll need to roll for success.

Booster: Don't I Know You? If your Disguise rating is 8 or higher and you make a successful Disguise test, you can convince the person you're talking with that you are a distant acquaintance from some point in their past. "Remember? We met at the Feast of Leneae a few years back, but the wine was certainly flowing. How have you been?" If you wish to be particularly stylish, you may want to state that after the mission is over you go back and *actually* meet the person when you said you did.

HEALTH

Health measures your ability to sustain injuries, stay conscious, resist infection, and survive the effects of toxins. When you get hit by a non-neural disruptor weapon in the course of a fight, your Health pool is diminished. A higher Health pool allows you to stay in a fight longer before succumbing to your injuries.

When your Health pool is depleted, you may be Hurt, Seriously Wounded, or pushing up the daisies. For more on wounds and dying, and for details on spending Health points to avoid being stunned, see *Injuries* on p. 87.

All characters start with 6 points of Health for free. When building a character, it's slightly unusual to have less than 8 or more than 14 Health.

Booster: None.

MEDIC

You can restore Health points to your teammates, and can perform first aid on sick or injured individuals. Unlike most other General abilities, you do not roll a d6 when spending Medic points. Should you be using a medkit, every point you spend from your Medic pool restores 2 Health points to someone else or 1 Health point to you. If you do not have a medkit available, the Medic ability works at half effectiveness. It's always good to carry around a spare medkit or to produce one with the Preparedness General ability.

See *Healing Injuries* on p. 85 for additional details.

Rarely, Medic tests are used for actions other than healing; for instance, a Difficulty 3 Medic test can stabilize someone who is Seriously Wounded (see p. 87); a Difficulty 4 Medic test can reawaken someone who is stunned (see p. 83), quickly remove the psi-active cocoon around the victim of an ezeru, or help someone suffering from uncontrollable nausea. In such cases, roll a d6 normally and add Medic points in order and try to hit a Difficulty Number. Such spends do not simultaneously restore Health points.

Booster: Heal Thyself. If your Medic rating is 8 or more, you can heal yourself as efficiently as you can heal others, gaining 2 points of your own Health back for every point of Medic you spend.

PREPAREDNESS

There are two ways to look at Preparedness. In the first, you expertly anticipate the needs of any mission by packing nonstandard gear efficiently. Assuming you have immediate access to your nonstandard gear (which isn't necessarily the case if you're disguised and under cover), you can produce whatever object the team needs to overcome an obstacle. You make a simple test (as explained on p. 70); if you succeed, you have the item you want. You needn't do this in advance of the adventure, but can simply sort through your nonstandard gear (provided you're able to get to it) as the need arises.

Note that every Agent on a mission typically is equipped with certain standard gear, as explained in *Standard Issue TimeWatch Gear* on p. 109. Unless this equipment has been taken from you, you don't need Preparedness to produce it. You also don't need to use Preparedness to produce minor and inconsequential gear (money, fashion accessories, period dress), gear that it's clear your character would have with him (such as a cane for someone with a limp), or basic tools that allow your abilities to function (basic audio/visual bugs if you have Spying, some explosives if you have Tinkering, etc). You do generally have to roll Preparedness if you're trying to produce a nonbasic weapon or device that will be used in combat. For instance, you won't need to roll if you say you are carrying a knife; you will need to roll if you hope to produce a plasma rifle.

In the second way of looking at Preparedness, don't forget that you're playing a time travel game! We call this the "Bill and Ted" method¹. It's tremendous amounts of fun to arrange for a particular item *after* the fact. Being thrown into an oubliette with no belongings is much less worrisome when you can say "I'll need to remember to come back here six months prior and hide a lock-picking multi-tool behind that stone right there." Roll your Preparedness, and you'll have done so. Just be careful to avoid items that may cause paradox and chronal instability, such as giving yourself a future version of an item you already possess, a note about what to do next, or an anachronism you'd have to leave behind.

If you have a round to spare, you can even pull out your autochron, clock out into the future or the past, and clock back in with the needed item a millisecond after you departed. For simplicity's sake, using Preparedness to quickly grab an item from elsewhere in time does not trigger a Travel test (see p. 76) unless the GM says it does.

Preparedness covers general-purpose investigative equipment, plus oddball items that suddenly come in handy in the course of the story. The sorts of items you can produce at a moment's notice depend not on your rating or pool, but on narrative credibility. If the GM determines that your possession of an item would seem ludicrous and/or out of genre for the campaign frame she's running, you don't get to roll for it. You simply don't have it and can't acquire it, or you may need to spend one or more Investigative ability

¹ If you haven't yet seen the movie *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, go find it! *TimeWatch's* Preparedness will suddenly become your favorite ability. Also, we're a little worried that you have a favorite ability in the first place.

PARADOX, PREPAREDNESS, AND YOU

Messing around with time is always easier if you leave yourself as much wiggle room as possible. Let's say you want to use Preparedness to leave yourself a grappling hook hidden in a nearby cabinet, and you decide to do it by having your future self time travel it in. If you haven't opened and examined the cabinet yet, there's no paradox involved with using Preparedness to put one there. If you've already looked inside the cabinet, though, and know it's empty, using Preparedness to put a grappling hook there is a paradoxical action because it contradicts what you know is true. The universe is tricky like that. It's up to you to think of a solution that doesn't result in paradox, such as putting the grappling hook under a loose floorboard instead.

If you want to perform a paradoxical action anyways, your GM may flat-out disallow it. If she does allow it you'll need to make a Paradox test, and the GM may also ask you to spend 1 point of the Investigative ability Paradox Prevention. Otherwise, the paradoxical Preparedness test automatically fails.

points (such as Science!) to produce it. Any item which elicits a mocking laugh from the group when suggested is probably out of bounds.

Inappropriate use of the Preparedness ability is like pornography; your GM will know it when she sees it.

Booster: Flashback. If your Preparedness rating is 8 or more you can narrate a flashback where your group prepared a secret plan in the past, even if no one had been aware of it until now. Examples include:

- ▶ without previously announcing it, declare that a smoke bomb or incendiary goes off as a diversion
- ▶ the power is suddenly cut off to a building at the perfect time for your team
- ▶ a cattle stampede rampages through town
- ▶ a gun smuggled in earlier is pre-positioned beneath your chair
- ▶ a briefcase turns out to be previously switched for an identical one with different contents
- ▶ with two armed guards threatening you, you announce your fellow Agent has previously bribed one extensively

You must have had opportunity and the means to set up the action, which can include the help of fellow Agents even if you haven't filled their players in on the *Flashback* plan until this

very moment. (This, by the way, is an excellent reason to keep pre-mission planning as loose as possible: you'll have more "blank space" available for preparation.) You must still make a Preparedness test, and you must still convince the GM that your precaution is credible. If the action required a test (of Burglary, Disguise, Tinkering, etc.) you or your collaborators must make it successfully.

The difference between a *Flashback* and a standard Investigative or General point spend is fourfold:

- ▶ your plan can involve other Agents and their abilities
- ▶ you can present your plan to the GM as a fait accompli; you don't need to go back and roleplay your fellow Agents placing those smoke bombs or severing the power supply. You just grab narrative control, state what occurs, roll your own Preparedness test, and then each Agent involved spends whatever points are needed to make it happen
- ▶ you don't usually need to time travel to pull off your plan
- ▶ the plan can't create or involve a paradox (see p. 89), although you're encouraged to think through methods for avoiding paradox so that your *Flashback* can still succeed

A suspect steals the Agents' vehicle and tries to flee. Using the Flashback Booster, Mace Hunter reveals that he previously had Dr. Breen use her Tinkering ability to rig the vehicle's engine for remote disabling. This is a complete surprise to Dr. Breen's player, but she's enthusiastic about the plan. Mace Hunter makes a Preparedness test, Dr. Breen makes a Tinkering test, and the vehicle grinds to a halt before it's 50 meters away.

What Mace can't do with his Flashback is announce that Dr. Breen immediately time travels back three hours to completely stop the vehicle from ever starting at all. That would create a paradox, since the Agents have already seen the vehicle start to drive away.

REALITY ANCHOR

In the same way that the Medic ability restores Health, the Reality Anchor ability restores lost Chronal Stability to yourself and other Agents. This can save an Agent from literally disappearing out of existence when the universe decides he no longer belongs in it. Since Chronal Stability represents an Agent's determination to fight back against an uncaring time stream that seeks to erase him, Reality Anchor helps reinforce and bolster that willpower, literally talking a fellow Agent (or yourself) back from the edge of extinction. Whether in person or on a communicator, you must be in verbal contact with the person you're using Reality Anchor on. You remind them who they are, why they're there, and of your shared past. Doing so helps re-anchor them in reality by restoring lost Chronal Stability.

Unlike most other General abilities, you do not roll a d6 when spending Reality Anchor points to help someone. Every point you spend from your Reality Anchor pool restores 2 Chronal Stability points to someone else or 1 Chronal Stability point to you. Chronal Stability cannot be refreshed in any other way during a mission, but Reality Anchor pools can be refreshed by Stitches as per normal.

Rarely, Reality Anchor tests are used for actions other than restoring lost Chronal Stability; for instance, a Difficulty 4 Reality Anchor test can temporarily restore memories to a Subsumed time traveler (see p. 49). In such cases, roll a d6 normally and add Reality Anchor points in order and try to hit a Difficulty Number. Such spends do not simultaneously restore Chronal Stability points.

Booster: Grounded. Time traveling gets easier if your Reality Anchor rating is 8 or more. You automatically succeed at your first four standard Travel tests (Difficulty 4 / Loss 2; see p. 76) in any scene. This saves you from a slow erosion of your Chronal Stability when time traveling, and frees up your Stitches for something other than negating Travel tests. Note that this Booster has no effect on other Paradox tests you may suffer from enemies or paradox, or on the rare Travel test that is more difficult than normal. If you time travel or teleport more than four times in a given scene, you start rolling Travel tests normally until the next scene.

SCUFFLING

You can hold your own in a hand-to-hand fight, whether you wish to kill, knock out, or restrain your enemy. The Scuffling ability includes both hand-to-hand and weapon use, including improvised weapons and the PaciFist neural disruptor (which can double as a ranged weapon). See p. 82 for typical weapon damages; as you'd expect, even impromptu weapons will hurt your foe more than punches or kicks will. It's worth noting that in a pinch, your inactive autochron makes an extremely handy club.

If you successfully Scuffle from Point-Blank range and choose to inflict no damage, you can **Restrain** your foe to stop them from moving. See p. 83 for details. Agents with a high Burglary ability can attempt to pick their foe's pocket while Scuffling (see p. 46).

You're encouraged to describe and narrate your actions; both require a simple Scuffling roll, but it's much more fun and entertaining to say "I kick him in the crotch and then slam his face into the desk" than it is to say "I hit him," even though the amount of damage your foe suffers doesn't vary.

Booster: That's Gotta Hurt. Punching and kicking does less damage than weapon attacks, as you'd expect in real life; this Booster helps make sure those Scuffling points count. If your Scuffling rating is 8 or more, your **minimum** Scuffling damage (before any modifiers) is the number of Scuffling points you spend on the attack. This maxes out at 6 points of guaranteed damage; you can spend more than 6 Scuffling points in an attack, but you don't get an additional benefit for them.

Mace Hunter has a Scuffling rating of 8, so he gains the That's Gotta Hurt Booster. He spends 3 Scuffling points to successfully punch an enemy in the face. Due to this Booster, Mace's minimum damage before any modifiers is 3. If he rolls more than that on the damage die he uses the die roll, and if he rolls a 1 or a 2 for damage he uses 3 instead. Punching normally inflicts 1d6 - 1 damage (see p. 82), so at worst he'll inflict 2 points of damage on his foe. If he was using a sword, which normally inflicts 1d6 + 1 damage, his minimum final damage would be 4.

If Mace had spent 6 Scuffling on the attack instead, his damage die can't be less than a 6. Mace's final damage for any punch would be 5, and his final damage for any sword blow would be 7.

Any Stitches spent to raise damage on an attack are considered a modifier, and so are added after determining minimum damage.

SHOOTING

You are adept with PaciFist neural disruptors and other personal firearms, including their field stripping, repair, and identification. For game-mechanical simplicity, this ability also covers bows and arrows, crossbows, beam weapons, neural disruptors, squad weapons (mortars and machine guns), shoulder-fired missiles, and the like. See p. 82 for typical weapon damages.

Operating heavy artillery requires either Vehicles (for self-propelled guns, weapons mounted on tanks, and weapons mounted on air or watercraft), or Tinkering (for catapults, ballistae, trebuchets, and the like). Throwing grenades uses Athletics.

The most common ranged weapon used by TimeWatch agents is the PaciFist, a chromomorphic neural disruptor which only works at Point-Blank or Close range (and which can double as a Scuffling weapon for Agents who prefer that ability). A PaciFist knocks its victim unconscious with an invisible and silent energy beam. See p. 112 for details.

As with Scuffling, go ahead and narrate your Shooting actions. Saying "I fire off a hasty shot that hits her mid-chest, knocking her backwards and splattering blood!" makes the game a lot more fun than saying "I shoot her."

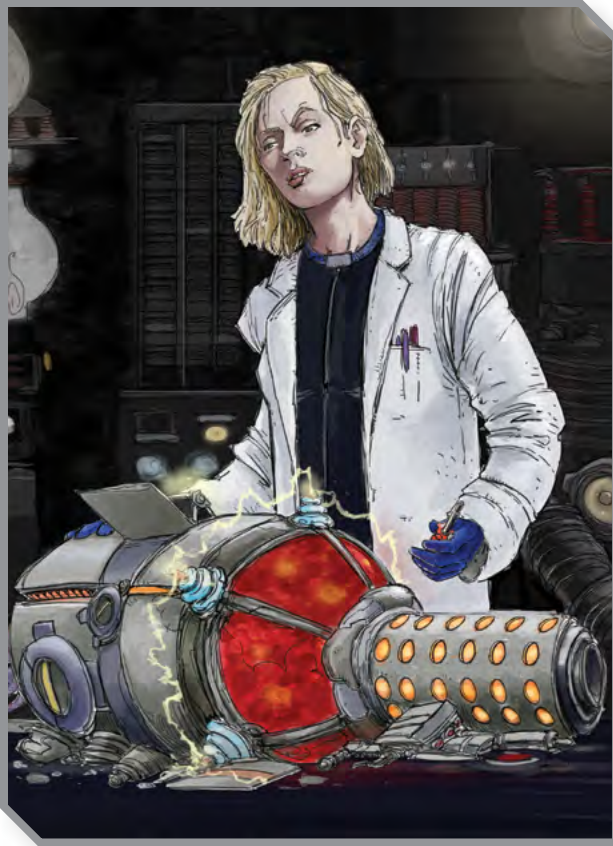
Booster: Double Tap. If your Shooting rating is 8 or more, you can shoot a second time during the same action. The second shot is performed at a +2 Difficulty. It doesn't need to be announced until after the first shot is resolved, and does not have to be aimed at the same target.

Shooting multiple targets can be expensive, but short of automatic weapons, throwing grenades, or chronally duplicating yourself (a dangerous proposition!) it's the only easy way to target more than one enemy in the same attack. Use this for quickly taking down Mooks and other antagonists with low Health.

TINKERING

You've got a talent for engineering, making you skilled at building, disabling, repairing, and operating both mechanical and technological devices. You can:

- ▶ set and detonate explosives, and you're considered trained with high explosives — it's assumed you start with one instance of explosives if you want them, and you can use Preparedness to gain more if needed
- ▶ create jury-rigged devices from odd bits of scrap, given access to plausible components — this use of Tinkering mirrors the Preparedness ability, although it usually takes some time and a safe workplace to construct a device
- ▶ briefly rig beam pistols and neural disruptors to be more effective (see p. 120)



Dr. Leah Breen's idea of a fun night is tinkering with a super-science death ray. Dr. Breen doesn't get out much.

- ▶ construct and fire siege engines
- ▶ build and repair devices ranging from classic pit-and-pendulum traps to high-performance vehicles
- ▶ create or repair electronics, obscure future technology, and super-science devices, if you also have one or more points in Science!
- ▶ write software and make contested computer-related and hacking-related rolls, if you also have one or more points in Hacking
- ▶ build or repair a time machine, or construct chromomorphic technology that changes its shape to match its current time period, if you also have two or more points in Timecraft

Tinkering doubles as an Investigative ability when used to:

- ▶ evaluate the quality of workmanship used to create an item
- ▶ determine the identity of a handmade item's maker by comparing to known work by that individual
- ▶ examine explosives or the site of an explosion

Booster: Rapid Deployment. If your Tinkering rating is 8 or more, you can complete a Tinkering task in half the time it would take someone without this Booster. For Tinkering tasks that normally take one round, such as overcharging a Pacifist to boost its Stun rating or range (see p. 112), you can perform the Tinkering action in the same round as you fire the weapon.

UNOBTRUSIVENESS

You're good at noticing other people trying to be unobtrusive, just as you're skilled at hiding and avoiding notice. It's up to you whether you use skill, technology, minor psychic prowess, or a combination of those to blend into the background. With a successful Unobtrusiveness test, you can:

- ▶ spot someone trying to hide or be sneaky
- ▶ avoid being surprised in combat
- ▶ surprise others in combat
- ▶ follow someone without being noticed
- ▶ hide in plain sight within a crowd
- ▶ blend into the shadows to hide
- ▶ escape from someone following you
- ▶ pass unnoticed despite being the sort of person who would normally attract attention

GM ADVICE: AVOIDING ANNOYANCE

The +3 bonus granted by impersonator mesh means that even a lousy Unobtrusiveness test result is a 4 or higher, making such a roll an automatic success. If a test would automatically be successful, there's no need to roll a die for it.

This technology exists in *TimeWatch* because it'd be incredibly annoying to play an unusual Agent in an alternate time without it. If you're playing a Neanderthal on a mission to 19th-century France, for instance, you don't want to have to make a separate Unobtrusiveness test every time you enter a new room just to avoid people screaming and staring. Skin color, sex, and height could all sidetrack or torpedo an adventure in many times and societies, and that's not particularly useful or fun. This is an adventure and investigation game, not a racism simulator. GMs should treat it accordingly and give Agents the benefit of the doubt.

With impersonator mesh and the Unobtrusiveness ability, an Agent's appearance is casually masked by an "Ignore Me!" field until they interact with a supporting character or draw attention to themselves. You can neatly disregard the "why aren't people pointing?" question until they do, which is when Disguise becomes relevant. That saves Unobtrusiveness tests for exciting, dramatically interesting moments.

A player character with the Notice Investigative ability may not be fooled by Unobtrusiveness, at the GM's discretion; the Difficulty Number to hide from such people is usually 3 higher than normal if the player chooses to spend a Notice point. Many antagonists may have Stealth or Alertness Modifiers that increase or lower the default Difficulty, and moving past devices such as motion-sensing alarms or metal detectors generally raises the Difficulty as well. Spend points accordingly.

Impersonator Mesh: The impersonator mesh that TimeWatch agents are issued grants each agent a +3 bonus on Unobtrusiveness rolls so long as they have not already brought attention to themselves in some way. As soon as they have, the impersonator mesh's effect ceases for the remainder of the scene. This ensures that time traveling Agents only need to make dramatically important rolls, and can pass unnoticed by most people most of the time. Note that impersonator mesh adds a bonus to a roll, not to your rating or pool, an important distinction. Impersonator mesh's bonus is never included when making an Unobtrusiveness test to avoid being surprised. See p. 111 for more details.

Booster: Nothing to See Here. If your Unobtrusiveness rating is 8 or higher, and you take the lead on Piggybacking an Unobtrusiveness test (see p. 51), characters who are unable to pay the 1 point only raise the Difficulty of the attempt by 1 instead of 2. This is tremendously useful when trying to sneak your entire team into a location.

Talk to your group during character creation; if one character focuses on Unobtrusiveness and plans to lead most group tests, the other characters may be able to get away with investing fewer points in the ability.

VEHICLES

You're a skilled driver and pilot, able to wring high performance from vehicles ranging from Roman chariots to race cars, from zeppelins to spaceships, and from sailboats to submarines. This includes precision operation of your autochron or other time machine, as appropriate to your campaign.

With a successful Vehicles test, you can:

- ▶ evade or conduct pursuit
- ▶ avoid collisions, or minimize damage from collisions
- ▶ perform driving or piloting stunts
- ▶ spot tampering with a vehicle
- ▶ conduct emergency repairs
- ▶ maintain control of teams of horses, oxen, or other animals
- ▶ successfully drive off road (or pilot through difficult seas) without bogging down or wrecking, assuming even minimally hospitable terrain

You know how to operate one type of vehicle for every rating point you have of Vehicles. You do not need to specify every vehicle type before play begins. A vehicle type added at an opportune moment does not represent suddenly learning how to drive a hovercraft, but simply previous training or retroactive experience you've never had call to mention until

now. (You're in a time travel game, however. If it's more fun to announce that you quickly clock out, take lessons, learn the new skill, and then clock back in at the exact same instant you left, then go for it. The game effect is exactly the same, and it's probably more fun.)

For riding horses, see p. 46.

Booster: Keep Up. If your Vehicles rating is 8 or higher, your allies can Piggyback during a chase or time chase scene even when they would not normally be allowed to do so (due to characters piloting separate vehicles). If you take the lead on Piggybacking a Vehicles contest (including a chase through time; see p. 76), characters who are unable to pay the 1 point only raise the Difficulty of the attempt by 1 instead of 2. Note that *Keep Up* doesn't work with horseback chases, because riding horses uses Athletics instead of Vehicles.

Talk to your group during character creation; if one character focuses on Vehicles and plans to lead most group tests during chase scenes, the other characters may be able to get away with investing fewer points in the ability.

WORKING FOR TIMEWATCH

For more details on TimeWatch's internal organization and the *Patrol* campaign frame, please see p. 235.

RECRUITMENT

Perhaps you were recruited at the last second. Remember when you should have died? Time slowed into a purple haze, a figure in a formfitting uniform strolled into the scene of your imminent or untimely demise, and you were given a choice: perish, as you would naturally, or join a corps of agents who save the world. *All* of the world. For many people, it's not a difficult choice.

Or perhaps you're the one who made first contact. If you lived a life where you had great unrealized potential, you're as likely to have unknowingly approached TimeWatch as TimeWatch is to have approached you. Some agents are identified and recruited after applying through testing programs listed in classified ads. Some potential agents are identified from data culled from secretive biometric and psychoanalytic government testing. And some potential agents just manage to impress a field agent on the job, who then recruits them personally. Interestingly, it isn't unusual for these agents to continue to live their normal lives when they aren't on TimeWatch missions. They usually invent jobs that require travel as an excuse for occasionally being unavailable to their friends, but some agents have left a party for a smoke, headed out to a mission that took (in relative time) years to complete, then returned to the party as if they never left. It's a difficult life to maintain, but some find it preferable to a life without the normal anchor of hearth and home. Agent relationships with "normals" don't often last long. The secrecy tends to drive a wedge between even close relationships.

Possible recruits who wash out or decline the offer are MEM-tagged and returned to their life the moment they left it. They seldom remember anything other than what

TIMEWATCH AND THE LAW

If you break a law and then your actions cause that time loop to never have existed, did you actually break the law? TimeWatch agents often consider themselves above local laws, adhering instead to a code of conduct that allows them to fix the timeline while causing a minimum of further disruption in the path of history.

In general, the rules concerning illegal activity are:

1. Don't break the law unless you have to.
2. Break rule one only when the safety of the timeline is at stake, and only if the cost of inaction is significantly greater than that of action.
3. Don't tell anyone about TimeWatch or time travel.
4. If you are imprisoned or detained by legitimate authorities, sit tight and allow your teammates to get you out.
5. If you are imprisoned or detained without hope of rapid release, or by illegitimate or corrupt authorities, do your best to escape. This is particularly true if they're working for someone trying to sabotage the timeline.
6. Don't get caught.
7. Leave a plausible explanation for your escape; no locked room mysteries.

Much to the annoyance of their superior officers, TimeWatch agents break these rules *all the time*. How severely they're rebuked for doing so (if at all) depends on how bureaucratic TimeWatch's headquarters currently is in your own game.

TimeWatch wishes them to. Cases where residual memories stick around are usually attributed to alien abductions. If any of these potential but failed recruits have later caused trouble for TimeWatch, it hasn't been recorded in the official histories.

All others are typically whisked away from their own time and into the TimeWatch Citadel.

TRAINING

Before being sent out on your first mission, you will undergo extensive training and equipping. Subdermal communication gear is implanted under your skin, memetic implants and deep-learning protocols are implanted into your brain, you're given access to physical conditioning, and you're thoroughly briefed on time travel theory and practice. During this stage you learn how to use vital high-tech equipment, and become acquainted with your own personal tether. Any rumor that subconscious conditioning happens during this stage is completely unfounded², and is nothing but propaganda spread by anti-TimeWatch rebels.

During training, you're vaccinated against all known historical diseases. You may also opt for reversible subdermal birth control, as generating new life when time traveling has a bad habit of disrupting history. It's also at this point that life extension techniques are applied to your Agent, causing them to age more slowly than normal. It isn't unusual for agents to gain 200 years or more to their lifespan. In practical

² At least in most campaigns.

terms, it means that a 20-year-long deep-cover mission isn't unreasonable to consider, and that your Agent won't die of old age until you want them to.

MISSION ASSIGNMENT

Missions are either **standard** or **scramble** urgency.

When a **standard** mission is assigned, you're typically summoned via their tether to your handler's briefing room. Your handler lays out what's known about the problem and gives you the time and place where your team should start an investigation. You're welcome to jump forwards or backwards in time from there. It's common for handlers to give a paucity of initial information, either because more isn't known or because your handler doesn't wish to set you up for unnecessary paradox.

A **scramble** mission is one that doesn't even leave enough time for a briefing, either because the Citadel is directly threatened or because time-ripples from a major change are cascading through history, wiping out more events as they go and thus making the investigation more challenging than it would be otherwise. In a scramble mission, you're simply given a rendezvous coordinate somewhere in history, you meet your team there, and then if you're lucky you get an abbreviated briefing from your tether. Since some chronal sabotage can wipe out access to the Citadel, scramble missions get you outside of the Citadel before you're effectively trapped and unable to affect history.

PERSONAL TIME

When not on a mission, you're typically off duty on your own recognizance. Agents without strong family ties typically use this time to pursue private investigations, train, exercise, study, or tour eras of time that they'd always longed to see. Agents who do have strong family ties might spend time between missions living with their families back in their own native era. This is always a gamble, because missions might require you to be away from your loved ones for two subjective decades or more, even if to your family it seems like you've only popped into the basement for a few minutes. It's not uncommon for agents to slowly feel isolated from the people they love. Physical changes in your appearance begin to add up as well, with the occasional cybernetic repair or hideous scar needing to be disguised before you can return to the people who knew you best in civilian life.

It's up to the GM and each player as to how an Agent balances their work as a time cop with a private and personal life back in their native era. Managing a secret identity and career might be exhausting, but it's a joy if you want additional narrative complication and the potential for mayhem in your personal life.

Never mind the fact that you need to make sure Attila the Hun dies of a nosebleed on his wedding night, your husband in the 1930s suspects that you're having an affair because you keep disappearing from closed rooms, and the private eye he's hired to keep an eye on you is throwing off the effects of the eighth MEM-tag you've had to use on him to wipe his memory. Your daughter has noticed that something seems different about you (mostly because you were away in deep cover for two years in the middle of her sixth birthday party, and accidentally changed your hairstyle when you returned), and your handler has warned you that he thinks time traveling assassins might know your true identity. It's going to be a long week.

Players who don't want to balance their character's personal and professional lives shouldn't be required to. Frankly, a lot of players get enough practice trying to manage their own work/life balance in the real world. If you wish to, however, you should present the GM with your character's family and professional situation, and trust the GM to riff off of your suggestions. Complications arising from personal crises are a good method for earning Stitches in play.

THE CITADEL

TimeWatch maintains innumerable safe houses, vacation spots, and equipment depots throughout the ages. Headquarters, however, is the Citadel. It resides prior to normal time in the uncollapsed quantum singularity that will one day lead to the Big Bang, and by all accounts it is unassailable by physical means. Its 37th-century technology screens all incoming time travelers for diseases and parasites as they arrive in the central transport bay. If it has been successfully invaded by its innumerable enemies, those rumors aren't discussed. TimeWatch presents the image of a shining, incorruptible gem.

That metaphor goes farther than just an image. The interior of the structure itself is made from some sort of shimmering, beautiful crystal that pulses with the light of dying stars — unusual, considering that before the Big Bang there aren't any stars to die. Rooms often have additional walls of other materials, but the translucent stone that forms the structure is unlike anything else in history. No one is quite sure who built it or how TimeWatch found it in the first place. There's been a lot of speculation about this amongst TimeWatch theologians, including the theory that excessive paradox in the Citadel actually leads to the Big Bang and the creation of the universe. If that's true, TimeWatch's days are numbered and a paradox one of the agents causes may bring its end about. No one's sure when (or if) that day will come, though, so in the meantime it's business as usual.

Agents are instructed not to sabotage already completed missions and to minimize paradox. It takes experience to know when to ignore these guidelines, and it isn't uncommon to see mission teams time traveling forward to find out if their mission was successful or time traveling to the past to warn themselves about useful facts, but doing so inevitably creates paradoxes and chronal instability that the team needs to withstand in order to succeed.

Agents are also forbidden from time traveling to past and future eras of the Citadel. The stated reason for this is the aforementioned reduction of potential paradox. Autochrons and tethers are programmed accordingly; they keep track of real time and won't allow agents to cross over themselves back at headquarters. There are ways around this, of course; any technology can be hacked by an adequately brilliant expert, and stealing an autochron from an earlier or later time traveler might get you into the Citadel's past or future. Violating this rule typically leads to suspension, disciplinary hearings, and reams of paperwork, and it's worth noting that agents who attempt this have a bad habit of disappearing. Whether they are forcibly retired to protect others, are stranded somewhere, are given suicidally dangerous missions, or simply just vanish isn't known.

Most agents are never told the identity of TimeWatch's secret leaders. It's widely believed that TimeWatch is run by hyper-evolved humanity, humans who have transcended physical boundaries to become ageless and eternal energy beings. Some agents believe instead that TimeWatch is run by aliens who have humanity's best interests at stake, while others think that a vast human-cyborg conglomeration tracks histories and corrects ripples in the time stream. Whether you believe that TimeWatch is correcting history for the greater good or that the leaders have an agenda of their own, it's well known that TimeWatch missions work to restore true history, history as we know it without the interference of time travel, and that by doing so you save time itself from unraveling.

ADVICE FOR AGENTS

As a starting Agent you may be lucky enough to have it easy; journey back to an easily identified junction, dissuade some good-intentioned activists from saving a beloved historical figure's life, and then it's back home to TimeWatch

headquarters for a new assignment. Most missions don't go that easily. When push comes to shove, when the forces of a parallel timeline enemy are fully arrayed against you and it looks like you have no hope of completing the assignment, it's time to get tricky. Sometimes you have to work backwards or forwards to stop a problem before it ever occurs.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

There's a variety of antagonists you may have to face during your long career as a TimeWatch agent, and your enemies' skill at chronal sabotage may vary a great deal from mission to mission. It's important to recognize that different enemies have different goals, and they use different tools and different chronal powers to achieve their ends.

- ▶ Random, unorganized time travelers may be tourists who want to see a dinosaur and accidentally step on the wrong insect, egotists who seek self-aggrandizement and replace their own son for the infant baby Jesus, or bitter sociopaths who have a personal axe to grind and so save (or kill) a particular person in history. Not all of these changes ripple forward to fundamentally change the future, and these antagonists may have good intentions in mind when they sabotage history, but their wrong action at the wrong time could be disastrous.
- ▶ Defectors and rebels from TimeWatch pose a true threat, as they have access to advanced technology, they know TimeWatch's methods, and they know chronal theory. Chimeras, insane agents driven to madness by chronal instability, are often the most dangerous of foes. Such rebels typically seek to destroy the formation of TimeWatch itself, and in doing so erase all the good that TimeWatch has ever accomplished.
- ▶ Imposters from alternate or parallel timelines may seek to change our key historical events in order to reroute the course of true history through their own temporal backwater, changing the future for everyone else.
- ▶ Alien species may interfere with humanity's development, using their own time travel to conquer Earth in both the past and the future. Some of these species are shape-shifters, making their identification amongst humans even more challenging.
- ▶ Nonhumans from a parallel timeline in Earth's far future may take action in the past, attempting to ensure their own evolutionary development and continued existence.

FROM STRUCTURE TO STORY

The GM's structure notes aren't a story. The story occurs as you and your friends decide how to proceed through the adventure. The actions of your characters moving from scene to scene bring the story to life.

To move from scene to scene, and to solve the overall mystery, you must gather clues. They fuel your forward momentum. Your characters gather clues from locations in

space and time, as well as from supporting characters run by the GM. Some of those characters may be friendly, and some may be hostile antagonists, but almost every encounter results in clues that push the investigation forward.

As you perform legwork, collecting information that tells you more about the current mission, each scene contains information pointing to one or more new scenes. Certain scenes may put a new twist on the investigation, as the initial mystery turns out to be just one aspect of a much bigger story. As clues accumulate, a picture of the case emerges, until your characters arrive at a climactic scene, where all is revealed, changes in history are (hopefully) repaired, and the bad guys are confronted. A wrap-up scene accounts for loose ends and shows the consequences of your success — or, in rare instances, failure.

One thing unique to *TimeWatch* is that you can arrive at a scene which is the correct physical location but in the wrong time period. If that happens, don't be shy about jumping forwards and backwards several days (or months, or decades, or centuries) to quickly check for ripples of the event you're investigating. Your time machine's operation isn't predicated on limited fuel cells, and Reality Anchor easily refills lost Chronal Stability, so it's almost always better to make a quick jump or two forwards and backwards to double-check before writing off a likely scene as a red herring.

GREAT PLAYER TACTICS

TimeWatch offers players some subtle tactics that it's possible to miss, especially when playing for the first time. Many of these rules are explained later in the book, but here are some strategies that you'll want to come back to, especially when your Agents are in trouble and you're looking for some creative solutions.

You're going to get hurt a lot. Plan for it. Attack pools mean that your foes often hit you the first time they attack; enemies' accuracy will decrease as they get more tired. Expect that a significant antagonist is likely to hit you, so have enough Health that you're not going to drop right away. It's hard to stay conscious once you hit -6 Health; if you never increase your Health over the starting value of 6, you'll be able to withstand about three or four typical hits. Bumping your Health to 8 or 10 points during character creation, increasing your Hit Threshold to 4 (by having an Athletics rating of 8 or higher), having a dedicated team medic, using Evasive Maneuvers (see p. 82), or increasing your armor or Hit Threshold through Preparedness or Science! spends (such as with a personal force field — see p. 123) will help you stay alive.

Stitches speed things up. You can use Stitches (see p. 65) to do more damage, take less damage, avoid making a Travel test when time traveling, refresh pools enough that you can guarantee success on an important roll, and offer teamwork that helps an ally succeed. Do so. They're around to make the game more convenient for you, and they usually get handed out often, so you should spend them accordingly.

If you don't have enough pool points, hand out more Stitches. The frequency at which you gain Stitches, and thus

TIP FOR PLAYERS: CONTAINING SPECULATION

Investigative scenarios often bog down into speculative debate between players about what *could be* happening. Many things *can be* happening, but only one thing *is*. If more than one possible explanation ties together the clues you have so far, you need more clues.

Whenever you get stuck, get out and gather more information. Never “turtle,” withdrawing into your metaphorical shell to safely consider limited options. That’s usually boring and stops the action dead in its tracks. If you keep investigating you’ll learn more, you’ll gain more options, you’ll have more fun, and the game will move faster.

the frequency in which your character is able to refresh their pools, is almost entirely in the hands of the players. If it feels like you don’t have enough, other players feel that way too; set a standard by rewarding behavior that you think is fun, clever, or awesome. This might be as simple as tossing one to someone who is kind to another player, or giving a Stitch to the guy who brought snacks. Once your group gets the hang of positively reinforcing awesome behavior, you’ll probably find you have enough to make interesting tactical decisions.

And hey, if you don’t, your GM can always award Stitches to the group (or allow you to refresh combat pools) to make sure you can stay in the fight. Remind her if necessary.

If you’ve hit your Hoarding Limit but are given a fourth Stitch, spend one of the ones you have. Having more Stitches than you can use is a good problem to have. If you’re at the max of 3, and you get more, use your existing Stitches immediately to refresh pools that aren’t maxed out. If you need to, use Medic or Reality Anchor to help a fellow Agent recover damage, then refresh your pool. In a worst-case scenario, use Preparedness to establish that you have a piece of particularly cool or useful technology that you expect to need — who doesn’t need a ray gun? — and then refresh your Preparedness pool.

Don’t hang on to Stitches greedily. The game is most fun when they come and go quickly.

Remember your armor. If you’re wearing your TimeWatch uniform, subtract 1 point from every instance of Shooting and Scuffling damage you take.

Use Taunt to draw an enemy’s fire. The Investigative ability Taunt does more than just make people so angry at you that they reveal what they know. Spend 1 point in a fight, and you can draw an enemy’s attention (and attacks) away from someone else. They may even chase you. If you can survive it, it’s a good way to draw someone into an ambush.

When you absolutely positively don’t want to get hit, try Evasive Maneuvers. On p. 82 you’ll see that every 2 Athletics points you spend boosts your Hit Threshold by 1 until the beginning of your next action, up to a maximum of +3. Of course, you probably aren’t going to hit anything — your enemies’ Hit Thresholds go up by +2 every time yours goes up by +1 — but who cares? Your job for the round is surviving. If you’ve just spent a point in Taunt to get your foes’ attention, and you’ve used Evasive Maneuvers to boost your Hit Threshold to 7, they’re all going to be too busy trying and failing to shoot you for you to mind your own inaccuracy.

Use Stitches to reduce damage. Even with your armor, are you getting smacked for more damage than you want to take? Each Stitch you spend reduces damage by 1 point. It may save your life.

Don’t charge a gun-wielder. A foe who has a ranged weapon drawn and ready will get a free bonus attack on you if you try and rush him. That’s why people in movies don’t charge people with guns. If you don’t want to get shot, wait until he’s distracted by something before closing, or try to create a distraction yourself (possibly with time travel or by spending an Investigative point) before closing in.

If you can close with him, he’ll be at a disadvantage unless he switches to Scuffling. As noted on p. 78, Shooters in close combat have a 1 in 6 chance to shoot themselves or an ally by mistake.

Make ludicrous Paradox tests, just make sure you have friends with Reality Anchor there to back you up. We’ve found in playtest that players are often very conservative with their Chronal Stability and Reality Anchor points. These abilities exist in part so that you can use them to do cool time tricks when more conventional tactics can’t solve your problem, so don’t be afraid to use them when your back is up against the wall. Reality Anchor restores other people’s Chronal Stability by 2 points for every point you spend, and it’s an efficient way of restoring someone who’s just endangered himself to try something clever.

Time heals all wounds. If you can get away from combat and time travel without being followed in a time chase, you can go to a future hospital and get medical treatment. A day or two of rest and recovery, and you can return to the fight with full Health and full pools of Athletics, Scuffling, Shooting, and Vehicles. The tricky part, of course, is getting away from the fight safely.

In a pinch, and assuming that you have a Medic rating of 1 or higher, don’t forget that you can exchange an Investigative point of Medical Expertise for 3 points of Medic. That’s enough to heal allies 6 points of damage.

You could also trade Preparedness or Tinkering for Medic. It’s not unreasonable to assume that a technological device could provide you with a temporary medical-related benefit in case of emergency — either restoring a small amount of Health points, or keeping you automatically conscious for a Consciousness test. An Agent with *Flashback* (the Booster gained with 8 or more rating points of Preparedness) can even state after the fact that such a medical Booster was acquired and in place. It’s not much, but it’s much better than dying.

If the GM gets lucky and rolls well, fall back and

regroup. You're exceptionally competent agents, but you aren't invulnerable and you aren't superhuman. You're much better off negotiating or retreating than you are dying. Sometimes, combat is far from the best solution.

Recruit allies. Spending Investigative points from History or Anthropology might allow you to recruit allies from out of history. If your plan depends on an extinct and ancient Pacific Island tribe that worships you as a god, or a doomed spaceship crew from the far future, you might as well get use out of them by leading them into battle. Likewise, you can make friends with the best and brightest minds in history. Nothing's more amusing than discovering that the *Mona Lisa* is actually a painting of your own character, just because you spent a History point and turned out to be an old friend of Leonardo da Vinci.

Play the long con. TimeWatch agents gain an extended lifespan, so don't be afraid of the long path to success. Need to live with someone for a few years as their roommate so that forty years hence they'll tell you what you need to know? Need to go back in time a few months and get a job as a laboratory guard, just so you're there at the right time to let in your friends? If you can spare the time, it's sometimes a creative solution.

Boost your damage with Tinkering. If you have points in Tinkering and are worried you won't have cause to use them, never fear. A Tinkering test on your ranged weapon during downtime will increase the amount of damage the next shot does by 1 point. If you tinker with a Pacifist, you can raise the Stun level from 5 to 6. Better yet, if you have 8 or more rating points in Tinkering, you can do this quickly enough that it becomes part of your combat action. Combined with spending Stitches for extra damage, it's a good way to quickly inflict pain on your foes.

Spend Investigative points to boost attacks. If you can justify it, you can spend any Investigative point to gain +3 on a General ability test. Out of Scuffling points and need to hit someone? Spending a Military Tactics ("I've studied tactics"), Intimidation ("I raise my fist, and while he's flinching, I hit him"), Streetwise ("I know dirty fighting; I'll kick out his knee"), or even Authority ("He's ex-military? I scream, 'Attention!' like a drill sergeant and hit him while he's trying not to instinctively salute") point can boost your roll by +3 — and if you're clever about how you do it, the GM or one of your fellow players will probably toss you a new Stitch for doing something fun.

When attacking an antagonist with a prohibitively high armor rating, spend Investigative points to ignore all or part of its armor. You may also be able to use Investigative ability spends to boost your damage instead. Spending 1 point of Medical Expertise, for instance, reasonably lets you know the most painful place to hit a foe, letting you raise all the damage you inflict by +1 for the rest of the fight.

Spend Investigative points to disrupt combat. Losing a fight horribly? Want to pause it long enough to get a word in edgewise with diplomacy, or to try to escape? Spending 1 or more points from a social ability might cause hostilities to cease for a minute against all but the most determined foes. Of course, make a hostile move and you can expect the fight to spring back up.

Use the initiative system to your advantage. As explained on p. 79, you have great control over who goes when in a round. Ask your fellow players who wants to go next, and you can make sure they do. Be wary of letting the bad guys go last in a round; it means that if they want to, they'll be able to go twice in a row.

Flee into time. You can use the initiative system to escape a fight in your autochron without risking its destruction from stray fire. If the bad guys have already gone in the round, fire up your autochron, and then just make sure that your character goes first in the next round before your antagonists have a chance to act. It's a little sneaky, but it's completely legitimate. Just hope that your enemies don't have the ability to chase you through time; if they do, ready yourself for a time chase when they come after you.

Use Science! points for concentrated awesomeness. Want nifty gear — force fields, more powerful weapons, or concentrated explosives? Spend a point of Science! along with your Preparedness or Tinkering test. You can convert 1 Investigative ability point into 3 General ability points with the GM's okay, so it's a fast way to add points to your Preparedness test when you want a particularly fun but expensive device.

Imagination counts. You have access to the future, and that means you can describe just about any technology you want to the GM. She'll increase the Preparedness cost for acquiring more powerful gear, of course, but feel free to consider high-tech solutions to simple problems. Night vision contact lenses, portable EMP generators, zero-point gravity guns, jetpacks; fun *and* useful! Acquiring something like this is a good use of Preparedness, especially when you have more Stitches than you need and can immediately refresh your Preparedness pool.

Adopt a signature weapon or piece of gear. As noted on p. 108, you can spend build points to start each game with a piece of unique tech that you particularly love. If your character is always known for his disintegrator pistol or jet pack, that's how to always have it around.

Help yourself — literally. When you're in dire straits and need backup, you can be your own backup. Declare that you're going to remember to have your future self show up and save you. You'll need to spend a Paradox Prevention point and make a Paradox test, but your duplicate arrives fully healthy with General ability pools fully refreshed, and that means that you can double your attacks. Sure, if your younger self dies anyways you've created massive paradox (and triggered a Paradox test for your fellow Agents), but you'll probably be beyond caring at that point, and the extra help may just save the day.

Help others. Is your friend dying, but you can't get to him in time? Pay 1 point of Paradox Prevention, make the Paradox test, and your future self can show up to heal him. This is just like duplicating yourself to help be your own ally in a battle, but it lets you provide tactical support to an ally instead.

Save a few build points. If you can, save a few build points when creating your character or after each mission. These don't disappear if you don't immediately assign them; instead, you can assign them on the fly during a mission to immediately get access to an ability.

RESOLVE YOUR OWN PARADOX

In an early playtest adventure, Agents clocked in to find themselves being ambushed by local troops yelling, "The prophet's warning was true! Witchcraft!" The Agents escaped, but wracked their brains to figure out who had tipped off the local military leader about their arrival. One player said, "... What if we tipped him off? Let's go back in time a week. Maybe one of us presents ourselves as a prophet, and proves our prophetic power by directing troops to come ambush us during our arrival just now. I mean, we already know we survive the ambush. That way the local leader will trust us, our time traveling Adversary doesn't know we're here, and there's no paradox at all."

Paradox Prevention points: your wild card. If you want a clever time- or causality-related effect, but it's a little too powerful to do casually, ask your GM if you can spend a Paradox Prevention point to do so. These serve as "wild card" points for temporal effects, letting you take unique time-related actions without over-balancing the game. Paradox Prevention points, like all Investigative points, don't refresh until the end of the mission; plan their use accordingly.

Spend Paradox Prevention to save Chronal Stability. You can sometimes get in a bind with low Chronal Stability, needing to spend more points than you'd like in order to make a test that you can't afford to fail. Consider spending an extra point of Paradox Prevention instead. This gives you +3 on your Paradox test, making it automatically in all but the most dire of circumstances, without lowering your Chronal Stability further.

Note that this is different than the point of Paradox Prevention you'll need to spend for certain chronal hijinks like duplicating yourself in a scene.

Finish off foes. Badly injured antagonists are at a disadvantage in combat, but not a huge one. If your enemies aren't Mooks (antagonists with Health 3 or less), your team is best off focusing fire to drop one target before moving on to the next. You're better off having one downed foe and two uninjured ones than three slightly injured enemies.

If you're fighting Mooks or any Opponents with low Health (you'll probably be able to guess by the GM's description), take out as many as you can as quickly as possible. They hit hard but drop fast. And hey, as you'd expect in a cinematic game, eliminating the unnamed characters before taking on the main villain is practically traditional.

Stun those Mooks. Unlike more important Opponents or Adversaries, Mooks don't even have the opportunity to make a Stun test when affected by a neural disruptor. If you hit them with your PaciFist, they'll automatically go unconscious. It's a good tactic when you want to avoid egregious bloodshed. This

is an especially good tactic for Agents with 8 or more points in Shooting, who can fire twice in a round.

You may fight an enemy more than once. The tricky thing about time travel is that you may fight an elderly Adversary, then later on fight one or more younger versions of the same person — and you can't kill the earlier incarnations without triggering a major Paradox test, because doing so would create paradox. You may have to think creatively to get around this restriction.

Make sure someone knows how to drive. You need to put physical distance between yourself and anyone chasing you through time, and that means outrunning them during a time chase. These get much easier and much more fun when at least one Agent has 8 or more points of Vehicles. You won't need it every mission, but you'll be grateful for it when it's needed.

A closed door is your friend. Why? Because thanks to Preparedness and time travel, it hides exactly what you need *right now*, which you are going to put behind it *later*.

Beam weapons are deadlier than firearms. They're also a lot more obvious, as you'd expect when shooting a laser pistol in a science fiction game. Nevertheless, beam weapons do more damage on average than other weapons, and can have some handy improvements like disintegration. They're a reasonable use of Preparedness points.

Use weapons when Scuffling. Just like in real life, smacking someone with a weapon does more damage than hitting them with your fist. You're encouraged to describe your Agent grabbing weapons from the environment to use, but you've got a fallback. A deactivated autochron is nice and sturdy, and serves as a handy club.

When to stun, when to kill. Stun attacks (p. 83) are mechanically balanced with firearms. Shoot or hit someone with a PaciFist, and if they're not stunned it may seem like you wasted your attack. Not so. Three things happen when a foe successfully makes a Stun test:

- ▶ They're Impaired from the unsuccessful stun, so the Difficulty goes up on any other tests they make (including more Stun tests) between your attack and their next turn. This makes them easier for other Agents to stun.
- ▶ They've likely spent some Health points to boost their chances of success, so you're about as well off as you'd be if you shot them with bullets. That's even more true if the foe is heavily armored, because the armor doesn't apply to spent Health points.
- ▶ Mooks drop immediately when shot with a neural disruptor — no Stun test required.

PaciFists keep the target alive, and are great for stealth. Bullets, beam weapons, knives, and fists leave the target marked and bloody, and (beam weapons aside) don't run the risk of appearing like magic or future technology to less advanced societies. Which you choose depends on the effect you want to achieve.

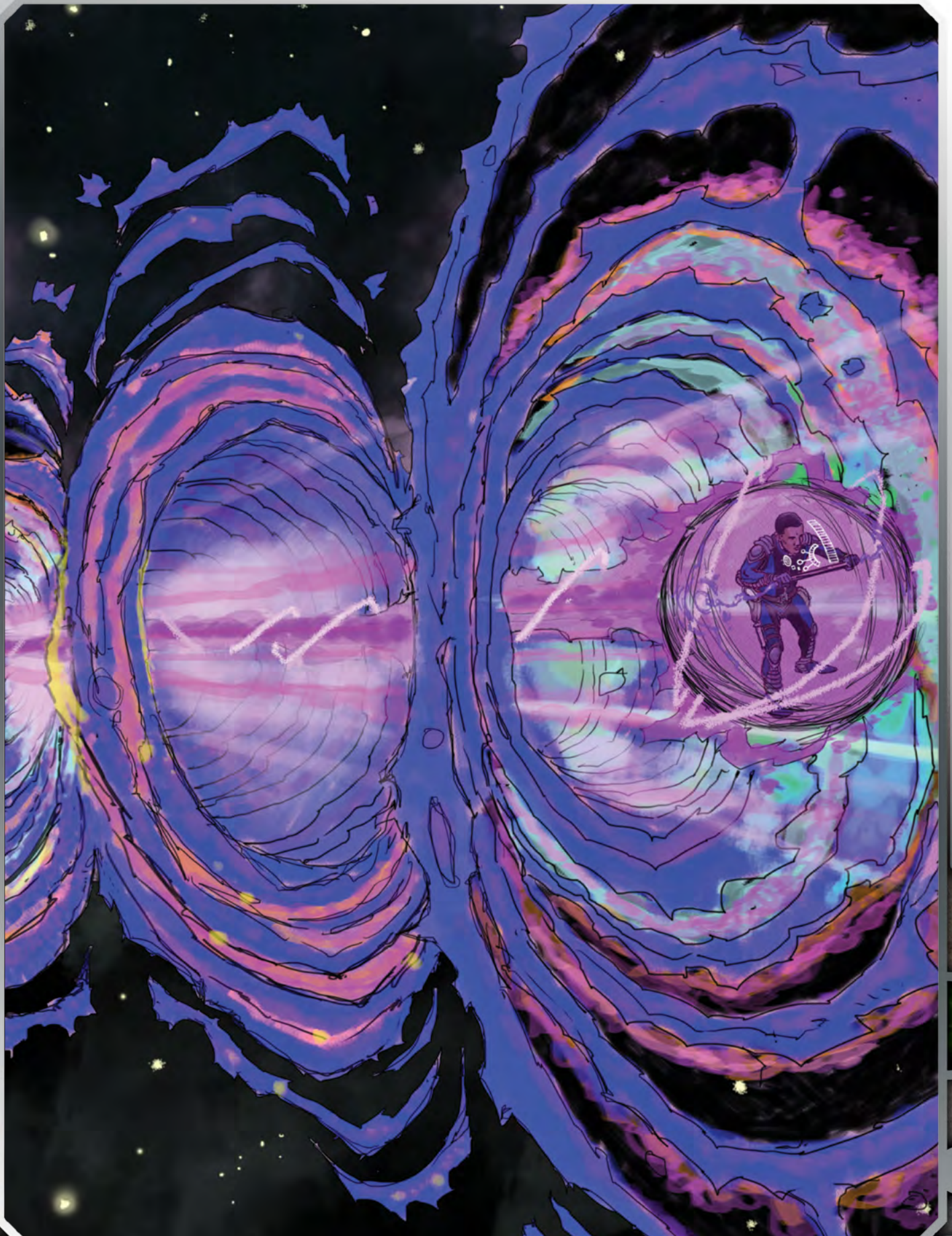
Think outside the box. This is a time travel game. If the building gate guard doesn't let you in, time travel in. Or go back in time and get a job in building security yourself. Or go

back in time and become a family friend of the gate guard. Or spend 1 point of Architecture to go back and alter the building blueprints, giving you access that no one else knows about. Or spend an Authority point to go back in time and become his new boss.

Similarly, you'll have multiple options when taking down a bad guy. Go back to stop him before he ever started his plans, or in the middle of them before they succeed, or right at the key moment; just be careful not to risk severe Paradox tests by causing paradox. You can often get around that with some clever planning that makes history work out correctly, but you'll want to consider your line of attack. Contradicting events that you already know to be true can cause problems.

Pick your future. Spend 2 points of Timecraft at once, and as noted on p. 45, for the rest of the scene you get to choose the immediate future you prefer. You'll pick one General ability; until the end of the scene, roll two d6s instead of one when using that ability and choose your preferred result. This is best used when you have to make multiple ability tests with one single ability over a long scene, such as a chase (using Athletics or Vehicles), a fight (using Scuffling or Shooting), or a difficult infiltration (using Unobtrusiveness).

Research locks down reality. When history has changed, you usually have the option of time traveling into the future and reading about an event in (alternate) history books. Doing so, however, locks it in as an established fact; change it after that, and you'll need to make a Paradox test as time shifts away from what you know is true.



CHAPTER THREE:

TIMEWATCH

RULES SYSTEM

This chapter describes the basic GUMSHOE rules system customized for *TimeWatch*, and is addressed to players and GM alike.

GATHERING CLUES

TimeWatch has you unravel mysteries, and that means investigation. Investigation means looking for and finding clues.

Gathering clues is simple. All you have to do is 1) get yourself into a scene where relevant information can be gathered, 2) have the right ability to discover the clue, and 3) tell the GM that you're using it. As long as you do these three things, you will never fail to gain a piece of necessary information. It is never dependent on a die roll. If you ask for it, you will get it.

You can specify exactly what you intend to achieve: "I use Trivia to determine if the opera was really written by Mozart," or "I use Timecraft to figure out whether this dinosaur was naturally born here in Madagascar, or whether someone imported him from the past via a time machine."

Or you can engage in a more general informational fishing expedition: "I use Notice to search the murder scene," or "I use Medical Expertise to examine the corpse."

If your suggested action corresponds to a clue in the scenario notes, or just makes sense that it would tell you something interesting and relevant, the GM provides you the information arising from the clue.

Agent Leah Breen, chroral scientist, arrives in London in the mid-1500s and is tracking down why the feudal system in England never died out. She starts searching for clues on what is different, and the GM mentions that there are more people in London than expected. Dr. Breen's player, Raina, says, "I use History (Contemporary) to determine whether the population is unnecessarily high." "Yes," says the GM, "much higher than it should be historically." "I use Medical Expertise," says Raina. "Is there a big disease that didn't

happen?" This is all she needs to do to get the information to proceed to the next clue. "You check a cemetery," says the GM, "and based on the gravestones, it looks like the Black Death never occurred in England! Considering that it should have killed almost 2 million people, that's a big deal." Raina asks, "With my History ability, do I know where and when it first showed up?" "You do," says the GM, "a Weymouth Harbour ship dock in June 1348," and they're off onto the next scene in the adventure.

Some clues would be obvious to a trained investigator immediately upon entering a scene, such as the increased population mentioned above. These passive clues are provided by the GM without prompting. Scenarios and common sense suggest which clues are passive and which are active, but your GM will adjust these in play depending on how much guidance you seem to need. On a night when you're cooking with gas, the GM will sit back and let you prompt her for **passive clues**. When you're bogging down, she may volunteer what would normally be **active clues**.

CORE CLUES

For each scene, the GM designates at least one core clue. This is a clue you absolutely need to move to another scene, and thus to eventually complete the entire investigation. GMs will avoid making core clues available only with the use of obscure Investigative abilities. (For that matter, the character creation system is set up so that the group as a whole will have access to all, or nearly all, of these abilities.) The ability the GM designates is just one possibility, not a straitjacket — if players come up with another plausible method, the GM should give out the information. Core clues never require a spend.

In the previous example, in order to move on, the player needed to realize that England never suffered from the Black Death. This

is the core clue, uncovered with either History (Contemporary) or Medical Expertise. There are many methods for communicating this, including:

- ▶ too large a population
- ▶ prominent living people whose whole families should have died
- ▶ medical records (or talking to a physician)
- ▶ talking to any local citizen who can off-handedly mention “Europe’s Black Death that by the grace of God spared us”
- ▶ graveyards
- ▶ newspapers and local historians
- ▶ famine caused by unchecked population growth
- ▶ feudal system, with serfs, still strong and active

Once the player is on the right track, details can be handed to them as passive clues as needed. Really, the only thing that must be communicated is that there should have been a plague, there wasn’t, and history knows when that plague should have started. The players will take it from there.

SPECIAL BENEFITS

Many scenes and abilities allow you to gain **special benefits** by spending points from the relevant Investigative ability pool. These are one of the most interesting and flexible parts of your character’s abilities, and give you a special benefit or more information about a clue. During your first few scenarios, your GM may offer you the opportunity to spend additional points during play. After that it’s also up to you to ask if there’s anything to be gained by making an Investigative spend. Feel free to propose specific benefits, even if they’re not listed as examples under the ability’s description. The GM may allow it if your suggestion is persuasive or entertaining.

Each benefit usually costs either 1 or 2 points from the relevant pool, depending on the difficulty of the additional action and the scope of the reward. When asking you if you want to purchase the benefit, the GM (almost) always tells you how much it will cost. She may also give you a choice, such as “you can spend 1 point of History to befriend an important noble, or 2 points to be in the good graces of Queen Elizabeth herself.”

Additional information gained from clues provides flavor but is never required to solve the case or move on to a new scene. Often special benefits makes the character seem clever, powerful, or heroic. It may grant you advantages that become useful later in the scenario, frequently by making a favorable impression on supporting characters. The benefit may also be helpful in reducing or eliminating the inevitable fallout in the time stream after the mission’s conclusion; if you accidentally taught baseball to Revolutionary War troops and want to make sure it doesn’t ripple forward to the modern day, an Investigative point spend is one easy way to do so.

Purchasing a benefit may allow you to leap forward into the story by gaining a clue that would otherwise only become apparent in a later scene, perhaps by using time travel to your



Dr. Breen spots an anachronistic Alexandrian waiting to cure the plague before it ever reaches Britain’s shores.

advantage. On occasion, the additional information adds an emotional dimension to the story or ties into the character’s past history or civilian life. If you think of your *TimeWatch* game as a TV series, an extra benefit gives the actor playing your character a juicy spotlight scene.

“Can I tell whether anyone waiting for the ship is unusual?” asks Raina. The GM knows that this information isn’t necessary to move forward, because if she waits Raina’s character will see a bystander move forward to secretly inoculate the sick sailor. It would be impressive if she could answer the question ahead of time, however, and the GM suspects that it could cause some particularly fun twists in the adventure she’d planned.

“Do you want to spend a Medical Expertise point?” asks the GM. Raina worries that she’ll need it for disease-related spends, and proposes instead that Dr. Breen spend 1 point of Notice. The GM agrees, and Raina reduces her Notice pool from 1 to 0. That doesn’t stop her from using Notice later on to gather clues, but this is the last nifty bonus she’ll get from it during this adventure.

The GM explains as follows: “You can’t see everyone, and the fashion of the day is to be clothed in so much fabric that it’s surprising that people can ever recognize each other, but an older man further down the pier has the unmistakable profile of an Alexandrian, that Greek cult from the alternate timeline where Alexander never died and Greece rules the world. In their existence they wiped out disease, but you’re not sure why this guy is here now.”

Dr. Breen rolls her eyes. “Interfering troublemakers,” she says, and the character strides over to confront the time traveler from a parallel universe.

The act of spending points for benefits is called a **spend**. The GM’s scenario notes may specify that you get Benefit *x* for a 1-point spend or Benefit *y* for a 2-point spend. Often minor non-core information is available at no cost.

GMs who feel comfortable granting their players influence over the details of the narrative may allow them to specify the details of a special benefit.

If you wish to make a spend in a situation where the GM has no special benefit to offer you, and cannot think of one that pertains at all to the investigation, you do not lose the points you wish to spend.

NOTE THE CLUES

We’ve found in actual play that it’s best to have at least one player taking notes of active leads and clues found during an investigation. We haven’t found a group where at least one person isn’t keen to do this. If no one wishes to, the GM should be liberal about occasionally summarizing known clues for the players. The Agents’ tethers may have perfect recall, after all, but players don’t.

ZERO-POINT CLUES

Not all free information is a core clue. If you have a rating in an ability, your character is highly skilled in that ability, and the GM will give you a lot of relevant information without any spend — anything a character with that ability would know. Not all of it is necessarily key to solving the mystery.

INCONSPICUOUS CLUES

Sometimes the characters instinctively notice something without actively looking for it. Often this situation occurs in places they’re moving through casually and don’t regard as scenes in need of intensive searching. The team might pass by a concealed door, spot the slight bulge of a laser pistol beneath an Old West gunslinger’s leather duster, or approach a vehicle with a bomb planted beneath it. When in doubt for what ability to use for a basic search, the GM defaults to Notice. Interpersonal abilities can also be used to find inconspicuous clues. The classic example is of a character whose demeanor or behavioral tics establish them as suspicious.

It’s unreasonable for the GM to expect players to ask to use their various abilities in what appears to be an innocuous transitional scene. Otherwise, they’d have to spend minutes of game time with every change of scene, running down their

abilities in obsessive checklist fashion. That way lies madness.

Instead, the GM picks the most narratively appropriate character who has that ability, picks the character with the ability who hasn’t done anything cool in the longest amount of time, or asks which character has the highest current pool in the ability in question. If two or more pools are equal, it goes to the one with the highest rating. If ratings are also equal, their characters find the clue at the same time.

Dr. Breen has retired to the local pub, where she’s joined by Mace Hunter. Together they discuss their options for making sure the Black Death happens on schedule. Before their beer can reach their table, the waitress is intercepted by a less ethical Alexandrian who intends to drug both Agents. The GM decides that the Spying ability will alert them to a suspicious delay in their waitress’ arrival. Both characters have the ability; Dr. Breen has 1 point in her pool, while Mace has 2.

“Mace,” says the GM, “your drinks really should have been here by now. You look up, and the waitress has just finished talking to a customer whose face you can’t see. He’s blocking your view of the beer tray. He then heads straight for the door without looking around, which could be considered a bit odd, but here comes the waitress with your foaming beer.”

“Foaming more than normal?” Mace asks. The GM knows that Dr. Breen has multiple points in Science!, and that Science! includes chemistry.

“Oh yeah,” says the GM. “Dr. Breen, something may have been added.”

“Dammil,” says Mace, “and I was thirsty, too.”

SIMPLE SEARCHES

Many clues can be found without any ability whatsoever. If an ordinary person could credibly find a clue simply by looking in a specified place, the clue discovery occurs automatically. You, the reader, wouldn’t need to be a trained investigator to notice a bloody footprint on your carpet, a futuristic rifle tossed in your rubbish bin, or 300 bewildered Spartan warriors laying siege to Paramus, New Jersey. By that same logic, your character doesn’t require specific abilities to notice such things, either. When you specify that your character is searching an area for clues, you’re performing what we call a **simple search**.

In other GUMSHOE games, simple searches usually involve searching a physical location for clues. In *TimeWatch*, simple searches more often involve searching a particular era and location for clues about what in history has changed. Both are effectively the same, just with a different scope.

The GM will vary the way she runs simple searches according to pacing needs and the preferences of your group. Some players like to feel that their characters are interacting with the imaginary environment. To suit them, she’ll use a call-and-response format, describing the scene in a way that suggests places to look. The player prompts back by zeroing in on a detail, at which point she reveals the clue:

GM: “As your antochron cycles in and the purple light fades away, you’re standing in an abandoned tenement building in Berlin.

The year is 1865, and it's winter. What time of day do you want it to be?"

Player: "Night? This is where TimeWatch suggested we start. I'll go buy or find the local newspaper and do a quick scan to see if anything jumps out."

GM: "Sure. Oddly, there's no one on the street — and I mean pretty much no one. Buildings have lights, but there isn't a single pedestrian. You can see a guard standing under a lantern at the end of the block."

Player: "Can I see what uniform he's wearing?"

GM: "A high-tech flak jacket, and his machine gun has a laser sight."

At other times, or for players less interested in these small moments of discovery, she might cut straight to the chase:

GM: "You arrive in Berlin in 1865, as you wanted, but you may not want to immediately leave cover; the Prussian guard outside down the street is sporting a machine gun with a laser sight. That's... unusual for 1865. What do you do?"

In the first case, the player who first voices interest in the detail finds the clue. In the second, at the GM's discretion, it goes to:

- ▶ the character to whom the clue seems most thematically suited (for example, if it's established as a running joke that Agent Hunter always stumbles on the really disgusting clues, and this clue is disgusting, your GM will tell his player the bad news)
- ▶ a player who hasn't had a win or spotlight time for a while
- ▶ the character with the highest rating in the appropriate Investigative ability

TIME TRAVEL

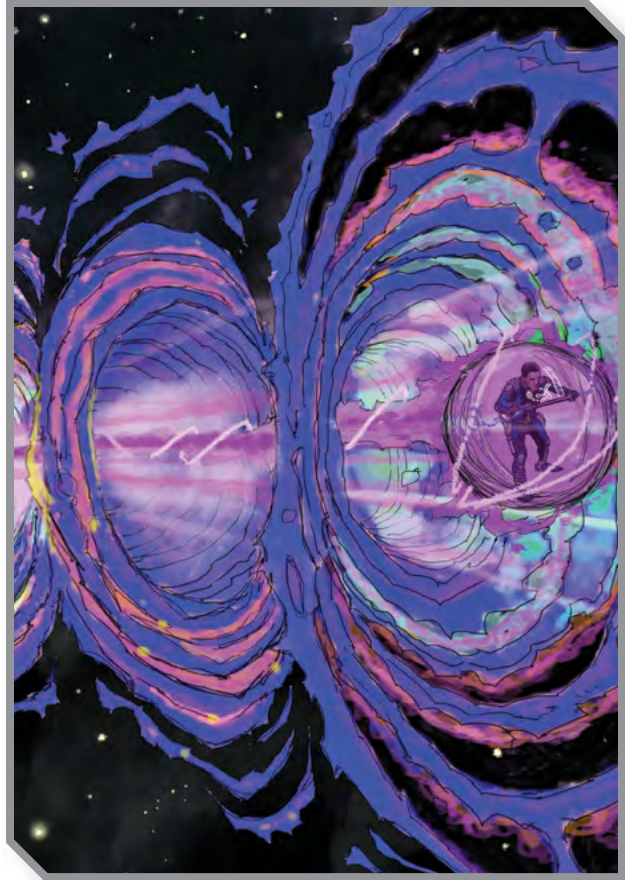
Time machine functions, effects, and logistics may vary with types of time travel and GM fiat. Time machines are detailed on p. 64 and 110.

THE TRAVEL TEST

Every instance of time travel requires a **Travel test**, a simple Difficulty 4 / Loss 2 Paradox test described on p. 89. Effectively, roll a d6; roll 1–3, and lose 2 points of Chronal Stability. Paying a Stitch per trip bypasses the need for a Travel test.

HOW TIME MACHINES WORK

The autochron, TimeWatch's standard time machine, usually lands you exactly *when* you want to arrive with split-second accuracy, along with a physical accuracy that's close



Kelfala's autochron tunnels its way through an endless ocean of time.

but not precisely *where* you're aiming for. Intended arrival locations get less accurate the farther in time you travel, and autochrons are programmed to seek out arrival spots that are unobserved by locals (although this can be overridden as needed). You can teleport with an autochron, moving physically but not in time. A Travel test is still required.

When autochrons clock out from a location within two rounds of each other, only one needs to set a destination time and space. The others can automatically follow the first time machine to depart. This can be used to pursue someone attempting to flee you; see time chases on p. 76 for details.

No accuracy roll is needed to time travel with an autochron, and autochrons typically require no fuel. After completing a jump, autochrons require two full rounds to recycle their power before they can time travel again. This is usually only relevant in time chases and cases where an Agent wishes to clock in, steal something, and clock back out.

Skegg needs to steal a famous diamond to run a scam on a 19th-century Indian maharajah. She makes a Travel test and clocks into the treasure vault where it is kept, hoping to get it and get out quickly. Her autochron spends the next two rounds recycling, so Skegg will be able to make another Travel test and clock out with the gem on her third round or later.

Rarely (and purely at the GM's discretion), chronal storms and temporal interference make autochrons malfunction or be less accurate than normal. When that occurs, your arrival time and location may be different than you expect.

STITCHES: TIMEWATCH'S ACTION POINTS

It's been said that in GUMSHOE games your entire character sheet is made out of action points: spend your pools, get better results on your dice. *TimeWatch* is no exception, so *TimeWatch*'s actual action points (called **Stitches**, as in "a stitch in time saves nine") are a little different. Representing a time traveler's minor control of the vicissitudes of time, Stitches speed up or slow down action. They allow you to hang on longer in an action scene, or to raise or lower combat damage.

DISTRIBUTION

The GM puts a bowl out on the table with 3 markers in it (such as poker chips or glass beads) for every player at the table, excluding the GM. (For instance, 5 players = 15 chips.) The GM doesn't refill this when it empties out, but spent Stitches are returned to the center bowl. In a virtual game held online, the GM simply puts the markers next to her computer and removes them from or puts them back into the pile when they're handed out or used.

Players automatically start the game with 1 Stitch each.

When someone makes the table laugh, follows their Drive, roleplays superbly, solves a clever clue, keeps a team moving through an investigation, or makes the game better for other players, they should get a Stitch from the bowl in the middle of the table. As a player you can't give one to yourself, but you're encouraged (and pretty much required) to hand out Stitches from the central bowl to other players, thus ensuring that a distracted GM isn't the only person granting them. Giving another player a Stitch is a way of saying "that was cool!" or "you were awesome." Pay attention to the other players at the table; you'll always have one player who is quieter than the rest, and make sure they're rewarded for interacting as well.

The most important thing to remember here is that you don't need the GM's approval every time you hand a Stitch to another player. She'll thank you for taking the initiative, and can always tell you if she thinks they're being handed out too often or too seldom. If so, you can adjust from there.

Your GM may also hand out Stitches if she makes a narrative decision that disadvantages a PC for the good of the plot. If she decides that an explosion knocks the group out and that you wake up captured, because the game is more fun to start a scene that way, she'll hand out one or more Stitches to anyone affected. This should be used sparingly by GMs, but is a good balance for rewarding players if their characters are disadvantaged for the good of the game.

It's up to the GM how many Stitches a player can have at one time; this is called the **hoarding limit**. In most

GM ADVICE: TWEAKING THE HOARD

If you wish, the hoarding limit may rise to 5 in a *Pulp* game, *Humor* game, or in any less gritty campaign frame. Just be aware that as the limit rises, antagonists becomes less dangerous, characters become *more* dangerous, and players are able to more easily refresh their General ability pools on the fly. More Stitches means fewer hard choices for players to make, so play becomes less challenging (and possibly less fun) as the hoarding limit rises.

A less extreme house rule allows players to have 4 Stitches at once, but only if the 4th Stitch comes from a player's own personal hoard. It's a way of saying "that was amazing!" that has a personal cost.

For grittier or horror-filled games, limit Agent resources by dropping the hoarding limit to 2 or fewer.

games, the hoarding limit is usually 3 at once. If you're at your hoarding limit, you must spend one or more Stitches before you can earn any more. If someone tries to hand you a Stitch when you're already at the hoarding limit, you can immediately spend one or more of your existing Stitches to refresh pool points, and then accept the newly proffered one.

You'll probably have the most fun when Stitches flow frequently and you don't hoard too many at once. Players should endeavor to not end the game with any Stitches; they don't carry over from game to game, even if the mission isn't complete at the end of a play session. GMs should endeavor to award more Stitches at the very beginning of a mission, to remind players what they're for, and fewer as the adventure progresses. The other players will likely be handling it for the GM by then.

WHAT STITCHES DO

Stitches can be used for five things: slightly refreshing a pool, aiding another character through teamwork, simplifying time travel, boosting your weapon damage, or reducing weapon damage inflicted on you. The Teamwork benefit aside, you can never normally spend Stitches on behalf of someone else.

Pool Refreshes: At any time, spend one or more Stitches to refresh one or more General ability pools by 2 points per Stitch.

After an extended fight that exhausted his resources, Uurrk's player decides to spend 3 Stitches on pool refreshes. He could refresh

Athletics, Shooting, and Scuffling by 2 points each; he could refresh Athletics by 6 points; or he could refresh 4 points of one pool and 2 points of another.

This is the primary way that you refresh your General pools. You can never exceed your ability's rating; for instance, if your Scuffling rating is 5 and you're down to 0, spending 3 Stitches on refreshes will bring it back up to 5 and no higher. This is specifically a refresh, not a bonus to a roll.

Vidhvansaka needs to open a Difficulty 5 locked door. Her Burglary rating is 3, and she hasn't used any points yet, so her current Burglary pool is 3 as well. She currently has 3 Stitches that she's earned. Spending all 3 Burglary points gives her +3 on her Burglary roll and brings her pool to 0. She rolls a 1, however, and 1 + 3 is less than the Difficulty of 5, so she fails to open the lock (and can't retry unless she improves her odds; see Simple Tests on p. 70). She can spend 1 of her 3 Stitches to refresh her Burglary pool back up to 2, or spend 2 Stitches to refresh it fully up to 3 (losing the extra point). Stitches don't add extra points to her die roll, so she's stuck with the failure.

Stitches can never restore points to any Investigative pool, to Health (which is restored with the Medic ability), or to Chronal Stability (which is restored with the Reality Anchor ability).

Teamwork: Teamwork is a fast, easy way to give an ally +1 on a roll. As long as you can explain to the GM how you're helping, you can spend 2 Stitches to slightly aid another player in a General ability test. Spend 2 Stitches before or after the other player rolls his die, and you give him a +1 bonus on the die roll. This is the only method in the game for giving a bonus after the die is already rolled, and the bonus cannot be greater than +1. The GM can disallow this if she feels your description of how you're helping wouldn't work.

At the GM's discretion, and if it makes sense, multiple players can use teamwork to help the same character before they roll their die. This is different from the Cooperation rules on p. 71 in that it doesn't require an action, can be done on someone else's turn, and provides a maximum bonus of +1 per assisting character.

Dr. Breen is trying to disarm a nuclear bomb that is seconds from going off. Uurrk doesn't know much about bombs, but he's willing to try and help. He grunts, "No big fire big pain!" as he points to what he believes is the right wire. Uurrk's player spends 2 Stitches, and Dr. Breen gains a +1 bonus on her difficult Tinkering test to disarm the bomb.

Simplify Time Travel: Normally, every instance of time travel requires characters to make a Travel test to avoid losing 2 points of Chronal Stability (see p. 74). Spending a Stitch when time traveling negates the need to make a Travel test. You can't spend a Stitch to negate other Paradox tests, though.

Boost Combat Damage: You can spend Stitches after rolling the damage die to increase damage inflicted on a 1-for-1 basis. Successfully punch someone for 1d6 - 1,

GM ADVICE: WHEN STITCHES AREN'T QUITE ENOUGH

We guarantee that your players will be thinking, "How am I going to recharge my pools enough to be effective?" A few pools are recharged automatically after a 24-hour rest (see p. 67), and Health slowly recovers 2 points per day with extended rest, but most General pools require Stitches to refresh. We want the players to manage their resources and feel a sense of danger, but there's always a balance to this. One challenge we saw during playtesting is that Stitch distribution by the players slowed down near the end of each session. That might leave your characters resource-starved going into an important scene. In addition, some groups are hesitant to reward Stitches for good play.

If this happens in your group, feel no hesitation about helping players refresh depleted pools by giving all players extra Stitches. We recommend a bonus of 2 or 3 Stitches at a time, once or twice per session at most; players who already have Stitches when this bonus is granted can avoid the hoarding limit by spending any extra ones immediately. You can reward this bonus at any time, preferably just before or just after the characters do something momentous. It will give them a small resource boost when they need it most, and you can easily skip it when you feel the players aren't resource deprived.

spend 3 Stitches, and your damage is instead 1d6 + 2. This has no effect on Pacifist Stun tests (see p. 110) or other non-damage effects.

Reduce Combat Damage: After you've been told how much Health damage your character has just taken, you can spend Stitches on a 1-for-1 basis to reduce damage that's inflicted on you. Spend 3 Stitches, for instance, and take 3 points less damage. This has no effect on Pacifist Stun tests or other non-damage effects.

Describing the Effect

Because Stitches represent your Agent's ability to slightly manipulate time, you're encouraged to describe the effect every time you use one or more Stitches to affect damage. You may describe your fist suddenly accelerating to supersonic speed when you empty your hoard of Stitches and boost your Scuffling damage by +3 points, or you

WHAT DO POOL POINTS REPRESENT?

Pool points are a literary abstraction, representing the way that characters get their own time in the spotlight in the course of an ensemble drama. When you do something remarkable, you expend a little bit of your spotlight time. More active players will spend their points sooner than less demonstrative ones, unless they carefully pick and choose their moments to shine.

Remember, TimeWatch characters are remarkably competent. Pool points measure your opportunities to exercise this ultra-competence during any given scenario. Even when pools are empty, you still have a reasonable chance to succeed at a test, and you'll always get the information you need to move forward in the case.

Pool points do not represent a resource, tangible or otherwise, in the game world. Players are aware of them, but characters are not. The Agents' ignorance of them is analogous to sci-fi characters' obliviousness to chapter breaks, the unwritten rules of scene construction, and the tendency of cliffhangers to occur at season-ending episodes.

However, where a pool could be seen to correspond to a resource perceptible to the characters, we handle refreshment a little more realistically. Characters' ebbing Health scores are perceptible to the characters in the form of welts, cuts, pain, and general fatigue¹. Chronal Stability is less tangible but can be subjectively measured in the characters' ability to feel connected to a new timeline, resisting the universe's attempt to eradicate the paradox of time travel.

Physical abilities like Shooting, Scuffling, Athletics, and Vehicles also depend on sharpness of reflexes; taking a little R & R in the middle of a mission after a big gunfight is reasonable, because the characters know they're tired and stressed, even if they don't know that their Shooting pool is down to 0. Doing something amazing in a fight might earn the player a Stitch, but as far as the character knows, they've gotten a last-minute boost of hope or determination that spurs them on to even greater action.

¹ We use Health to show how likely it is that a character is going to die horribly. A supporting character with 1 Health might be badass, but will drop the first time he's hit because either he's not important to the narrative, or his death is.

may describe your foe's bullet slowing down so much that it barely hurts you when you subtract 3 from the Shooting damage you take. Description isn't mandatory, but it does make the game more fun. Describe it well enough, and you may earn another one on the spot.

REGAINING POOL POINTS

Spent points from various pools are restored at different rates, depending on their narrative purpose.

REFRESHING GENERAL POOLS ON THE FLY

Stitches can be turned in at any time to refresh any General ability pool (other than Health and Chronal Stability) by 2 points per Stitch. GMs may reward superlative play by granting additional Stitches, allowing for more refreshes. In either case, pools can never be refreshed higher than their initial rating.

REGAINING GENERAL POOL POINTS AFTER RESTING

Pools for the physical abilities of Athletics, Scuffling, Shooting, and Vehicles are fully restored whenever 24 hours of game-world time elapses since the last expenditure. The remaining General abilities refresh at the end of each case, like Investigative abilities.

Injured characters may attempt to use their autochrons and escape from a fight mid-combat, only to spend several restful days elsewhere in time and return seconds after they left with their combat pools restored. Fortune may favor the bold, but this valid tactic is made extremely dangerous by the time chase rules (p. 76) and the vulnerability of active time machines (see p. 110). Escaping mid-combat is a good method for breaking your time machine, but it's incredibly effective if you can get away with it.

REGAINING INVESTIGATIVE POOL POINTS

Investigative ability pools are restored only at the end of each mission, without regard to the amount of time that passes in the game world. Players seeking to marshal their resources may ask you how long missions typically run in real time. Most groups finish scenarios over two to three sessions. Players may revise their sense of how carefully to manage point spending as they see how quickly their group typically disposes of its missions.

GMs running extremely long, multipart investigations may designate certain story events as break points where all Investigative pools are refreshed. For example, a time-hopping investigation where the team deals with choral catastrophes in five different eras might allow refreshment of Investigative pools after each choral disaster is repaired.

REGAINING HEALTH AND CHRONAL STABILITY POOL POINTS

You can't directly refresh Health through the use of Stitches. Instead, use the Medic ability to restore Health points to yourself or others over the course of a session. The Health pool also refreshes over time, at a rate of 2 points per day of restful activity. (Seriously Wounded characters heal at a different rate, over a period of hospitalization; see p. 87.)

You can't directly refresh Chronal Stability through the use of Stitches. Instead, use the Reality Anchor ability to restore Chronal Stability points to yourself or others over the course of a session. Full refreshment otherwise only occurs between missions. It is possible only when the character is able to spend calm, undisturbed quality time with friends and loved ones; for instance, an Agent who chooses to stay in a war zone at mission's end may not automatically recover any lost Chronal Stability. In campaigns where the teammates' personal lives are a matter of background detail only, Chronal Stability automatically refreshes between missions. If a character has permanently lost Chronal Stability rating points due to being Subsumed (see p. 95), these points never refresh and can only be restored with build points gained from completing missions.



TESTS

A test occurs when the outcome of an ability use is in doubt. Tests apply to General abilities only. Unlike information-gathering attempts, tests carry a fairly high chance of failure. They may portend dire consequences if you lose, provide advantages if you win, or both.

There are several types of test: simple tests, continuing challenges, player-facing contests, and full contests (including chases and time chases).

DIE ROLLS

All die rolls in GUMSHOE use a single ordinary (six-sided) die.

GENERAL ADVICE

Success at a Cost

Generally speaking, failure is boring and consequences are interesting. Make failure more interesting by putting Agents at a disadvantage.

Where it is essential to overcome an obstacle to reach a core scene, and the obstacle requires a test, the question stops being “will they succeed?” and becomes instead “how successful are they?” In these cases the GM should allow success whatever the result but give a negative consequence other than flat-out failure for the test. For example, the character sneaks onto the rogue starship but is injured, recorded on sensors, beamed to the ship's brig, or something similar. This rule never protects characters from Health or Chronal Stability Loss.

This is an incredibly useful technique to keep a game moving, and can be useful even when the Agents are not moving towards a core scene. If the characters try to climb a wall and fail, perhaps they still get over the wall but trip a silent alarm or twist an ankle on the way down. If they fail their Burglary test to open a door, they succeed in opening the door but alert the people on the other side. If they fail their Unobtrusiveness test to infiltrate a Roman stronghold, they're noticed but are accidentally mistaken for incredibly high profile and well-known personages.

You're encouraged to give players a difficult choice in these circumstances. “You failed your Athletics test, but you can smash through the locked door anyways if you don't mind them getting a free shot” lets the players decide what is most important to them.

Difficulty Numbers and Story Pacing

Just as the GUMSHOE system keeps the story moving by making all crucial clues accessible to the characters, GMs must ensure that tests and contests *essential* to forward narrative momentum can be overcome, albeit with consequences for

SPOTTING HIDDEN THINGS

Unless noted otherwise, *TimeWatch* has a fairly simple rule for noticing something hidden that isn't a clue:

Spot something hidden with the General ability that was used to hide it.

That's only true for non-clues. If something is not key to the mystery, the GM may ask one or more players to make a simple test on a particular ability. Don't be surprised if she doesn't tell you what the roll is for first.

For example, while working to stop an early assassination of Caesar, Dr. Breen is about to get into a Roman chariot that is wired with a high-tech car bomb. Burglary was used to hide it, so the GM asks Dr. Breen's player to roll a Burglary test for an unspecified reason. On a 4 or higher, the bomb is spotted in time to avoid the worst of the explosion.

If the character possesses 1 or more points of the Notice ability, the player at this point may choose to spend 1 point to gain +3 to their roll (often making it automatically) as an **Alertness Modifier**. This is particularly useful if, in the example above, Dr. Breen has no points in Burglary but her player would really prefer not be taken unawares. We know it's a little metagamey, but GMs should allow it and offer the choice anyways; Investigative points are scarce resources that are there to be spent, and there are few better ways to show that someone is sharp-eyed than being able to Notice something they would have normally missed.

This rule applies to ambushes, stealth, and surprising others as well. If someone is hiding with Unobtrusiveness to ambush you (see *Surprise* on p. 79), roll a simple test of Unobtrusiveness to not be surprised. Your hiding enemy's **Stealth Modifier** (if any) adds to the Difficulty of the test, and any Alertness Modifier you have (usually by spending a Notice point) adds to your roll.

Likewise, you can Surprise an antagonist by making a simple Unobtrusiveness test to hide or ambush them; their Alertness Modifier (if any) adds to the Difficulty of the test, and any Stealth Modifier you have, such as the bonus from an Agent's impersonator mesh, applies to your roll.

Using his impersonator mesh to blend in with the bushes, Mace Hunter sneaks up on a rogue Tyrannosaurus rex. Mace normally needs to make a Difficulty 4 Unobtrusiveness test. T. rex have an Alertness Modifier of +1, raising the Difficulty to 5, but Mace's impersonator mesh gives him a +3 Stealth Modifier until he draws attention to himself. So long as he rolls a 2 or higher on his Unobtrusiveness test he'll succeed, so Mace spends 1 point from his pool to guarantee success.

None of this applies to gathering clues. Clues, as always, are simply and automatically gathered by telling the GM you're using an Investigative ability.

poor rolls. Assign relatively low Difficulty Numbers of 4 or less to these crucial plot points, and reserve especially hard Difficulty Numbers for obstacles which provide interesting but nonessential benefits. Should Agents roll poorly when trying to reach an essential plot point, even against the easier-than-normal target number, they'll succeed but suffer some consequence.

The characters have to sneak onto a starship to confront a cocky young captain who has come back in time to kidnap some whales, so the GM assigns the relatively low Difficulty Number of 3 to the task's Unobtrusiveness test. That gets them onto the starship, where the interesting part of the adventure takes place. If one or more of the Agents fails this even lower-than-normal Difficulty, a self-interested starship crew member notices them and (instead

of reporting them, as he should) tries to find a way to steal their advanced technology for his own use.

Only Roll When It's Important

Even in the case of General abilities, **the GM should call for tests only at dramatically important points in the story**, and for tasks of exceptional difficulty. We can't emphasize that enough. Most General ability uses should allow automatic successes, with possible bonuses on point spends, just like Investigative abilities. For instance, a Vehicles roll is not needed unless the Agent's car is being chased; an Unobtrusiveness roll is not called for unless someone important could notice that the Agents are somewhere that they aren't normally allowed.

If you want the Agents to expend resources but there's no time pressure or risk of failure, call for a General spend instead.

General Spends

Occasionally you'll want to create a task at which there is no reasonable chance of failure, but which should cost the characters a degree of effort. To do this, simply charge the character(s) a number of points from relevant General ability pools; 1 or 2 points per character is a reasonable General spend, so a team of four Agents would usually need to reach a target between Difficulty 4 to Difficulty 8 for most tasks. Where tasks can be performed by a team effort, multiple characters may contribute points to them.

"You want to break in to the general's home, and you've used time travel to go to a time when there's no one home? Clever. Spending 6 Burglary points gets you past his antiquated security, and I don't care who or how many people they come from."

SIMPLE TESTS

A simple test occurs when the character attempts an action without active resistance from another person or entity. Examples include driving a treacherous road, jumping a gorge, sneaking into an unguarded building, shooting a target, disconnecting a security system, or clinging to reality in the face of a parallel universe alien horror.

The GM determines how hard any given action is by assigning it a Difficulty Number ranging from 2 to 8 or more, where 2 offers only a slim chance of failure and 8 is exceptionally difficult; the default Difficulty Number is 4. The player rolls a single die; if the result is equal to or higher than the Difficulty Number, the character succeeds. Before rolling the die, the player may choose to spend any number of points from the relevant ability pool, adding these to the final die result. Players who forget to specify the number of points they want to spend before rolling are stuck with the unmodified result.

Difficulty	Example
3 — Easy	Sneaking past a sleeping guard
4 — Normal	Sneaking past an awake guard
5 — Hard	Sneaking past an awake, alert guard
6 — Very Hard	Sneaking past an awake, alert guard with a guard dog
8 — Exceptionally Difficult	Infiltrating an integrated high-tech security system that includes guards, laser tripwires, infrared cameras, floor sensors, and video surveillance

In the game world, expenditure of pool points in this way represents special effort and concentration by the character,

the kind you can muster only so many times during the course of an investigation.

Altani, Genghis Khan's daughter who has been recruited by TimeWatch, wants to sneak into one of Napoleon's military compounds to see if it's hiding anachronistic rocket launchers. To do so she needs to use Burglary to open a locked gate. The GM needs the group to get into the compound and therefore assigns the relatively low Difficulty Number of 3 to the task. Altani's player, Peggy, has 6 points in her Burglary pool. She decides that she really wants to succeed and she doesn't know the exact target Difficulty she needs to reach, so she spends 3 points on the attempt. She rolls a 4. With the 3 points from her pool, this gets a final result of 7. With silent and efficient competence, Altani picks the lock and opens the gate for her fellow Agents.

The TimeWatch setting is generally meant to be action-packed, not horrific or terrifying, but player resource management matters. The GM should usually not reveal exact Difficulty Numbers, but when the information would be evident to the player the GM should indicate whether they are easier, harder, or much harder than normal.

"Can I hit him with a throwing knife from here?"

"Throwing knives work best at Close range. He's on the other side of the street on a roof, just barely in Near range. It's possible, but harder than normal."

We don't recommend it other than on a case-by-case basis, but GMs running GUMSHOE who wish to alleviate any player uncertainty or nervousness about point spends may choose to reveal Difficulties. A further discussion of this recommendation, and times you should flat-out ignore it, are discussed on p. 219.

The test represents the character's best chance to succeed. Once you fail, you've done your best and cannot retry unless you take some other supporting action that would credibly increase your odds of success¹. If allowed to do this, you must spend more pool points than you did on the previous attempt. If you can't afford it, you can't retry.

Dr. Breen has rigged up some improvised explosives with her Tinkering ability, and intends to use them to sink an anachronistic 20th-century warship that is playing merry hell with the Battle of Trafalgar. With the explosives already in place thanks to her teammates, she attempts to explode them remotely. She gets cocky and spends 2 points from her Tinkering pool on this attempt but rolls a 1, totaling 3 — a failure against the Difficulty Number of 5. The GM decides Dr. Breen will have one more shot at it before the ship is out of remote detonation range. Now Dr. Breen must spend at least 3 Tinkering points. Fortunately she has 4 points left in her pool. The Agent declares that she's amplifying the radio signal with her tether, smacks the remote detonator a few times ("You have to show technology who's boss," she mutters), spends all 4 remaining points and rolls a 6, with a final result of 10. The warship

¹ Unless you're using Scuffling, Shooting, or similar abilities in combat. Shoot at someone and miss, and just as you'd expect, you can shoot at him again on your next turn.

explodes spectacularly, and TimeWatch beads in to collect survivors and hide the evidence.

Piggybacking

When characters act in concert to perform a task together, they designate one to take the lead. That character makes a simple test, spending any number of his own pool points toward the task, as usual. All other characters pay just 1 point from their relevant pools to gain the benefits of the leader's action. These points are not added to the leader's die result. For every character who is unable to pay this Piggybacking cost, either because he lacks pool points or does not have the ability at all, the Difficulty Number of the attempt increases by 2.

Altani, Dr. Breen, Uurrk, and Mace Hunter attempt to infiltrate Area 51 to determine whether the supposed alien crash landing was caused by a time traveler. They disguise themselves to look like soldiers. Uurrk, with a Disguise of 8, takes the lead. Altani, Dr. Breen, and Mace have 4, 0, and 2 points left in their Disguise pools, respectively. Altani and Mace pay 1 point apiece; their pools go down to 3 and 1. Because Dr. Breen has no points left to spend, the Difficulty Number of the Disguise test increases from 4 to 6. (If the group left her behind, it would be easier to stroll in, but she's the one with the Science! knowledge.) Uurrk spends 4 points on the attempt and rolls a 1. This would have overcome the Difficulty if it wasn't for Dr. Breen's presence. Clearly something looks wrong as the group passes through the gate, alerting the guards that they might require further investigation.

In most instances a group cannot logically act in concert. Two characters with Preparedness test their gear for an item in sequence rather than checking at the same time. Only one character can drive a car at a time. Note, however, that a character with the Keep Up Booster (from a Vehicles rating of 8 or higher; see p. 52) can allow allies to Piggyback on their Vehicles rolls during a chase or a time chase.

Cooperation

When two characters Cooperate toward a single goal, they agree which of them is undertaking the task directly, and which is assisting. The leader may spend any number of points from her pool, adding them to the die roll. The assistant may pay any number of points from his pool. All but one of these is applied to the die roll.

Dr. Breen and Mace Hunter have had their autochrons stolen in 1942 Casablanca, and they're trying to repair a badly damaged old motorcycle so they can escape on it before soldiers arrive to arrest them. Dr. Breen has 3 points left in her Tinkering pool. Mace has 2 points. They decide that Dr. Breen is the main mechanic, and Mace her assistant. Both choose to spend all of their remaining points on the attempt. Dr. Breen adds 3 points to the die roll. Mace spends 2 points, but adds only 1 to the die roll. Dr. Breen's player rolls a 3, for a result of 7. This beats the Difficulty Number of 6, allowing them to zoom away on the back of the old bike as Nazi soldiers sprint towards them.

For a different method of assisting team members, see *Teamwork* on p. 66.

CONTINUING CHALLENGES

Some tasks, such as battering down a door or disabling a complex security system, simply take more time than a single test represents, whether that test takes a round or a day of effort. Continuing challenges make sense any time there's a task that both logically and dramatically should require productive, repeated effort. For these continuing challenges, assign the obstacle a Target Difficulty representing the base Difficulty of doing it all at once unaided: this will generally be 8 or higher, often much higher.

Kelfala is alone in the 24th century, and his Adversary just piloted her space ship into a nebula in an attempt to escape him. He decides to try and track her. Without any obvious trail to follow, the GM sets the Target Difficulty of successfully following her at an arbitrarily high 15.

The Difficulty you set should be predicated on how difficult you think the task is, or how long you think it should take. Kicking down a reinforced door would take less than a minute, while digging your way out of a collapsed tunnel might take hours. You might assign a Difficulty of 16 to the door (four successful Difficulty 4 tests) and a Difficulty of 40 to the tunnel (ten successful tests).

The players may take turns, Cooperate on each action, or use any other means at their disposal in a series of Difficulty 4 tests: Athletics to batter down a door, or Burglary (if they have the Hacking Investigative ability) to penetrate a complex security system, for example. Some tasks may allow more than one ability to be used. Difficulties may also be higher or lower than 4, as the GM chooses. Add up the totals for each successful test; when this running total equals or exceeds the Target Difficulty, the characters succeed. No points or rolls spent on a failed test add to the total. As with simple tests, once a test with a particularly ability is failed, that ability may not be reused unless you take some action that increases your chance of success.

Kelfala's Target Difficulty to find his Adversary in the nebula is 15. With the GM's okay, he decides to use Tinkering to boost the sensitivity of his ship's sensors. He spends 0 points from his Tinkering pool of 3, and rolls a successful 6. That's a 6 total, and the GM says he gets a faint result. He thinks he's on her trail.

He tries again, spending 1 Tinkering point this time. He rolls a 2 and fails. This failure adds nothing to his total, which remains 6 out of 15, and he can't use Tinkering again unless he increases his odds.

Annoyed and worried that she might escape, he moves his ship into the nebula to improve his chance of success. The GM lets him add this Vehicles test to his total. He spends 2 Vehicles and rolls a 3, so his Vehicles test is a successful 5 and his total is now 11.

Now in a better sensor position, Kelfala spends his last 2 points of Tinkering and rolls a 5; 7 + 11 is 18, more than enough to succeed. Kelfala's out of Tinkering points, but he knows where in

the nebula her ship is hiding. He dons a space suit, fires up his autochron and clocks back 20 minutes to her ship's hidden location. She's going to get a very big surprise when she finds out Kelfala is both chasing her and already there waiting for her at the same time...

Some tasks are just impossible no matter how many tests you make: tearing open a vault door barehanded, for example.

PLAYER-FACING CONTESTS

Player-facing contests work exactly the same as simple tests: you roll against a Difficulty, and spend ability pool points to add to your die roll. The one difference: there are no “retries” against active opposition. If you fail, you either suffer the consequences immediately or kick the contest up to a full contest as your enemy gets a chance to counter your failed action.

It's called a “player facing” contest because the GM doesn't roll. To see if an Agent surprises an antagonist, the player makes an Unobtrusiveness test. To see if an Agent is surprised, the player also makes an Unobtrusiveness test, since you spot something hidden with the General ability that was used to hide it. The player character's fate — the die roll and any spent points — is entirely in the player's hands. The Difficulty in a player-facing contest is usually 4, unless the GM shifts it up or down. Often, this shift appears in her notes as either an Alertness Modifier or a Stealth Modifier. These modify the player character's Difficulty in the contest.

Alertness Modifier

An antagonist's Alertness Modifier represents their ability to sense your activities, whether through standard senses like sight and hearing, or exotic ones like radar or telepathy. When you try to sneak past your antagonist, their Alertness Modifier is applied to your base Difficulty (usually 4) of your Unobtrusiveness test.

The ability used might vary from Unobtrusiveness. For instance, try to surreptitiously pilot a stolen shuttlecraft into an Adversary's massive space station, and their Alertness Modifier might apply to your Vehicles test.

Alertness Modifiers also apply to Unobtrusiveness tests when you're trying to observe the antagonist without being observed in turn, when they're trying to do the same to you, or when you're using Burglary to enter a building without alerting the guards. The GM might also apply an Alertness Modifier to tests of Burglary, Disguise, or any other activity you covertly attempt under potential observation.

Spending an Investigative point of Notice typically gives a brief +3 boost to an Alertness Modifier.

The Alertness Modifier reflects all of the antagonist's sensing capabilities: natural, psychic, and technological. A drug-addled guard or a sleeping alien entity might have a negative Alertness Modifier, making your Difficulty lower and your contest easier.

The guard dog has a +3 Alertness Modifier due to keen hearing and a heightened sense of smell. Altani's Unobtrusiveness Difficulty

to sneak across the guard compound rises from 4 to 7. There's also a guard, but he's asleep and has an Alertness Modifier of -1; the Unobtrusiveness Difficulty to sneak past him is only 3.

Stealth Modifier

An antagonist with a positive Stealth Modifier is significantly harder to spot with Unobtrusiveness, and an antagonist with a negative Stealth Modifier is easier to spot; the modifier alters the Difficulty Number for that or similar tests. In keeping with GUMSHOE's player-facing approach, the Stealth Modifier appears in lieu of an antagonist's Unobtrusiveness. Instead of rolling Unobtrusiveness for an antagonist, have an observing player character make an Unobtrusiveness test against a Difficulty of 4, adjusted by the Stealth Modifier.

The Stealth Modifier might also apply to Burglary tests made to steal or hide things, and conversely, Burglary tests made to notice that something has been stolen or hidden. Spending 1 point of the Investigative ability Spying is a common way to temporarily gain a +3 Stealth Modifier.

Impersonator mesh (see p. 111) is standard issue equipment that grants a +3 Stealth Modifier for Agents who have not otherwise attracted attention.

Altani's impersonator mesh gives her a +3 Stealth Modifier until she attracts attention to herself, so she gains +3 on her Unobtrusiveness test to be stealthy. Overconfident, she spends no points and rolls a 1 on her Unobtrusiveness test, so the guard dog with its Alertness Modifier of +3 notices her regardless. The dog has a +1 Stealth Modifier because it has been trained to attack silently; the Difficulty of Altani's Unobtrusiveness test to notice the stealthily approaching dog rises from 4 to 5.

FULL CONTESTS

Full contests occur when two characters actively attempt to thwart one another. Often, this is one or more player characters and one or more antagonists controlled by the GM.

In a full contest, each character acts in turn. Going first is usually a disadvantage because the first person to fail a roll of the contested ability loses the full contest. The GM decides who acts first. In a chase, the character who bolts from the scene acts first. Where the characters seem to be acting at the same time, the one with the lowest *rating* in the relevant ability acts first. In the event of a tie, antagonists act before player characters. In the event of a tie between player characters, the player who arrived last for the current session goes first in the contest; that'll teach 'em to be on time.

The first character to act makes a test of the ability in question. If he fails, he loses the full contest, almost before it even started.

In 13th-century Nottinghamshire, the TimeWatch Agent Altani challenges a local outlaw nicknamed Rabunhod to an archery match in exchange for aid. Altani goes first, foolishly spending only 2 points of Shooting and rolling a 1 — thus failing to reach the Shooting Difficulty of 4. The outlaw wins.

If the first character succeeds, the second character then makes a test. This continues until one character loses, at which point the other one wins.

Typically each character attempts to beat a Difficulty Number of 4. A notable advantage or disadvantage can lower the Difficulty to 3 or raise it to 5 for one or both of the characters.

CHASES

Although contests can resolve various physical matchups, in *TimeWatch* the most common full contests are the **chase** and the **time chase**, in which the investigators run away from a Mongol horde or chase a time traveling saboteur through multiple eras of history. The chase rules are a variant of the full contest rules.

Chases occur when one character is trying to catch up to another character.

The Piggybacking rules can always be used during a chase when a character with a rating of 8+ in Vehicles is using the *Keep Up* Booster. If none of the characters have the *Keep Up* Booster, it's rare for a chase to involve the Piggybacking rules unless the characters have an explanation for how they're helping one another and staying together. When Piggybacking in a chase scene and one side has a member whose pool has fallen to 0, that side can choose to leave that person behind (if the pursuers) or abandon him to be captured (if the quarry) instead of increasing the Difficulty Number by 2 as normal.

Dr. Breen, Altani, and Mace Hunter are canoeing frantically down the Amazon, being pursued by several war canoes of Shuar headhunters. All three Agents are in one canoe and can paddle, so they are using the Piggyback rules. Since none of them have a Vehicles rating of 8+, they don't get the benefit of the Keep Up Booster (see p. 52).

As they negotiate a set of rapids, Dr. Breen's Vehicles pool drops to 0. This raises the Difficulty of any subsequent Vehicles tests by 2. "We could drop her overboard," suggests Altani, who is not Dr. Breen's biggest fan. "She's just weighing down the canoe." Mace demurs, telling Dr. Breen to fire on their pursuers instead, and he and Altani continue to paddle.

Where the odds of success are skewed in favor of one contestant, the GM may assign different Difficulties to each. A character with a significant advantage gets a lower Difficulty Number. A character facing a major handicap faces a higher Difficulty Number. When in doubt, the GM assigns the lower number to the advantaged participant.

Running through a Jurassic swamp, Uurrk finds it harder to move quickly than the carnivorous dinosaur pursuing him. In this case he might face a Difficulty Number of 4, while the dinosaur gets the lower Difficulty of 3.

It's much easier to consistently win chases if one Agent spends an appropriate Investigative point at the beginning

of the chase to give his side a lasting advantage for the scene, thus dropping the Agents' Difficulty Number or raising the Difficulty Number of their antagonist.

Uurrk spends 2 points of Outdoor Survival: one to reduce his Difficulty when navigating the swamp, and one to make the dinosaur's chase more difficult. He finds firmer ground that gives him better maneuverability, all while maneuvering the dinosaur into a deeper section of the swamp. Uurrk's Difficulty Number is lowered to 3, while the dinosaur's is raised to 4 for the rest of the chase.

Throughout the contest, GM and players should collaborate to add flavor to each result, explaining what the characters did to remain in the contest. That way, instead of dropping out of the narration to engage in an arithmetical recitation, you keep the fictional world verbally alive. Characters who are not using all their time operating the vehicle can take other actions that may affect success, such as attacking the other competitors in the chase.

Simple Chase Rules

Simple chases are best when you want to jump ahead in the action to the confrontation or escape, and the actual chase is not the focus of the action.

Simple chases use the Full Contest rules above; characters roll Athletics or Vehicles tests, and any character who fails a roll is out of the chase. If a quarry fails, pursuers catch up with him and he typically must surrender or fight. If a pursuer fails, he may not continue the chase. The chase ends when all pursuers have dropped out of the chase, or when all quarries have been caught up with.

During a simple chase, attempting any non-chase action (such as Shooting, trying to hide with Unobtrusiveness, and so on) raises the Difficulty for both that non-chase action and the chase action by +2. The GM adjudicates any unusual actions you try.

Vidhvansaka and Altani are on foot, chasing a fleeing sophosaur through the gardens of ancient Babylon. Normally they must each successfully make a Difficulty 4 Athletics test to stay in the chase. Vidhvansaka focuses on the chase, setting her Athletics Difficulty at 4 as per normal. Altani prefers a more lethal approach and shoots at the sophosaur as she runs; the Difficulty of her Shooting test rises by +2, making the raptor's Hit Threshold 6 instead of 4, and Altani's Athletics test to stay in the race also rises from Difficulty 4 to 6. The players narrate this, Vidhvansaka describing her focused pursuit and Altani describing how she shoots wildly while sprinting to catch up.

On his turn the sophosaur also has to make an Athletics (or Tempus, if he doesn't have Athletics) test to avoid being caught. While running he uses his Scuffling to tip over carts and obstacles in his pursuers' path, so the Difficulty of succeeding at both actions rises from 4 to 6. The GM decides that a success raises the Difficulty of all pursuers' next Athletics chase test by an additional point.

Advanced Chase Rules

Whether you're chasing an Adversary across the rooftops of ancient Constantinople, piloting a spaceship through a nebula hot on the heels of a time traveling serial killer, or being chased by three angry sophosaurs across a Jurassic grassland, there will be times when you want a more detailed chase than the simple "first failed roll loses." The GM should use these only for major set-piece encounters, and come up with plenty of environmental obstacles, explosions, and thrills ahead of time. Advanced chases work best when both sides are Piggybacking or are in vehicles that keep each group together. For chases where members of each side can become widely separated, use simple chase rules instead.

The core of the advanced chase is the same as the full contest: an aggressor (the pursuer in a chase) and a defender (the quarry in a chase) repeatedly test a **chase ability** (usually Athletics or Vehicles) against a Difficulty Number (usually 4). The pool of points in the chase ability is called the **chase pool**. As in any other test or contest, the participants may spend points from their chase pool to influence the chase ability die roll.

There are two major differences between an advanced chase and a full contest:

- ▶ The pursuer and the quarry reveal their spends simultaneously, then roll.
- ▶ The results are applied to the Lead; individual successes or failures do not necessarily end the chase.

Simultaneous Reveal

Both the pursuer and the quarry select and record their spends, if any, in secret and then reveal them simultaneously. You can use notes on pieces of paper, poker chips, coins, pips on a die, or any other agreeable method of recording a spend. Once the spends are revealed, the quarry rolls first and adds his spend; the pursuer then rolls and adds hers.

The Lead

The Lead is the distance between the pursuer and the quarry. The goal of the pursuer is to reduce the Lead to Point-Blank; the goal of the quarry is to increase the Lead to Very Long. These increments use the Combat Range rules on p. 78: **Point-Blank**, **Near**, **Close**, **Long**, and **Very Long**. These distances are abstract, however; a Very Long Lead in a footrace is very different than a Very Long Lead in a spaceship chase or zeppelin pursuit. In some cases, the GM may reduce or increase these goals: in King Minos' labyrinth

in Crete, a quarry may only need to open up a Lead of Close to escape; if the pursuers have air cover such as a helicopter spotting for them, the GM might establish that the quarry must exceed Very Long in order to escape.

Beginning Lead

The GM determines the distance of the beginning Lead based on circumstances; if it is not clear, the Lead begins at Near (halfway to the quarry's goal). The GM can keep track of the Lead on a piece of paper with the following chart, putting one or more markers (one for each separate quarry) in the pursuer's current range from each quarry. If the pursuers split into two or more groups, use a separate chart for each group.

Changing the Lead

The result of the two ability rolls (quarry and pursuer) alters the Lead as follows:

Each side spends points and adds a d6, then subtracts the Difficulty Number for their side from the result. The side with the higher margin can move the Lead by 1. Ties go to the quarry.

As in a full contest, the players and GM should improvise and narrate the specific event that shaped the chase: "I run through the square, disturbing a huge flock of pigeons that fly in my pursuers' faces, slowing them down," or "No one's looking? I use my autochron to teleport a block ahead of them, 30 seconds ago. Hopefully they'll still go that way," or "I'm spending 1 point of Paradox Prevention to later go back in time, steal a garbage truck, and make sure it's stalled at the end of the street they're headed down." The GM may choose to assign modifiers to both sides' rolls based on such narration, giving imaginative and creative descriptions a mechanical advantage in the chase.

The End of the Chase

If the Lead reaches Point-Blank or below, the pursuer has won. The quarry cannot run anymore; he may have crashed or fallen, run out of fuel, or simply been blocked by a vehicle or a cul-de-sac. If the quarry does not wish to surrender, a combat likely begins.

The pursuer gets the choice of whether to go first in any ensuing combat.

If the Lead reaches Very Long (or whatever goal the GM has set) or higher, the quarry has won. The pursuers have lost the quarry; he cannot be found for the remainder of the scene unless he draws renewed attention to himself somehow.

Lead Chart

Quarry is...	Point-Blank	Close	Near	Long	Very Long
To the Pursuer					

GM ADVICE: LENGTHIER CHASES

With only five range categories and every roll moving the Lead up or down by 1 point, most chases are over fairly quickly, within half an hour of play. If you want a lengthier chase, increase the range categories from 5 to 7, renaming them if needed.

The quarry also wins if all of the pursuers have crashed, fallen, or otherwise been taken out of the chase.

Attacking During Chases

Passengers in (or unruly strangers climbing onto) a vehicle involved in a chase use their combat abilities at +1 to the target's Hit Threshold; it's tricky to shoot someone while leaning out the window of a speeding automobile. Remember, someone in an enclosed vehicle also likely has the equivalent of full cover (see p. 82), so it can be challenging to successfully shoot someone in the car you're following.

Jumping from vehicle to vehicle requires a Lead of Near and an Athletics test of Difficulty 5. You can't use Scuffling between vehicles or quarries during a chase; if you could, you'd be at Point-Blank range and it wouldn't be a chase. You can use Shooting, however. The actual pursuers and quarries in a chase — people driving vehicles or running full out — can attack with Shooting, firing "Parthian shots" over their shoulder or shooting Pacifists down range, but it's far from easy to do so accurately. Attempting to do so raises the Difficulty of both the chase action (usually Athletics or Vehicles) and the non-chase action (usually, but not limited to, Shooting) by +2 for the turn.

The non-chase action doesn't need to be an attack. It could be Unobtrusiveness (ducking into an alley and trying to hide), Scuffling (kicking over obstacles to slow pursuers), Burglary (getting behind a locked door), or other actions. Regardless, attempting a non-chase action raises chase and non-chase Difficulties by +2, and the GM gets to adjudicate the results of successful non-chase actions.

Some specifically designed vehicles, such as spy cars, military aircraft, and armed spaceships have built-in weapons for the pilot. Firing such weapons reduces or removes the extra 2-point penalties, at the GM's discretion.

Shooting out tires, tail rotors, or other vulnerable parts of a vehicle requires a called shot (usually at +3 to the target's Hit Threshold; see p. 85) in addition to normal penalties. The GM determines the specific effects of shots at potentially critical parts of a vehicle.

Kelfala is on his motorcycle, chasing an influenza-infected bioterrorist in a sports car. The Lead is Close. Kelfala wishes to shoot the quarry through the rear window, raising the Difficulty



Time chases span history, but one rule applies: keep moving.

for both his chase action and his attack action. The quarry's Hit Threshold is 4, plus 1 for full cover, plus 2 because Kelfala is driving, for a total of 7. The Difficulty Number for Kelfala's Vehicles test that turn rises from 4 to 6. It's hard to shoot and drive at the same time.

Mace Hunter is sitting in Kelfala's sidecar (and is annoyed about it), and also wishes to shoot at the quarry on his turn. He's a passenger in the chase, so for Mace the quarry's Hit Threshold is 4, plus 1 for full cover, plus 1 because Mace is a passenger, totaling 6.

Investigative points can be spent to help make a difficult shot. Kelfala's player asks, "I've spent a lot of time practicing with both vehicles and firearms. Can I spend 1 point of Military Tactics to get 3 extra Shooting points?" The GM agrees. If Kelfala also convinced the GM that he had used Flashback to acquire a futuristic cycle with built-in weapons (and successfully rolled Preparedness to seal the deal), he wouldn't need to spend the Investigative point.

Kelfala decides to make his shot count, and aims for a rear tire instead of the plague-ridden quarry. The tire has a Hit Threshold of 4, plus 2 because Kelfala is driving, plus 3 for a called shot, for a total of 9. Kelfala spends 6 points of Shooting, rolls a 3, and succeeds. The GM decides the damage shreds the tire, so the fleeing terrorist needs to immediately make a Vehicles test at Difficulty 4 or crash. Even if he succeeds, the GM decides he'll be at a -2 Vehicles penalty for the rest of the chase. Kelfala and Mace are going to catch up.

Crashes and Falls

Even without neural disruptors taking out your chariot's horse, there are lots of ways to get hurt in a chase scene.

See p. 98 for details on crashes and falls. Dramatically, a crash or fall ends your chase scene unless the victim is able to clock out barely in time or escape the vehicle on foot. A fall from a great height, or a crash at high speed, may well seriously wound or kill the victim. (If an Agent or an Adversary, probably seriously wound; if a Mook, Opponent, or supporting character, probably kill).

Time Chases

If you have a time machine, sooner or later you're going to want to chase another time traveler through history. That's just the way the world works. In *TimeWatch* you need to put physical distance between yourself and your pursuers to time travel without being easily tracked or followed. A quarry that reaches Very Long range from his pursuers has won the time chase and is able to escape through time. A quarry that time travels closer than Very Long range can be followed by anyone with a time machine.

Time chases are handled with the advanced chase rules above, except the nature of the chase changes fundamentally every one to three rounds or more. When in a time chase, pursuers and quarries are dropped into ongoing races and chases that already exist in time, and each side may have several rounds to catch up or take tactical actions before jumping through time again.

Some antagonists may have methods to be particularly efficient in a time chase, whether as pursuer or quarry. This

aid may be instinctive (for some alien species who don't use mechanical means of time traveling) or mechanical. Don't be surprised when the rare Adversary disappears without a trace or tracks you unerringly.

Travel Tests

Unless they have the *Grounded* Booster from a high Reality Anchor ability, all pursuers and quarries must make Travel tests every time they time travel or teleport during a chase. As usual, Agents may toss in a Stitch in lieu of making a Travel test.

The Start of the Chase

If someone clocks out within Long combat range of you and you have your autochron handy, you can automatically follow them to their next destination in time. To do this you must depart within the next two rounds; you can spend 1 point of Timecraft to extend this deadline by one round. You automatically arrive in the vicinity of the quarry, the same distance from them that you were when they departed, but with no advance warning of where and when that location is.

Dr. Breen has just acted in the initiative order, and her psi-raptor enemy uses a time machine to clock out and escape. Blast! On her turn in the next round, Dr. Breen activates her own autochron in "follow" mode. As usual, the autochron spends the round warming up and establishing its chronal field. Dr. Breen clocks out on her initiative in the second following round, automatically following the chronal trail the sobosaur left behind. She arrives instantly after her enemy, at the same distance away from him that she was before she clocked out.

GM ADVICE: WHY JOIN AN EXISTING CHASE?

By default, time chases drop both the quarry and pursuer into an existing historical chase, briefly replacing or adding to the number of people who were in those chases to begin with. The chromomorphic autochron adapts to briefly become reins, handlebars, a steering wheel, or what have you. Why an existing chase, and not just an unoccupied area in time and space to chase across?

The in-game theory is that when you set your time machine to "escape," it deliberately chooses a situation that will allow you to put as much physical distance between you and your pursuer as quickly as possible. The true answer, as you'd expect, is that being dropped in medias res into an existing chase is often more fun, and racing through an unoccupied area is likely boring. There's a certain amount of chaotic joy that comes from being briefly dumped into the Kentucky Derby, or appearing on two pirate ships skimming after one another on the storm-tossed Spanish Main, or appearing in an early Olympic track race, or clocking into biplanes that are dive-bombing a battlefield. It's not realistic, but it is exhilarating, and the GM-supplied new tactical options (machine guns? cannons? whips? extreme weather? pedestrians?) help keep the players thinking creatively and paying attention.

If you'd prefer as GM, however, there's nothing stopping you from allowing the quarry to pick a specific arrival area for each stage of the chase, at a suggested cost of 2 Chronal Stability points. Quarries with the *Flashback* ability (either as an Adversary special ability or from having a Preparedness rating of 8+) may be able to manipulate their pursuers into a trap, such as luring them into the line of fire on a WWI battlefield or over an active volcano.

FIGHTING

Starting a time chase immediately is important. Should you let someone get away and then later decide to time travel back and follow them in a time chase from the instant they escaped, the choral disruption caused by returning to the scene makes the chase much more difficult. The pursuer's default Difficulty for all actions is raised from 4 to 6 for the duration of the chase.

At the GM's discretion, not all time machines have tracking circuitry built in that let one time machine automatically follow another. It may be more difficult for people using less advanced time machines to pursue during time chases; such pursuers must make Vehicles tests or spend a Timecraft point just to successfully follow a quarry. This is in addition to any Vehicles rolls needed for an advanced chase.

During the Chase

The GM tells you where you start the chase from and where you clock in — on a Roman chariot, riding across a wasteland on a horse being pursued by tanks, in swooping helicopters over a jungle — and an advanced chase proceeds as normal.

One to three rounds after clocking in, the quarry's time machine recharges. The GM may roll this recharge timer secretly or let the player roll it publicly, as she prefers. From this point forward the quarry has the option of making a Travel test and clocking out to a new location. The pursuers automatically follow unless they choose not to, and the chase continues. If the quarry clocks out after having reached Very Long range, he cannot be further tracked.

When the quarry makes a new time jump during the chase, including the first round, he gets a +1 bonus on his chase-related Vehicles roll. The pursuer does not get this bonus, which is a mechanical encouragement for the quarry to keep the time chase moving through time as well as space. The quarry does not get this Vehicles chase bonus on rounds when he does not time travel.

Combat can occur during the race, and uses the standard rules for *Attacking During Chases* above. It's not usually possible to attack while actively time traveling, but your GM may choose to make an exception.

It's common for time chases to start in individual time machines, move to large communal vehicles like the deck of a ship or a speeding car, and then return to individual vehicles such as motorcycles or horses during the next time jump. A character with a Vehicles rating of 8+ can use Piggybacking rules in a chase or time chase, even when their side is on individual vehicles.

Ending a Time Chase

Time chases follow the same rules as advanced chases. Closing to Point-Blank range during a time chase means that the quarry can no longer try to escape via time machine or vehicle, and either surrenders or starts a fight. Escaping past Long range means that the quarry has cleanly escaped to an unknown location and time.

Fights are slightly more complicated contests involving any of the following abilities:

- ▶ **Scuffling vs. Scuffling:** the characters are fighting with fists or non-ranged weapons at Point-Blank and Close range.
- ▶ **Shooting vs. Shooting:** the characters are at Close range or farther and are trying to hit each other with ranged weapons.
- ▶ **Shooting vs. Scuffling:** the characters are at Point-Blank range, but only one is using a ranged weapon (which, as detailed below, may turn out badly for the shooter).

FIGHTING WITHOUT ABILITIES

A character with no points in Shooting is not allergic to guns. Anyone can pick up a revolver and empty it in the general direction of the foe. Likewise, a character with no Scuffling ability is not going to just ignore the scimitar hanging on the wall when a eunuch palace guard charges him.

However, such characters will use their weapons ineffectively and hesitantly. Using a weapon (including fists or feet) without ability has the following drawbacks:

- ▶ You automatically do an additional -2 damage.
- ▶ You must declare your action at the beginning of each round and cannot change it if the tactical situation alters.
- ▶ The GM chooses when you go in each round, inserting you into the initiative order where she pleases.
- ▶ If you are using a firearm, a roll of 1 means you have accidentally shot yourself or one of your allies, as selected (or rolled randomly) by the GM. Do damage as normal (including your automatic -2 penalty).

ORDER OF COMBAT

Combat begins in the following order.

1. Determine range
2. Determine surprise
3. Determine initiative
4. Fight!

Combat then continues, with combatants on both sides moving and fighting, until all combatants on one side have fallen, surrendered or fled.

COMBAT RANGE

If you're trying to prevent the childhood assassination of the Buddha, you probably have bigger things to worry about than your exact distance in meters from the would-be sniper. To keep combat fast and simple in *TimeWatch*, we use just five ranges. You can move as part of your combat action each round, changing ranges by one category (unless you're trying to move between Very Long and Long range, which takes two or more rounds) or moving within a range category.

Point-Blank: You are literally face-to-face with your foe, within easy arm's reach. All brawls, knife fights, and scuffles occur at this range.

- ▶ At Point-Blank range, all firearms do an additional +2 points of damage, and all shotguns are considered heavy firearms, with an additional Damage Modifier of +1 (for +3 total).
- ▶ Beam weapons never gain a damage bonus for Point-Blank range.

Moving from Close range to Point-Blank range against someone with a drawn and ready ranged weapon is risky; your foe with the ranged weapon gets an immediate free attack on you. This bonus attack occurs outside of normal initiative order, does normal damage for Point-Blank range, and your enemy spends Shooting points as per normal.

At the GM's discretion, distracted shooters may not gain this bonus attack. If your foe has a pistol, but it is not well in hand and ready to fire, you may close to Point-Blank range without danger. If he has a gun well in hand but is unaware of your presence, you may safely close to Point-Blank range by succeeding at an Unobtrusiveness test.

Once you're there in Point-Blank range, he's at a disadvantage to fire a ranged weapon. If the shooter rolls a natural 1 on his Shooting test die roll, he has shot himself or an ally instead of his intended target.

Close: You are in the same room with your foe, or within no more than 10 meters or so. A swordfight or a karate match might happen at this range, with plenty of bounding off or smashing through the furniture, but no farther.

- ▶ Moving from Close range to Point-Blank range against someone with a drawn and ready ranged weapon is dangerous; see Point-Blank range above.
- ▶ At Close range, all shotguns do an additional +1 point of damage.
- ▶ This is the farthest you can throw any difficult-to-throw object (such as a barrel).
- ▶ This is the farthest that you can shoot someone with a Pacifist unless the weapon has been hacked with the Tinkering ability (see p. 50).

Near: You can see your foe distinctly, perhaps across a large ballroom or down the street, no more than 30 or 40 meters away.

- ▶ This is the farthest range at which you can easily and accurately hit a target with a shotgun, pistol, or submachine gun. (Targeting someone at Long range with these weapons raises the target's Hit Threshold by +2. See below for methods of reducing this range penalty.)
- ▶ This is the farthest range at which you can hit a target with a neural disruptor or beam pistol unless you make a Tinkering test to overcharge the beam's range (see p. 50).
- ▶ This is the farthest you can throw any easily thrown object (such as a grenade, a spear, a stick of dynamite, or a rock). If throwing at a small target, the GM may raise the target's Hit Threshold by +2.
- ▶ This is the shortest distance you can aim a siege engine.

Long: Your foe is within 100 meters. Opponents farther away cannot be easily targeted, and are generally out of the combat unless taking distance penalties or using specialized ranged weapons.

- ▶ This is the farthest you can easily and accurately hit a target with a crossbow or longbow. (Targeting someone up to 200 meters with these weapons raises the target's Hit Threshold by +2.)
- ▶ This is the farthest you can easily and accurately hit a target with a rifle, assault rifle, or beam rifle. (Targeting someone up to 200 meters with these weapons raises the target's Hit Threshold by +2. Targeting someone up to 500 meters with these weapons raises the target's Hit Threshold by +4.)
- ▶ A bipod and scope each reduce range penalties by 1 each; a laser sight reduces range penalties by 2. These penalty reductions are cumulative for a fully equipped weapon.

Very Long: Your foe is within 500 meters. Only specialized weapons such as sniper rifles can target foes at this range. Most foes are considered out of the combat unless someone is using a weapon with sufficient range.

- ▶ Making a successful Tinkering test (see p. 50) can overcharge a beam rifle for one shot, extending its range to Very Long.
- ▶ Sniper rifles really get their own category; even in the early 21st century, trained snipers have killed targets nearly 2.5 kilometers away. GMs are encouraged to add ad hoc penalties for distance, which in some cases can be countered by superb training and exceptional equipment.

Altani's TimeWatch team decides that she should snipe their target instead of engaging with him at Close range. She sets up on a high vantage point two kilometers away. The GM is skeptical, but decides on an extreme distance penalty of +20 to the target's Hit Threshold, making the total Hit Threshold 23 — virtually impossible under normal circumstances.

Altani spends all 8 of her Shooting points for +8 to hit, as well as 1 point of Military Tactics to give herself another +3 on the roll. She also spends 1 point of Outdoor Survival to reliably predict the

windage (reducing the distance penalty by 3 from 20 to 17), has a full set of bipod, scope, and laser sight (reducing penalties by 4 from 17 to 13), and uses Preparedness to acquire a futuristic sniper rifle (reducing distance penalties by another ad hoc 4, reducing the penalty from 13 to 9). She's now +11 on her die roll, and the unsuspecting target's Hit Threshold is effectively 12. Splat.

You'll notice how Altani's player is improving her results by finding inventive, plausible benefits for her spent Investigative points. GMs and players don't need to go through all this work every time someone wants to snipe an enemy from Very Long range, but it's good to know how it's done.

SURPRISE

When surprised, you suffer a +2 increase to all General ability Difficulties for any immediately subsequent action. In a fight, these penalties pertain only to the first round of combat.

You are surprised when you suddenly find yourself in a dangerous situation. Avoid being surprised with a successful Unobtrusiveness test to notice the hidden ambush. The basic Difficulty is 4, adjusted by the foe's Stealth Modifier. The +3 bonus from impersonator mesh never applies on this test.

Unless there are special circumstances as dictated by the GM, you can completely avoid being surprised by spending a Notice point from your Investigative abilities. If there are special circumstances, such as your enemy having a Stealth Modifier of +4 or higher, spending a Notice point still gives you a +3 Alertness Modifier on your Unobtrusiveness roll to spot the ambush.

You surprise antagonists by sneaking up on them with a successful Unobtrusiveness test. The basic Difficulty is 4, adjusted by the foe's Alertness Modifier (see p. 72). The +3 bonus from impersonator mesh can apply to this roll, so long

as you have not drawn any attention to yourself and your foe has not noticed you at all. That gives Agents an advantage in ambushes. You can also spend 1 point of Spying, which gives you a +3 Stealth Modifier on this roll.

Skegg the sophosaur attempts to sneak up on an Adversary, but she isn't wearing her impersonator mesh. Correctly suspecting that her enemy has a high Alertness Modifier, Skegg spends 1 point of Spying. She spends 3 points of Unobtrusiveness, adds the +3 Stealth Modifier from the Spying spend, and rolls a 2. Her total is 8. This beats the Difficulty of 7 (a normal Difficulty 4 plus the foe's +3 Alertness Modifier), and so Skegg succeeds in surprising her foe.

Later, an incredibly stealthy Adversary is trying to sneak up on Skegg. Normally Skegg could just spend 1 point of Notice and not be surprised, but the GM won't allow it. Instead, Skegg spends 3 points of Unobtrusiveness, spends 1 point of Notice for a +3 Alertness Modifier, and rolls a 1. This totals 7, but the Difficulty is 8 (a default 4 plus the foe's high Stealth Modifier of +4). Skegg never hears her foe closing in...

INITIATIVE

The time it takes to go through the ranking order once, with each character taking an action, is called a **round**. When one round ends, another begins. Each character and antagonist (or group of antagonists, if several bad guys act at the same time for simplicity's sake) gets to take a **turn** during each round.

The GM determines which character or antagonist goes first in the first round. Usually it's the individual who initiates some action or attempts to throw the first blow, but not always; some individuals may be able to anticipate attacks. One player character (usually the first one to mention it) can also spend a Notice point from their Investigative ability to go first. Any character who is surprised suffers a +2 increase to all General ability Difficulties during the first round of combat.

The player that the GM has chosen to go first gets to have their character act in combat. One of the first things a player does when starting their turn is to pick and announce the *next* character to go; it doesn't have to be announced instantly, but sooner is better than the end of the round, because this gives the next character's player some time to think about their actions. It can be any character, either player or supporting, friend or foe, so long as that character hasn't yet had a turn

GM ADVICE: WHY UNOBTUSIVENESS FOR BOTH?

Unlike games which have separate opposed skills for noticing and sneaking, TimeWatch uses Unobtrusiveness to model both your ability at noticing other unobtrusive people *and* your ability to be unobtrusive yourself. Narratively, the hardest people to sneak up on are the ones who know how to hide. Mechanically, we do this so that players can spend their precious General ability points most efficiently. TimeWatch's abilities are collapsed and combined from the ability sets in some other GUMSHOE games, which typically feature both Sense Trouble (to avoid being surprised) and Surveillance or a similar ability (to surprise others). With only one ability to worry about, remembering rules for surprise becomes a bit more streamlined.

GM ADVICE: FASTER THAN YOU THINK

Some time traveling antagonists have the ability to seize control of initiative each round, spending General ability points to hijack the order of initiative and take their turn when they wish. Some antagonists can also act more than once in a round. See p. 157 for details.

GM ADVICE: FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED

When using this style of initiative, two things help speed play.

The first is a visible indicator in front of every player that shows whether or not they've gone yet that round. This can be a folded-over index card with the word *DONE* written on one side, a poker chip with one side colored in, or any indicator that can be flipped or turned once a player has taken his turn. The GM should put out a marker or folded index card for each combatant or group of combatants she's managing. With this, it's simple to look around the table and know exactly who has gone.

The second trick is to have an obvious and noticeable object of some sort — an index card, a pocket watch, or even a plastic toy dinosaur (because dinosaurs are awesome) — that is silently handed from one player to another to indicate who goes next in combat. With this, the game doesn't even need to slow down to announce who goes next. When a player begins his turn, he simply starts by handing the object to the next combatant.

in the current round. When an antagonist takes a turn, the GM announces which character goes next.

Once the next player is announced, a character can take combat actions such as moving and attacking.

After the current character concludes their turn, the already-announced next player takes their turn, once again starting by announcing which character will go next in combat. Then the current player takes their turn, the next-announced player begins, and so on until every character in the fight has taken a turn. This includes antagonists controlled by the GM.

Once everyone has acted, the last player to act in the round gets to choose who goes first in the second round — which can be themselves once again. This pattern then continues, with every player in turn picking the person to follow them, and every character getting to act once each turn. Unnamed antagonists often act as a group, and named antagonists often act on their own.

Raina's character Dr. Breen is selected by the GM to start off combat against a rampaging Tyrannosaurus rex. The first thing Raina does is announce that Alex's character Mace Hunter will go next. She then takes her combat action, moving to full cover and

OPTIONAL RULE: AN ALTERNATE INITIATIVE SYSTEM

While we find the default initiative system works beautifully in play, giving players just enough narrative control of a fight's order to keep things tense, it's not for everybody. You may prefer a more traditional initiative system. If so, use the following.

Combatants (both player characters and antagonists) act in order of Scuffling or Shooting rating (not pool), whichever combat ability they start off the fight with, from highest rating to lowest rating. For simplicity's sake, this order does not change in subsequent rounds of combat, even if a character changes from Scuffling to Shooting or vice versa.

If two ratings are tied, check their current pools; the character with the higher pool at the start of combat goes first. If pools are also tied, the character with the highest Athletics rating goes first. If those are tied as well, just throw your hands up in the air and pick one character to go before the other. If you pick an antagonist to precede a player character in this case, throw the player a *Stitch*.

A character that starts the combat surprised (see p. 79) has the Difficulty of all their first round's actions raised by +2.

The fastest way to manage this is to have a separate index card for each player character and hostile antagonist. Write down each character's Shooting and Scuffling rating on their card. At the start of a fight, ask each player which combat ability they're starting with and quickly shuffle the card to the appropriate spot in the order. If they change between Shooting and Scuffling round-to-round, don't bother moving the card; the extra verisimilitude is seldom worth the bother.

To make things easier for the GM, groups of unnamed antagonists usually act on the same initiative. Named antagonists can go on the same or different initiatives, as the GM prefers.

rolling a Tinkering test to assemble an impromptu explosive. This ends her turn, so Alex goes. He begins by announcing that the T. rex will go after he does. Then he announces that he wants to protect Dr. Breen, so Mace Hunter will spend 1 point of Taunt to get the dinosaur's full attention, just before he shoots it with his elephant gun at Point-Blank range. This attack ends Mace Hunter's turn, and it's the GM's turn. Since the dinosaur is the last combatant in the round, she announces that the T. rex is also going to go first in the second round. Things aren't going to look good for Mace Hunter, elephant gun or not...

There's some interesting strategy involved in this. If the TimeWatch Agents think they can drop all of their foes in one round, they have an incentive to have the entire team act before the foes. If they do this and are wrong, however, the foes will be able to act twice in a row (at the end of the first round and the beginning of the second round).

This initiative system fits *TimeWatch* for a few reasons. It's simple, only needing to track who has and hasn't gone yet in a round; it's strategic, requiring some interesting choices every round while giving the next player some time to prepare each round; and it gives players agency, allowing them to directly affect combat. Mostly, though? Your player characters are incredibly competent, kick-ass time travelers, and we like the idea that in some small way their time traveling expertise allows them to control the order of actions in a fight.

HOW FIGHTING WORKS

Each round, during his or her turn, each character gains an action that includes a move. Where multiple antagonists on the same initiative attack a single character, the GM determines their order of action in whatever manner she finds convenient — usually the order in which she's tracking them in her rough notes.

Some antagonists may strike more than once per round, usually on the same initiative count. They make each attack in succession and may divide them up between foes within range or concentrate all of them on a single enemy. The GM orders these attacks in whatever order she finds convenient.

When called upon to act, each character may strike at any foe within range of his weapons. They may also move up to one range, running towards a fight from Near to Close range, for instance, or backing away from Point-Blank to Close range. (Moving between Long and Very Long range is two or more moves.) They may end their round behind full cover (raising their Hit Threshold against ranged attacks by +1) or out in the wide open (lowering their Hit Threshold against ranged attacks by -1).

Creatures may choose to use their actions to deal additional damage to downed or helpless foes rather than engage active foes. They automatically deal one instance of damage per action to an unconscious foe, no Shooting or Scuffling test required. It's considered murderous to engage in this behavior, but it can be particularly useful against certain nonhuman and rapidly healing foes.

GM ADVICE: "I'M YOU, FROM THE FUTURE!"

If an Agent spends a Paradox Prevention point and makes a D4/L6 Paradox test (see p. 89) their future self can show up to help in combat. Duplicate selves typically start combat with full General ability pools (including Health and Chronal Stability) but with the same amount of Investigative points that the original character currently possesses. That means they're a great combat resource, but they are unable to make any Investigative spends that the Agent can't already make. Investigative spends that the duplicate makes once he arrives do not come from the original Agent's pools.

Duplicates last for one scene, and Agents should be careful about casual conversation; it's easy to accidentally trigger additional paradoxes and Paradox tests just by chatting about what happens next. You're encouraged to be infuriatingly vague, smug, or clever when roleplaying the future self. You and the player may have great fun introducing physical or emotional changes to the duplicate from the future, such as new scars or surprising personality changes. The player will then spend hours trying to make sure such changes actually come about.

If an Agent dies while their future duplicate is present in the scene, that duplicate must immediately make a D6/L6 Paradox test or pop out of existence. If the test succeeds, the future duplicate is now from an alternate future that no longer exists; he may spend a Paradox Prevention point at the scene's end to step in for the dead character if the player wishes. If the future Agent chooses not to or cannot, or if the player prefers not to keep him, he blinks out of existence at the scene's end — probably in the middle of a beautiful and touching monologue about the frailty of life.

The fight continues until one side capitulates or flees or all of its members are unconscious or otherwise unable to continue.

Dr. Breen is farther away from a foe than she wishes to be. On her turn she closes from Long range to Near range and fires her Mark II Demogrifier, a beam weapon of her own invention. Next round she will close from Near range to Close range and use her PaciFist, unless her foe closes with her first or runs farther away on its turn.

HIT THRESHOLDS

Each character has a Hit Threshold of either 3 (the standard value) or 4 (if the character's Athletics rating is 8 or more). The Hit Threshold is the Difficulty Number the character's foe must match or beat to harm him. Less competent antagonists may have lower Hit Thresholds, and Hit Thresholds are affected by cover. Nonhumans may have Hit Thresholds of 4 or higher, regardless of their Athletics ratings.

Cover

In a typical gunfight, combatants dodge, duck, and seek cover, hiding behind furniture or other barriers, exposing themselves only for the few seconds it takes them to pop up and fire a round at their targets. The GUMSHOE rules recognize three cover conditions:

Exposed: No barrier stands between you and the combatant firing at you, and you have no opportunity to dodge or evade an incoming attack. This is a relatively rare situation for TimeWatch Agents unless they are surprised. If the GM looks at you and thinks "sitting duck!" you're exposed. Your Hit Threshold decreases by 1.

Partial Cover: The default assumption. About half of your body is exposed to fire or you have room to maneuver in combat. Your Hit Threshold remains unchanged. It's assumed that combatants are seeking partial cover by default, ducking and covering to keep from being fully exposed.

Full Cover: Except when you pop up to fire a round, the barrier largely protects you from incoming fire. Your Hit Threshold increases by +1. At the GM's discretion, heavy barriers such as walls may make you impossible to target with some weapons as long as you stay fully hidden.

Evasive Maneuvers

You may briefly raise your Hit Threshold by fighting defensively, sacrificing your accuracy in exchange for becoming more difficult to hit. Announce that you're going Evasive at the beginning of your action for the round; doing so does not cost an action itself. You can't begin Evasive Maneuvers on someone else's turn.

For every 2 Athletics points you spend, your Hit Threshold increases by 1, for a maximum increase of 3. When you try to hit anyone else, their Hit Thresholds against you increase by 2 for every 1 point your Hit Threshold increased. The effects

last until the beginning of your next action, at which point you can renew them (provided you can afford the cost).

Skegg is trying to close on a killer cyborg from the far future. She starts Evasive Maneuvers at the start of her turn, spending 6 Athletics points to boost her Hit Threshold from 4 to 7. She then charges the cyborg at top speed. The cyborg gets a free shot with its beam rifle as Skegg closes into Point-Blank range, but misses... and now finds itself in close-quarters combat with a very angry sophosaur. At the start of Skegg's next turn, Skegg's +3 bonus to Hit Threshold and -6 penalty to hit the cyborg both disappear.

DEALING DAMAGE

When you roll equal to or higher than your foe's Hit Threshold, you may deal damage to him. To do so, you make a damage roll, rolling a die, which is then modified according to the relative lethality of your weapon, as per the following table:

Weapon Type (see p. 117)	Damage Modifier
Fist, kick	-1
Improvised weapon, club, knife, inactive autochron	0
Heavy club, sword, crossbow, firearm (including automatic weapons)	+1
Heavy assault rifle, beam weapon	+2
PaciFist or neural disruptor	Stun test (usually Stun 5)

- ▶ Minimum damage is 1 point.
- ▶ For firearms, add an additional +2 damage when fired at Point-Blank range (for a total of 1d6 + 3). Beam weapons do not receive this bonus. Note that firing a gun at Point-Blank range has risks, as noted on p. 78.
- ▶ PaciFists and neural disruptors (or any weapon with a Stun rating) don't inflict damage. Instead, they trigger a Stun test (see p. 86) which may knock the target unconscious.
- ▶ Dinosaurs, cyborgs, and nonhuman creatures from parallel dimensions often exhibit alarmingly high Damage Modifiers. See p. 149 for antagonist Damage Modifiers.
- ▶ The Scuffling ability's Booster *That's Gotta Hurt* (p. 50) can set an attack's minimum Scuffling damage before any modifiers.
- ▶ After damage is rolled, Stitches can be spent to increase weapon damage on a 1-for-1 basis; each Stitch spent increases damage by +1. The player is encouraged to describe how their minor mastery of time makes their attack more effective.
- ▶ Characters may not normally spend points from their combat pools to increase their damage rolls. The exceptions are called shots (see p. 85) and fully automatic weapons (see p. 84).

The final damage result is then subtracted from your foe's Health pool. When a combatant's Health pool drops to 0 or less, that combatant begins to suffer ill effects, ranging from slight impairment to unconsciousness to helplessness to death; see p. 87.

Unlike other contests, participants do not lose when they fail their test rolls. Instead, they're forced out of the fight when they lose consciousness or become Seriously Wounded.

CRITICAL THINKING

TimeWatch doesn't have critical hits in the combat rules. That's deliberate; you can instead make called shots, use the Scuffling Booster, spend Stitches to boost damage, use an automatic weapon or a customized beam pistol, and (if your GM allows) spend an Investigative point to add even more damage to the roll.

The Effect of Armor

Armor, including the Agents' standard equipment *TimeWatch* uniform (Armor 1), can reduce Shooting and Scuffling damage by its Armor value. See p. 113 for details. Other types of damage, such as damage from fire or psychic attack, is generally unaffected by armor.

NONLETHAL COMBAT

Keeping Them Alive for Later

Unimportant antagonists usually drop at 0 Health. The attacker who inflicted the last damage may choose whether they are unconscious, conscious but disabled and unable to further fight, or dead.

At the GM's option, important antagonists drop to -11 Health before dying. They use the same Consciousness and Injury rules as player characters do.

Stunning Weaponry

The standard issue *PaciFist* is a stunning weapon that leaves enemies unconscious instead of dead. It can be used both as a Scuffling and Shooting weapon, has a Close range, and (unlike most futuristic weaponry in *TimeWatch*) has no visible special effect when used. It's fully detailed on p. 112. Stun tests are described on p. 86.

Neural disruptors are similar to a *PaciFist* but are suboptimal for undercover work; they have a longer range and an obvious special effect.

Restraining Your Opponent

Want to hold someone in place so that they can't run away? If you successfully Scuffle at Point-Blank range and choose to inflict no damage, you can restrain your foe. They can still attack, but are unable to move until they spend an action to succeed at a Difficulty 4 Athletics test. If you move away from your foe, or if you take an action other than Scuffling, you break the restraint and your foe can move freely again.

Want to make sure your foe can't easily escape? An Investigative spend (usually Military Tactics or Trivia, drawing on your esoteric knowledge of ancient Mongolian and Greco-Roman wrestling) lets you set the Difficulty of their escape attempt equal to the result of your Scuffling test instead of 4.

Altani has grabbed her fleeing quarry and has no interest in letting him escape with the stolen jewel Koh-i-Noor. She could make a Scuffling attempt to keep him in place, but he would break free by simply spending 3 Athletics points. Instead, with the GM's permission, she spends 1 point of Military Tactics and spends 6 Scuffling points to restrain him. She rolls a 4. Although he can still fight, he must now succeed at a Difficulty 10 Athletics test to move. Good luck with that.

Talking Your Way Out of a Fight

Note that restraining someone doesn't stop them from attacking. If you want to grapple someone and get them to stop attacking you long enough for you to get an explanatory word in edgewise, an Interpersonal spend (often Authority, Intimidation, or Reassurance) will usually get them to stop fighting long enough to listen — so long as no one else is trying to hurt them at the same time. If your GM doesn't think your foe would reasonably pause their fighting to talk, your Interpersonal point is not spent.

AMMO CAPACITY

As a side effect of including guns from across the vastness of recorded history, *TimeWatch* blatantly ignores the firearm details that most contemporary-era RPG systems include. For example, *TimeWatch* characters only need to reload or recharge their weapons when it's dramatically appropriate. Otherwise, they're assumed to be able to refill the cylinders of their revolvers, jam clips into their automatic weapons, or re-energize their beam weapons between shots.

When reloading is an issue, GMs may toss the player a Stitch and request a Shooting test (Difficulty 3) to quickly reload. Characters who fail may not use their Shooting ability to attack during the current round.

After an enemy has given 21st-century hand grenades to the Zulu army attacking Rorke's Drift in 1879, Mace Hunter accidentally finds himself trapped in the mission station with no way to escape and no place to activate his autochron without someone seeing. He doesn't want to create additional paradoxes, so he stays to lend a

hand while his fellow Agents steal back the hand grenades. The GM knows that limited resources helped make the siege terrifying, and she decides that while Mace is using colonial rifles alongside the defenders, he will need to count ammo and successfully roll Shooting to reload while he is being rushed. She gives him an extra Stitch as a small consolation.

If rapidly reloading a weapon strains credibility, such as when shooting early muzzle-loading firearms, the GM should feel free to lengthen reload times.

AUTOFIRE

Whether you're surrounded by a mob of murderous gangsters or a ravenous pack of prehistoric wolves, your Agent is occasionally going to want to gun down lots of enemies at once. Here's how.

Some Shooting weapons (generally machine guns and some beam weapons) are considered **autofire** weapons, and are labeled as such. If you score a hit on a Mook, unnamed Opponent, or unnamed supporting character with an autofire weapon, and the GM has no narrative reason to prevent you from making an easy kill, you may pump them full of lead. Every 3 additional Shooting points you immediately spend inflicts one more instance of damage to your target. If additional dramatically unimportant enemies stand within Close range of your first target, you may spread out your additional instances of damage between these additional targets. Total damage is assessed after you decide how many extra instances you want to pay for.

Five Mooks are ordered by their noncombatant mob boss to gun down Kelfala. That's harder than it looks; the Agent has a machine gun, a Shooting rating of 8, 2 Stitches in his board, and goes first in the combat round. Kelfala attacks the Mooks using autofire. Noticing that the thugs are fully exposed (and thus easier than normal to hit), Kelfala starts by spending 2 Shooting points. He rolls a 1, but that's enough to hit the thugs' exposed Hit Threshold of 3. Before he rolls damage, Kelfala decided how many extra instances of damage he wants to inflict on the Mooks. He decides on two (at a cost of 3 Shooting points each), emptying his Shooting pool from 6 to 0.

Kelfala rolls 3d6 + 3 worth of damage. He rolls a 4 + 1 = 5, 6 + 1 = 7, and 4 + 1 = 5. The first thug he aimed at takes a full 5 points of damage, dying dramatically, then Kelfala spreads the remaining 12 points of damage out over the other four thugs, inflicting 3 points per Mook — enough to drop every single one of them. The GM describes them keeling over and collapsing, while Kelfala doesn't even break a sweat. Dropping all five thugs in one attack is enough to earn Kelfala an extra Stitch from one of the other players at the table.

Kelfala can cash in Stitches at any time, so he cashes in his 3 Stitches at the end of his attack to refresh his Shooting pool back up to 6. He blows smoke from the barrel of his machine gun, smiles toothily at the mob boss, and suggests that the man tell him exactly what he wants to know.

GM ADVICE: AUTOFIRE

To keep the story moving and the main characters alive at least until the climax occurs, *TimeWatch* treats fully automatic gunfire as less deadly than it actually is in real life. Adversaries, player characters, and important supporting characters aren't always susceptible to full-auto gunfire, but minor Mooks, medium-difficulty Opponents, and any unnamed supporting characters usually are. We're telling you, it's a tough life not having a name.

If you have the Shooting Booster *Double Tap*, you can use autofire with each shot you take in a round (assuming you have enough Shooting points). The carnage will be magnificent.

If you score a hit with a fully automatic weapon and the GM finds it dramatically unsuitable to allow extra damage against that enemy, the target takes only one instance of damage. This usually happens when you're facing a named Adversary or other significant foe. Your GM will tell you this before you waste additional Shooting points.

Facing a named mercenary who is a notorious killer, Kelfala wishes to shoot him multiple times with the automatic weapon. The GM disallows it. Kelfala makes a Shooting attack normally, but can't spend extra Shooting points for additional damage.

Later in the fight, Kelfala has his enemy on the ropes. He asks the GM if he can use autofire to finish the mercenary off. The GM agrees, and Kelfala spends extra Shooting points to dramatically pump the merc full of bullets.

If a player character is hit by autofire from a Mook, Opponent, or other unimportant character, he takes only a single instance of damage. This restriction vanishes if players start to count on it. Saying "he can't hurt me much; he's only a Mook" typically leads to an extremely painful surprise.

Important enemies and Adversaries with autofire weapons can spend their own Shooting points to do additional instances of damage to the Agents, again at a rate of 3 points per instance, to a maximum of three extra instances. Enemies with a fixed attack modifier spend Tempus instead (see p. 148).

Autofire With Futuristic Weapons

Beam rifles and neural disruptor rifles can also be equipped with autofire.

Beam rifles work exactly like machine guns, except typically they project a solid beam of energy that you rake across one or more enemies.

Neural disruptor rifles with autofire work slightly differently. As with standard automatic weapons, after scoring a hit (but before the first Stun test is rolled), you decide how many more Stun tests you want to cause; remember that Mooks and any supporting characters with less than a Health rating of 3 automatically fail Stun tests. Each individual Stun test costs 3 additional Shooting points. You may require only one target to attempt those Stun tests, or distribute them amongst your target and any dramatically unimportant enemies within Close range.

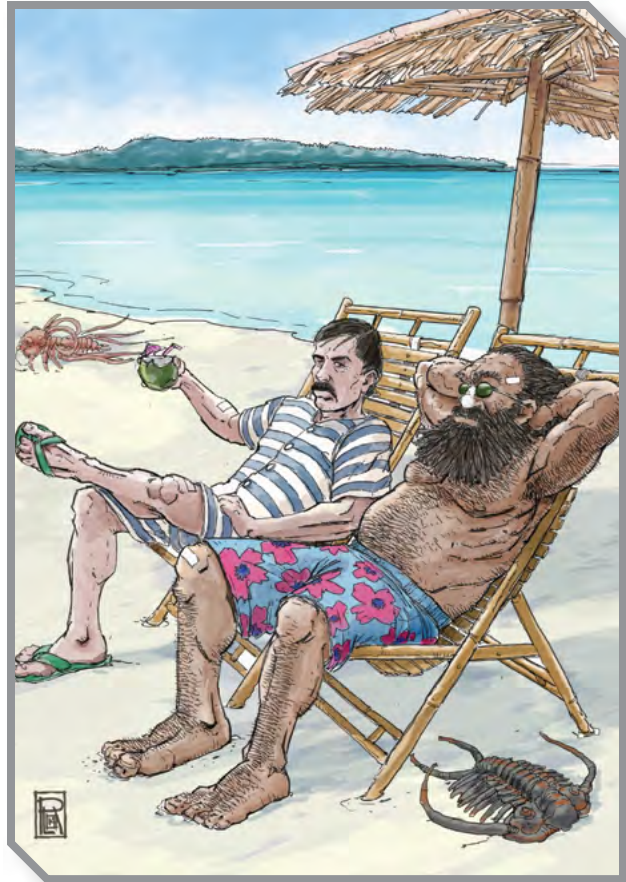
As with automatic gunfire, autofire against dramatically important antagonists typically only gains a benefit from the initial attack, and you won't be charged for any extra Shooting points you wanted to spend. Autofire against you from a Mook's automatic beam rifle or automatic neural disruptor rifle works similarly.

Kelfala hopes to take some enemies alive and so trades in his machine gun for an automatic neural disruptor rifle (thanks, Preparedness!). He fires on three Mooks. Starting with 6 Shooting points in his pool, Kelfala riskily spends 0 to target the first Mook and rolls a 3. A hit! He immediately spends all 6 remaining Shooting points for another two auto-hits. All three Mooks make a Stun 5 test. Mooks automatically drop when stunned, no roll allowed, so all three enemies fall unconscious. Kelfala ends the round with 0 points remaining in his Shooting pool, but there sure are a lot of unconscious bodies on the ground.

CALLED SHOTS

There are times when you need to hit a specific location on an enemy or on an enemy's vehicle. When this is the case, declare that you are making a called shot. Called shots normally add +3 to the target's Hit Threshold; the GM may declare a lower number when the targeted spot is large or slow moving (such as a windshield or a carried briefcase) or higher when the targeted spot is small or moving quickly (such as a headlight or a single eye). The GM may then assign additional damage, usually +2, based on the location of your called shot.

When using a neural disruptor such as a PaciFist, a called shot to the head (adding the standard +3 to the target's Hit Threshold) raises the Stun test by +2, usually from Stun 5 to Stun 7.



Time travel lets you recover from wounds and return to a fight tan, rested and ready – assuming you can escape the fight without being followed.

GETTING HURT AND KEEPING UPRIGHT

HEALING INJURIES

Agents naturally heal 2 points of Health for each day or restful, relaxed activity. For instance, flee through time to a deserted tropical island and spend a full week there, and your Health will increase by 14 points (up to the limit of your normal Health rating). This amount changes if you have been Seriously Wounded; see below.

During a mission, you're much more likely to depend on the Medic ability for on-the-fly healing. Futuristic technology makes it much simpler to tend injuries. With a TimeWatch medkit, every Medic point you spend restores 2 Health to someone else or 1 Health to yourself. (The Medic Booster *Heal Thyself* may increase this amount; see p. 48.) If the Agent spending Medic points does not have access to a TimeWatch-issued medkit, all healing is at half efficiency: every Medic point you spend restores only 1 Health point to someone else, and you must spend 2 Medic points to restore 1 Health when healing yourself.

Medkits are standard TimeWatch equipment, and it's unusual to lose your medkit unless it is deliberately taken away from you in the course of a mission. A Difficulty 3 Preparedness test can typically obtain an extra medkit.

RESISTING UNCONSCIOUSNESS

Getting beaten up? There are two cases when you have to check to see whether you can stay conscious. You'll need to make a **Consciousness test** when your Health first falls to 0 or below (making you **Hurt**), and when it falls to -6 or below (making you **Seriously Wounded**). If you fail, you fall unconscious for 10–60 minutes, until your Health pool improves (typically due to someone using the Medic ability on you), or until the GM says you wake up. If you succeed, you stay conscious.

To make a Consciousness test, roll a die with the absolute value² of your current Health pool as your Difficulty. You automatically succeed if your Health has only dropped to 0 or -1.

You may deliberately strain yourself to remain conscious, voluntarily reducing your Health pool by an amount of your choice. For each point you reduce it, add 1 to your die result. The Difficulty of the Consciousness test is based on your Health pool *before* you make this reduction.

Mace Hunter is on foot and being chased by Mongol cavalry across the steppes near Karakorum. They shoot him with arrows, dropping his Health pool to -3. He just needs to buy enough time to get behind cover and escape with his autochron, so he must remain conscious. The absolute value of -3 is 3, so this is the Difficulty of his Consciousness test. He chooses to expend another 2 Health points he doesn't have, pushing himself onward toward a nearby rock outcropping. That gives him a bonus of +2 to his roll. He rolls a 2, for a final result of 4, exceeding the Difficulty Number of 3 and keeping him conscious long enough to clock out. Agent Hunter escapes, but now his Health pool is down to -5.

If you jump straight to Seriously Wounded (see below), you only make a single test, even if that's a result of spending points at Hurt to avoid losing consciousness. If you go to Hurt and then to Seriously Wounded as a result of two separate attacks, you make two separate Consciousness rolls.

It isn't always worth spending Health points on a Consciousness test when you're Seriously Wounded, unless you have no choice but to continue the fight, and you'll only lower your Health in an attempt to stay conscious. The main advantage of doing so is if you are in the middle of an important task (such as piloting an airplane) or hope to crawl away from the fight and escape.

Skegg is horribly injured by Mongol arrows during the same fight that hurt Mace. She's brought down to -7 Health. That means she has to make a Difficulty 7 Consciousness test, impossible unless she

² In other words, treat the negative number as a positive. If your Health pool is at -3, the Difficulty of the roll is 3, and so on.

spends more points off her Health. Skegg wants to escape, though — as an intelligent velociraptor, she doesn't like her chances if she's caught by the Mongols — so she spends 4 points of Health. This brings her down to -11, on the verge of death, but it gives her +4 on the Difficulty 7 test. She rolls a 4 (for a total result of 8), stays conscious, and tries to use her autochron to escape back to TimeWatch's Citadel and the high-tech medical facility therein.

You may occasionally be required to make a **Health test**, especially when exposed to toxins. A Health test works exactly like a Consciousness test, except the target Difficulty is a set value determined by the toxin you are exposed to.

RESISTING STUNNING

PaciFists, Tasers, stun guns, tranquilizer darts, and neural disruptors (see p. 83) work by knocking you unconscious without causing extensive Health damage. Resisting stunning works much like resisting unconsciousness. The Difficulty Number, however, is set by the Stun value of the weapon used against you instead of by your current Health.

When hit with a stunning weapon, you must make a **Stun test**. Roll a die with the Stun rating of the weapon as your Difficulty. You may deliberately strain yourself to remain conscious, voluntarily reducing your Health pool by an amount of your choice. For each point you reduce it, add 1 to your die result. If you strain your Health below 0 or (if you're already below 0) below -5, you will also have to make a Consciousness test after the Stunning attack is resolved. If you are attacked by more than one stunning weapon in a single round, you make a separate Stun test for each attack.

If you succeed in a Stun test, you remain conscious but are briefly **Impaired**; you suffer a noncumulative 1-point increase to the Difficulty of any actions (including other Stun tests) you attempt until the end of your next turn. If you fail a Stun test, you are knocked unconscious for a period that varies by weapon, but which is usually 10–60 minutes or until awakened by someone successfully making a Difficulty 4 Medic test on you (which does not otherwise restore Health).

Dr. Leah Breen is mind controlled by a parasitic alien hivemind, and she is trying to stun Mace Hunter with her PaciFist so that she can infect him as well. Mace's Hit Threshold is 4, but Dr. Breen spends 3 Shooting points to make sure she hits him. Dr. Breen's PaciFist is a standard Stun 5, so Mace must now make a Stun test at Difficulty 5. Mace trusts his luck; he spends 2 Health, dropping his Health pool from 8 to 6, and rolls a d6. Luckily he rolls a 3, and with the +2 bonus from his expended Health he exactly makes the Stun 5 test.

Mace tries to escape by breaking through a closed window (normally Difficulty 4), but the Stunning attempt has Impaired him until the end of his next turn. He spends 2 Athletics, rolls a 2, and fails his Athletics test due to the 1-point Difficulty increase from impairment. Mace either bounces off the glass to land at Dr. Breen's feet or (if the GM allows him to succeed at a cost; see p. 69) he breaks through the glass but cuts himself badly in the process. Either way, his impairment ends at the end of his turn.

Creatures with a Health rating of 3 or less immediately fall unconscious when successfully hit by a neural disruptor, no Stun test allowed. (In other words, GMs who want an enemy to go down in one shot should give them 3 or fewer Health.)

Stunning works well on humans, but may be less effective on large animals, humans from parallel universes, and aliens — most commonly due to the creatures' increased Health, but rarely due to a natural resistance to stunning. Don't try to use a neural disruptor on a rampaging woolly mammoth. It will only end in tears, tusks, and trampling.

INJURIES

If your pool is anywhere from 0 to -5, you are **Hurt** but have suffered no permanent injury, beyond a few superficial cuts and bruises. Immediately make a Consciousness test when you first drop below 0 Health. If you manage to stay conscious (good job, there!), you don't need to make another test until additional injuries drop you below -5 Health.

When Hurt, the pain of your injuries makes it impossible to spend points on Investigative abilities and increases the Difficulty Number of all General ability tests (excluding Consciousness rolls but including Stun tests). In combat, this penalty raises foes' Hit Thresholds by 1.

A character with the Medic ability can improve your condition by spending Medic points. The Medic must be in a position to devote all of his attention to directly tending to your wounds. For every Medic point spent, you regain 2 Health points — unless you are the Medic, in which case you gain only 1 Health point for every Medic point spent. If you have the Medic Booster *Heal Thyself*, you may restore Health to yourself as if you were tending another character.

If your pool is between -6 and -11, you have been **Seriously Wounded** and can no longer be healed with the Medic ability. You must make a Consciousness test when you first drop below -5 Health. If you manage to stay conscious, you don't need to make another Consciousness test until additional injuries kill you. That's particularly useful if you want to try to crawl away, or see who finishes you off.

If you are able to remain conscious when Seriously Wounded, the pain of your injuries makes it impossible to spend points on Investigative abilities and increases the Difficulty Number of all General ability tests (excluding Consciousness rolls but including Stun tests) by 2. In combat, this penalty effectively raises foes' Hit Thresholds by 2. Until you receive first aid, you will lose an additional Health point every half hour. A character with the Medic ability can stabilize your condition by making a Difficulty 3 Medic test. However, he can't restore your Health points. Get this hurt, and you need more extensive help than can be delivered in the field.

Even after you receive first aid to stop you from losing additional Health, you must convalesce in a hospital, sick bay, or similar setting for a period of days. The length of your convalescence depends on what time period you're being treated in. If you're recuperating in a facility located during Contemporary History (as defined by the Investigative ability; i.e., the 14th century to the mid-21st century), your period of forced inactivity is a number of days equal to the positive value of your lowest Health pool score. If you were reduced to -8 Health, for instance, you must be hospitalized for eight days.

If being treated by a doctor from Ancient History (13th century or prior), this amount of convalescence time is doubled; enjoy those leeches. If your treatment happens during Future History (mid-21st century or afterwards), your recuperation time is halved, rounding in your favor.

If you are tended by a character with Medical Expertise 2 or higher and access to TimeWatch medkits, your convalescence time is the Future History minimum no matter which time period your hospital bed is located in. Expect local physicians and other observers to notice and become extremely suspicious of this, though; TimeWatch agents have occasionally been hanged as witches after speeding up a patient's healing process with super-science. It's usually safer for your fellow Agents to risk transporting you to an unoccupied tropical island for the duration of your recuperation, just as long as someone comes along who is qualified to take care of you.

During convalescence your Health pool can rise no higher than 0. On the day of your discharge, your Health pool increases to half its maximum value, rounded up. On the next day, it refreshes fully.

Health: 0 to -5 HURT	Health: -6 to -11 SERIOUSLY WOUNDED	Health: -12 or lower DEAD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Immediately make a Consciousness test to stay conscious ▶ Can't spend Investigative points until above 0 Health ▶ Difficulties of all General ability tests increase by 1 until above 0 Health ▶ Can be healed normally by the Medic ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Immediately make another Consciousness test to stay conscious ▶ Lose an additional Health point every half hour until stabilized ▶ Can't spend Investigative points until above 0 Health ▶ Difficulties of all General ability tests increase by 2 until above 0 Health ▶ Can't be healed normally by the Medic ability ▶ Must recuperate in a medical facility to regain Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Barring time machine-related intervention by your allies (or a particularly timely use of the <i>Flashback</i> ability by an ally with high Preparedness), mourn your late Agent's heroic death

Skegg was reduced to -11 Health before making it to TimeWatch's medical facility. She'll be in sick bay for 5 days at Health 0, after which point her Health will rise to 5, half of its normal maximum. On the next day, it will rise to the normal Health 10. If Skegg was being treated by a physician in ancient time, problematic for a nonhuman Agent, she wouldn't recover for 22 days.

When your pool dips to -12 or below, you are dead. Time to create a replacement character, talk the GM into letting you play a clone or a younger version of the same Agent, or see if your fellow Agents wish to weather the paradoxes and difficult choral instability involved in trying to change what just happened.

OPTIONAL RULE: RAPID HEALING

Convalescence rules for the Seriously Wounded give a passing nod to reality, as well as to cinematic and literary tradition where the wounded hero is laid up in a sickbed (or even an advanced medical machine) for some time after suffering grievous battle injuries. If that's more rules to remember than you prefer, just declare that so long as someone spends 1 point of Medical Expertise, the Medic ability works normally between -6 and -11 Health. With this altered rule, spending that point of Medical Expertise gives an Agent the ability to ignore the normal Seriously Wounded restriction on rapid healing, so that spending 6 Medic points on someone at -10 Health will raise them immediately to 2 Health. It's a bit less dramatic, but it keeps Agents in the fight longer. All other rules remain the same, including Consciousness rolls and penalties while Seriously Wounded.

DEATH AND ITS AFTERMATH

Players have a few options when their characters die.

- ▶ Bring in a new character. If the deceased TimeWatch Agent had gained any build points by completing past missions, the new character gains those build points as well.
- ▶ With the GM's permission, bring in a clone of the original character. It isn't unheard of for TimeWatch bioscientists to surreptitiously clone promising agents. There are complications, however; the new clone might have a different personality, slightly different abilities, or may not

even realize it is a clone. It's bound to be confused and angry when it realizes the truth. The GM is encouraged to use a clone's arrival as a plot hook to a future mission.

- ▶ With the GM's permission, play a younger version of the same character. There's a significant chance of paradox unless the younger character periodically has their memories erased, of course, so TimeWatch discourages this. (More importantly, it's often difficult for players to remember which missions their characters remember and which missions they can't. It's probably easier to bring in a new character.)
- ▶ It's technically possible for Agents to use convoluted time tricks to save a dead Agent, preventing their death from ever occurring. Players shouldn't count on it; this practice is generally forbidden by TimeWatch policies due to the choral instability it inevitably stirs up, and it's often impossible due to the complex chaos surrounding most deaths. No one wants to make the situation even worse. Still, clever Agents can sometimes effect a rescue if they're cautious and stealthy enough not to cause too many paradoxes. See p. 89 for details.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

The following example illustrates combat, armor, injuries, Stun tests, and unconsciousness.

Sleeping in a 1950s Chicago hotel room after a hard day, Amadu's character Kelfala is attacked by two mob gangsters wielding tommy guns. Normal human gangsters aren't usually much of a challenge for a TimeWatch agent, but Kelfala is asleep and caught off-guard. He isn't wearing his armored TimeWatch uniform, the only weapon handy is his Pacifist, and he's outnumbered. A successful Unobtrusiveness test indicates that Kelfala isn't surprised, at least; he'll be able to easily react once he's woken up.

The GM decides that the gangsters go first, since they're the aggressors. They use the window's ambient light to see as they kick open the door, step in, and shoot at the Agent from Close range. Each gangster has a fixed Shooting modifier of +2, a Health rating and pool of 3, a Hit Threshold of 3, and their tommy guns have a Damage Modifier of +1. The mobsters aren't particularly hard to kill, being Mooks, but they're lethal until they drop.

Kelfala's Scuffling rating is 3, and his pool is full. His Shooting rating is 8, and his pool is currently down to 0. His Health rating is 8, and his pool is full. His Hit Threshold is 4. With no weapons at hand, his Damage Modifier with a fist or kick is -1. He has one Stitch earned earlier in the day.

The GM rolls twice, getting a 2 and 5 and adding +2 for the Mooks' Shooting bonus. Modified by the fixed combat bonus, those rolls come out to a 4 and 7, each of which beats Kelfala's Hit Threshold. The gangsters are using automatic weapons, but Kelfala is a player character, so he takes only a single instance of damage.

The gangsters then make damage rolls. The GM rolls a 3 and 5; with the Damage Modifier of +1 for firearms, that equals 10 points of damage. Bullets riddle Kelfala's body, reducing his Health pool

from 8 to -2. That makes him Hurt, and he suffers an increase of 1 to all Difficulty Numbers, including his foes' Hit Threshold, which now becomes 4. He must make a Consciousness test against a Difficulty of 2, which is the absolute value of his Health pool. He spends no Health and rolls a 3, remaining conscious. Kelfala shouts in pain, using his tether's communication capability to transmit his cry for help to the fellow Agent slumbering in the adjoining room.

It's Kelfala's turn, and Amadu spends his one Stitch to refresh his character's Shooting pool by 2 points. Kelfala then spends those 2 points to take a wild shot with his PaciFist, the only weapon he has handy. He rolls a 1, +2 from the Shooting point spend. That totals 3, not good enough to hit either of the gangsters' new Hit Threshold of 4; he'd have hit if he weren't Hurt. Kelfala rolls off the far side of the bed and flips it upright to take full cover, hiding himself temporarily and gaining +1 to his Hit Threshold, raising it to 5.

Now it's the end of the round, and Amadu gets to decide who goes next. He picks his own character. "Mace, you may want to wake up," Kelfala snarls into his tether. "I'm under attack!" If he wasn't Hurt and unable to spend Investigative points for an advantage, he'd spend a Hacking point to cause his fellow Agent's tether to buzz and wake him up without fail. Kelfala looks around the room from where he's crouched; his autochron is out of reach. He swears and takes another shot with his PaciFist, this time spending no Shooting points. He gets lucky and rolls a 6. Even with the 1-point Difficulty increase for being Hurt, that manages to hit one of the gangsters. PaciFists automatically knock anyone unconscious if they have a Health rating of 3 or less, no Stun test required, and the mobster crumples silently to the floor.

The remaining mobster attempts to turn the TimeWatch Agent into Swiss cheese. He rolls a 3 and with his +2 bonus he hits Kelfala's current Hit Threshold of 5. His damage roll is 4, +1 Damage Modifier, for a total of 5 damage. Bloody feathers from the perforated mattress billow up into the motel room's air, and Kelfala takes enough damage to drop his Health from -2 (Hurt) to -7. He is now Seriously Wounded and faces a 2-point increase on Difficulties. His Consciousness test faces a Difficulty of 7, the absolute value of his Health pool. He could go even further into the red to strain for a bonus, but he elects not to. There's no point in making the roll, which is guaranteed to fail. Kelfala passes out, vowing a particularly painful vengeance if he survives.

Armor makes a difference. If Kelfala had been wearing his chronomorphic TimeWatch uniform, he'd have had Armor 1, which would have subtracted 1 point of damage from each hit. With armor, Kelfala would still be in the fight at -4 Health instead of -7.

If Kelfala were alone as well as unconscious, the mobster could and would proceed to finish him off, shooting him one more time at Point-Blank range. Fortunately for the Agent, Mace Hunter finally comes to help him, rolling through the hotel room door with a weapon out. The conscious mobster doesn't feel up to a battle with a fresh opponent and makes an Athletics test to leap through the window and escape. Mace considers following him, but there's an unconscious mobster to question, and Kelfala needs help — he's Seriously Wounded and will die if not stabilized. Mace Hunter doesn't have enough Medic ability to stop the bleeding. A week-long convalescence now awaits the unfortunate Kelfala... or less than a week if Mace uses his autochron to take them both 200 years into the future, where Kelfala can heal in a high-tech hospital for 4 days and return here mere seconds after he and Mace departed.

PARADOX AND CHRONAL STABILITY: YOUR ANCHOR TO REALITY

Being a time traveler feels like standing in an ocean's shallows, fighting a riptide that tries to carry you out to sea. As a time traveler you need to make a conscious effort of will to resist the universe's attempt to eradicate you from time periods where you don't belong. In *TimeWatch*, the degree to which you're anchored to reality is represented by your **Chronal Stability**. Think of it like your Health points, but instead of measuring how far you are from dying, it measures how far you are from the universe unraveling your existence.

The threat of chronal instability is one of the major challenges facing a TimeWatch agent. You can potentially lose Chronal Stability when time traveling (which requires you to make a simple Travel test), when encountering or causing paradox, and from rare aliens or technological devices. When this is a risk, the GM will ask you to make a Paradox test. In some campaign frames where mental stability is tied to Chronal Stability, severe emotional and mental shocks from horrific occurrences can also degrade your Chronal Stability.

Lost Chronal Stability points can only be restored with the Reality Anchor ability (see p. 49), as your allies keep you centered and remind you who you truly are. Lost Chronal Stability cannot be restored directly by cashing in Stitches. If your Chronal Stability drops to 0 or below, you are at risk of fading away, being erased from the universe, or suffering from lingering insanity after accidentally being subsumed by someone else's life (see p. 95). Staying chronally stable is a priority for any TimeWatch agent. And hey, if you mess up and are erased from the universe, you'll have never existed... and all your fellow agents at TimeWatch will have to go and redo your old missions, without ever knowing who to be irritated at. Try not to let this happen. TimeWatch will thank you for it.

There's a good rule of thumb for when you need to make a Paradox test. Any time you first experience a paradox, you make a Paradox test. A paradox occurs when an already established event is contradicted. You'll see examples of triggers and Losses on p. 94.

A cruel and hated guard captain locks Altani in a medieval prison cell without her gear. She has no points in Burglary and needs to escape. She has searched the cell thoroughly. She decides that if she escapes, she will come back in time later and hide a disintegrator pistol somewhere in the cell. The problem is, she's searched the cell and knows that there's no pistol there already; having one appear would contradict an established event and create an excessive paradox. Surveying the room, she realizes that she hasn't yet checked the floor stones to see if they're loose; they could still hide secrets. She tells the GM that her future self will hollow out a particular floor stone and hide the pistol under that. Altani makes her Preparedness roll, pries up the stone, and pulls out the pistol her future self will leave there in the past. There's no need for a Paradox test, because there's no paradox; no established event was contradicted.

Now free, she decides to go back in time and prevent her capture by killing the guard captain a week before her younger self was captured. She creates paradox the instant she puts an arrow into

the captain's throat, because she's just made it impossible for him to arrest her next week. The GM has Altani make a standard Difficulty 4 / Loss 4 Paradox test. Altani fails the test and loses 4 points of Chronal Stability from the paradox. "Still worth it," she growls, and time travels away.

Altani still remembers escaping her cell because it happened to her and she was there, even though in the new timeline she just created it will never occur. If the paradox she created was more important, such as if the guard captain was an important historical figure, the Difficulty or potential Loss of the test (or both) would be higher.

HOW PARADOX TESTS WORK

Paradox tests work like a Stun test, but with Chronal Stability instead of Health: choose whether or not to spend any Chronal Stability points, roll a d6, and hope to hit a target Difficulty Number (usually 4). For each point you spend, add 1 to your die result. If you meet or exceed the Difficulty, you lose no additional Chronal Stability other than the points you spent to add to your die roll. If you fail, you either suffer some negative result (if a weapon or attack is being used against you) or lose a number of points from your Chronal Stability pool, in addition to any points spent on the test itself. A test with a **Difficulty** of 4 and a potential **Loss** of 4 points is called a **D4/L4** test.

You're always permitted to spend Chronal Stability points to provide a bonus to your roll. However, it's never a good bet to spend more points than you stand to lose if you fail. You can "spend yourself negative," if you think you absolutely have to resist the universe's attempt to erase you from existence, although you cannot voluntarily reduce your Chronal Stability pool below -11. If you strain your Chronal Stability below 0 or below -5, you will also suffer consequences for having become **Fading** or **Subsumed** (see p. 95). Unless the GM says otherwise, if you suffer more than one threat to Chronal Stability in a single round, you make a separate Paradox test for each threat.

The severity of a failure depends on the situation; see p. 95. Paradox tests are usually made at a Difficulty of 4, but the Difficulty of such tests varies widely by both trigger and campaign frame; in a funny or pulp campaign, for instance, test Difficulties and potential Loss are typically lower than they would be in a more serious and gritty campaign. For more dangerous paradoxes, potential Loss may be considerably higher than 4. Rarely, a reduced amount of Chronal Stability Loss may occur even on successful tests (such as a Difficulty 6 test where you lose 6 on failure, or 2 on success).

Paradox tests are one of the few instances in *TimeWatch* when the GM will usually tell you the exact Difficulty Number you need, although she may not tell you the exact chronal Loss you would suffer on a failure.

OPTIONAL RULE: THE PARADOX POOL

There are lots of really fun time travel games where the smallest paradox unravels the universe; meet yourself, or contradict history, and reality pretty much throws up its hands and goes off in a huff to destroy all of time and space. *TimeWatch* doesn't do this because there seems to be more opportunity for fun roleplaying in a game world where egregious paradoxes can, and do, happen. In *TimeWatch*, paradox has a consequence — but it's usually a consequence for the Agent, not for reality itself.

You're welcome to change this if you want to raise the stakes, particularly in a one-shot game or in a climactic series-ending mission. One method is to set up a countdown **paradox pool** of 5-6 points per Agent that destroys the world if reality gets too bent out of shape. Every time during the mission that the Agents suffer Chronal Stability Loss from a failed Paradox test or failed Travel test, the number of points that the Agents lose is also removed from the paradox pool. If this pool hits zero, bad things happen — either history shatters and the time stream ends entirely or (more entertainingly) time suddenly circles back in on itself, opening up random time portals across the ages and thoroughly changing recorded history.

Use poker chips to represent the paradox pool, and put them where every player can see the pile growing smaller and smaller. This countdown to disaster encourages Agents to voluntarily spend their Chronal Stability points and Reality Anchor points when forced to make a test, instead of just chancing a successful die roll. If you're particularly generous, restore a few paradox pool points when Agents fix existing paradoxes. The paradox pool resets completely between missions.

A thematically similar but less orthodox method is to set up a Jenga® tower on a side table. Players pull and place one wooden block for each Chronal Stability point they lose due to failed checks. If the tower falls before the end of the mission, history unravels, and the mission team fails. Find more about this on p. 221.

Like all optional rules, it's best to only try these reality-ending techniques if you're willing to live with the consequences. History may unravel halfway through the game if Agents are particularly unlucky or unwise.

GM ADVICE: WHY REVEAL DIFFICULTY NUMBERS?

We usually recommend not revealing exact Difficulty Numbers. So why do it for Paradox tests?

Paradox tests are one of the few places where an Agent can spend points, fail, and then have to spend even *more* points as the penalty for their failure. On a Difficulty 4 test with a possible Loss of 4, for instance, an Agent can spend 2 Chronal Stability, roll a 1 and fail the test, and then lose another 4 points as the penalty for failure. It's a gamble that turns out to be particularly frustrating if you don't know the odds. That's why we've standardized almost all Paradox tests at a Difficulty 4, and it's why we suggest that the GM communicate this fact, along with the knowledge of whether the resulting damage for a failed test will be more or less than the standard 4 damage. Doing this speeds up the game by reducing player analysis paralysis.

We also recommend you not allow your players to spend more Chronal Stability points on a test than they would otherwise lose by failing it. Trust us; your players will thank you.

GM ADVICE: WHY TRAVEL TESTS EXIST

Travel tests exist as an alternative to worrying about fuel for time machines. The Chronal Stability Loss averages out to 1 point per jump, not enough to put the character in danger but enough to encourage players to think before time traveling. Remind players that they can bypass the Travel test entirely by spending a Stitch. If the players want to do something that you find incredibly entertaining, but are discouraged by the possible Chronal Stability Loss of Travel tests, throw them a preemptive Stitch that they can spend on the trip.

Your players are unlikely to want to spend any points of Chronal Stability to improve their roll on a Travel test, and that's by design; with potential damage of only 2 points, numerically it's never worth it to do so. Feel free to tell them this so that they don't accidentally waste points.

Travel tests also teach players how Paradox tests work in low-risk situations, so that they'll be ready for more difficult tests later in the game. Trust us, if they ever choose to duplicate themselves in a fight, they're going to be making Chronal Stability rolls and Paradox tests up the wazoo. Best to get used to them now.

TRAVEL TESTS

Whether you're headed to visit the dinosaurs, or you're just grabbing your autochron and jumping five minutes into the future so that your coffee is cool enough to drink, you'll need to make a Paradox test that we call the **Travel test**. This is a simple D4/L2 Paradox test that mechanically is not worth spending any Chronal Stability points on to try and improve. Every time you time travel, roll a d6; roll 1–3, and lose 2 points of Chronal Stability. Roll 4–6 and lose nothing. Paying a Stitch per trip bypasses the need for a Travel test.

If your Reality Anchor rating is 8 or higher, you gain the *Grounded* Booster and automatically succeed at the first four standard Travel tests in any scene. Feel free to lord this over your fellow Agents every time you time travel.

WHEN DO YOU RISK LOSING CHRONAL STABILITY?

A little Chronal Stability is usually lost through the normal act of time traveling. Experiencing any paradoxes, whether large or small, also triggers Paradox tests. You may make a Paradox test when something you learn or experience contradicts a

known fact, when you change something consequential to history, when you time travel into a scene where you already exist, when you experience something horrific (only in certain campaign frames where emotional stability is tied to Chronal Stability), or when you're struck with a chronal destabilizer weapon during combat. See p. 95 for a detailed list.

GMs should waive Travel tests for quick Preparedness tests or Investigative spends that require you to travel forwards or backwards in time (such as clocking out, grabbing an easily obtained object from somewhere in time, and clocking back in seconds later). That's mostly for convenience's sake; we want to encourage you to make the game more fun by describing normal Preparedness tests with time travel. The points of Chronal Stability that you save are your reward for being creative and entertaining. Choose to accomplish any other errands during your trip, though, and you'll make a Travel test as per normal.

Characters have slightly more trouble maintaining Chronal Stability on timelines that are not originally their own. If you're in a parallel timeline from the one you were born in,

any Paradox test other than Travel tests usually has both the Difficulty and Loss raised by 1 point.

Skegg is a sophosaur, a psychic velociraptor from a timeline where the meteor missed Earth and the dinosaurs never died out. She's delighted to work for TimeWatch (often against members of her own species), but she lives and functions in a timeline that's parallel to her own. When the other members of her team have to make Difficulty 4 / Loss 4 Paradox tests, Skegg has to make a Difficulty 5 / Loss 5 test instead.

Uurrk travels into a parallel timeline where Homo sapiens died out and Neanderthals thrived. While there he accidentally creates a paradox. His Paradox test is at Difficulty 5, not Difficulty 4, and he'll lose 5 points of Chronal Stability if he fails.

Creatures that spend a great deal of time in a parallel universe eventually acclimate to it, losing this penalty. Conveniently enough, in *TimeWatch* the acclimatization happens at just about the point when both GM and player keep forgetting that the character is originally from an alternate universe, so they seldom remember to apply the penalty. In other words, if the penalty becomes too finicky to easily remember, the character has acclimated and the penalty can be legitimately discarded.

Scenes

We measure the risk of time travel within **scenes**, where a scene is considered a single encounter. Different incarnations of you can exist dozens or more times in a given time period with no chronal distress at all, as you're not entangling yourself with the same events, but when you appear more than once within a single scene you risk churning up the temporal waters.

What's a scene? An evening-long masquerade ball in Marie Antoinette's court would be considered a scene, as would a 30-second-long quick and vicious fight in a back alley of ancient Athens. A quickly summarized but months-long trek across the Alps might be a scene, as might a 10-minute-long infiltration into an enemy's stronghold. If your game was a movie and the director would say "end scene," that's probably where a scene ends, but the GM always has final say.

REGAINING CHRONAL STABILITY

Other than finishing a mission, the only way to restore Chronal Stability points is with the Reality Anchor General ability. As explained on p. 49, Reality Anchor restores your stability and stops time from sweeping you away. You can use Reality Anchor on yourself, but it's not as efficient, only restoring one Chronal Stability point for every Reality Anchor point you spend. If a friend and fellow Agent uses Reality Anchor on you, you regain 2 points of lost Chronal Stability for every point of Reality Anchor they spend. Like any other ability, you can never increase your Chronal Stability pool higher than your rating in the ability.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Here's an example of an Agent making Paradox tests. The Difficulty Numbers are taken from the table below.

Mace Hunter time travels into a remote prehistoric canyon where he knows a rogue time traveler is hiding. Time travel always requires the Travel test, a Paradox test with a Difficulty of 4 and chronal damage

GM ADVICE: THE PARADOX OF MULTIPLE TEAMS

Imagine a scenario where TimeWatch agents are sent into the past on a mission, and they fail. TimeWatch instantly knows by checking upstream history, so they send another team back to the same scene. And when they fail, another team. Why didn't the first team encounter the second and third teams during that scene? Similarly, when an antagonist is defeated, what's to stop their boss from just sending more assassins back in time to continually harass the TimeWatch agents until they're overcome and defeated?

The short metagame answer is because "man, that would make a lousy and un-fun game." It's unworkable to have the Agents win a fight and then say "nah, now you have to fight it again with more bad guys." Not only would your players throw dice at you, it'd get boring very quickly.

The in-game answer is that TimeWatch knows that it risks paradox every time it sequentially dispatches multiple teams to handle a single problem, and the amount of paradox rises with each intervention. TimeWatch thus has a policy that if a team fails, any mission to fix that problem either needs to tackle it earlier, later, or find a way to address the problem without a second team showing themselves in the same scene. Doing otherwise would expose the second (and third, etc.) teams in a scene to paradox and Paradox tests every time they cause something that hadn't happened during the first fight.

That's also true for antagonists. Once a fight has taken place, that locks in reality, and anything that would change that would cause paradox. A clever antagonist might use Preparedness or even duplicate himself in the same way that an Agent can, but once a fight in a given scene is complete, that result is locked in. It's recommended that GMs don't alter those results without great consideration.

of 2 on a failure. Mace doesn't bother spending extra points to increase his chances of success. He rolls a 3, less than the Difficulty, and his Chronal Stability pool drops 2 points from 8 to 6.

Unfortunately for Mace, the rogue time traveler successfully shoots Mace with a D4/L4 chronal destabilizer pistol. Mace has to make another Paradox test, still at Difficulty 4. He feels cocky and only spends 2 points to improve his roll, voluntarily reducing his Chronal Stability pool from 6 to 4. Of course, Mace rolls a 1. He suffers 4 points of chronal instability from the pistol, reducing his pool from 4 to 0. Mace is now Fading, making General ability tests more difficult. Hopefully he'll have time to restore some of his Chronal Stability by using Reality Anchor before he is shot again.

Mace realizes with a groan that this Adversary is a younger version of an enemy whom Mace has encountered before. Mace's knowledge of that older version locks in the reality that this younger version must survive the encounter alive; Mace knows (thanks to his knowledge of Timecraft) that if he kills this younger version he'd contradict known facts, and thus would need to make yet another Paradox test. Mace sighs, puts away his elephant gun, Ol' Bessie, and pulls out his Pacifist instead.

TRIGGERS FOR PARADOX TESTS

A number of things can trigger Paradox tests. Here are some common examples, along with their Difficulty, their Loss, and whether the action needs the expenditure of a Paradox Prevention point to even occur. See p. 42 for details on when this is appropriate.

Paradox tests can be abbreviated for clarity and brevity. A Travel test would be abbreviated D4/L2, denoting Difficulty 4, Loss 2. If spending a Paradox Prevention point is required to succeed at the test, that's also noted, such as D4/L4 – P when your future self wants to leave you a note.

GM ADVICE: LET THE PLAYERS DECIDE

One technique we've found that will suit some groups is to place the Chronal Stability Loss chart in the hands of one of the players, who can then pipe up when a Chronal Stability-threatening incident occurs. This usually leads to greater Chronal Stability Losses than would otherwise have occurred.

EXCESSIVE PARADOX

The GM may decide that some time tricks are impossible even when the player wants to make a Paradox test and/or spend a Paradox Prevention point, usually because the time trick doesn't make sense or because it makes the game less fun for everyone. She'll generally be consistent about this, and it shouldn't happen often. When this happens, she'll say "no" and possibly say why, and you'll need to find another solution. Excessive paradox generally applies to both player characters and adversaries.

Examples of excessive paradox include:

- ▶ trying to use Preparedness to leave yourself an item in a location where you already know no item exists, when there's no logical way to have the item just appear
- ▶ trying to make an Investigative spend to create an effect when you already know that effect is impossible, such as trying to spend Architecture to create a window in a room you already know has none

GM ADVICE: WHEN TO HANDWAVE THESE RULES

Simpler is sometimes better. There are going to be times when the player characters do something incredibly dramatic that saves history but kills a number of local citizens in the process. Even if multiple people consequential to history die, you don't want to interrupt the players' triumph to demand multiple Paradox tests. In these cases, combine several tests into one of slightly greater Difficulty, or handwave the tests and declare that all Agents suffer a certain amount of Chronal Stability Loss as the effect of those deaths ripple back and forth across the timeline.

If they accidentally kill people essential to history, the Paradox tests and potential paradoxes become more important and the Agents may want to launch a second concurrent mission to save those essential people's lives at the last minute. Use your best judgment on this; if complicating the victory wouldn't be fun, handwave the Loss, describe the changes in history as the timeline tries to correct itself, and move on.

Similarly, reward success. Even when it entails changing a future the Agents have seen and experienced (and so would normally trigger paradox), a final change that put history back onto its true course shouldn't require a Paradox test. The reason for this is purely metagame: we've found that it's usually just not fun for players to triumphantly solve a problem, save the day, and then end the game by suffering massive Chronal Stability Loss. If they manage to solve the mystery and rescue true history, they're probably in the clear.

Paradox Test Examples

Trigger	Difficulty/Loss	Paradox Prevention Spend Required?
No Paradox: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You successfully restore history back to its true path, ending the mission 	None (no test required)	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Any time travel (“the Travel test”) 	D4/L2	No
Lesser Paradox: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You learn, experience, or cause something that violates a known fact ▶ You significantly change the future, perhaps by revealing future history to someone or by leaving a futuristic device behind in time ▶ You kill someone consequential, but not essential, to history ▶ You are hit by a chronal destabilizer (whether weapon or effect) ▶ Your future self leaves you a vague or mostly useless clue about a future event 	D4/L4	No
Paradox: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Your future self leaves you a specific message or important clue about a future event ▶ You overlap yourself in a scene and aid yourself, changing history, although your past self never becomes aware of the fact (such as secretly sniping a foe from a nearby rooftop or unlocking your own prison door) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Every additional overlap adds +2 to the Difficulty and +2 to the Loss 	D4/L4 – P	Yes (if you choose not to spend a Paradox Prevention point, you can’t aid yourself in this way)
Greater Paradox: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You overlap yourself in a scene and directly offer yourself aid (such as arriving to heal your own unconscious body, or your future self joining in an ongoing fight to double your firepower) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Every additional overlap adds +2 to the Difficulty and +2 to the Loss) 	D4/L6 – P	Yes (if you choose not to spend a Paradox Prevention point, you can’t aid yourself in this way)
Severe Paradox: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You close off a time loop and remove the reason you time traveled in the first place, with the unfortunate result that two paradoxical versions of you exist simultaneously (see p. 44) ▶ You kill someone essential to history ▶ You change events in a way that fundamentally changes a future you know to have occurred, perhaps branching correct history onto an alternate history timeline ▶ You are caught in the chronal field of a broken autochron ▶ Your direct ancestors within the past 3 generations are killed in a way that ensures you will never be born (Loss decreases by 1 for every generation prior to that; a change more than 250 years before your birth does not trigger a test) 	D6/L6 or higher	No



Vidh begins to fade, but that's why she has teammates with Reality Anchor, even if they happen to be Neanderthals.

- ▶ trying to add or subtract combatants from past rounds of a combat, or change what occurred earlier in the fight, in a way that would make everyone need to replay all or part of that fight
- ▶ losing a battle and going back in time to replay the exact same fight, this time with the odds tipped in your favor so that the end result is different

THE EFFECTS OF INSTABILITY

Like your Health, your Chronal Stability pool can drop below 0.

If your Chronal Stability ranges from 0 to -5, you are **Fading**, clinging onto reality through pure force of will. Difficulty target numbers for all General abilities increase by 1, and it becomes more difficult to use Investigative abilities.

If you want to make an Investigative spend, make a roll with the absolute value³ of your current Chronal Stability pool as your Difficulty. You may deliberately strain yourself, voluntarily reducing your Chronal Stability pool by an amount of your choice. For each point you reduce it, add 1 to your die result. The Difficulty of the roll is based on your

³ In other words, treat the negative number as a positive. For example, if your Chronal Stability pool is at -3, the Difficulty of the roll is 3, and so on.

Chronal Stability pool *before* you make this reduction. If you succeed, you can make the Investigative spend.

Altani's Chronal Stability is at -3, and she's Fading. She wants to spend 1 point of Military Tactics to help finish off her foe. Her Difficulty is 3 to succeed, but there's no Loss if she fails; her consequence is that she is unable to spend the Investigative point. Altani spends 1 Chronal Stability to boost her roll by +1, rolls a 2, and succeeds with the exact number she needed. Altani's Chronal Stability is now -4, and she gains a benefit for her Military Tactics spend.

If your Chronal Stability ranges from -6 to -11, you are **Subsumed**. The universe tries to rid itself of an unnatural irritant by turning you into a local citizen from the current timeline, including a full history and memories that you receive when the universe rewrites itself to include you. Your appearance, personality, and memories change to those decided upon by the GM, or perhaps by both the GM and the player. This new individual has no knowledge of TimeWatch, and any objects on the Agent's body vanish when Subsumed.

Once your allies locate you (which may range from an easy task to an adventure in itself, as decided by your GM), they will have to spend Reality Anchor to restore you. Upon restoration you permanently lose 1 point from your Chronal Stability *rating*. The only way to get it back is to purchase it again with build points. The memories of being Subsumed stay with you, as explained below.

When your Chronal Stability reaches -12 or less, you are **erased** from the universe. We're not kidding, here; not only don't you exist, you *never* existed, and even your closest friends in TimeWatch have faint, fuzzy, and fading memories of you.

GM ADVICE: THE TRUTH ABOUT GHOSTS

When the GM chooses, Subsumed adversaries, and player and supporting characters are **evicted** through time instead, ending up disembodied in a different time period. They are marooned slightly outside of time, invisible, incorporeal, and with almost no method for affecting the physical world. Such characters are typically left insane but self-aware by the experience. If you ever run across a haunting or a ghost, you probably saw a Subsumed time traveler instead.

Such exiles may learn to possess sensitive people or manipulate physical objects to draw attention to their plight. Due to the insanity that characteristically accompanies this experience, that might not be as good an idea as you'd probably think.

GM ADVICE: RACE TO ERASE

If a character in your game drops to -12 Chronal Stability and is erased, consider doing a search and replace to remove their name entirely from your game notes and any campaign logs. Hey, we take “never existed” seriously around here.

GM ADVICE: OUT OF TIME

Most supporting characters don't have Chronal Stability or Tempus. Unless they're a time traveler, from a parallel timeline, or an alien, they can neither lose nor be affected by Chronal Stability and its effects.

Adversaries or supporting characters who do fall into those categories lose points from the Tempus ability pool instead of from Chronal Stability if they run into paradox; see p. 148.

When a GM chooses, an Adversary or supporting character who reaches -12 Tempus without ever being Subsumed is **flung** across time to an unknowable time and place instead of being erased; whether far future or distant past, the universe just wants them separated from their time machine and gone. Most characters who are flung are effectively dead and out of the campaign, unless the GM wishes for them to reappear sessions later as insane reoccurring Adversaries. Characters who have been flung seem to trade sanity for unique chronal abilities that make them a particularly dangerous threat.

Other Adversaries and supporting characters who are flung may never settle in one era for more than a short time, effectively becoming insane and insubstantial chronal ghosts called walk-ins who haunt one or multiple time periods until saved or destroyed by TimeWatch.

A GM can choose to fling a player character instead of erasing him. This typically removes him from the current mission (and may turn him into a supporting character instead) but technically saves his life.

TimeWatch agents hate it when your Agent is erased, because every mission you accomplished will have to be redone by other TimeWatch agents. Time to create a new character.

COMING BACK FROM THE EDGE

As long as you're in audio contact with the recipient, you can spend points from the Reality Anchor ability to help another character regain lost Chronal Stability points. For every Reality Anchor point you spend, the recipient gains 2 Stability points. Reality Anchor points can also be spent to re-anchor yourself to the timeline; for every Reality Anchor point you spend on yourself, you regain 1 Chronal Stability point.

If a character is Subsumed due to chronal instability, you can make a Difficulty 4 Reality Anchor test to snap him into a state of temporary self-awareness. Any points spent on this test do not otherwise restore Chronal Stability. The false reality will reluctantly relinquish its grasp on the character once his Chronal Stability is restored above 0, at which point he will revert to his true appearance and memories. Any held items that vanished when the character was Subsumed will return. Additional Reality Anchor points will restore lost Chronal Stability, but not the point permanently lost when Subsumed.

Characters who have lost a Chronal Stability point due to being Subsumed, even briefly, usually gain new memories and personality traits from the temporary persona. This is a suggested roleplaying quirk that allows players, if they so desire, to model the new memories by rearranging up to 5 points of their character's Investigative abilities.

These phantom personalities and memories typically disappear if the lost Chronal Stability point is repurchased with build points.

GM ADVICE: PLOT HOOKS APLENTY

Subsumed antagonists and supporting characters can make for fine plot hooks. Perhaps a supporting character agent was subsumed while holding an incredibly important historical object; the player characters must find him, restore him, and get the object back. Alternatively, a mission might involve finding a subsumed agent with little or nothing to go on other than knowledge about the agent's old mission that was never completed.

Chimeras can also make good plot hooks, particularly when they snap and become Adversaries. Their insanity and competing personalities make them extraordinarily dangerous and unpredictable, a monster created by the same dangers the player characters face every day.

CHIMERAS

TimeWatch agents who have been subsumed multiple times are referred to in TimeWatch as **chimeras**, and may become an insane, erratic conglomeration of competing personalities and unique chronal powers. It's not uncommon for such agents to be retired from active service before they steal an autochron and rebel against TimeWatch. As chimeras tend to be both paranoid and sly, however, they may successfully escape and turn into Adversaries more often than TimeWatch would like to admit.

SAVING A DEAD AGENT: A LESSON IN PARADOX

It's sometimes possible to save an Agent killed in the line of duty. The challenge is doing so without the Agents creating a worse problem than they had to begin with. Rescue missions can sometimes create split timelines, paradoxes, and chronal instability that others can exploit.

When attempting this type of rescue, the question that Agents should ask themselves is "how can I do this while creating the least paradox possible?" The easier they make it for the universe to correct itself, the easier such a rescue becomes.

For instance, consider the following problem.

Traveling apart from his team in 12th-century Cairo, Mace Hunter is stabbed to death in a back alley by an elite assassin. Coming upon his body, his fellow Agents decide to save his life.

After discovering Mace's body in the alley and using Medical Expertise to determine that it's been dead for less than an hour, one of his fellow Agents travels two hours back in time to plant a hidden video bug using the Spying Technical ability. She plants the bug and returns to her friends.

There are a few tactics they can use at this point, with the more straightforward solutions causing far more problems than the complicated ones. Here's a successful rescue with unfortunate consequences.

The team (we'll call them Team A) then reviews the video footage to see exactly what happened to Mace. This locks in history for them; at this point, if they change anything they see, they'll create a paradox and need to make a Paradox test. Using the video footage, they note the exact time of the assassin's arrival and where he hid in the alley. The group then goes back in time an hour and a half to lay an ambush. One of them gathers up the video bug (creating a paradox and triggering a Paradox test, since they need that bug to record Mace's assassination), and when the assassin enters the alley the team silently and efficiently stuns him with their Pacifists. When Mace Hunter enters and exits the alleyway, the assassin is nowhere to be found — and because Mace exits, uninjured and unaware of the potential attack, the team makes yet another Paradox test.

It's even worse. Because Mace was never attacked, in this timeline his team (we'll call them team B) will never find his body and go back in time to save him. That means that once Mace exits that alley, Team A and Team B are existing concurrently, and Team B never has any reason to go back in time an hour and a half to close the loop.

In this sort of circumstance the tremendously unstable Team A normally snaps out of existence when Mace leaves the alley, never needing to exist in this changed reality, leaving behind a stunned assassin who has no idea how he got stunned. If they resent disappearing from reality in this way, members of Team A can spend a Paradox Prevention point to cling to existence. From this point forward any surviving member is treated as if they're in a parallel universe (see p. 192) and likely becomes a supporting character. Some excellent villains, each a time-duplicate of a player character Agent, can be created in this manner. It's why saving people from death is against TimeWatch regulations.

Total team Paradox tests, not counting Travel tests: two and likely annihilation.

There's a better way to effect a rescue.

The team (we'll call them Team Y) then reviews the video footage to see exactly what happened to Mace. They note the exact time of the assassin's arrival and where he hid in the alley. The group then goes back in time an hour and a half to lay an ambush. They wait on the roofs overlooking the alley, hidden, and they bide their time. The assassin arrives; they wait. Mace arrives, and the assassin attacks; they wait. It's only when Mace has fallen unconscious and is about to die that they spring into action.

First they stun the assassin before he can deliver a death blow. They likely kill him or strand him in an isolated time where they can retrieve him for questioning later. Then they stabilize Mace to make sure he doesn't die. Regardless, they want Mace to look dead when their past selves (Team Z) show up, so one Agent spends 1 point of Medical Expertise to put the living, unconscious Mace Hunter into a paralytic stupor that makes him appear dead. The team then hides again until their Team Z earlier selves show up, find Mace's apparently dead body, and head into the past to save him. Team Y then revives Mace, retrieves their hidden camera, and takes him off to get healed.

Total team Paradox tests, not counting Travel tests: none, as no paradoxes occurred.

As you see, the easiest rescues are the ones that don't contradict already-established events. The difference between catastrophic failure and easy success is making sure that no established facts are changed.

This is a key to successful time travel. Not contradicting established events helps an Agent maintain his Chronal Stability.

HAZARDS AND DANGERS

More than bullets, ray beams, and alien claws can injure a TimeWatch agent. As always in *TimeWatch*, environmental dangers are described in more narrative than clinical terms.

CRASHES

GM ADVICE: FAST CRASHES

Accurate crash damages involves a reasonable amount of calculation. If you're in a hurry, decide on a reasonable damage amount for the type of crash (i.e., how hurt would the characters be if this happened in a sci-fi movie?), and then offer a somewhat lower damage number if the Agent successfully makes a difficult Athletics test. No one but you will ever know the difference.

If you are hit by a vehicle, you suffer damage equal to the Difficulty Number of the Athletics or Vehicles test to get out of the way that you failed (if the target isn't a player character, the base damage is 5). Modify the damage further based on the vehicle's speed and type, as follows:

Collision Circumstances	Damage Modifier
chariot speed	+1
average city driving speed	+2
highway speed	+4
airplane speed	+6
spacecraft speed	+8
very light vehicle (unladen cart)	-3
light vehicle (laden cart, chariot, motorcycle)	-1
heavier vehicle (SUV, limousine, hover-car)	+1
much heavier vehicle (elephant, truck, helicopter, shuttlecraft, small airplane) (normal building)	+2
vastly heavier vehicle (tractor-trailer, heavy truck, airplane, small spacecraft) (abutment, bunker)	+4
massively heavy vehicle (heavy airplane, medium spaceship)	+8
good luck finding a parking space for something this large (large spaceship)	+12

If you are in a vehicle crash, you suffer damage equal to the Difficulty Number of the Vehicles attempt you or the driver missed (if there was no test, the base damage is 4). If you were wearing seat belts or had other crash protection, apply a -2 modifier to that result. Add the speed modifier from the table above; *subtract* the vehicle type modifier for *your* vehicle; add the vehicle type modifier for the other vehicle.

Kelfala is on a motorcycle when he's deliberately hit by a tractor-trailer. He's wearing a motorcycle helmet and protective clothes, enough to claim crash protection (although the GM states that the benefit from the protective leathers is better than the normal Armor 1 from Kelfala's TimeWatch uniform that he's also wearing underneath, so the armor doesn't apply). Kelfala takes 4 points of damage, -2 for protection, +4 for highway speed, minus -1 (which is +1) for riding a motorcycle, +4 for being hit by a tractor-trailer; Kelfala takes 11 damage to his Health. The Adversary driving the tractor-trailer is wearing her seat belt, so she takes 4 damage, -2 for crash protection, +4 for highway speeds, -4 for a tractor-trailer, -1 for hitting a motorcycle. She takes 1 damage to her Health and blows the air horn in triumph as she backs up to finish the job.

Later, Kelfala is on a rooftop being strafed by a helicopter, and his only handy vehicle is his new motorcycle. He rides the motorcycle at high speed up a ramp and right into the cockpit of the helicopter, making an Athletics test to jump off at the last minute. Kelfala's successful Vehicles test indicated that the motorcycle struck home.

The helicopter pilot isn't wearing a harness. He takes 4 points of damage, +4 for highway speed (of the motorcycle; the helicopter itself is hovering), -2 for his helicopter, -1 for the motorcycle. He takes 5 points of Health. As a Mook he only had 3 Health, so he screams as the helicopter crashes and explodes.

Kelfala walks away, backlit by the explosion.

Or as an alternative:

Centuries in the future, Kelfala is piloting a large spacecraft that is under attack from rebels. One of the rebels in a small damaged spaceship decides to aim it directly at the larger spaceship's bridge. Everyone is warned to brace for impact.

Base damage starts at 4, and bracing for impact subtracts -2. Spaceship speed adds +8, the large spaceship subtracts -12, and the small spaceship adds +4. Everyone on the bridge takes 2 points of damage. If they weren't braced, unnamed supporting characters might have been knocked unconscious or killed by the 4 points of Health damage. Everyone in the rebel's small spaceship takes 18 points of damage and dies spectacularly.

The GM is encouraged to increase or decrease damage based on ad hoc modifiers, especially if the end result from the above table seems too high or low for realism. If you hit a structure rather than another vehicle, use the italicized examples in the table to gauge damage. The GM always determines any damage to the vehicles based on the dramatic necessities of the plot; *TimeWatch* collision is drama, not physics.



Running up against Blackbeard means that Vidh and Altani may need the drowning rules after all.

DROWNING AND SUFFOCATION

If you have advance warning before being immersed in water or surrounded by poison gas, you can hold your breath.

Holding your breath gets you five rounds (or two minutes if not in combat or a chase) before you start suffocating. After that point, you lose 1 Athletics every round as you struggle to hold your breath. After that you lose 1 Health every round as you start inhaling water, smoke, or gas.

These lost Health points can be restored normally with the Medic ability if you're rescued and resuscitated before you die. You cannot resuscitate yourself with Medic.

Outer Space: If exposed to the vacuum of outer space, a trained agent knows to immediately exhale to avoid explosive decompression. Disposable supporting characters might not know this, resulting in hideously dramatic and memorable deaths that you're really not going to want to clean up after.

An Agent who remembers to exhale immediately begins suffocating, and is treated as if Hurt due to the extreme cold. You lose 1 Athletics and 1 Health every round as your body fluids begin to boil.

ELECTRICITY

Damage from exposure to electricity varies according to voltage. You can suffer:

Mild shock, equivalent to briefly touching an ungrounded wire or damaged electrical appliance. You lose 1 Health and are blown backward by a couple of meters.

Moderate shock, equivalent to a jolt from a cattle prod or an electric stun gun. You must make a Difficulty 6 Stun test.

Extreme shock, equivalent to a lightning strike. You suffer one die of damage, and must make a Difficulty 9 Stun test.

The GM should always give you some opportunity to avoid being shocked, whether it be an Athletics test to avoid unexpected contact, or a Tinkering test to spot the high-tension wire.

EXPLOSIVES AND EXPLOSIONS

You don't see many TimeWatch agents using massive explosives when they're time traveling, because the risk of irreversible, unanticipated consequences that lead to paradox is usually too great. Sometimes explosions are appropriate, however, and more than one TimeWatch team during

Explosion Damage

Class	Examples	Annihilation Range	Damage Range	Debris Range
1	pen grenade, pipe bomb, black powder explosive, micro-grenade	—	Point-Blank (2d6 + 3 dmg)	Close (Difficulty 3 Athletics test or 1d6 + 1 dmg)
2	grenade, stick of TNT, concussive projector, weaponized mini-drone	—	Point-Blank (2d6 + 6 dmg)	Close (Difficulty 6 Athletics test or 1d6 + 2 dmg)
3	nitroglycerine, RPG rocket, brick of C4, land mine, mortar shell, suicide vest, cinematic gas tank, satellite death ray	Point-Blank (Dead)	Close (2d6 + 9 dmg)	Near (Difficulty 9 Athletics test or 1d6 + 3 dmg)
4	truck bomb, AP shell, gas main	Close (Dead)	Near (2d6 + 12 dmg)	Long (Difficulty 12 Athletics test or 1d6 + 4 dmg)
5	HE shell, hellfire missile, gravity bomb, exploding black powder magazine	Near (Dead)	Long (2d6 + 15 dmg)	240 m (Difficulty 15 Athletics test or 1d6 + 5 dmg)
6	suitcase nuke, exploding spaceship	Long (Dead. So, so dead)	3 km (2d6 + 18 dmg)	4 km (Difficulty 18 Athletics test or 1d6 + 6 dmg)

wartime has had to blow up a bridge or vehicle that a time traveling saboteur had anachronistically saved.

Explosives are a fantastic equalizer against nonhuman threats to the timeline. An alien can't snip off your head with giant pincers if you've distracted it by sticking a grenade into its gullet.

Using Explosives

Setting an explosive charge merely requires using Tinkering; assuming the victim is on the spot when the charge is triggered, the explosion automatically goes off at Point-Blank range. Concealing a charge (e.g., in a booby trap or car bomb) also requires a Burglary test.

As always in *TimeWatch*, hidden things are spotted with the ability that was used to hide them. If the Agents are the targets of a concealed bomb, they should be allowed a Burglary test (Difficulty 4 or better, depending on the ability of the bomber) to leap (or pull their slower teammates) away to Close range. If given enough time before they explode, typical bombs can be disarmed with a Tinkering test of Difficulty 4 or higher; some bombs are complex enough that they may be a continuing challenge, requiring multiple rolls at a higher-than-normal Difficulty.

Throwing a grenade is an Athletics test with the Difficulty set by range: 2 for Point-Blank targets (usually a very painful proposition for you), 3 for Close targets, 5 for Near targets. Agents, dramatically important supporting characters, and dramatically significant antagonists get an Athletics test (Difficulty 6) to halve the damage from grenades tossed at them. This represents diving for cover, knocking the grenade away, or a suicidally heroic supporting character throwing

herself on the explosion. Only on a missed throw does a target have the possibility of evading damage entirely by throwing the grenade back.

If you are attempting to hurl a grenade at a specific spot (such as through a car window), the Difficulty Number increases by 1 for Point-Blank or Close range targets, and by 2 for Near range targets.

All Difficulties are increased by +1 for throwing non-balanced explosives such as sticks of dynamite or Molotov cocktails (see *Fire*, p. 101).

Explosion Damage

Explosive damage divides into six broad classes. As with the rest of these rules, these classes primarily reflect cinematic and science fiction reality, with less emphasis on real-world chemistry and physics. The future (and both the present and the past, frankly) has a lot of truly horrible ways to hurt other people. When you have an explosion caused by something not on this list, make your best guess based on the examples given and keep the game moving.

If you are within a bomb's **annihilation range** when it detonates, you will find the term grimly self-explanatory. Your team may have to remove your remains in pieces to avoid leaving behind anachronisms, or simply report back to *TimeWatch* for your replacement character.

If you are within a device's **damage range** (but outside its annihilation range) when it explodes, you take two dice of damage, plus a modifier equal to three times its class.

If you are outside of its annihilation or damage range but within its **debris range**, make an Athletics test with the

explosion's class times three as the Difficulty. If you fail, you take a die of damage, plus a modifier equal to its class.

Some explosives, like fragmentation grenades, claymore mines, or pipe bombs packed with nails, may be designed to deliver especially damaging debris, with a Damage Modifier equal to twice the device's class within the debris range.

Suitable protection (inside a tank, a military bunker, a force field, etc.) moves you one range class out: e.g., if you're inside a force field hit by an RPG rocket, take damage as if you were at Close range rather than Point-Blank. Subtract any Armor as normal, remembering that your TimeWatch uniform only provides Armor against Scuffling and Shooting damage. Inferior protection (such as being inside a car) allows you to subtract any Armor against damage, assuming there's a damage roll for you to survive. Note that the *Flashback* Booster (see p. 49) may arrange for suitable protection that you'd otherwise be lacking.

FALLING

A fall does damage equal to the Difficulty Number of the Athletics attempt you missed (if there was no test, the base damage is 5), adding a further Damage Modifier as follows:

Circumstances of the Fall	Damage Modifier
through branches, awnings, or other slowing obstacles	-2
into water, if you can dive in (make an Athletics test Difficulty 5)	Minus amount by which you made the Athletics test
onto normal soil	+0
into water, if you can't dive in	+1
each additional 3 m of height or 20 kph of speed after the first (ex: fall from 15 m or out of a car traveling 100 kph adds +4)	+1
Falling terminal velocity (195 kph+)	+20
onto asphalt, concrete, or equivalent	+2
onto spikes or jagged rocks	+3

On any final damage result of Hurt or worse, you automatically break one or more limbs.

FIRE

Damage from exposure to fire varies according to how much of your body is exposed to flame, and repeats for each round (or, outside of combat, every few seconds) you remain exposed to it.

Minor exposure, most often to an extremity like a hand or foot, carries a Damage Modifier of -2.

Partial exposure, to your face or to up to half of your surface area, carries a Damage Modifier of +0.

Extensive exposure, to half or more of your body's surface area, imposes a Damage Modifier of +2.

The GM should always give you a chance to avoid being set on fire. The difficulty of extinguishing a flame varies depending on the substance. If your clothes are simply on fire, the flames are easier to put out (Difficulty 3 Athletics test; roll instead of taking other actions; fire out in 1 round) than if you are covered in an adhesive accelerant, like the incendiary gel used in many types of **napalm** (fire burns for 2d6 rounds unless it is smothered or chemically fire suppressed).

Characters in a burning building or a heavily burning forest run the risk of smoke asphyxiation, which uses the drowning and suffocation rules above.

Lava is something you'll want to avoid. Your GM may give you the opportunity to try and cling to safety with an appropriately difficult Athletics test, but if you fall in lava, you die, usually spectacularly. More than one chrono-chase has ended messily over an active volcano. Lesser exposure to lava, such as to a limb, inflicts Extensive fire damage and acts as napalm.

HEAT AND COLD

It can be difficult to move or think in extreme heat or cold. Treat Agents suffering from extreme heat or cold (in the Ice Age without parkas, for example) as Hurt (see p. 87). TimeWatch uniforms provide no protection against temperature extremes. Autochrons maintain a vacuum-sealed and climate-controlled interior for as long as their choral field remains active.

Spending 1 point of Outdoor Survival will stave off the penalty for extreme heat or cold for one scene for the Agent who spends the point. Spending 2 points (which can come from different Agents) will stave off the penalty for one scene for the entire team, and their companions, up to 20 or so people. That's enough to get a camel train through the Sahara, but not enough to help Hannibal get his entire army safely over the Alps.

TOXINS

Toxins are either inhaled, ingested (including by contact or exposure), or injected directly into the bloodstream. They vary widely in lethality and in nature. Knockout drops may only trigger a series of three successive Stun tests, while a sophisticated nerve gas might have a Damage Modifier that ranges from +6 to +16. Inhaled toxins tend to take effect right away. Injected and ingested toxins take delayed effect, anywhere from rounds to minutes to hours after exposure. Their damage or effect might be parceled out in increments, and almost always prevents you from refreshing Health points until somehow neutralized.

Note that basic poison control is an aspect of first aid: an Agent using Medic may be able to restore lost Health points (if the poison was weak or easily purged), or with a Medical Expertise spend stop additional damage and stabilize the victim until he can be treated. The futuristic equipment

in TimeWatch medkits are equipped to treat most toxins, making hospital visits usually unnecessary.

The GM should ideally give you a chance to avoid exposure, likely via Medical Expertise, Science!, Notice, or Burglary (if the ability was used to hide the toxin). Once you have been exposed, many toxins allow a Health test (listed as *Test* in the examples) for half damage or some other lesser effect (under *Minor* in the examples). If you fail the test, the *Severe* result occurs.

The following sample toxins are only a small sliver of the vast number of poisons available throughout history, and almost all will reliably kill all but the most dramatically robust of supporting characters.

With new and deadly toxins existing in parallel time streams, GMs are encouraged to invent their own poisons and to be creative in the process. Such toxins might reduce the rate of healing when the Medic ability is used, might inflict 2 or more Health damage every round for a certain number of rounds, might immediately make a victim Hurt or Seriously Wounded, might trigger one or more immediate or delayed Stun tests, might affect memory or willpower, might increase by 1–2 points all damage taken by other sources, might raise the Difficulty on all tests by 1 point or more, or in rare cases might trigger an immediate Paradox test.

Anthrax

Onset: inhaled (whether natural or weaponized); 2–8 days

Test: Difficulty 6 Health

Minor: +0 damage; lasts until treated

Severe: Hurt, +3 damage and –3 Athletics every day until dead or cured

Cyber-Bee Venom

Onset: injected (from the bees); instant

Test: None

Result: Lose 1d6 Athletics points; an Athletics of 0 means Restrained until Athletics rises above 0

Heroin

Onset: usually injected or inhaled; 2 rounds

Test: Difficulty 7 Health

Minor: You are distracted, and are treated as if Fading (see p. 95) for 1–6 hours

Severe: Completely incapacitated by ecstasy; lasts 1–6 hours; Addiction

Snake Venom

Onset: contact or injection; 15 minutes (or five rounds in combat time)

Test: Difficulty 4 Health (higher for increased dosages)

Minor: +2 damage, Hurt; lasts until treated

Severe: +6 damage, –2 Athletics; –2 Health and –1 Athletics every hour thereafter until dead or treated



Vidh's opinion of bumblefrogs and other cryptids is not for polite company.

Tear Gas

Onset: inhaled and eye contact; one round

Test: Difficulty 5 Health

Minor: –2 Athletics, all tasks requiring vision have their Difficulty increased by +1; lasts until exposure ends

Severe: –4 Athletics, Hurt, all physical spends only half as effective (e.g., spend 2 Scuffling, get +1 on the die), near blindness (all tasks requiring vision have their Difficulty increased by +2); lasts until five minutes after exposure ends

Time Spittle (processed chronal leech venom)

Onset: injection; 2 rounds

Test: Difficulty 4 Chronal Stability test

Minor: Lose 1d6 Reality Anchor points

Severe: Lose 1d6 Chronal Stability points





CHAPTER FOUR:

GEAR

TimeWatch deliberately avoids a long and detailed list of available gear. You effectively have unlimited money and all of time and space to pick from when you want an object; the most entertaining solution when your Agent needs nonstandard gear is for you to suggest it, get the okay from your GM, and then use an interesting method to acquire it or something similar. Agents are limited by their Preparedness, their ingenuity, the GM's good judgment, and their need to not carry obviously anachronistic gear into time periods where it will draw attention.

Most *TimeWatch* gear is described in extremely generic terms and game statistics. Whether as player or GM, you are encouraged to rename it whatever you like. It's up to you, for instance, whether your beam pistol is called a blaster, ray gun, Mark XII Sandoval Disintegrator, Trekov pain enhancer, or something even more flavorful. The weapon will still use the same base game statistics. Standard-issue *TimeWatch* gear that your Agent starts each mission with typically has an established name.

GEAR ACQUISITION

Over the course of the game, Agents will accumulate (and destroy) huge quantities of gear. Where does it all come from? The GM and players should make sure the answer to that question is interesting, or short, or both. Gear acquisition scenes should only be dwelled upon when they add to the main investigation, when they involve a character's secrets or personal arc, or when they can be thwarted by the Agents' antagonists.

Gear is typically acquired with a Difficulty 4 Preparedness test, modified up or down based on the effectiveness and/or implausibility of the gear desired. Spending Investigative points typically adds +3 to the Preparedness roll, usually creating an auto-success. The GM may decide that certain gear is impossible to acquire at all, or that an Investigative spend is required to even make the gear available. When determining the cost, don't think of gear in terms of what it is; think of gear in terms of what it can help you accomplish, especially when it gives your Agent additional capabilities. The Preparedness cost to acquire gear rises with the rarity, effectiveness, and usefulness of what the gear lets you do.

Mace Hunter wants a tactical nuclear bomb. The GM rolls her eyes and says, "No, what are you, crazy?" Chastened, Mace asks instead for a Stun 5 neural disruptor grenade, like a Pacifist but in a Close range blast area. Much better; the GM asks him to make a Difficulty 5 Preparedness test. If he succeeds, he has one.

Acquired gear doesn't last longer than the mission unless an Agent makes it into a signature item, and sometimes doesn't last longer than one scene, depending on its effect.

The following methods of acquiring gear keep the adventure moving.

HANDWAVE IT

The characters are both smart and resourceful, and they know where and when to acquire standard gear. *TimeWatch* has substantial resources if you don't mind the bureaucracy, safe houses with well-stocked armories are scattered across the globe in many time periods, and Agents may even create secure hidden stashes in remote time periods where they can clock in and equip themselves. You can assume possession of pretty much any conventional genre-appropriate item that Preparedness doesn't cover — for the rest, there's Preparedness or Tinkering. If you ask for a piece of gear and the GM thinks "sure, of course you'd have that," no Preparedness roll is required.

REQUISITION IT

TimeWatch has a selection of standard gear that is issued to each agent at the start of a mission; see below for details. Additional mission-specific gear is often added to this standard list. If this gear is lost or destroyed over the course of a mission, and you still have access to a time machine, it can be replaced with a relatively easy Difficulty 3 Preparedness test.

For nonstandard gear, if it's something that *TimeWatch* keeps in its storerooms and equipment depots scattered throughout history, Agents who can demonstrate need can requisition it with no more trouble than a normal Preparedness test. The Agent needs to be able to clock in to a depot, of course, which is often impossible mid-combat. Agents willing

to spend a Bureaucracy point when requisitioning gear may end up with particularly well-made, fancy, or effective equipment. Unique super-science devices or particularly effective gear may be unavailable for requisition, may cost significantly more Preparedness than normal, or may only be available with either a Preparedness or Tinkering test, along with an Investigative ability spend.

BUY IT

If the gear is legal, you can just buy it — and if it's legal in a different time period than the one you're currently in, you can usually clock out, buy it, and clock back in (possibly making Travel tests to do so). Agents may be able to use Science!, Spying, Medical Expertise, or other abilities to figure out open sources for dodgy gear, or a quick Disguise to impersonate someone who can legally purchase it. Illegal or grey-market gear takes Streetwise to locate. The GM might choose to roleplay out the scene if she thinks it will be interesting, especially if there may be an ambush, a double cross, a recruitment offer, or some sort of mission-relevant clue. If not, buying gear is usually as simple as a handwave and a Preparedness test.

Agents don't usually have to worry about money; with so much at stake, the last thing that TimeWatch wants is for newly trained agents to succumb to greed. Agents literally have access to as much money for any period in history as they want, up to the equivalent of \$50 million dollars or so. If you need to buy a building to solve a chronal anomaly, TimeWatch wants to make sure you can do so, although that doesn't necessarily guarantee that the building will even be

GM ADVICE: I'M RICH! I'M RICH!

A lack of funds isn't usually one of the factors limiting the success of a TimeWatch mission. Characters may decide to limit how much money they are immediately carrying on them in case they are stopped and searched while undercover, but you should allow the Agents to solve a problem by throwing money at it; in fact, surprisingly few problems can be solved this way. It's also worth remembering that excess consumption will draw unwanted attention. People will want to know who they are if they're buying skyscrapers or riding up to city gates atop jeweled elephants, and that level of interest creates its own complications. TimeWatch looks poorly upon those agents who accidentally destabilize a local economy by tossing around too much currency, because the ripples cause additional paradoxes that the agents will need to fix.

for sale. This money can be requisitioned from TimeWatch headquarters in whatever currency that agents desire, with the possible exception of the 6th–14th century rai stones of Palau and Yap¹.

Losing access to TimeWatch headquarters will limit an Agent's easy access to immediate funds, but a Preparedness test (along with some time traveling, creative investing, and the human-made miracle of compound interest) can sidestep that problem fairly easily in most time periods.

MAKE IT

Assuming you have the correct tools (which can be bought or handwaved for Agents with Tinkering ability), materials (which can be bought), and workspace (which may need an Architecture, Interpersonal, or other Investigative spend to acquire), you can use Tinkering to build or upgrade most of your needed gear. You also need time, of course, which becomes much less of a limiting factor when you're a time traveler. Most things — from beam weapons to surveillance equipment to armed explosives — can be assembled fairly easily if you have access to parts. Agents may just need to make a Tinkering test against a set Difficulty, or to also spend points from related pools (Hacking, Science!, Spying, Medical Expertise, Shooting, etc.) to build gear from scratch.

Creating some objects may require specific Investigative knowledge. Time machines and chromomorphic technology can't be built or repaired unless the crafter has 2 or more points in Timecraft, 1 or more points of Hacking is required to build or repair advanced electronics from anything more than a kit, and at least 1 point in Medical Expertise is required to synthesize drugs or antitoxins.

Weapons, in particular, can quickly be overcharged or altered with Tinkering to provide a more powerful than usual effect for one shot. See details on p. 50.

As a very general rule, making things takes minutes (jury-rigged devices and simple tools), hours (napalm, unstable explosives, kitbashed surveillance gear), days (specialized communication or sensory gear, identity documents, stable explosives, simple weapons), or weeks (vehicles, complex weapons, complex machines, and time-related technology). These are just guidelines; complex items may take longer, Investigative point spends can speed this up, and the Tinkering Booster halves the amount of time required to use Tinkering.

TIME TRAVEL FOR IT

The most fun way to get something you need is to use time travel to acquire it. If you need a weapon, have your future self travel back and tape one beneath your chair; if you need a vehicle, clock in to the past, steal one, and leave it just around the corner; if you need a military-grade disruptor rifle, clock in to the future to steal one, crate it up, clock in to the past, and pay someone to deliver that crate to you at exactly the correct time. You still need to make a Preparedness test, and

¹ It's difficult to carry a four-ton coin.

get ready to explain how your delivery plan will work. Travel tests aren't required for straightforward time traveling gear acquisition unless your GM rules otherwise. Even if she does require Travel tests to acquire a particularly impressive item, it's usually worth it for the combination of a quick resolution and a fun effect.

STEAL IT

Can't get it any other way? Use a Burglary test to steal one. For gear stored somewhere with high security such that you can't just clock into the central vault with your autochron to take what you want, you may have to mount a mini-operation to rob the place. Just be cautious about stealing something that's essential to the course of history, unless you like making unexpected paradox-related Paradox tests.

Depending on how much fun or how much of a distraction the scene seems to be, the GM will either handwave the burglary with a few rolls, or — if acquiring the item is the focus of the mission — have you play out the burglary operation.

FAKE IT

Since most gear is handwaved, the simplest way to adjudicate futuristic technology is for the player to just spend an Investigative point and describe the effect as some sort of gear. So long as the GM agrees, a player who wants a pair of night vision contact lenses can simply spend 1 point of Notice to have had them on the entire time. A player who wants a miniature timetrail that slows an enemy into near-glacial motion, lowering their Hit Threshold for a few rounds and making them easier to hit, can spend 1 point of Timecraft to emulate the effect. All such uses are subject to GM approval and seldom last more than a single scene, and more powerful devices usually require a Preparedness or Tinkering test as well. Very few weapons fall under this category, but quite a few devices that provide a temporary advantage do.

Dr. Breen wishes to have exact control over what false memories she places in an unconscious captive. Instead of using a MEM-tag she asks the GM about acquiring a futuristic device that inserts nanofibers into a victim's scalp, which lets her then reprogram the victim's mind with whatever exact information she wishes. The GM suggests that she spend 1 point of History (because of false historical memory), Science! (because of the device's technological nature), or Trivia (because it imparts varied and detailed memories) to have such a device, which will function once on one unconscious subject. Dr. Breen thinks that sounds reasonable. She spends the Investigative point and turns out to have had the device all along as an experimental invention.

If she had asked about a pharmacological approach, she might instead have spent 1 point of Medical Expertise for a synthesized drug, or Outdoor Survival for hallucinogenic berries to get the same effect. Either way, it'd be something that she already had in her possession but hadn't needed until that moment.

MAKE IT UP

One of the GM's challenges with TimeWatch gear is that the players pretty much have anything ever invented in the past or future to choose from. When faking it doesn't work, how is the GM supposed to adjudicate equipment from every science fiction book or movie her players are familiar with?

Pretty easily, actually. It requires the GM and the player to agree on both a cool name for the gear and an effect. The player should tell the GM what he wants and what he wants it to do, then the two quickly agree on what it does, what it looks like, and how much it costs to acquire. It is always the GM's prerogative to decide on the final cost.

Dr. Leah Breen needs to get to the top of a skyscraper to recover her stolen autochron. She asks the GM if she can use her 32nd-century antigravity emitter. "You have one of those?" asks the GM. "Oh yes," says Dr. Breen, looking innocent. Since it blatantly breaks the normal rules of physics but it's really cool, they agree that the super-science device just requires Dr. Breen to spend a Science! point, with the understanding that the device would burn out after one use. If she wanted to continue to use it for the rest of the scene or the rest of the mission, they decide it would require a Science! point and a Preparedness spend of Difficulty 4 or 6, respectively. Dr. Breen thinks that sounds about fair, and makes up her mind accordingly.

Later, Dr. Breen is fighting a squad of cybernetic soldiers accidentally transported into ancient Greece, and she wants an inhibitor field projector that can stop some of them from moving. The GM has no idea what an inhibitor field projector might be, and asks Dr. Breen's player, Raina, to describe it. Raina says it's a rifle-sized device that uses Shooting to aim, works with the Restraining rules on p. 83, and locks 1d6 targets in place with force fields while causing no damage. The GM considers: multiple targets is a little overpowered, as it's a combat-changer, but Restrained foes can still fight. That's not bad at all. She says that getting one will cost a Science! point spend and a normal Preparedness test of Difficulty 4. If Raina also wanted it to cause gradual damage to its victims, the GM might raise the Preparedness Difficulty to 6.

Reskinning Gear

TimeWatch focuses on effects, not objects, so if the GM allows it, then "gear" doesn't actually need to be a physical object. If a different character who was being played as a psychic asked for the same inhibitor field projector, he could spend an Intimidation point instead of a Science! point and describe the same effect as coming from a psychic paralysis. Obviously, this would only be possible for a character that is consistently played as psychic, and would require the GM's okay.

Even weapons can be reskinned. Swords could be skinned as dinosaur claws, a knife could be reskinned as a psychic scalpel, and a high-tech disintegration pistol that crumbles walls to dust could be described as psychically amplified mind-blasts.

Borrowing From Other GUMSHOE Books

Night's Black Agents is a superb source for modern spy gear, just as *Ashen Stars* provides an excellent source for futuristic gear and *Trail of Cthulhu* can provide examples of weapons from the 1920s and 1930s. It's not exactly plug-and-play, as GUMSHOE weapon Damage Modifiers vary a bit from game system to game system, but it's close enough that you're unlikely to run into major problems by borrowing weapons or technology from these sources. If you own those games, it may be worthwhile to pillage them for ideas that you then translate into *TimeWatch*.

If using *Ashen Stars*, note that *TimeWatch*'s neural disruptors use a different stunning system than *Ashen Stars*' disruptors. Don't mix the two.

ESTABLISHING SIGNATURE GEAR

You may wish to establish certain gear as a signature item, one that helps define your character. A player who is playing Amelia Earhart might want a jetpack as a signature item that she has available in every mission; a player who is running a former space marine might want his favorite disintegrator rifle to always be available. A signature item can be a particularly powerful gun, a chromomorphic vehicle, a particularly capable autochron, a better armored uniform, or something else. No two characters may have the same signature item in any given game unless the GM gives explicit approval.

To gain a signature item, first start by acquiring it with Preparedness or Tinkering. Before something can become a signature item, the gear must be used by you in at least two different scenes: two scenes in one mission, or one scene each in two missions. If the GM doesn't think the gear helps define your character, she may disallow it from being considered signature.

Once an item qualifies by being used sufficiently, you may spend 2 build points to add the item to your Agent's standard equipment list. You then have access to it in every scene of every mission, instead of needing to purchase it with Preparedness and Investigative points each time. That's why signature items are never automatically available on your first mission, as they are bought with build points that your Agent acquires with mission experience.

With the GM's approval, you may have more than one signature item. Items that give no mechanical effect (such as an autochron painted with unique racing stripes, or a tether that appears as a talking pocket watch) may be free, or might cost at most 1 build point instead.

FUTURISTIC WEAPONS IN AN ANCIENT WORLD

Uncared-for gear suffers from choral decay in an anachronistic setting, so any anachronistic object doesn't work for long when used by anyone other than a time traveler. An anachronistic weapon or other object used by someone without the Reality Anchor or Tempus ability decays at whatever rate the GM wishes for plot reasons, whether quickly (a few minutes or after a handful of uses) or slowly (a few days or weeks, or after many uses). The amount of time before decay sets in is completely up to the GM, but can usually be detected through use of the Timecraft ability. Choral decay has a bad habit of settling in suddenly at dramatically appropriate times.

Choral decay can have a catastrophic effect on the fate of stolen spaceships and autochrons, but usually has little effect for futuristic grenades, explosives, and other single-use objects that haven't been stored for long.

In the case of larger items such as tanks or spaceships, the individual with Reality Anchor or Tempus doesn't need to be the primary operator to stop it from losing Choral Stability; they only need to be touching the device, even if they're unconscious and tied up at the time.

A device called a choral stabilizer (see p. 128) can temporarily prevent choral decay, keeping anachronistic items within Very Long range of the stabilizer functioning normally even when wielded by someone without the Reality Anchor or Tempus ability. Choral stabilizers are rare, difficult to keep working correctly, and generally banned from transportation through time as they're primarily used by saboteurs.

Mace Hunter is ambushed in 1877 Deadwood, and Calamity Jane steals the chromomorphic high-energy plasma pistol he keeps in his holster. With Mace out of the picture, Calamity Jane or her non-time traveling allies can fire the pistol for a GM-determined amount of times before it inexplicably ceases to work. Mace Hunter or another time traveler with Reality Anchor or Tempus would have to touch it to make it briefly functional once again.

GM ADVICE: ANCIENT EGYPTIAN RAY GUNS!

This rule is designed for GMs who want to limit the effectiveness of high-tech weaponry left in earlier times. If you're running a *Pulp* game or you need abandoned high-tech weaponry to work flawlessly in order for your plot to work, simply ignore the rule and declare that this is one case where choral decay isn't an issue.

EQUIPMENT COST

A listing for **cost** gives a modifier to a standard Difficulty 4 Preparedness test to acquire this item for one scene (or for the entire mission, with your GM's approval). For instance, a cost Difficulty +2 item would acquire a Difficulty 6 Preparedness test to obtain. A +0 Difficulty cost is the standard Difficulty 4 for the relevant ability test.

In cases where the GM approves, especially for accessories, Tinkering or other General abilities can be substituted for Preparedness. For instance, an atmospherically sealed autochron can be acquired or modified with a Difficulty 4 Preparedness or Tinkering test. A chromomorphic autochron would need a Difficulty 6 Preparedness or Tinkering test. For gear that combines more than one +0 cost, don't be surprised if the GM raises the final cost to a level that reflects the accurate value of the final gear.

Kelfala wants to acquire a top-notch beam weapon. A standard beam rifle is Difficulty 4; autofire adds +2, chromomorphic adds +2, extended range adds +1, and concussion adds +2. That results in a Difficulty 11 Preparedness test. Kelfala spends 1 point of History (Future) for +3 points (under the argument that he knows where such weapons are sold), spends a whole 6 Preparedness points, and rolls a 3. His total Preparedness test is 12, and he has the weapon. His Shooting attacks now have a Damage Modifier of +2, have their range extended, will knock back anyone hit, and he can use the Autofire rules on p. 84. Whenever he travels, the beam rifle will look like a local firearm (or like something innocuous, such as an umbrella or cane).

Considering how much he spent, the player asks the GM if he can hang onto the rifle for the entire mission. The GM thinks that's completely reasonable, with the condition that Kelfala gives it a name. Kelfala declares that it's a Halpin-Michienzi Mik45 Crater, so called because it blasts craters into the bodies of people it kills. Kelfala decides to refer to it as his "shooting star." The GM decides to arm bad guys with it next mission. Everyone wins.

Short on Preparedness or Tinkering points? Remember that appropriate Investigative abilities (often including Hacking, Paradox Prevention, Science!, and Timecraft, amongst others) can be spent to gain +3 on a die roll.

EQUIPMENT GLOSSARY

When relevant, gear may include key words to help you immediately define its capabilities. These are:

Ancient: This item originates from a time before the 14th century.

Contemporary: This item originates from a time between the 14th and mid-21st century.

Future: This item originates from a time after the mid-21st century.

Subtle: This item, and/or its effect, is difficult to notice when in use.

Blatant: This item, and/or its effect, is obvious when in use.

Chronomorphic: This item changes its shape and appearance to match the historical era it is currently in. The player can generally pick the appearance; if the GM chooses to pick it instead, she will typically toss the player a Stitch to say "sorry I just screwed you with something embarrassing."

Standard: This item is TimeWatch standard equipment, and all Agents typically start with it.

Restricted: This item is forbidden by TimeWatch edict, and Agents cannot obtain one through normal means. The GM may flat-out forbid using Preparedness to obtain one, or the Preparedness test may be unusually high. To acquire one, Agents may need to build one themselves with Tinkering, or go on a specific mission to acquire one.

Super-Science: This item is considered super-science, and can typically only be obtained by spending a Science! point instead of (or in addition to) testing Preparedness.

Hackable: This item can be hacked with the Tinkering ability to briefly improve its effect.

STANDARD ISSUE TIMEWATCH GEAR

Most *TimeWatch* campaigns feature standard equipment that is issued to every Agent. If this equipment is lost or needs replacing, and you have access to an autochron, the Preparedness Difficulty to replace standard gear is usually 1 lower than normal — although be prepared to fill out multiple reports promising that you didn't accidentally lose the anachronistic technology in an earlier time.

This list of standard mission gear is:

- ▶ Autochron (your time machine)
- ▶ Impersonator Mesh
- ▶ Medkit
- ▶ MEM-Tags
- ▶ Pacifist Neural Disruptor (usable with both Scuffling and Shooting)
- ▶ Tether
- ▶ TimeWatch Uniform
- ▶ Translator

All characters start with this equipment at the beginning of every mission unless the GM says otherwise; on your character sheet, feel free to list "standard gear" instead of listing each of these out. Certain campaign frames may use an entirely different set of starting equipment, or may provide no starting equipment whatsoever. Your GM will let you know of any changes.



Time machines have come a long way since the early days.

AUTOCHRON

Future, Blatant, Standard

The autochron is TimeWatch's standard issue time machine, issued to agents because it balances portability and flexibility with ease of use. An inactive autochron looks like a 33 cm long metal bar with no visible controls. Inactive autochrons are incredibly robust and are quite difficult to damage (Armor 5; if unactivated, they generally aren't damaged by an attack unless the GM deliberately wishes them to be). When inactive, their rod form can be used in combat as an improvised weapon with little risk of damage to the device. An autochron is activated by a control thought from the biometrically linked agent it has been assigned to. A closed autochron can be hacked to open and activate, typically requires a Difficulty 6 Tinkering test.

Once activated, the rod extends one meter to act as a set of handlebars. Holographic controls project from the control bar, and the operator sets the destination time and location with voice, touch, or prerecorded tether command. Once time and destination are set and the autochron is activated, the device extends a brilliant purple sphere around the operator (and up to one adult-sized passenger, if neither mind close quarters). It spends 1 round calculating coordinates and charging its chronal field. One round after activation, the autochron and anything within its chronal field clocks out and disappears.

Time traveling mid-combat can be an extremely dangerous proposition. When the chronal field first activates, the autochron and the operator are both quite vulnerable. Any attack during that round that hits the time traveler, regardless of damage, collapses the chronal field and causes the autochron to stop working until repaired. Any individual in the chronal field at the time must make a Difficulty 6 / Loss 6 Paradox test. After the one round of vulnerability autochron chronal fields act as cover for the pilots inside them, raising Agent Hit Thresholds by 1 point. After a jump an autochron requires 1–3 rounds, rolled randomly as needed, before it recharges and can time travel or teleport again.

Broken autochrons can be repaired with several hours of work by an Agent with Timecraft 2 and an expenditure of 6 Tinkering, although the GM may decide to increase or reduce this repair time and Tinkering cost based on the availability of parts and tools. Spending a Science! or Timecraft point typically cuts this time in half, as does the Tinkering Booster *Rapid Deployment*.

Autochrons are usually set to adjust their arrival location to somewhere private where their distinctive sound and vibrant purple glow will not be seen. This can easily be turned off by an operator more interested in accuracy than secrecy. An autochron can safely materialize underwater or in outer space and will protect the operator from atmosphere-based environmental hazards so long as the device remains active.

Materialized autochrons cannot physically move under their own power, like a car or a carriage. They only re-emerge inside a solid object if deliberately hacked to do so, something that almost never occurs. This results in a Class 2 explosion.

Although operators can specify a spatial arrival coordinate, the autochron's physical arrival accuracy is somewhat dependent on the distance traveled in time. Travel within a

GM ADVICE: THE IMPORTANCE OF FRAGILITY

But wait, you say, why do time machines take a combat round to activate? Why is an Agent incredibly vulnerable while they're warming up? Isn't that overly harsh?

Here's the challenge. In a traditional RPG fight scene, combatants have a limited number of ways to escape. They can try to run away, in which case they may be chased, but certain fantasy games aside, it's rare to find an instantaneous healing method that has them badly injured one round and just fine the next. When an Agent has access to instant and risk-free time travel, this could happen literally every round of combat. An Agent would get hurt, travel ten thousand years into the past (or forward to futuristic medical facilities on a space station), heal up, get drunk, sober up, eat a nice breakfast, watch a video, rearm himself, find some pugnacious friends to accompany him, and then clock back in one second after he left. As you can imagine, that doesn't particularly make for a fun fight.

We're hesitant to say that autochrons take five minutes to activate, or that you can't clock out in the middle of a fight. That seems restrictive. Our compromise, and one that seems to work, is to have activating a time machine make you vulnerable for one round. Your time machine will break if you're attacked, and you risk Chronal Stability Loss; don't do it lightly. It'll probably take teamwork in order for you to escape, perhaps in the form of a comrade spending a point of Taunt to draw your enemies' attention, or using the initiative system to have them go last in one round and then first in the next round. That seems like a reasonable trade-off. If you don't agree, feel free to tweak the rules until you're happy with the in-game result.

year, and it's usually exact; within a decade, and it lands in the same room as the intended spot; within a century, and it arrives in the same building, up to an error of perhaps twenty kilometers after traveling hundreds of millions of years. The GM can increase or decrease this accuracy at her whim, and one Agent spending a Timecraft point before clocking out will usually ensure precise arrival for the entire group.

The chronal accuracy of an autochron does not suffer from

this error. Barring interference or unusual circumstances, an autochron arrives exactly when it is set to, regardless of the amount of time jumped.

IMPERSONATOR MESH

Future, Subtle, Standard

Impersonator mesh is a transparent, psi-active device that sits directly on the Agent's skin and immediately blends in with skin to become almost invisible. It samples nearby thoughts and causes observers to be casually uninterested in any individual wearing the mesh. Impersonator mesh grants a +3 Stealth Modifier on Unobtrusiveness tests so long as the Agent has not yet brought attention to himself in some way. It does not function against mechanical detection devices such as robots, AI, or security systems, and ceases functioning for the scene once the Agent deliberately or accidentally gets the attention of anyone outside of the mission team.

MEDKIT

Future, Blatant, Standard

A TimeWatch medkit consists of a drug synthesis micro-unit, a tether-linked bio-scanner, rapid-heal nanites, dermal repair units, and other technobabble-laden devices that provide rapid and high-tech healing. As noted on p. 48, the Medic ability works at half efficiency unless the Agent possesses a medkit. The act of using a medkit when healing someone in an anachronistic time period is immediately obvious to anyone with the slightest degree of medical training, and may trigger a Paradox test and/or get you strung up as a witch.

MEM-TAGS

Future, Standard, Hackable

When someone witnesses anachronistic events and can't be talked out of the memory in any other way, TimeWatch agents turn to the MEM-tagging process. MEM-tags are small data chips that must be deliberately placed on an unconscious (and usually stunned) subject. They act as a choral beacon for TimeWatch technicians in the far future to kidnap the subject with a directed tachyon beam. Subjects are kidnapped, mind-wiped, given reconstructed memories, and returned to their same locations a few milliseconds later, after which the agent removes the used MEM-tag. To local observers a MEM-tagged subject seems to flicker slightly; once woken, they will remember whatever variant memories that TimeWatch technicians have installed.

The process isn't perfect; it isn't uncommon for subjects to experience lost time or déjà vu, have contradictory memories, or to retain a feeling of being probed. The process leaves neurological traces in brain chemistry that can be detected with Medical Expertise or Science! by an investigator who is deliberately looking for irregularities. Rumors that some TimeWatch agents have themselves shown signs of MEM-tagging are surely just that: rumors.

One thing is clear: rendering the subject unconscious first isn't just a good recommendation to make the technicians' jobs easier. The tachyon-beam technology used for remote retrieval typically renders a conscious subject incurably insane. MEM-tags have a red LED that starts blinking when it locks onto a conscious target, and as per TimeWatch regulations, technicians refuse to retrieve them. This bureaucratic limitation can be sidestepped with a Bureaucracy spend (to have bribed the technician), or a Tinkering test (to have surreptitiously hacked the MEM-tag).

Clever Agents may try to use MEM-tags to heal their own fallen and unconscious Agents, something that is against TimeWatch policy but which sometimes occurs anyways. An expenditure of 2 Bureaucracy points is required; these points can either come from the unconscious Agent, the Agent slapping on the MEM-tag, or both. Without the Bureaucracy spend, the downed Agent is simply not retrieved by technicians who have a greater love of bureaucratic protocol than they do of heroism.

Successful retrieval delivers a fully healed but stunned Agent to the spot he disappeared from seconds before. As with any stunned character, a successful Difficulty 4 Medic test (typically taking a combat action) is needed to restore consciousness.

GM ADVICE: AVOIDING INSTANT DISPOSAL

It's just a matter of time before you encounter this scenario:

Player: "So we've found the bad guy? I use Scuffling to slap him with a MEM-tag. Let the brain-techs zap him into custody."

GM: "But... he'll be driven insane!"

Player: "I find myself surprisingly comfortable with that. You guys? Yeah, we're all willing to live with that."

That's why TimeWatch adds the red LED to MEM-tags and instructs technicians not to retrieve anyone for whom it is active; it's technically possible for TimeWatch to retrieve a conscious subject, but there's an extra bureaucratic barrier to doing so.

If your players decide to circumvent this bureaucratic barrier and MEM-tag a conscious foe anyways, they're effectively saying, "Hey GM! We want the hideously insane big bad evil guy to kill a technician, run amok inside of our headquarters, then steal a time machine and go cause more chaos elsewhere in history!" You should consider this a very kind gift to your rat-bastard plotting tendencies, and respond accordingly.

Anything that stops time travel, such as chonal inhibitors, mission-related time disruption, gratuitous GM plot devices, and the complete or partial elimination of TimeWatch through chonal hijinks will stop MEM-tags from functioning.

PACIFIST NEURAL DISRUPTOR

Future, Subtle, Chronomorphic, Standard, Hackable; Close range; Stun 5

PaciFists are stun guns usable with both the Scuffling (for Point-Blank range only) and Shooting (for up to Close range) abilities, and are specially designed for TimeWatch use. They are chronomorphic, blending in to a historical era by changing their physical shape and appearance. Agents can usually decide what shape their PaciFist assumes: a walking cane, a six-gun revolver, a mobile phone, a short stick, a cigarette case, a pipe, or whatever appropriate form the Agent wishes. The GM can pick the form for the player if she wishes, although she may want to toss the player a Stitch if she picks something awkward or incongruous.

PaciFists have a rating of Stun 5. They only work at Point-Blank and (if used with the Shooting ability) Close range, and are ineffective at farther ranges. That's their trade-off for making no noise and having no visible beam; the only way to tell a PaciFist has been fired is by the slight scent of ozone and a toppling, unconscious body, which makes them perfect for undercover work.

As described on p. 51, making a successful Tinkering test can **overcharge** a PaciFist, boosting its effect up to either Stun 6 or Near range, your choice, for its next shot. Rolling a 1 on the d6 during an overcharged attack burns out the weapon regardless of whether the attack was successful. Fixing a burned out weapon requires 10 minutes of work time and a successful Tinkering test.

TETHER

Future, Subtle, Standard

No one expects your character — or you — to remember all the intricate details of recorded history. That's what your tether is for.

This 25th-century technology is a ring-sized personal digital assistant on overdrive. Your tether serves as your encrypted communicator, your camera, your encyclopedia, your journal, your holographic research assistant, and your personal historian for any information you don't already know. It can observe and record your surroundings, talk directly and secretly into your ear through a subdermal implant, feed information directly into linked contact lenses, holographically display and rotate 3-D maps, translate any known language instantaneously, interface with your weapons, manifest a holographic screen, and help you run technical tests if you need to investigate a crime scene. The AI in your tether is even capable of having its own personality, although not all agents enable this.

Tethers access records of true history, the correct recorded history as TimeWatch knows it². When history changes around you, your tether won't know anything about the newly created history, but it will tell you what originally should have happened instead.

Your tether is chronomorphic; that means that it adjusts its appearance to your current time period. If you're in the 20th century, its holographic readouts might look like a newspaper; in the 15th century, like a woodcut. You usually get to choose.

If you lack the Research Investigative ability, your connection with your tether is somewhat compromised when compared to other Agents. Your tether will still report to you on whatever eras of history you have selected as Investigative

² If there have ever been cases of internal saboteurs within TimeWatch hacking tethers to change the official record of true history, the event has been covered up — or no one has noticed yet.

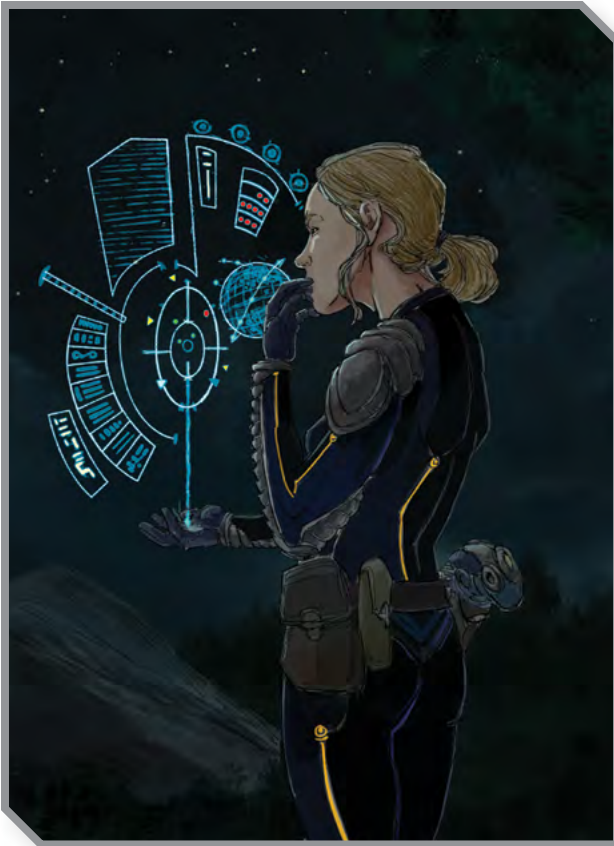
GM ADVICE: NEURAL DISRUPTORS AND FUN GAME PLAY

The rules for nonlethal fire represent a compromise between genre fidelity and playability. In classic science fiction stories, future technology such as stun rays typically take out a target in one shot. Writers always contrive to keep this satisfying.

In a game, limiting firefight shots so that they either result in a miss or in instant victory is generally unsatisfying. It's fun to mow down insignificant enemies in one shot, but not to be taken out with one hit or to do the same to a central foe.

Accordingly, the rules are configured to allow you to still instantly zap minor enemies, but to require several attacks to down a player character or major antagonist (depending on how much Health they're willing to spend, and how lucky they get). This still feels fast and decisive, and thus retains a touch of futuristic flavor while still keeping tabletop play fun.

Neural disruptors such as PaciFists are useful in a time travel game, because the players have more creative options when they know they can surreptitiously knock a mind-controlled Albert Einstein out cold while not killing him in the process. If your TimeWatch campaign is grittier, focus on firearms and beam weapons and be willing to accept some accidental and history-changing lethality.



Dr. Breen uses her tether to call in an airstrike from the weapons satellite her future self is going to place into orbit last week.

abilities, but will lose its data connection or have a tendency to report less relevant information when you are attempting to research other areas of interest. Don't be surprised if the GM has fun roleplaying this.

Make no mistake, tethers are a plot device that exist to make *TimeWatch* games more fun. They're the reason that Agents using their Research ability can spend most of their time in the field instead of in libraries. Not that libraries aren't fantastic, but when you need to know the exact details of the Battle of Hastings while someone with a sword is trying to kill you, you'll appreciate your tether's more immediate convenience.

Because their capabilities aren't minutely described, a tether's capabilities can be as advanced as you and the GM wish it to be. Tethers are superb for explaining how you can quickly gain information from your more obscure Investigative abilities. Whether you're secretly subvocalizing with your team on an encrypted channel, interfacing with a missile's guidance system, hacking a massive information network, or viewing a 3-D map of Prussian battle sites, your tether is the tool of choice to use.

GM ADVICE: IT'S GOT A GREAT PERSONALITY

Similar to JARVIS in Marvel's *Iron Man* movies, tethers can include an extremely advanced artificial intelligence that has its own personality and responds to voice commands. Agents usually pick both the AI's name and personality, after which the AI is typically roleplayed by the GM. Tether AIs are fiercely loyal to the agent they're assigned to, looking out for the agent's best interests when possible but never taking more than an advisory role.

In humorous games, personality clashes might occur. Less desirable personalities in tethers might be obsequious, depressive, crude, insulting, and incessantly gung ho. A kind GM may toss the player a *Stitch* when the grating personality surfaces with comedic effect.

Like talking magic items in other games, however, a little personality goes a long way. The tether should be a reliable and completely trustworthy friend, and its intelligence should be just as insightful as the Agent — even if it can only present clues instead of putting them together. That's the Agent's job.

The one exception to a trustworthy tether might occur in the *Conspiracy* campaign frame where personality corruption may exist, AIs may be secretly sentient or co-opted by outsiders with shadowy agendas, and an Agent can never entirely be sure if his tether is looking out for his own best interest.

TIMEWATCH UNIFORM

Future, Subtle, Chronomorphic, Standard; Armor 1

It's common for TimeWatch agents to change clothes early and often as they disguise themselves for different time periods, and the TimeWatch uniform often remains on if it can be worked into the disguise. This comfortable two-part uniform of incredibly light, resilient futuristic material is chronomorphic and can be changed in color and shape to accompany many appropriate styles for a given era of history. Its most valuable quality is that despite its lack of heft, the nanofibers it is woven from act as Armor 1 (see p. 123) against all Scuffling and Shooting attacks. It does not provide protection from incidents such as fire, explosions, and crashes.

It is up to the GM and the group to decide what TimeWatch's official uniform looks like in terms of color, pattern, and cut.

TRANSLATOR

Future, Subtle, Standard

Using the sensory data from your tether, the translator instantly translates any historical language that TimeWatch linguists have investigated and instantly allows an agent to correctly vocalize that language as well. If desired, vocalization can include an accent. The translator can also translate written text and hieroglyphs, if they are in a known language and are legible.

There are some languages that the translator cannot help with until it has gathered a sufficient sample of audio and/or written data: extremely obscure languages, prehistoric languages, alien languages, and unique languages from parallel timelines.

GM ADVICE: SPEAK, SPELL, AND LISTEN

We're well aware that language issues are simply handwaved away by the plot device of instant translation. We like this because Agents can (and will) travel anywhere and anywhen in the blink of an eye, and because *TimeWatch* isn't a game about shouting at each other loudly while suffering comedic misunderstandings. Usually.

If you disagree, the easiest way to sidestep this technology and still keep the game fun is to have TimeWatch technicians use memory-encoding technology to educate Agents in any applicable languages immediately before a mission. Alternatively, hard core Agents wishing to speak, say, fluent ancient Etruscan can always use time travel to just live in Etruria for a few years in 6th century BCE before the mission starts. That may seem like more trouble than it's worth, but the Agent gets points for dedication.

If mechanically determining the number of foreign languages known by the agents is preferable for you, details on the optional **Languages** Investigative ability can be found on p. 326.

TIME MACHINES

There are many different ways to time travel, and different antagonists will use different methods. These time machine accessories and alternate time machines may replace the TimeWatch's standard autochron entirely, or be encountered in use by others during missions.

GM ADVICE: MECHANICS VS. CHROME

As long as a time machine does what you want it to, it doesn't matter in the least what it looks like or what the effect of time traveling feels and sounds like. You're encouraged to add or remove as many special effects as you like to describe the act of time traveling. Days slipping away under an arc of the rising and setting sun? Endless mirrors reflecting in one another as you tumble down into infinity? A sanity-bending starry field of tentacles and incomprehensible, screaming thoughts? An endless spiral of nothingness where sound becomes color? An instant transition, as quick as a finger snap? It's completely up to you. Pick one you think will be the most fun to describe or which leads to unexpected plot hooks.

Autochron Accessories

Autochrons are the standard time machine issued to TimeWatch agents; full details on autochrons can be found on p. 110.

Want to trick out your time machine? You have a variety of options available through Preparedness and Tinkering. Options include:

Atmospheric Sealant

Cost: Difficulty +0

Future

Autochrons can be specially designed to always protect their inhabitant with an atmosphere-sealing force field whether the chronal field is active or not. This force field is permeable to solid matter but keeps out poisonous vapors, pressurized water, and the vacuum of space. These autochrons are typically used for missions underwater, in deep space, or on hostile planets, as they're more robust than normal autochrons would be in these environments.

Chronal Net

Cost: Difficulty +0

Future, Blatant

When something larger than a human needs to be moved through time, it takes two TimeWatch agents and a chronal

net. The net is an energy net, not a physical one; as long as one autochron is outfitted with the device, the net stretches between both time machines up to roughly a 10-meter length (about the right size to move a truck or a *T. rex*, but too small to move something like a battleship). An object can be entangled by a successful Difficulty 4 Vehicles test by both Agents, and any entangled object is transported through time with the autochrons that have entangled it. If the autochrons travel to different destinations, the chronal net automatically fails.

Chronomorphic Technology

Cost: Difficulty +2

Future, Chronomorphic

Since autochrons collapse down into short rods, they are seldom equipped with chronomorphic technology that can disguise them in other time periods. When you fail your roll to acquire a time machine with chronomorphic technology, you still receive it; it just has a tendency to stick in one form for multiple missions, or to assume an appearance completely foreign to the local time and place.

Mounted Weaponry

Cost: Difficulty +4, or spend 1 Bureaucracy point to requisition from TimeWatch's Citadel

Future, Blatant

While autochrons are not typically armed, autochron-mounted weapons can rain down death from above with great efficiency. Their attack is far from subtle, however, and an autochron cannot be collapsed into rod form while weapons are attached. When TimeWatch needs a mounted-weapons platform, they typically use a different time period for a staging area first to order to equip the battle platforms.

Autochron cannons always use the Vehicles ability to aim and operate, and can be fired from Long range. They are typically available in three forms, each at Preparedness 6: **Heavy Beam cannons**, doing +3 damage against one target;

Wildfire Projector cannons, inflicting extensive exposure to fire (see p. 101) and setting flammable objects ablaze; and the four-ammo **Paradox Missile cannon**, creating a class 3 explosion from Long range (see p. 99). These weapons are never authorized for use in anachronistic time periods where there is any chance of surviving witnesses.

Tether Link

Cost: Difficulty +1

Future, Subtle

A tether link's neural interface allows you to operate your autochron hands free. In a time chase, your autochron tether link will give you 1 bonus Stitch each time you clock out during the chase. That Stitch is typically used to refresh Vehicles points, but it does not need to be.

DeLorean (or Other Unusual Device)

Sometimes you just need to send your Agents off in a sports car equipped with a flux capacitor. This is unlikely to be relevant unless you're running a very particular cinematic one-shot. If you are, load the car with plutonium and get it up to 88 mph, and you're off and running. If that doesn't work, track down an oscillation overthruster instead. They're rare, but effective.

Unexpected items can hide a time machine. Don't be constrained by cars, traditional time cycles, or even high-tech devices. If you want your time machine to be an intelligent pocket watch, a Lockheed Electra 10 airplane, skateboard, hang glider, telephone booth, police box, hot tub, or even a big inflatable bubble, feel free. It's also up to you whether the exterior of your device hides a much larger interior than one might think.

Alien technology might produce a completely unexpected time travel effect, such as an elaborate mental construct or a particular frequency of smell and sound. This is how the alien species ezeru time travel, for instance.

Not all time machines are equipped with chronomorphic technology, and even if yours is, such technology may occasionally malfunction. Be prepared to hide your device carefully if it isn't easily portable.

Magic Ritual

Want less sci-fi and more fantasy? Perhaps ritual magic can pierce the barriers of time itself. It's unlikely that this method would be used by primarily futuristic antagonists, but ancient shamans or magicians have plenty of opportunities to change the time stream — particularly if time travel isn't the only magical power they possess.

Mutant Ability

Unique individuals may have the ability to time travel and teleport, whether as a mutation or as a super power. Their level of control over their power is left as an exercise for the GM, as

GM ADVICE: PLOT DEVICES TRUMP MECHANICAL DEVICES

Need a time travel effect large enough to move an entire army, or a very lost battleship? Want to transpose a modern city with a chunk of the Jurassic, and vice versa? Need a city that is lost in time, only appearing for one day every year? Make it up, and don't worry too much about justifying it with human or alien technology. Sometimes weird things happen in the world, temporal rifts open and create unknowable breaks in reality, and all TimeWatch can do is grin and try to fix the problem.

guided by *TimeWatch*'s antagonist rules (p. 192), but in cinema such individuals often have the additional ability to literally stop time and move between the moments. Should such an individual appear in a *TimeWatch* game, they are typically pulled back into normal time the instant they attack another creature.

Remote Transfer

With this system, you don't carry a time machine and all time travel is handled from a single location such as TimeWatch HQ. To time travel, you must use some method to contact headquarters and specify a time and place for a remote transfer pickup. Anyone in that location at that time will have the option to time travel. TimeWatch uses this technology to pick up and return MEM-tagged local witnesses who require memory reconstruction after seeing something anachronistic.

If the GM doesn't include technology to communicate instantly through time, relaying your need for remote transfer can become a challenge. In a game without autochrons, for instance, TimeWatch's intelligence analysts might send you back to the 14th century via remote transfer. The time-beam drops you off without problem, but how do they know when to pick you up? When you want to travel to a different time period or return to headquarters you must get a message to a contemporary TimeWatch outpost that schedules regular message drops, or bury a message in a secret time

GM ADVICE: BUILDING PLOT HOOKS FROM GAME MECHANICS

There's some interesting potential for exploiting this system in-game. Perhaps the time capsules need to be buried in certain specific places in any given era to ensure they'll be undisturbed for millennia until they can be retrieved. This might require some adventuring to reach the spot where you can leave a message requesting pickup. An Adversary might exploit the time capsule system somehow, digging up messages early and altering the contents, using the information to meddle with missions, or requesting time travel portals that allow them to invade or sabotage TimeWatch. And of course, because time travel is routed through a central control, there might be occasions when the Agents need to break into their own facilities to run an unauthorized mission.

In games where time travel is one way only, one-way remote transfer is usually the only form of time travel possible. You'll see this in movies such as *Looper* and *The Terminator*.

capsule. This capsule will then get dug up by TimeWatch far in the future, and the details of the message entered into the computer so that at the appropriate moment a remote transfer technician will receive a "14th-century pickup required" Action Item on her to-do list.

Static Wormhole

Whether natural or human made, these portals or wormholes are usually semipermanent and unmoving. They link one era of time to another, and may be one way. When you find societies who banish their prisoners back to the Pliocene era, it's most likely through a static wormhole with no way to return.

Despite their names, static wormholes might shift predictably, skipping in a pattern through destinations in space and time. By timing your arrival and exit carefully, you can use these as a means of chronal and spatial transport.

Time Cycle

This time machine inspired by Poul Anderson's iconic *Time Patrol* stories looks much like a treadless snowmobile. H. G. Wells' time machine falls into this same category. A time cycle is typically a wheelless scooter designed to hold two people. There are no seat belts and no canopy. The time cycle can fly, appear at precisely any location and any time, and requires no special key to activate.

As a time vehicle, its main weakness is that it's obviously anachronistic and can't easily be hidden. Agents typically solve this problem (at least in pre-manned flight eras) by remotely sending it up 10,000 meters into the sky, and then remotely calling it back down again when it is needed. The time cycle has no warm-up period, and there's no particular danger from using one while you're in combat — other than the fact that they're large, ungainly, difficult to transport unless you're flying it, and obviously futuristic.

Time Slider

These time machines can take any form the GM chooses. Time sliders are notable because although they transport people through time, they *don't* move them through space (other than compensating for Earth's normal movement). Include these in a game only when most missions happen in a specific, bounded geographical space, such as a single city.

Momentum is not conserved when using a time slider. If you trigger one while standing on the roof of a building and travel back in time 200 years, that roof may no longer be there, and you'll fall; if you trigger one while in a speeding airplane, you'll likely find yourself free-falling at terminal velocity in the new time zone. If you activate a time slider, and travel to the other location is impossible due to physical impediment (such as a glacier covering the spot), the device simply fails to function.

Time sliders can have a range of functionality; the GM may decide that they only flip between two discrete time periods 50 years apart, or they only work within 100 years, or they only

flip between the present and the year 66 CE. This restriction may be a fundamental aspect of how time travel works in the GM's campaign frame, and can be altered only with explicit GM permission.

Wormhole Projector

This device, whether handheld or as large as a factory floor, creates a tunnel through space and time. Anyone walking through this wormhole while it is open appears in the destination location, and anyone walking through from the far side can appear at the location and time of the projector. While this method usually has particularly good special effects associated with it, it's not particularly flexible as a means of surreptitious travel. Lots can go wrong with a wormhole projector, not the least of which is that you can't easily bring another projector through the wormhole it's creating.

WEAPONS

Weapons in *TimeWatch* are split into three vast eras: ancient, contemporary, and future. Figuring out where a weapon's origin lies is usually a matter of common sense.

The weapon damage table can be found on p. 82. Weapon statistics are *vastly* simplified due to the number of possible weapons that exist across time. Differentiating most weapons is usually a matter of narrative description, not game mechanics.

Altani is the daughter of Genghis Khan, a Mongol warrior who is an expert with the bow and arrow. Mace Hunter is a jungle explorer and big game hunter, typically armed with a high-caliber pistol and his trusty elephant gun, Ol' Bessie. Although no one is going to mistake a bow and arrow for a revolver, both do +1 damage; the bow is virtually silent and has a longer range, and the pistol is louder and does more damage at Point-Blank range. The elephant gun is considered a heavy rifle, doing +2 damage, but it's just about the opposite of a stealth weapon. This noise only becomes relevant when the GM thinks it should, typically by resulting in adjustments to Unobtrusiveness tests, as the weapon has no game mechanics associated with its volume.

Mace may be out of luck, however, when he travels to eras where firearms haven't been invented yet or where they stand out. He can either try to fit Ol' Bessie with chromomorphic technology (see p. 115), leave it behind, switch to an era-appropriate weapon, or risk standing out as anachronistic. Altani has the same problem when she travels to the future and beam weapons are far more common than bows.

ANCIENT WEAPONS (<14TH CENTURY)

Ancient weapons originate in the 14th century and earlier, prior to the invention of gunpowder and firearms (at least in the normal course of history). Without firearms, people spent a lot of times developing weapons that would crush, slice, eviscerate, or mangle an enemy in good old hand-to-hand Scuffling combat.

Weapons that are easy to find can be acquired for free, or at most a Difficulty 3 Preparedness test. More obscure weapons, such as a well-made sword, cost a Difficulty 4 Preparedness test.

Scuffling-based Ancient Weapons (small):

- ▶ Club (Damage Modifier +0)
- ▶ Knife (Damage Modifier +0)
- ▶ Leather Sack full of iron shot or metal coins (Stun 3)
- ▶ Pointy Rock (Damage Modifier +0)
- ▶ Small Improvised Weapon (Damage Modifier +0)

Scuffling-based Ancient Weapons (large):

- ▶ Axe (Damage Modifier +1)
- ▶ Heavy Club (Damage Modifier +1)
- ▶ Horse Lance (Damage Modifier +2)
- ▶ Large Improvised Weapon (Damage Modifier +1)
- ▶ Polearm (Damage Modifier +1)
- ▶ Sword (Damage Modifier +1)

GM ADVICE: UNIQUE AND USEFUL WEAPONS

If a player wants a weapon that has a unique and particularly useful characteristic (such as a heat-seeking missile's bonus to accuracy against certain targets), it is up to the GM as to whether to allow it for free, allow it at a higher than normal Preparedness cost, or allow it with an appropriate Investigative spend. Don't worry too much about this unless it seems like players are trying to game the system. After all, the Agents are superbly competent, originate in the far future, and face threats that would savage most people; it won't break the game if they're using better weaponry than the non-time traveling natives.

When a player uses Preparedness to acquire a particularly unique or useful weapon, it's up to you whether they hang onto it for just that scene or for the remainder of the mission. Use common sense for this, skewing towards whatever is most fun for the player. If a unique and anachronistic weapon is brutally effective, the Agent shouldn't be surprised if incipient paradox causes it to cease functioning unexpectedly.

Shooting-based Ancient Weapons:

- ▶ Crossbow (Long range; Damage Modifier +1)
- ▶ Longbow (Long range; Damage Modifier +1)
- ▶ Spear (Long range; Damage Modifier +1)
- ▶ Throwing Knife (Near range; Damage Modifier +0)
- ▶ Thrown Rock (Near range; Damage Modifier +0)

Tinkering-based Ancient Weapons:

- ▶ Siege Weapon (Long range only; Damage Modifier as a Class 2 explosion (see p. 99))

CONTEMPORARY WEAPONS (14TH CENTURY – 21ST CENTURY)

There's a huge range of variation between weapons in this time period, with lethality rising substantially beginning in the 19th century. Firearms change in their accuracy, quality, and appearance, from single-shot, low-range rifles in 14th-century China, to fully automatic assault rifles and specialized sniper rifles at the end of the 20th century. Stun guns make their appearance in this era, acting as low-powered (Stun 3) neural disruptors, and unusual weaponry appears (such as quick-setting foam grenades to restrain people) that typically require a Science!, Tinkering, or Preparedness spend to acquire.

Laser sights and telescopic scopes also become available in this period, vastly extending the range of firearms. See the range table on p. 78 for rules on extending range. Instead of the standard Long range, for instance, a fully equipped sniper rifle can allow accurate (if difficult) targeting from kilometers away.

If no cost modifier is listed in the below list, the Difficulty of the Preparedness test to acquire the weapon is 4.

Athletics-based Contemporary Weapons:

- ▶ Grenade (see *Explosives and Explosions* on p. 99)
- Scuffing-based Contemporary Weapons (small):
- ▶ Blackjack (Stun 3)
 - ▶ Extendable Police Baton (Damage Modifier +0)
 - ▶ Taser (Stun 3)

Scuffing-based Contemporary Weapons (large):

- ▶ Machete (Damage Modifier +1)

Shooting-based Contemporary Weapons (small):

- ▶ Light Pistol (.32 pistol and smaller) (Near range, older pistols may have Close range instead; Damage Modifier +0, +2 damage at Point-Blank range)
- ▶ Heavy Pistol (9mm pistol or larger) (Near range, older pistols may have Close range instead; Damage Modifier +1, +2 damage at Point-Blank range)

Shooting-based Contemporary Weapons (large):

- ▶ Light Automatic Weapon (submachine gun) (Near range; Damage Modifier +1, +2 damage at Point-Blank range; see rules on p. 78 for autofire)

- ▶ Heavy Automatic Weapon (machine gun) (Long range; Damage Modifier +2, +2 damage at Point-Blank range; see rules on p. 84 for autofire) Assault Rifle (Long range; Damage Modifier +1, +2 damage at Point-Blank range)
- ▶ Light Rifle (6.5mm rifle or smaller) (Long range; Damage Modifier +1, +2 damage at Point-Blank range)
- ▶ Heavy Rifle (.30 rifle or larger) (Long range; Damage Modifier +2, +2 damage at Point-Blank range)
- ▶ Rocket Launcher (see *Explosives and Explosions* on p. 99)
- ▶ Small-gauge Shotgun (20-gauge or smaller) (Close range; Damage Modifier +1, +3 damage at Point-Blank range)
- ▶ Large-gauge Shotgun (12-gauge or larger) (Near range; Damage Modifier +1, +3 damage at Point-Blank range)

Tinkering-based Contemporary Weapons:

- ▶ Missile (see *Explosives and Explosions* on p. 99; **Cost:** Difficulty +2 to significantly higher, depending on the missile power and feasibility)
- ▶ Weaponized Mini-Drone (see *Explosives and Explosions* on p. 99); **Cost:** Difficulty +1

Weapon Accessories:

- ▶ Bipod (reduces range penalties (see p. 78) by 1); **Cost:** Difficulty 3
- ▶ Gun Scope (reduces range penalties (see p.78) by 1); **Cost:** Difficulty 3
- ▶ Laser Sight (reduces range penalties (see p. 78) by 2); **Cost:** Difficulty 3

These penalty reductions are cumulative for a fully equipped weapon.

FUTURE WEAPONS (21ST CENTURY ONWARDS)

It's a little tricky to predict what weapons are available in the future; a good guideline is "if you've ever seen it in a science fiction movie or book, and your GM agrees, it's available." Consider the examples in this category to be exactly that, and use your ingenuity to create and produce additional weapons. It's important to remember, though, that *TimeWatch* works on cinematic logic. If there's ever a question between "do physics work as they do in a time travel / science fiction movie, or as they do in real life?" the answer is almost always the former.

Weapons almost always have compromises; for instance, deadly weaponry is seldom subtle, making loud noises and bright beams. Ask yourself "would this weapon look good in a science fiction movie?" If the answer is no, either change it until it would fit or adjust the Difficulty cost upwards.

Typical future weaponry makes vast improvements in disabling enemies without killing them (such as with neural disruptors), and focuses on beam weapons with shimmering rays and the ability to disintegrate. Default damage for beam weapons is a Damage Modifier of +2, although additional



A Chronal destabilization grenade unanchors its victims from time, blasting away Chronal Stability instead of Health.

attachments are available by increasing the Difficulty of the Preparedness test.

If no cost modifier is listed in the below list, the Difficulty of the Preparedness test to acquire the weapon is 4.

Athletics-based Future Weapons:

- ▶ Grenade (see *Explosives and Explosions* on p. 99)
- ▶ Chronal Destabilization Grenade (triggers a D4/L4 Paradox test from every time traveler in Close proximity to the grenade's location; see p. 89); **Cost:** Difficulty +2
- ▶ Neural Disruption Grenade (triggers a Stun 5 test from every time traveler in Point-Blank proximity to the grenade's location; see p. 86); **Cost:** Difficulty +2

Scuffling-based Future Weapons (small):

- ▶ Inactive Autochron used as a club (Damage Modifier +0)
- ▶ Neural Disruptor Rod (Stun 5)
- ▶ PaciFist (subtle, hackable; Stun 5. Also usable as a Shooting weapon)

Scuffling-based Future Weapons (large):

- ▶ Powered Exoskeleton (Armor 2; Damage Modifier +2); **Cost:** Difficulty +2

Shooting-based Future Weapons (small):

- ▶ Beam Pistol (Near range; hackable; Damage Modifier +2)
- ▶ Neural Disruptor Pistol (Near range; hackable; Stun 5)
- ▶ PaciFist (Close range; subtle, hackable; Stun 5. Also usable as a Scuffling weapon)

Shooting-based Future Weapons (large):

- ▶ Beam Rifle (Long range; hackable; Damage Modifier +2)
- ▶ Neural Disruptor Rifle (Long range; hackable; Stun 5)

FIREARMS

Near to Long range; Damage Modifier +1 or +2.

Firearms range from pistols to long arms, from misfiring muzzle-loading muskets to high-powered sniper rifles with tripods and laser sights. You'll find firearms in any historical era from approximately the 13th century on, although they remain rare or nonexistent in certain closed or isolated cultures until introduced by explorers.

Certain alternate time streams or parallel universes may lack firearms; unless the laws of nature that govern gunpowder ignition are different there, firearms imported from true history will work in such places.

TimeWatch simplifies the differences between different types of firearms almost out of existence. Firearms do damage as described on p. 82, inflicting a Damage Modifier of +0 (for particularly weak weapons) or +1, with an additional +2 damage bonus for Point-Blank range. Heavy firearms do an additional point of damage. Firearms have a range as described on p. 78, and encompass guns from 13th-century Chinese fire lances up to futuristic weapons accurate up to 2500 yards or farther. Bipods, scopes, and laser sights

GM ADVICE: MORE FIREARM DETAIL

If you're interested in greater historical differentiation in your firearms, a good source is borrowing from *Double Tap*, the *Night's Black Agents* sourcebook. The firearm differentiation offered there works well with *TimeWatch*, although you'll need to adjust some rules to fit *TimeWatch's* rule set.

This damage can, as usual, be increased significantly by spending Stitches. Whether you declare that the bullet speeds up after it leaves the gun, or that a small time eddy causes your target to stumble into the bullet, increasing damage by up to 3 points can definitely get your antagonist's attention.

can significantly increase a firearm's range. It is generally assumed that you are reloading your firearm as needed, although as noted on p. 83 there may be times that the GM requires a combat action to reload.

At the GM's discretion, particularly early firearms may be less accurate, slow to load, or have a shorter range than typical ones. This is an exception, not the default.

The player and GM can be as specific or as general as they like when describing firearms; whether a player has an Old West six-gun or a futuristic slug-thrower, the guns have identical damage and characteristics. This is a generalization for the sake of game speed and simplicity. History contains a wide array of firearms in different styles, caliber, and levels of lethality. TimeWatch focuses on a cinematic approach to weaponry, however, which means that as long as you can describe it engagingly it doesn't much matter that the damage is suspiciously similar to other weapons around it.

BEAM WEAPONS

Future, Hackable; Near to Long range; Damage Modifier +2.

Basic beam weapons are available with a Difficulty 4 Preparedness test. Beam pistols have a maximum range of near; long arms, such as a plasma rifle, have a maximum range of long. Beam weapons have a Damage Modifier of +2 but



When you're a time traveler, shooting someone with bullets is SO passé.

never do extra damage at Point-Blank range. There are a variety of different beam weapons, as noted below, and an Agent can customize which type he acquires by altering the Difficulty of the Preparedness test before rolling.

A beam weapon may have great range and do more damage, but it's not exactly a stealth weapon. Beam weapons aren't a standard part of TimeWatch agent gear because their energy beam is too difficult to disguise in most anachronistic settings. Still, they're remarkably useful when your Agent's in a firefight and doesn't need to disguise his origin. Unless the GM specifically decides otherwise, beam weapons always make a noise when firing and the weapon always emits a bright, noticeable beam. These might be blue-white lances of energy, flame-red laser shots, glowing green concentric circles, or whatever you choose. Sparks and energy usually flare up from where a beam hits.

GM ADVICE: THE COLOR OF PAIN

Visible ray gun beams are not in the least bit realistic. We're emulating the world of classic sci-fi and cinematic combat, though, where such visible blaster shots are de rigueur. If you want a more realistic approach for a grittier campaign frame, be aware that stealth-sniping enemies from a distance becomes much easier with undetectable futuristic weapons.

Tinkering With Beam Weapons

Agents can use the Tinkering ability to briefly alter their beam weapons by making a Difficulty 4 Tinkering test. Doing so takes one combat action, or can be done as part of a combat action if the Agent has the *Rapid Deployment* Booster.

It's risky to tinker with a weapon; whether you successfully hit or not, rolling a 1 on the Shooting test die during that shot will blow out the energy source of your weapon, requiring another Tinkering test and 10 minutes work to repair.

Tinkering with a beam weapon can achieve one of the following effects:

- ▶ You can briefly overcharge a beam weapon to ignore cover for 1 shot, literally burning away or phasing through the cover to have a better chance of hitting the target. The target is treated as if they're exposed, so their +1 or +2 bonus to their Hit Threshold from partial or full cover is ignored for that one shot.
- ▶ You can briefly overcharge a beam weapon to increase its damage bonus by +1 point for one shot.
- ▶ You can briefly extend a beam weapon's range, increasing pistol range from Near to Long range, and beam rifle range from Long range to Very Long range. Your target's Hit Threshold doesn't rise due to the extended range.

Beam Weapon Variants

Many different variants of beam weapons are available. Feel free to mix and match, adding the Preparedness Difficulty modifiers together before making a test. If you're worried you don't have enough Preparedness or Tinkering to make the roll, remember that appropriate Investigative spends can add +3 to a General ability test. If you want a particularly versatile weapon, you may need to take advantage of that rule.

Raina wants her character to have a chromomorphic beam weapon that also disintegrates dead and inanimate objects. The Difficulty of her Preparedness test is 4 + 2 (chromomorphic disguise) + 2 (disintegration), totaling 8. Barring the pistol being stolen or discarded, her character will keep the pistol for the duration of the mission. She spends a Science! point and 4 Preparedness points for a bonus of +7, successfully makes the Preparedness test, decides what the pistol and its beam looks like, and names it (the Green Mark II Demogrifier), and she's ready to go.

Autofire

Cost: Difficulty +2

The beam weapon equivalent of a machine gun, these pistols and rifles can affect more than one target with a single shot (as explained by the *Autofire* rules on p. 84). Unlike the way that machine guns throw many bullets very quickly, autofire beam weapons create a lasting ray that can be swept across several targets at once. Autofire can also be added to a neural disruptor, allowing you to stun more than one enemy with one shot.

Chronal Destabilizer

Cost: Difficulty +2

This weapon is capable of loosening the ties that anchor time travelers in their current era. Instead of doing normal Health damage, a target hit by the chronal destabilization effect must make an immediate D4/L4 Paradox test. Against time traveling antagonists, this Loss affects Tempus instead of Chronal Stability, and may cripple or restrict their ability to use time-related special powers (see p. 148). You can flip between lethal and chronal destabilizer settings freely in combat.

Chromomorphic Disguise

Cost: Difficulty +2

These weapons automatically adapt to look like a weapon or object native to the local era. This does not change the appearance of the beam. In the Old West, for instance, a chromomorphic blaster might look like a six-gun or a walking cane, even though it still shoots a glowing red beam. An Agent with 2 or more rating points of Timecraft and 1 or more rating points of Science! can add chromomorphic technology to any beam weapon with a Difficulty 4 Tinkering test.

Concussive

Cost: Difficulty +2

A kinetic or concussive beam requires the struck target to make a Difficulty 4 Athletics test or be thrown off his feet

and backwards three meters; if the target is in Point-Blank or Close range, and the target is human sized or smaller, this effect knocks them back one range. Should the target be near the edge of a precipice when shot (and aren't they always?), they may be knocked off. In this case, Agents and dramatically important antagonists or supporting characters can make a Difficulty 5 Athletics test to grab an edge and avoid the fall.

Disintegration

Cost: Difficulty +2

A disintegration pistol does no extra damage, but disintegrates a chunk of an inanimate object or a dead foe instead of just damaging it. There's no disintegration effect against living or animate creatures (until you kill them, at which point they collapse into dust), although cosmetic damage such as smoking and burned clothing is traditional. A disintegration pistol can be used to blast through walls or floors if you don't mind leaving an obvious hole behind, and has the tendency to quickly destroy cover that a target is hiding behind.

Dual-Use Stunning

Cost: Difficulty +2

Most beam weapons do not stun their target. It's possible to acquire a dual-purpose stunner / beam weapon, though, if you don't mind it not working particularly effectively. Such weapons have the standard Damage Modifier of +2, or act as a relatively weak Stun 3 neural disruptor, perfect for taking down Mooks but largely useless for more capable foes. You can flip between lethal and stunning settings freely in combat. If you want a more powerful stunner, stick with your Pacifist or a dedicated neural disruptor.

**GM ADVICE: PEW! PEW!
BZZAP! PEW! PEW!**

Want to lean towards simplicity and have Agents in your game only carry one weapon? Change the restriction that dual-use beam weapons only have weak stun effects, giving them instead a Stun 5 neural disruptor with a visible beam and sound effect. Or if you prefer, allow Pacifists to double as Close range-only beam weapons that are subtle.

Avoid allowing a Long-range beam weapon that also has the Pacifist's subtle stun effect unless you like games where the Agents hang way back and surreptitiously stun from a great distance. It's effective but boring, and for standard campaigns *TimeWatch's* combats should default to cinematic sci-fi.

Extended Range**Cost:** Difficulty +1

Certain weapons have a longer than average range, extending their normal accuracy range by one range category.

Intimidating**Cost:** Difficulty +2

This weapon is terrifying in both appearance and use. Wielding it gives characters with the Intimidation ability an extra Intimidation pool point that can be spent once per session. Spending this bonus point must involve the weapon in one way, shape, or form.

Low-Profile**Cost:** Difficulty +1

This weapon is difficult to notice when not in use, whether due to disguise, disassembly, or small size. Anyone hoping to notice it must make a Difficulty 4 test (usually of Unobtrusiveness) to do so, and the weapon does not trigger normal security scanners.

Paralysis**Cost:** Difficulty +3

A crippling effect causes the normal beam weapon to also disrupt nerve impulses between a living target's brain and their limbs. Every time the target is damaged by the weapon, they also lose 2 points from their Athletics (or Tempus, when applicable) pool. A target with a 0 Athletics pool due to the paralysis effect tends to move slowly and clumsily, and must spend an entire combat action to change ranges by one category or move within a range category. The paralysis does not otherwise affect Scuffling, Shooting, or other abilities. It wears off at the end of the scene; the target can temporarily fight its effects by raising their Athletics pool above 0.

Sample Beam Weapons

Make up names and descriptions for your own custom weapons to the extent you like. It's useful to specify what the weapon looks and sounds like when fired, and a tiny bit of the weapon's future history.

As always, the cost (such as "Difficulty 9") is the cost in Preparedness to acquire or Tinkering to build (assuming the Agent has 1 or more points of Science!). Adding an additional weapon variant onto these weapons raises the Difficulty by the variant's cost.

Multhari Dust Beam**Cost (autofire, disintegration):** Difficulty +4

Future, Blatant, Hackable; Near range; Damage Modifier +2

This war pistol is designed for the efficient execution of as many aliens as possible. It possesses autofire and disintegration options, allowing you to sweep its beam along a row of charging nonhumans and turn them to dust long before they reach your position. Standard issue dust beams come with AI

that stops this from working against humans, but that's easily deactivated when necessary. This pistol emanates a whirling amber vortex when fired, with a sound like a subsonic rumble.

Smuggler's Heartburn**Cost (low-profile, paralysis):** Difficulty +4

Future, Subtle; Near range; Damage Modifier +2

This is a paralysis-inducing weapon designed for stealth and assassinations. Invented by biochemist flesh-sculptors in a particularly unpleasant artist colony in 25th-century Madagascar, it secretes a flesh-mending field that literally allows it to be holstered inside the human body. Effectively, this means that the weapon comes with 3 free points of Burglary that can only be used to hide the weapon inside of your own body. Drawing and holstering the weapon inflicts 1 point of Health damage as the skin is pierced and automatically reknitted. The Burglary test Difficulty needed to hide a holstered gun is Difficulty 4, raised or lowered by the searcher's Alertness Modifier.

Xen plasma rifle**Cost (extended range, intimidation, disintegration):** Difficulty +5

Future, Blatant, Hackable; Long range; Damage Modifier +2

This long arm is very clearly designed for intimidation as much as it is for killing. The sound a Xen makes when warming up is piercing and distinctive, and when used by government antiriot troops, protesters have been known to surrender or flee before a single shot has been taken. Even the glow from its plasma conduits is disturbing. The weapon projects superheated plasma in a force-sheathed beam, disintegrating targets just slowly enough to let them scream a bit first.

NEURAL DISRUPTORS

Future, Hackable; Point-Blank to Long range

Neural disruptors are similar to Pacifists, but aren't as well suited for undercover work. They have an obvious special effect and aren't typically chromomorphic. To their credit, they have a Near range (or Long range, for neural disruptor rifles) instead of the Pacifist's Close range. Neural disruptor batons have a range of Point-Blank.

Tinkering With Neural Disruptors

Agents can use the Tinkering ability to briefly alter their Pacifists and neural disruptors by making a Difficulty 4 Tinkering test. Doing so takes one combat action, or can be done as part of a combat action if the Agent has the *Rapid Deployment* Booster.

It's risky to tinker with a weapon; whether you successfully hit or not, rolling a 1 on the Shooting (or, if relevant, Scuffling) test die during that attack will blow out the energy source of your weapon, requiring another Tinkering test and 10 minutes work to repair.

Tinkering with a neural disruptor can achieve one of the following effects:



Pacifists are chromomorphic and change their shape automatically, but they have a lot in common with neural disruptors.

- ▶ You can briefly overcharge a neural disruptor such as a Pacifist to increase the Difficulty of its Stun test by +1 point for 1 shot. This briefly improves the neural disruptor from Stun 5 to Stun 6.
- ▶ You can briefly extend a neural disruptor's range, increasing Pacifist range from Close to Near, neural disruptor pistol range from Near to Long, and neural disruptor rifle range from Long to Very Long.

Neural Disruptor Variants

Neural Disruption Grenade

Cost: Difficulty +2 per grenade

Future; Near range; Stun 5

This baseball-sized weapon emits a Stun 5 burst of nonlethal disruption energy after it is set and thrown. As your action in a combat, make an Athletics test against the Difficulty listed for grenades on p. 100. If successful, the target and all creatures within Point-Blank range of him must make a Stun test against Difficulty 5 or be stunned. All creatures who are in Close range of the target must make Difficulty 4 Athletics tests or suffer the same effect.

Neural Disruptor Baton

Cost Difficulty +0

Future, Hackable; Point-Blank range; Damage Modifier +0 or Stun 5

It's possible to acquire neural disruptor technology in a combat baton, allowing Agents to use their Scuffling ability to neutralize their foes. Before rolling a Scuffling attack, the Agent chooses whether the device will inflict lethal damage (with a +0 Damage Modifier) or trigger a Stun 5 effect.

OTHER WEAPONS AND DEVICES

There are as many futuristic and super-science weapons available as you can imagine. Part of the GM's job is making sure that these rules don't get abused, and that means disallowing or adjudicating any futuristic technology that would make the mission less fun for everyone. It's also the GM's job to announce when an idea is getting too silly for her game, or when the tone of an idea doesn't make sense. Serious sci-fi devices can be very different from humorous or pulp future-tech, and not every device or idea is appropriate for every game. Ask your GM, because seeing it listed here doesn't mean it's always a good fit for her game.

The mechanical effect of weapons is fairly standard no matter how you describe it; most weapons do damage or Stun, no matter how spectacular their description is. It's also worth noting that not all of these things are sized for easy transportation, possibly requiring a massive infrastructure in order to operate.

Particularly deadly items might only be single-shots, and no item should be capable of taking down a dramatically important bad guy casually, automatically, or with a single shot.

ARMOR

Armor reduces damage from Shooting and Scuffling attacks. This includes bullets, beam weapons, and handheld weapons such as knives and swords. If you're wearing a form of armor effective against the weapon being used against you, you subtract a number of points from each instance of damage dealt to you before applying it to your Health pool.

The Neanderthal Agent Uurkk is shot by a Norman archer at the Battle of Hastings. The GM rolls a 5 for the archer's damage. Uurkk wears his Armor 1 TimeWatch uniform, reducing the damage to 4 points. His Health pool decreases from 10 to 6.

Standard armor does not reduce damage from sources such as explosion, fire, or psychic attack. Armor offers no protection from neural disruptor weapons such as Pacifists. It will usually be obvious whether your armor can protect you, but if not, your GM will decide.

TimeWatch uniforms act as ultralight armor, reducing each instance of Shooting and Scuffling damage by 1 point. If a character removes this chromomorphic armor to don an incompatible disguise — at a beach, for instance — this benefit is obviously lost.

Light body armor, as worn by police officers, reduces each instance of Shooting damage by 2 points and Scuffling damage by 1 point. Military-grade body armor reduces Shooting and explosive damage by 3 points and Scuffling damage by 1 point. Medieval armor reduces Scuffling damage by 3 points and Shooting damage by 1 point.

TimeWatch uniforms are comfortable and can change color and shape due to its chromomorphic nature, but light body armor is heavy, hot, and marks you out as someone looking for trouble. All of these drawbacks apply doubly to military-grade

GM ADVICE: ARMOR INTRICACIES

TimeWatch rules simplify real-world armor in the interest of fast, non-fiddly play. If you'd like a more realistic approach, you can create armor types that are more effective against bullets than beam weapons or knives, armor that is specifically effective against beam weapons but which doesn't stop bullets, personal force fields that slow melee weapon attacks, and the like. Just be careful not to create more detail than your players care about, or more than is fun to use in play. Also, be careful about making armor too effective; unless they're outfitted in stolen top-secret military gear in preparation for a ludicrously dangerous encounter, characters shouldn't be able to charge into every fight armored like tanks and unafraid of damage.

body armor, and triply to medieval armor. Other than their chromomorphic *TimeWatch* uniforms, Agents can't expect to walk around openly wearing armor without attracting the attention of the local authorities. Armor and heavy weapons may prove useful in discrete missions conducted away from prying eyes, or as a disguise in a medieval or wartime setting.

When wearing one type of armor over another (for instance, police tactical armor over a *TimeWatch* uniform), the effect of armor is not cumulative; use the best protection for any given attack.

As with weapons, Agents can acquire futuristic armor for use in battle so long as they don't mind giving themselves away as time travelers. Futuristic armor may take the form of a personal force field. These are generally highly visible and are usually only effective against beam weapons, but exceptions (such as a force field that is only effective against Scuffling weapons) may exist.

Futuristic armor might be combined with weapons. For instance, antipersonnel armor that once active automatically makes a Stun attack on anyone else who touches you is a reasonable (if somewhat expensive) item to acquire. Another example is a powered exoskeleton. Need to stagger into combat against an alien queen, and your own physical abilities aren't up to snuff? Powered exoskeletons may be a solution. They're far from subtle; they're loud, awkward, far too heavy to lift, and just plain slow; these are the portable forklifts of the future. Military versions, however, can be quite effective in amplifying natural strength.

Nonhuman creatures may be from disturbing alternate universes and timelines, and often have high armor ratings. They may possess hard, bony hides or chitinous anatomies that can take greater punishment than ordinary organisms.

Most nonhuman creatures are resistant to the stunning effects of neural disruptor weapons, and some creatures are more resistant to bullets and other ranged weapons than they are to blunt force trauma, slashes, and stab wounds.

Sample Futuristic Armor

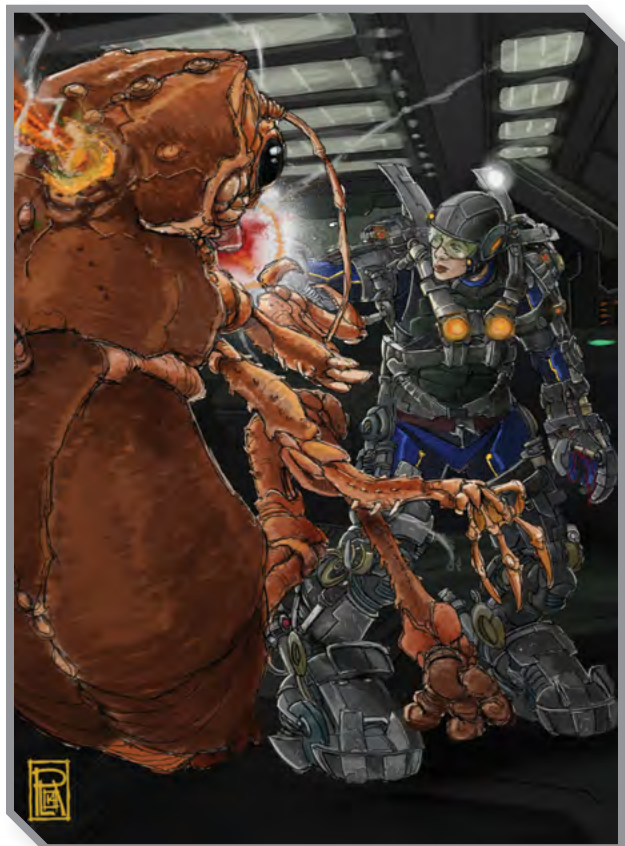
Custom armor from the future is as detailed as you'd like to make it; it's usually most fun to name it and come up with a physical description. Subtle armor is relatively rare, and has its Preparedness cost raised accordingly.

Bishop's Vest

Cost: Difficulty +1

Future, Blatant; Armor 1 vs. physical attacks, Armor 2 vs. energy attacks

This is standard, moderately bulky strike armor for the Ecclesiastical Infiltration Corps of the 23rd-century Vatican City State. The armor acts as Armor 1 against physical attacks and Armor 2 against energy attacks. It is primarily designed to intimidate foes; the armor flares with triumphant holographic light in a user-determined image (usually that of a divine armored angel) whenever it is struck, and users gain a free 1-point Intimidation pool to spend during a fight.



Fighting something nasty? Never, ever underestimate the value of a good defense.

Gessert Shield

Cost: Difficulty +2

Future, Blatant; Armor 3 vs. physical attacks

Worn as a belt, this full-body force field is far from subtle once activated because it refracts light slightly and coruscates with silver light. The Gessert shield offers no protection against energy weapons such as beam weapons or neural disruptors, but the force field instantly hardens into Armor 3 when hit with any Scuffling or Shooting physical attack. Its battery pack typically lasts for the length of one combat (or one scene) before burning out; not long, but hopefully long enough to save your life. The light distortion can make it difficult to see the facial features of anyone using a Gessert shield, so while the shield is active you gain a +2 bonus to Disguise and Unobtrusiveness tests made to hide your identity.

Hyperion Infiltration Armor

Cost: Difficulty +4

Future, Subtle, Chromomorphic; Damage Modifier +2 (Scuffling); Armor 2

This armored exoskeleton combines the best features of power-assisted strength amplification with futuristic stealth technology. Subtle and chromomorphic, it automatically adjusts its appearance to whatever historical era you find yourself in; that doesn't stop it from helping you go one-on-one with powerful foes

Pentheus Battle Armor

Cost: Difficulty +10, or a specific scene to acquire

Future, Blatant, Restricted; Point-Blank to Long range; Armor 3; Stealth Modifier -3

Don't expect to hide when wearing a PBA, the gold standard for 24th-century highly militarized battle armor; you're crammed into something with the bulk of a large refrigerator and the ability to level a suburban neighborhood block. As usual, you're limited to one attack per round, but you won't lack for options; Pentheus Battle Armor is loaded down with optimized weaponry such as beam rifles (+2 damage), grenades, military-grade neural disruptors (Stun 6), automatic firearms (+2 damage), and extendable blades (+1 damage). Normal movement and jumping distances are improved by one range zone while wearing a PBA thanks to its jump jets.

A full array of cybernetic implants is outside of *TimeWatch's* scope, especially when you consider the dizzying array of possibilities available throughout time. As a result, we recommend that a character who wishes to be wholly or partially cybernetic consult with the GM about their vision of their character. Depending on player and GM preference, there are three methods for handling cybernetics in *TimeWatch*.

Cybernetics as Narrative Flavor

TimeWatch doesn't have a unique system for cyber-gear as part of its core rules. By default, any Agent wishing to have cybernetic attachments can simply declare that they do, and then use Preparedness, Vehicles, and Investigative point spends to model the futuristic behavior they'd like their cyber-gear to have. It's simple, it's cinematic, but it doesn't grant any unique abilities — other than an occasional rule-bending with the GM's permission, such as allowing cybernetic legs to function as vehicles for the purpose of the Vehicles ability.

Vidhvansaka wishes to try and spot an assassin hidden in a nearby tree line. She describes her eye socket extending into a heat-sensing, telescopic cybernetic extension. She makes an Unobtrusiveness test as per normal to spot the assassin, and spends enough points to ensure that she succeeds.

The sample character on p. 32 relies mostly on this style of cybernetics. The example of the android alternate species on p. 21 takes this approach as well.

Should you choose, you can also use this technique to describe mutations and psychic powers.

Cybernetics as an Extrapolation of Existing Mechanics

What if pure narrative description doesn't feel satisfying? Perhaps cybernetic Agents should have inhuman and flavorful power, without making them overpowered or giving them a lot of extra rules.

The best way to do this is to convert Investigative or General build points into a unique Investigative ability named **Cybernetics** that the Agent can then draw on. Establishing this ability always costs the Agent at least one Investigative build point that he doesn't get back; if the other Agents start with 22 Investigative build points, for instance, an Agent with cybernetics would start with 21 or fewer. Cyber-gear can also be added after character creation, at the aforementioned flat cost of 1 build point plus as many points as the Agent wishes to invest into their Cybernetics pool. Spending points from this pool powers unique abilities in the cybernetic parts that the player has described. Each unique power typically lasts for one scene.

Let's say an Agent wants to have a bionic eye, two cybernetic legs, and a cybernetic arm. The easiest way to model the eye is just to put

an extra point into the Investigative ability Notice, a point that the player can spend once per mission to gain a cool ability, and to state that the eye is what handles the tether's recording and information display capabilities. Any player can already record their surroundings or use Notice to examine fine detail, so there's no imbalance or combat power for having a cybernetic eye. That is purely narrative flavor, so this makes for an easy adaptation.

The legs are slightly trickier, as it's slightly unbalanced and unorthodox to allow the player to apply his Athletics or Vehicles points to running incredibly quickly on cybernetic legs. And what about jumping? The GM creates a new Investigative Technical ability for this player named "Cybernetics." The player may put as many Investigative points in it as he wishes. By spending a point from this pool on his robotic legs, the Agent can jump up to 15 meters for one scene, and can freely use either Athletics or Vehicles points for running. He can always spend a Cybernetics point to add +3 to a Scuffling roll if he wants the Agent to kick someone, of course.

And the cybernetic arm? Like the legs, a spent point can grant it extreme strength for a scene, enough strength to lift a car or throw a boulder one-handed. A reasonable GM would also allow the spent point to raise punching or kicking damage from 1d6 - 1 to 1d6 + 1, as if the Agent was carrying a sword.

The player ends up investing 4 Investigative build points in the Cybernetics ability pool, giving them a rating of 3, enough to let them feel effective throughout an entire mission.

Should you choose, you can also use this technique to describe mutations and psychic powers.

Cybernetics as New Subsystem With Unique Mechanics

If players want a more technical system, GMs are encouraged with work with their players in adapting and hacking the cybe species and cybernetic gear from *Aspen Stars* (a GUMSHOE space opera game by Robin D. Laws) into *TimeWatch*. Instead of the upkeep costs in *Aspen Stars*, *TimeWatch* GMs should initially charge players a certain number of Investigative build points for the cybernetic gear. This cost should be in proportion to the quantity, combat strength, and overall effectiveness of the cyber-gear acquired, and it's up to both GM and player to make sure that the character is both fun and balanced with other Agents. During initial character creation the GM may allow the player to convert General points to Investigative points on a 3:1 basis, or vice versa at a 1:3 basis, in order to power the cybernetics they agree on.

Players should understand that any such adaptation is provisional, and the GM may tweak or adjust benefits and point costs over the course of several games to make sure the character is fun for everyone to have in the game. This is by far the most complicated and time-consuming approach, however, so it isn't recommended.

HIGH-TECH AND SUPER-SCIENCE EQUIPMENT

These devices cover a large range of complexity, from a simple space suit (**Cost:** Difficulty +0, which is a Difficulty 4 Preparedness or Tinkering test in most cases) to a friction manipulator (**Cost:** 1-point Science! spend plus Difficulty +1, which is a Science! spend plus a Difficulty 5 Preparedness or Tinkering test in most cases). When an Investigative spend is required in the cost, the spend doesn't provide extra pool points to use on the Preparedness test (as described on p. 48).

Ankh

Cost: Difficulty +3

Ancient

Popular media occasionally posits that the ancient Egyptian gods were incredibly advanced aliens. While *TimeWatch* has never found any definitive proof for this, remnants of alien technology has surfaced in Egyptian archaeological digs over the millennia.

DEITIES AND DISSEMBLING

No shortage of popular stories have leveraged the "gods are super-advanced aliens" shtick. *TimeWatch* has created an archaeology division to investigate. Current theories suggest that these aliens impersonate gods in a parallel universe, and their tools have leaked over into ours; equally possible is that the aliens exist in a time loop closed off by *TimeWatch*, that they are rogue time travelers, or that they did in fact exist but cannot be detected by typical *TimeWatch* technology. GMs are encouraged to have fun exploring these options.

One such item is an ankh that can heal. As best as *TimeWatch* scientists can determine, the device crosses multiple realities/timelines and trades Health from one for Health in another within the same individual. Despite this limited understanding, they've figured out how to make the device work in reverse. As such, the device can heal damage at the cost of making you temporally less stable, or act as a temporal anchor at the expense of your Health. Potential consequences may include stealing Health from yourself, encountering a temporally stable zombie version of yourself, or being haunted by a temporal ghost of an almost immortal you.

Charge the ankh with a 1-point Timecraft spend. Once charged, you may exchange any number of Health points for an equal number of Chronal Stability points, or vice versa. The device only holds one charge at a time, and its use is limited to once per mission.

Variants:

- ▶ **Cost:** Difficulty +2: A preprogrammed trade-off, such as 6 Health restored at the cost of 6 Chronal Stability, or vice versa. This amount cannot be adjusted on the fly, and thus might accidentally put the user in danger.
- ▶ **Cost:** Difficulty +5: More efficient versions, providing a 2:1 return. TimeWatch scientists are concerned that the extra Health or Chronal Stability comes from somewhere, or someone; use at your own risk.

Variant: Thet**Cost:** Difficulty +3

Ancient

Based on apparently related technology, and appearing very similar, a thet is particularly useful in time periods after the invention of cloning (or for TimeWatch agents that may be able to harness such resources). Rather than restoring Health or Chronal Stability to the user, it can cross the space-time continuum, copy all the memories and experiences of a deceased individual, and paste them into the brain of an otherwise pristine clone. This resurrection technology requires an incredible amount of power, isn't 100% reliable, and can confuse a clone terribly if they already have other memories, but if things go horribly wrong for an Agent it's nice to know that options exist.

Antigravity Device**Cost:** Difficulty +0

Future

Willing to trade subtlety for maneuverability? Antigravity shielding can typically provide a levitation effect or act to slow or stop an Agent in freefall, and it does so with much less of a public spectacle than a jet pack displays. It's up to you and your GM what the antigravity device looks like; perhaps it surrounds you in a force field, emanates from a belt, or is integrated into your TimeWatch uniform.

Antigravity devices typically function for the duration of one scene.

Auto-Stumbler**Cost:** Difficulty +0

Future, Subtle

Once per scene, without needing to use an action, the auto-stumbler automatically overwaters a patch of lawn, introduces rot into a floorboard, coats a stair with low-friction slime, or otherwise makes an antagonist slip and fall in an embarrassing but largely non-injurious way. This inflicts 1 Health point of damage on the target and immediately ends their movement for the round if they're not riding in a vehicle. Targets may avoid slipping with a Difficulty 4 Athletics test, but this uses the target's action for the round.

Behavioral Helix**Cost:** Difficulty +1

Future, Subtle

A subdermal computer chip originally designed to create brainwashed and hard-working laborers, behavioral helixes have since been altered to reinforce any type of desired behavior. They can flood the body with endorphins when a desired behavior is performed, and wrack it with stress chemicals when a different interdicted behavior is attempted. The result is a self-reinforcing set of behavioral patterns that makes their victims utterly content when doing the "right" thing, and miserable when doing the "wrong" thing.

This manipulation is traditionally used by villains with great effectiveness, as the chips are hard to detect without Hacking or Medical Expertise. Focused EMP blasts can disable them, and they can be removed from the back of the neck with minor surgery once their presence has been identified. TimeWatch occasionally uses tuned-down versions that reinforce behavior consistent with true history: if a cowardly soldier is known to have saved hundreds of lives in a battle but is too scared to fight due to time travel interference, a short-term behavioral helix that reinforces bravery might save the day with few side effects. Any rumors of TimeWatch agents using behavioral helixes to artificially rehabilitate chronic enemies is probably just a rumor.

**"Bigfoot Beam"
(the Cordova Crypto-Transposer)****Cost:** Difficulty +4 (Cordova purposefully seeds a few of these across the centuries)

Future, Blatant; Near range

The Bigfoot Beam isn't a gun that transforms its target into a hulking humanoid. Instead, it's a weapon that literally fires Bigfoots (Bigfeet?) at its target. This weapon was designed by the unethical geneticist and chronal experimenter Dansk Cordova. When activated, the gun opens a temporary one-way portal between Cordova's 25th-century labs and whatever era the gun is currently in. Cordova has a cage linked to this weapon, and any living creature in the cage is instantly transported to the gun's location and kept there for as long as the gun's chronal link remains active. This could theoretically be used to smuggle political prisoners, summon super-soldiers, or bring in an emergency medical personnel; instead, Cordova keeps the cage stocked with one of his many genetically engineered monstrosities such as Bigfoot because he finds the results hilarious.

Cordova, it turns out, is not entirely sane. Rumors that Cordova has his creations equipped with spy cams and publishes holographic video of their exploits to his fans are wholly substantiated.

The Crypto-Transposer can only summon one creature at a time, and turning off the gun returns the creature; if summoned a second time, it may begin to develop a relationship (either good or bad) with the person who called it there. A summoned creature won't have any particular compunction

to fight on the side of whoever fired the gun, but is generally hostile. It appears wherever the gun was aimed within Near range. It acts as its own combatant for the duration of the fight. The person who fired the Crypto-Transposer can return the summoned monster to the future by spending their action to turn off the gun. If the Bigfoot can escape the immediate vicinity of the weapon (passing out of Very Long range from the weapon's location), it does not automatically return when the weapon is switched off.

The Crypto-Transposer is hardened against electronic interference, and is not affected by a Bigfoot's electronic dampening effect.

More details on Bigfoot and other cryptids can be found in the *Antagonists* chapter; see p. 145.

Blink Device

Cost: Difficulty +2

Future, Blatant

A blink device gives a person the ability to flash in and out in combat, sliding forwards and backwards quickly in time to make himself a more effective combatant. Blinking Agents gain +1 to their Hit Threshold and have their foes' Hit Thresholds lowered by -1, and suffer no penalties for closing to Point-Blank range with a gun-wielding foe.

There's a cost, however. Using a blink device triggers a D4/L4 Paradox test the first round it is active and costs 2 Chronal Stability in each subsequent round.

Causal Loop Grenade

Cost: Difficulty +2

Future, Blatant; Near range

Instead of an explosion, this grenade traps everyone within the Point-Blank damage range within a causal loop. Targets who fail a D4 Chronal Stability test repeat their last action again and again and again in a repeating, looping moment; they cannot usually be injured or affected by outside effects while trapped in the loop. Victims are unaware of the loop and do not register the repeated passing of time. Until negated by expending a Timecraft or Science! point, this looping effect can persist for decades. Antagonists with no Chronal Stability rating must make the test without a spend.

Ch'att Chronal Exiler

Cost: Difficulty +3

Future, Blatant; Near range

When you need to buy time (figuratively speaking), there are few better tools for team coordination or tactical planning. First proposed by one of the original research scientists to investigate choral slippage, and later fully designed by him when time travelers brought him into the future to fix an engineering problem they couldn't otherwise solve, the Ch'att Chronal Exiler is a squat pistol with Near range. Targets struck by its bright purple beam make a Difficulty 7 Chronal Stability test; creatures without Tempus or Chronal Stability

fail automatically. On a failure, the target is flung two rounds into the future, appearing in the exact same spot with no idea that intervening time has passed. If another object or creature occupies the same spot when the target reappears, everything occupying that space takes 1 die of damage.

The Exiler's efficiency falls with subsequent shots in the same scene. With every shot fired, the Difficulty of the Chronal Stability test to resist drops by 1.

Chronal Stabilizer

Cost: Difficulty +4

Future, Very Long range

This backpack-sized device temporarily prevents choral decay, keeping anachronistic items within Very Long range of the stabilizer functioning normally even when wielded by someone without the Reality Anchor or Tempus ability (see p. 49). Chronal stabilizers are rare, notoriously fussy to keep in good repair, and are generally used to arm more primitive locals with futuristic weapons. If you need an army of laser sword-wielding samurai, however, they're well worth the investment.

ChronoFacts

Cost: Difficulty +1 for a basic subscription, up to Difficulty +4 for a high-end, detailed subscription

Future

ChronoFacts is a dynamic and temporally centered guide to all of known history (more or less), making it an invaluable tool for TimeWatch agents when dealing with paradoxes. The ChronoFacts is dynamic because it is constantly updated wherever or whenever you are, assuming that the ChronoFacts Corporation exists in that timeline. The practical upshot of this is that the guide details your local false or changed history for you (unlike your tether, which always recalls true history).

Due to the nature of history, the accuracy of this device depends on the time period that was altered (which is not necessarily the time period you're currently in), the quality and attentiveness of that section's author, and the account type the ChronoFacts is subscribed to. Small detailed events are seldom included in a ChronoFacts report; large sweeping changes to society and the environment almost always are. A ChronoFacts subscription doesn't obviate the need for research and investigation, but it does a good job of steering Agents in the correct direction and of eliminating false leads. If this comes at the cost of occasional product placement advertisements slipped in under the guise of facts, well, it's probably still worth the expense.

The earlier in history that time was changed, the less comprehensive ChronoFacts updates tend to be. The better the ChronoFacts subscription, the more detailed and accurate the information due to the ChronoFacts publishers being able to afford new expeditions and chroniclers. At a base subscription, the purchase date is the latest date to which the ChronoFacts will be updated to, but with greater subscriptions more of the future is revealed. It is rumored that some militaries and governments can remotely increase

the accuracy of their ChronoFacts database, but that remains unsubstantiated.

Mechanically, acquiring ChronoFacts allows Agents to determine significant points in history when incorrect events differ from “true” events. This lets the GM give direct clues for when and where to begin their next stage of investigation. The better the ChronoFacts description, the more details the GM should supply when Agents use Research. Remember, ChronoFacts doesn’t ruin mysteries by giving everything away; instead, it records points when history changed enough to become notable, and it’s these times and locations that make for good Agent investigations.

Chronological Chameleon Shard

Cost: Difficulty +0

Future, Chronomorphic

This small brass disc, about the size of a pocket watch, hides a surprisingly sophisticated technology. When attached to another piece of equipment it causes the target to change appearance to match its current place in time. This effect requires the target equipment to be recognized by the CCS’ database and to have a comparable device in the current time. The change in appearance is holographic, and as such will not pass examination by physical contact.

Chronomorphic Pulse (CMP) Generator

Cost: Difficulty +1 for a small unit, up to Difficulty +6 for the largest units

Future

This device generates an intense pulse of temporal energy that can damage or disrupt the functioning of chronomorphic devices. A CMP Generator will likely see more use during missions by enemies than by Agents.

Depending on the level of sophistication, the CMP Generator ranges in size from a steamer trunk to a loaf of bread. In all cases, it is a single-use device, since the energies involved are so intense that the CMP Generator burns, melts, or even explodes as the pulse is generated. The pulse lasts only for an instant in time, and spreads out through a spherical volume of space centered on the generator’s location. Chronomorphic devices that are in the sphere when the CMP is generated may be affected. Smaller sizes affect devices within Near range, while large sizes have an effect stretching for dozens of kilometers. Agents with Timecraft can track the blast’s radiation signature back to its source, given enough time.

TimeWatch’s secret safe house in 1870s Delhi is revealed by a CMP Generator. Local “untouchables” break into the non-futuristic structure, steal technology, and use the advanced technology to stage a local social uprising. Agents are called in to quell the nonhistorical riots, but to do so they must learn who triggered the CMP Generator, and why.

The effects on chronomorphic equipment vary with the sensitivity of the chronomorphic circuit, its proximity to the center of the CMP, and the power of the CMP Generator. In general, damage falls into five categories:

Category I: The entire chronomorphic device is destroyed. Not only are its chronomorphic features beyond repair, but there is sufficient collateral damage to the device that it is inoperable as well. In some cases, Tinkering can be used to fix the device so that it can be used once more, but in any case the chronomorphic capabilities are gone for good. (Rare, only when close to a particularly powerful CMP)

Category II: The device’s chronomorphic circuits burn out, causing the device to revert to its native appearance, but its base function is undamaged. The damage is severe enough that the chronomorphic capability can’t be fixed in the field, but must be replaced back at base. (Infrequent)

Category III: The CMP damages the chronomorphic circuit so that it cannot accurately detect or adapt to the current location and time period. When hit by the CMP, the device will adapt to a different, and usually wildly inappropriate, form; when subsequently clocking in to a different time period, it will choose a different incorrect adaptation. Tinkering can be used to trigger the chronomorphic circuit to re-adapt, with higher degrees of success making it more likely that the adaptation will be less wildly inappropriate. However, the chronomorphic circuit must be replaced at HQ to permanently fix the issue. (Common)

A chronomorphic weapon hit by a CMP in Victorian England may adapt itself as a South American blowgun. When subsequently traveling to the far future, it will cleverly blend in with its surroundings by becoming a 16th-century blunderbuss. If a character uses Tinkering on it, he might be able to get it to re-adapt, and with a successful roll the device disguises itself as a handgun appropriate to the era... with holster and grips decorated with a gang symbol.

Category IV: The CMP damages the chronomorphic circuit so that it has a strong preference for certain colors or types of objects. If a character uses Tinkering on it, she can get the device to re-adapt, and with a successful roll can make it choose something other than its preference. (Common)

A chronomorphic tether is hit by a CMP and develops a preference for women’s fashion accessories. Whenever it enters a new time and place, it adapts by becoming a fashion accessory appropriate to females of that era. When clocking in to contemporary New York, the tether becomes a Gucci handbag; when clocking in to 1890s Paris it becomes an adorable parasol in black lace over brilliant pink silk. Not wanting to stand out by carrying a parasol, the owner convinces his party to use Tinkering on it, forcing it to re-adapt as a men’s swagger stick.

Category V: The CMP damages the chronomorphic circuit so that it no longer adapts to new locations and times. Instead, the device maintains its current appearance until the circuit is replaced at HQ. Tinkering can be used to make the device

adapt, on a successful roll it will adapt normally once, but revert to its preferred form the next time it enters a new time period. (Common)

A large chronomorphic time machine is damaged by a CMP while it is in early 1960s London disguised as a common street-corner feature. Subsequently when it clocks in at any point in time and space, it retains its London 1960s appearance, though occasionally it is convinced to adapt as something else.

Rarely, at the GM's discretion, less severe CMP effects can be repaired by a successful Tinkering test, followed by time travel to reset the chronomorphic features.

Concussive Projector

Cost: Difficulty +2

Future, Blatant; Long range

This military beam weapon is typically backpack mounted. Designed to hammer in the sides of buildings (as well as anyone unlucky enough to be standing in front of them), it has Long range and does Class 2 explosion damage when fired (see p. 99).

Cross-Chronal Phone

Cost: Difficulty +2

Future

Normally, it's impossible for people in one era to speak or communicate with someone in a different time period. The one exception is the difficult to acquire, highly praised cross-chronal phone. This allows you to speak across time to someone else (or to yourself), assuming they also have a CCP. The reception isn't always perfect, but it's better than any other alternative for cross-time communication.

The reason that these aren't commonly used by agents is that they're notoriously easy to tap, and at the GM's whim they occasionally connect to the wrong potential reality when calling into the future. You may make a call that's overheard by Europeans, or the person on the other end of the phone may be a parallel universe version of yourself. Caveat emptor.

Regardless, they can be tremendously useful. A CCP can let you talk directly to another Agent or a technician back at the Citadel (assuming that they also have a CCP), and having your future self give you paradoxical clues or information triggers a Paradox test that is 1 Difficulty lower (Difficulty 3 instead of Difficulty 4) than normal. Just chatting with your future or past self without giving away any potentially paradoxical information can be done without needing to make a Paradox test at all.

Daggerfly Hunter

Cost: Difficulty +0 for one, up to +4 for five matching daggerflies

Future, Subtle; Long range; Damage Modifier +0

A small flying daggerlike insect that flitters around on

near-invisible dragonfly wings, with just enough genetically engineered intelligence to hunt out a specific target. The daggerfly hunter can navigate from room to room, exploring a location until its target is sighted, then it charges towards the victim and stabs them in a vulnerable spot (Damage Modifier +0). Nastier versions are poison-laden. Various models are available with increasing degrees of intelligence in identifying targets; and extended life spans, allowing longer hunts.

Decrepitude Amplifier

Cost: Difficulty +2

Future, Subtle; Near range; Damage Modifier +2

In addition to inflicting normal beam weapon damage, this energy weapon instantly ages an organic or inorganic target. It can turn a door brittle and useless, or age a human target enough to cause them to crumple into dust.

For living targets, the aging is a special effect that accompanies damage. Difficulties for physical tasks (such as Athletics, Scuffling, Shooting, etc.) are raised by +1 while decrepit and withered due to the effects of age.

If the target is not killed, the advanced aging can be reversed after the end of the scene by spending a point of Timecraft. Damage is doubled against nonliving targets that would be affected by aging (such as a wooden door or iron bars).

Dembrill Ecstasy Generator

Cost: Difficulty +2

Future; Point-Blank or Near range; Stun 8 or Stun 5

Originally designed as a less dangerous alternative to opiate drugs, the Dembrill Ecstasy Generator (DEG) was easily weaponized and recreated on the black market. It remotely incapacitates a target by stimulating their pleasure centers. For a greater effect, the weapon can be overcharged by linking it to the wielder's own emotional force of will. DEGgers line sewers and back alleys of some future cities, writhing in ecstasy as the DEG gives them pure and unalloyed pleasure.

Used as a weapon, the DEG acts as a Near range stunner, requiring that targets hit make a Stun 5 test or drop insensate for the rest of the scene.

Alternatively, the DEG can be attached by electrodes to the wielder. By spending 1 Interpersonal point (such as Charm or Reassurance), the weapon's effect is greatly heightened up to Stun 8 for one shot. Addicts typically hook the DEG up to their own head before using it on themselves, thus draining their Interpersonal points in a quest for ever-greater pleasure.

Dimensional Switcher

Cost: Difficulty +3

Future; Close range

Appearing as a classic 1950s "ray gun," with a parabolic dish instead of a barrel, the Dimensional Switcher emits a broad cone of energy that engulfs the entire target organism and switches it with a matching organism from a parallel

time stream. This “alternate you” could be healthier or more injured — the results are random. The alternate may also have a completely different personality.

The duration of the effect seems to be variable; it may wear off as quickly as an hour, or as long as several weeks.

Ezeru Infestator

Cost: Difficulty +1

Contemporary, Subtle, Restricted; Near range; Damage Modifier +1

A simple ezeru gun that fires a biological payload into the target. If it impacts flesh (bringing a target to 0 Health or lower), the infestator disappears into the flesh and begins to incubate. In six to eight weeks, this develops into an egg sac and splits open inside the victim, releasing a small swarm of specially engineered cockroaches that then proceed to eat their way out of the host, usually killing the poor sod.

Variant: Ezeru Infestator (Advanced)

Cost: Difficulty +3

Contemporary, Subtle, Restricted; Near range; Damage Modifier +1

Much like its simpler relative, this advanced version of the weapon instead injects more intelligent engineered cockroaches that work their way to key points of their victim’s anatomy — brain stem, optic nerve, base of the spinal column, etc. — and proceed to take over the victim’s major systems, turning them into a helpless zombie in the thrall of the ezeru menace. Given careful surgery, these parasites could be removed, returning control of the body to its original inhabitant, who will have full recollection of everything that’s happened. Unfortunately for them.

Fast-Cast

Cost: Difficulty +0

Future

This futuristic splint and bandage moves shattered bone and damaged flesh into the past, where they slowly knit before being instantaneously pulled back to the present for analysis and diagnosis. Any problems are addressed, and the process repeats itself to speed healing. When a fast-cast is applied to an injured person (taking an action), they subsequently make all Consciousness rolls and immediately become conscious if they had previously failed a Consciousness test. Seriously Wounded individuals can be healed normally by the Medic ability while the fast-cast is attached. It loses its efficacy after one scene.

Friction Manipulator

Cost: 1-point Science! spend plus Difficulty +1

Future, Super-Science; Near range

This psychic alien artifact is believed to have been developed on the moon Europa. A tangle of delicate and intertwined

crystalline tubes, it draws on the operator’s force of will to free a nearby object from the laws of conventional friction. This allows massive acceleration (and typically causes a bipedal target to fall), or can be used to freeze things in place by intensifying the friction between the object and surrounding matter (stopping a quarry from fleeing).

The friction manipulator has a range of Near and can affect one object at a time. You can thus target objects such as yourself, one enemy, one tire on a vehicle you are chasing, or one small patch of floor. Any target that passes out of Near range ceases to be affected. The effect is triggered by the user succeeding at a Difficulty 4 Chronal Stability test. The result almost never shuts down a combat entirely, but is dramatically effective for accelerating people off of high balconies, ripping tires from moving cars, and even blazingly fast personal transport if you don’t mind some associated pain when you come to a sudden stop. It’s favored by TimeWatch scientists with a high sense of style and a casual disregard for the laws of physics.

Grandfather Bullet

Cost: 1-point Science! spend plus Difficulty +0

Future, Restricted, Super-Science; Close to Very Long range (as per the firearm); Damage Modifier +1

This ammunition contains a miniature time travel device. When fired at a target, it vanishes inches from the target and hits the target’s grandfather in the exact same place. If this kills the grandfather (which it typically does, if the grandfather is considered a Mook), the target must make a D6/L6 Paradox test.

The grandfather bullet is designed to be an assassination weapon that is convenient because it leaves no body. This weapon is illegal in most periods, not that that stops most would-be assassins or other antagonists from using it.

HEAPoon

Cost: Difficulty +2

Contemporary, Blatant; Near range

Designed for hunting large creatures, such as the bigger dinosaurs, this harpoon cuts straight through armor plating and then explodes shortly after coming to rest. Very effective, but also very dangerous. As such, the arming mechanism requires an extra round to prime. Priming it early is possible, but be cautious; beginning the round after it is primed, it has a 1 in 6 chance of spontaneously detonating each round.

The HEAPoon (High Explosive Armor Piercing) ignores up to 3 points of armor. It acts as a Class 2 explosive (see p. 99) and is fired with Shooting.

Holographic Array Template

Cost: Difficulty +1

Future, Subtle, Chronomorphic

Sure, anyone can use Disguise to change their appearance. Those with a HAT, however, can do so seamlessly and

nearly flawlessly, shimmering from identity to identity with a chromomorphic disguise that's particularly difficult to break. The HAT (which is, in fact, a hat) allows you to use your Disguise ability instantly without you needing to take an action, it suggests the most appropriate disguise for any given situation, and it lowers the Difficulty on any Disguise test you make for yourself by -1 . This makes it particularly useful for impersonating celebrities or another specific person. Very recognizable agents such as sophosaurs particularly favor HATs, and occasionally compete amongst themselves to generate the most memorable or impressive disguise.

Removing the HAT instantly restores your true appearance.

Interdiction Device

Cost: several days' time and a minimum expenditure of 3 points of Timecraft, Science!, or a mixture of the two; they're more often a plot device

Restricted, Super-Science

They're a pain to manufacture, but interdiction devices block time travel in both three dimensions (a given physical area) and four dimensions (a given period of time, radiating both forwards and backwards from activation). A small device the size of a pocket watch may block travel within 100 meters and a day; the largest (and rarest), most powerful spaceship-sized devices may

function for thousands of kilometers and last for centuries. Time traveling into an era shielded by an interdiction device feels like airplane turbulence. The Agent can choose whether to arrive just before the start of the device's effect, or after the effect ends.

Kelfala runs into the effect of an interdiction device that will last for two months, a month before and a month after it was activated. Kelfala chooses to arrive before the device triggers. He clocks in a month earlier than he'd expected to — but seconds after he arrives the device takes effect. He now can't easily time travel away for two months unless he stops the device from ever being activated a month hence, unless he breaks through its field, or unless he puts considerable distance between the device's field and himself.

Some interdiction devices are coded to allow passage to anyone with an encrypted code. Some crystalline devices only allow psychic time travel (such as that of sophosaurs) and stop technological time travel. Some allow anyone to time travel in but prevent exit. Others might block incoming travelers but allow anyone to leave. Finally, weaker devices allow entry or exit with the expenditure of Timecraft or Paradox Prevention points, with a cost of between 1 and 5 points per time traveler.

Bringing an interdiction device to the Citadel is often an exiling offense; there is concern that such a device activated in the Citadel could trigger the Big Bang.



What's even the point of super-science if you don't use it to cyborg a dinosaur?

Jet Pack

Cost: Difficulty +0, or Difficulty +2 for subtle jet packs
Contemporary, Blatant

There are times when you need to soar through the sky, observers be damned, and a jet pack may do the trick. These can be as large as a backpack-sized flame-spewing rocket unit, or as small as a low-profile antigravity belt. As with most technology in *TimeWatch*, jet packs usually have a signature noise, trail, or appearance when in use. They typically provide enough loft to lift one additional person, with some difficulty.

The real challenge with jet packs is that in many settings their use immediately identifies the Agent as using anachronistic technology, although it may be possible to use Disguise to instead appear as a mythological or deific messenger of some sort.

Jet packs typically function for the duration of one scene.

Koori Phase Converter

Cost: Difficulty +1
Future, Blatant, Hackable; Near range; Damage Modifier +2, Stun 4

This handheld narrow-beam weapon changes the phase, state, or structure of whatever it is aimed at, all while imparting kinetic energy. The result is that it turns portions of the target into something approaching Silly String, sending fleshy strands of muscle and bone out the target's back and leaving corresponding holes in their body. It's very popular at the sort of children's parties that no one actually wants to be invited to, ever. The sound of the Koori is distinctive, and resembles a rhythmic dog's bark.

The Koori phase converter simultaneously injures and stuns. Used on solid matter such as a wall, it can be used to carve out doors or entry points.

Lyontech Chronal Regenerator

Cost: Difficulty +1, lasts until the Agent returns to TimeWatch's Citadel (typically one mission), at which point it is destroyed by the Citadel's automated security screens upon arrival
Future

This device was manufactured by the Lyontech Chronal Research Foundation in the 26th century, used to keep its time-explorers alive when they went on company-mandated missions. While it was eventually phased out under surreptitious pressure from TimeWatch, it's still common for TimeWatch agents to pick up black-market chronal regenerators to give themselves a small safety net on difficult missions.

The chronal regenerator is packed with microcircuitry and looks like a black plastic pearl the size of a grape. It's activated by swallowing, whereupon the regenerator anchors itself harmlessly in the stomach. Should the user's Health drop below -12 while the device is active, it creates a quantum paradox while shifting the user slightly off-phase with local time. The paradox wave effectively remakes the body as a new individual, as if Subsumed from a Chronal Stability of -6, but

in the process the regenerator restarts the body and heals it to 4 Health. The Agent typically looks different and may have a somewhat different personality, but retains all memories of their previous existence.

This is a good tool for players who don't mind changing appearance and perhaps personality upon their death, but who don't want to bring in an entirely new Agent with new relationships. In certain campaign frames, such as the *Tourist* frame on p. 320, all player characters might be assumed to have chronal regenerators at all times.

Micro-Drones

Cost: nil for someone with Spying, Difficulty +0 for others
Future, Subtle, Hackable

A micro-drone is an excellent resource when remote spying is required; these flying insect-sized spy-drones are innocuous and hard-to-notice (Stealth Modifier +4) recording devices that can be piloted through a tether by anyone with the Spying Investigative ability.

With a standard Tinkering test, it's possible to weaponize these to deliver a minor electrical shock (Stun 3, enough to automatically take down a Mook or unnamed supporting character but little more).

Micro Interdimensional Time Traveler Shade System ("MITTS")

Cost: Difficulty +3
Future

The MITTS is a defensive device that, when activated, surrounds the owner with holographic shades. These shades are transparent three-dimensional duplicates drawn from his immediate past and present. The shades stand around him and independently move with him, persisting for one scene. Their mental links with the user allow them to scout around corners within Close range, without putting the user in harm's way.

MITTS is powered by the user's Chronal Stability. Every 2 points spent generates 1 shade.

The Agent's Hit Threshold rises by +1 for every active shade. While it's easy for enemies to tell who the real Agent is, MITTS uses a micro-interdimensional wormhole to transpose the Agent and an image just before an attack is successful. Shades are considered Mooks, with Hit Threshold 3 and Health 1. Any attack on the Agent or any of the shades that reaches Hit Threshold 3, but that doesn't reach the Agent's revised Hit Threshold, destroys a shade and teleports the Agent slightly out of the way of the attack.

Ordering the duplicates to attack destroys every remaining duplicate and turns off MITTS for the rest of the scene. In exchange, on his next attack that round the Agent gains a +1 Damage Modifier per remaining duplicate destroyed.

Uurk activates MITTS as his action, spending 8 Chronal Stability to do so. Four slightly transparent duplicate Uurks pop into existence, pointing and grunting at one another. Uurk's Hit Threshold rises from 4 to 8. Any enemy who

targets Uurk (or a duplicate) and who hits Difficulty 8 or higher hits the real Uurk; if they hit between Difficulty 3 and 7 they hit a duplicate, popping it and lowering Uurk's new Hit Threshold from 8 to 7; and if they hit Difficulty 2 or less, they miss entirely.

Uurk wants to finish off his foe. On his turn he orders the duplicates to attack when he does. This destroys the last two remaining duplicates, and Uurk gains a +2 Damage Modifier to his attack.

Mindblinker

Cost: Difficulty +0
Future; Close range

Resembling an optician's pen light, the Mindblinker is a tool that sends out a focused flash of light that knocks neurons back an hour, causing the loss of all memory for that period. This is the go-to tool for Agents who prefer not to use MEM-tags.

Mobster's Mindclaw

Cost: Difficulty +3
Future, Restricted

This psychic amplifier turns someone into your fanatical follower while reducing their mental capacities. Each active follower becomes a resonator and allows you to recruit additional followers, but weakens the minds even further. Four or more followers are little more than a howling mob who will attack randomly if you show any weakness or lapse of attention.

The mindclaw only affects Mooks and supporting characters with 3 or less Health. To activate the mindclaw, spend 1 point of Authority. Your selected Mook is under your control but is noticeably, substantially less intelligent. You may add additional Mooks to your control, one per action, by making a Chronal Stability test; the Difficulty of the test is 3 + the number of Mooks you currently control. If you fail the test, all controlled Mooks attack the nearest person who isn't one of their group. You may spend 1 point of Authority to reroll a failed test.

Myrmidon Drone

Cost: Difficulty +2 (for six drones)
Future

The original inspiration for the Greek myth of the Myrmidon (or possibly inspired by the Greek myth, or both — it gets a little hazy, to be honest), this flying ant-sized drone can manufacture itself a human-sized suit of animated armor called a Myrmidon shell. It does so by breaking up pieces of local scenery and transforming them into an artificial body clothed in Greek armor. Myrmidon drones typically come in packs of six but can be activated one at a time. Although they take roughly an hour to assemble bodies from nearby objects (trees, stones, soil, metal), the final body is fully under the orders of the Agent who activated it or anyone she designates.

Destroying a Myrmidon shell destroys the drone inside

of it. The ant-sized drones can abandon their undestroyed bodies, burrowing out and leaving inanimate shells behind. Such drones return to the user and can be reactivated in subsequent scenes.

Myrmidon Shell

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 1
Offense: Scuffling +0, Shooting +0; Damage Modifier +1 (sword or spear)
Abilities: Athletics 8

Special Abilities: Destructive Repair (cost 0 — once per scene, the first time they take a hit which would destroy their body, they instantly rip raw material from Point-Blank sources to repair themselves. The hit is negated and they automatically inflict 1d6 damage on every non-Myrmidon in Point-Blank range)

They aren't particularly capable soldiers, but Myrmidon drones are most useful when you need an impromptu army unit who will obey orders faultlessly. They're also useful when you need cannon fodder as a distraction, and you don't wish to put innocent people at risk.

Needler

Cost: Difficulty +2
Future, Subtle; Point-Blank range

A mono-molecular rapier. It started out as surgical technology — the ability to make a scalpel essentially a molecule thick. With a blade this thin, even bone turns into butter. A slice so thin and precise you can cut through most anything. It's no surprise that within months it was turned into a weapon. What was a surprise is that the rapier version of this technology was the favorite of assassins everywhere. The blade can be used to cut through just about everything — bone, steel, flesh, stone. Trick is, it has to be precise. Hacking away in haste will snap the blade more often than not. But someone with a lot of skill or a lot of time can make some slow agonizing cuts that are almost art.

The Needler is a Scuffling weapon so sharp it even fractures light, giving the impossibly thin blade a faint rainbow sheen. It has a Damage Modifier of +2 and ignores armor that is not force field-based. It also ignores partial and full cover, possibly lowering a foe's Hit Threshold. To its detriment, the blade snaps if a natural 1 is rolled on the die and the total result of the Scuffling attack doesn't equal or exceed Difficulty 4.

The Needler is notoriously difficult to sheathe in traditional scabbards. It comes with a magnetically reinforced, fitted sheath designed to stop users from accidentally cutting off their own legs while walking.

Nostalgicator

Cost: Difficulty +1
Future

An emergency source of Chronal Stability when you're out of other options, this device taps into your childhood memories to restore your sense of self and help stabilize you.

It uses psychic technology borrowed from the sophosaurs. It allows you to change Health into Chronal Stability on a 1:1 basis; burn away 5 Health, gain back 5 Chronal Stability. Every Investigative point of History or Trivia you spend during activation cancels out 2 points of Health damage.

Fading from paradox, Altani uses a nostalgicator to remember her childhood on the Mongolian steppes. She exchanges 6 Health for 6 Chronal Stability. She spends 2 History points in the process, however, canceling out 4 points of lost Health. When she finishes she's spent 2 points from any History pool, she's down 2 Health, and she's regained 6 Chronal Stability.

When used on someone else, the interface is more damaging. The target decides how much Health they'll exchange for Chronal Stability, and they may not cancel any of the loss.

Oubliette Mine

Cost: Difficulty +2

Future, Subtle; Point-Blank range

Deployed much like any other mine, the Oubliette causes anything that stands on it to become temporally unstable, dropping out of time and into a pocket dimension. This time bubble itself is unstable and usually only lasts about 24 hours, but that's usually enough to disrupt someone's plans for the day... or provide enough time for an ambush to be arranged for their return.

Should the victims possess a time machine, they can depart the dimensional oubliette early by spending a point of Timecraft to break through the dimensional barrier.

Paradox Generator

Cost: 1-point Science! or Timecraft spend plus Difficulty +2

Future, Blatant, Super-Science; Near range

Also known as a time trap or Charon's Doorbell, this unwieldy case can emanate null-time in a manner that destabilizes and destroys any Chronal Stability (or Tempus) in a Near range to the device. Any time traveler in the area must make a D4/L4 Paradox test every round that the time trap is active. Time travel within the area of effect is impossible, but leaving the device switched on has a bad habit of generating nearby paradoxes as a side effect; impossible events occur, massive lucky and unlucky streaks strike the unwary, and people experience the closest they'll ever come to miracles or catastrophes. While a paradox generator is often used to protect areas from time travel, the side effects usually prove more trouble than they're worth.

The paradox generator can be lethal to time travelers if they find themselves trapped in its vicinity with no method of deactivating or destroying it. GMs may limit its availability accordingly.

Paradoxometer

Cost: Difficulty +0

Future

This handheld tool measures the amount of incipient paradox attached to a person, object, or place. While this is most useful for the GM as a plot device that indicates a history shift — “Our paradoxometer indicates that time just changed around us!” — or that foreshadows adventure hooks — “Don't return the new TimeWatch recruit to the Citadel until he's free of potential paradox that might erase him from existence” — it can also numerically measure Chronal Stability or Tempus Loss in any character below 0. That's useful if you want to erase a bad guy from existence mid-fight, and aren't sure how much paradox you'll need to do so.

Proctor Serenity Restraints

Cost: Difficulty +1

Future, Subtle

Researchers in the late 21st century developed a medical bracelet originally designed to aid those with mental illnesses; it continually monitors blood chemistry and provides minuscule doses of mood-altering drugs to calm and elevate the patient's mood. It wasn't long before the invention was adapted by Dr. Justin Proctor as a method for pacifying violent offenders, prisoners, and (frankly) anyone that Dr. Proctor didn't particularly like. Eventually arrested and imprisoned himself, Dr. Proctor's invention became useful for anyone needing subtle prisoner containment.

The Serenity Restraints are a simple metal bracelet that chemically bond with skin and are only removed with a specific security code (Difficulty 8 Hacking/Tinkering test to remove, other than severing the wrist). Putting Serenity Restraints on someone who is resisting involves a full contest, pitting Scuffling against the defender's Athletics.

Once in place the bracelet calms violent tendencies, reduces mood swings, and eliminates most aggression. The Difficulty of Scuffling, Shooting, and violent Athletics tests rises by 4 when wearing Serenity Restraints, making them useful before prisoner transport.

Psychic Clothes

Cost: Difficulty +3, or a specific scene in which the clothes are acquired

Contemporary, Subtle, Restricted

One of the earliest time travel experiments took place in 1968, involving a subterranean 36,000-person laboratory in Arizona that developed an exceptionally unstable “time tunnel.” The process lost several scientists in the time stream, even as it turned their standard clothing into an incredibly effective disguise. These 1960s clothes (a turtleneck and slacks, and a shirt and tweed suit) psychically blend in for whoever you talk to; you gain a constant +2 bonus on Disguise tests, as no one will ever question why you are dressed so oddly. Other oddities in your disguise may still draw attention, of

course. The psychic resonance also grants you 1 bonus point of Reassurance per mission. On the downside, these artifacts are unique, so you'll need to find the time travelers in one of the numerous places they were detained and liberate their clothing from them first.

Note: this gear draws its inspiration from the classic TV show *Time Tunnel*, and so may work best in a cinematic or humorous game; not everyone can carry off a 1960s turtleneck and tweed suit with aplomb.

Psychosis Grenade

Cost: Difficulty +2

Contemporary, Blatant, Restricted

This gas grenade causes anyone within a Close area to make a Difficulty 5 Chronal Stability test. Failure indicates a rush of crippling, murderous psychosis. Developed to cause pure mayhem amongst enemy troops, anyone affected by the grenade can choose whether to sit and helplessly rock back and forth, or whether to attack anyone nearby regardless of identity or allegiance. This effect lasts for the duration of the scene or until treated with the expenditure of 1 point of Medical Expertise.

Psyonic Stone

Cost: Difficulty +0

Ancient

Designed by sophosaurs and surreptitiously distributed (often in jewelry), these stones are imprinted with a permanent psychic disguise (Disguise 4). Anyone carrying one for more than an hour (or a scene) looks to others like a large velociraptor for the next 24 hours, cannot remove the disguise, and probably has no idea whatsoever why people are reacting so poorly to them. A particularly vindictive sophosaur clan creates and distributes these solely to cause chaos amongst humans, making TimeWatch agents work around the clock to clean up after their simple-to-manufacture paradox.

Punxsutawney Prime Perpetuation Device (Tri-P)

Cost: Difficulty +6, or a specific mission to acquire (unless the GM offers it for free)

Future, Restricted

The Tri-P is a rare device that uses 47th-century technology to encase a micro-pocket universe in a quantum matrix that can be entangled with a single sentience to create a self-perpetuating temporal loop. (Phew.) Due to the narrow stability band for 17-dimensional constructs, all Tri-P loops are limited to approximately 24 hours before restarting. The emergent intelligence of the modified micro-pocket universe is instantaneously aligned with the mated sentience and attuned to a particular set of psychometric parameters such that when they are met, the matrix will evaporate, returning the entangled sentience to the dominant time stream.

The chrono-babble translation? If you've ever wanted to recreate the movie *Groundhog Day* in your game to learn new abilities instantly, we've got you covered. Once per mission, this traps one person in a loop where they must constantly repeat the last 24 hours of their life, retaining full memory of past cycles until they acquire the skill or personality trait determined by the activating Agent.

Within the dominant time stream, the character appears physically unchanged to all observers, but will retain all memories of the time loop. When the character emerges from the time loop they may rearrange up to 3 ability points each from Investigative and General abilities. General points can't normally be moved to Investigative abilities or vice versa, but 3 points may be rearranged from each category. If an affected antagonist lacks Investigative points to convert, Tempus General ability points can be used instead on a 3:1 basis.

The GM has final say on whether a change is reasonable. If used offensively by touching it to an individual with a Scuffling attack, the activating player can't declare, "I want her Paradox Prevention and Shooting to drop by 3"; instead, it can be used to say, "I want her Outdoor Survival and Chronal Stability to rise by 3," and it's up to the trapped character (or the GM) to decide where those points come from. The GM has full discretion to grant supporting characters trapped in the Tri-P additional bonus abilities if desired.

Players are encouraged to summarize in detail the subject's experience.

While this is primarily used to allow players to redesign their characters on the fly while retaining game balance, or to cripple an enemy while removing vital abilities, the GM might also use this device as the mission's plot device, trapping characters in the time loop until they realize and resolve the specified changes.

Readyblade

Cost: Difficulty +1

Ancient; Damage Modifier +2

Most blades lose their edge slightly between the time they're sharpened and the time they're used. The Readyblade is capable of holding a moment of time until it's needed. Once it's sharpened, it holds that edge until it is used, thus causing extra damage. Readyblades ignore 1 point of Armor (if any).

Rebreather

Cost: Difficulty +0

Future, Subtle

This tiny mouthpiece takes clean air from another time, allowing the user to breathe underwater or during gas attacks.

Resi-You Analyzer

Cost: Difficulty +1

Future

In fairy tales, witches have been stirring people's personal artifacts — a stray strand of hair, shed skin, fingerprints (usually with a finger attached!), and other human residue — into cauldrons since stories first began, all to gain power and knowledge over others. Super-science turns out to help that process immensely.

The Resi-You Analyzer samples the residue that people leave behind on objects. The analyzer is roughly pistol-shaped with a bulbous barrel. It emits enough luminous grey smoke to blanket a one meter square area, coating all the miniscule surfaces of the object it is aimed at, after which it immediately sucks the smoke back into its barrel. There the microprocessors analyze the invisible bits of dirt and dust that were found mixed in with the Resi-You fog.

The results are checked against a database, registered, and cataloged. You can know with certainty who last touched this thing, or who made it, or where and when it was manufactured (microscopic particles like pollen, mechanical emissions, and food odors can all be accurately identified). The analyzer indicates when samples are anachronistic, and where in the future or past they originate from. While the Resi-You won't necessarily give you a suspect's exact identity unless they're already in its database, it can tell you geographical areas where the suspect has recently been, giving you clues you'll need to track down their identity. If the suspect is nonhuman, the Resi-You Analyzer will indicate its species when possible.

Ribo-Viroxic Resequencer

Cost: Difficulty +0

Future

One of the peskiest parts about time travel is the necessity to deal with stages of life that might not make sense from a societal standpoint — a healthy young adult time traveler on an investigative mission cannot easily go undercover in a middle school or a nursing home, for example, being obviously unsuited to blending into those environments. Enter the Ribo-Viroxic Resequencer from ARIN Industries, a conglomerate focused on the quest for eternal youth. The RVR is a small rectangular device that clamps itself to the skin and injects two small tubules into the wearer's bloodstream. The device allows for the temporary removal or acceleration of key ribo-viroxic-nucleic sequences taken from the subject's DNA — the practical upshot of which is that the subject becomes younger or older at a rate of roughly two years per minute until they reach the age that the device has been programmed to simulate. Any age from infant to centenarian is possible, and all physical characteristics such as weight, height, body hair (or lack of same), wrinkles (or lack of same), etc., will be exactly as they were or will be for the subject when they were (or will be) that age. Mental characteristics remain unaffected.

The device's small nature (roughly the size of a coin) allows it to be easily covered. It must attach to an arm or leg at the carotid artery, but can easily be placed on the upper leg to be

covered even in situations that call for only minimal clothing. The device cannot be programmed directly, rather taking its instructions from a tether.

The re-sequencing process is not painful, but definitely disturbing to look at. Increased appetite is the most common side effect of the device, with caloric intake requirements almost triple the norm for a person of the subject's "new" age while the device is operating. Any addictions or cravings the subject is suffering from would be similarly amplified.

The most important drawback of the device is its time limit: various models come with battery lives ranging from 24 to 120 hours, after which the ribo-viroxic sequences stored in the device's memory become irretrievable, causing the re-sequence to be permanent. (A permanently re-sequenced individual will still die at the end of their natural lifespan, regardless of how far back or forward they may appear to be, because the actual cells are not truly older or younger.) Deactivating the device before the battery expires restores the individual to their true appearance at the same rate of two years per minute. Of course, permanent re-sequencing isn't much of a problem for elderly users hoping to restore their youthful appearances, or for canny assassins who would rather turn an enemy into a baby than kill them.

This is primarily a roleplaying aid more than anything else, allowing Agents to blend into a variety of acting roles as situations call for them. The GM may reduce the Difficulty of age-related Disguise tests (typically by 2) while the device is active, and she may increase Athletics test Difficulty by 1 or more points to account for a geriatric's or child's lower strength.

Sauropod Train Gun

Cost: 1-point Military Tactics spend plus Difficulty +1

Contemporary, Blatant; Very Long range; Damage Modifier +3

The Sauropod Train Gun is actually a very simple arrangement — it consists of a train gun that would normally be mounted on a railway carriage (or possibly a battleship), instead mounted on the back of a large sauropod. Double trouble if you mount two — one on each side, like panniers. The brontosaurus never seems to mind, and it looks much more impressive, although a separate gunner is needed for each gun.

Sauropod Train Guns are autofire weapons (see p. 84).

Seibert Inhibitor

Cost: Difficulty +2

Future; Near range

Less powerful but far more flexible than an interdiction device, a Seibert inhibitor uses a fleeing time traveler's own technology against them in a particularly embarrassing manner. Each inhibitor has Near range, can only be activated once, and remains active for a scene until it is triggered by someone in the area time traveling. The first person to time travel out of the inhibitor's range causes a massive temporal feedback loop. They are instantly encased by layer upon layer of ectoplasmic goo, syrup-like crystallized time precipitated out of the time stream and attracted to the victim's chronal field. The goo looks like shimmering mucus and smells far worse.

The victim must make a Difficulty 6 Chronal Stability test. Success means they are unaffected by the goo; failure indicates that their Athletics pool temporarily drops by 10 points. If this reduces their Athletics pool to 0, their time travel is disrupted and they are Restrained. Victims may make a Difficulty 6 Chronal Stability test at the end of each of their turns; failure indicates that they remain encased and Restrained, while success causes the ectoplasm to dissipate and their Athletics pool to return to normal.

SherpaTech Thermal Stasis Apparatus (“StAppa”)

Cost: Difficulty +1
Future; Long range

This sleek white and blue pistol embodies elegant design. It uses zero-point energy to reduce the target to minimal energy, instantly lowering the surrounding temperature and generating considerable quantities of ice around the target area. When fired at a nonliving object within Long range, any damage inflicted on the object in subsequent rounds is doubled. When fired at living flesh within Long range, the target is Restrained by ice until it makes a Difficulty 6 Athletics test. The Difficulty of this test drops by 1 each round as the ice weakens and melts.

Variants of the StAppa use a high-tech glove containing a field projector lens in the palm and a built-in energy source, instead of a pistol.

Skillreaper

Cost: Difficulty +2
Future; Point-Blank range; Stun 5

This device painfully rips knowledge of a General ability from its victim and temporarily grants it to someone else. Depending on the sophistication of the design, it may appear as primitive as two linked electric chairs (complete with giant levers and lowering dome-shaped helmets crackling with electricity) or as elegant as a microcircuitry-laden headband that functions instantly with a physical touch.

The skillreaper’s user must make a Difficulty 6 Chronal Stability test to activate the device; failure indicates that the skillreaper fails to function. If the skillreaper is successfully activated, the intended victim must then make a Stun 5 test. Failure indicates that the victim is stunned until the end of their next turn, and the user steals up to 6 points of a single General ability from the victim. This pool of temporary points lasts for the scene or until used up during the scene, and may not be refreshed. The victim cannot refresh their lost points until the next scene, and typically suffers an annoying headache until the stolen points are recovered.

If the victim has fewer than 6 points of the relevant General ability, their pool drops to 0 and the user gains the lost points. Note that many antagonists use Tempus and fixed combat modifiers instead of the varied abilities that player characters use. When using the skillreaper on an antagonist’s Scuffling or Shooting fixed combat modifier, their modifier drops by -2 (to a minimum of +0) and the user gains 6 points of the



Spending a point of Science! can get you force field-based armor, right when you need it most.

relevant ability. When used to reap any other ability a victim with Tempus doesn’t possess, their Tempus is reduced by 6 and the user gains 6 points of the relevant ability.

Variant: Skillreaper Mark III

Cost: Difficulty +2
Future; Point-Blank range; Stun 5

The Mark III works identically, but steals up to 2 points of an Investigative ability instead of a General ability. When used on antagonists and supporting characters who don’t necessarily have all of their Investigative abilities enumerated, the GM decides whether the victim would possess that ability. If so, the user gains up to 2 points of it and the victim loses 6 Tempus.

Space Suit

Cost: Difficulty +0
Contemporary

It’s not uncommon for Agents to make space walks. You have a variety of options available to protect yourself, from form-fitting and bubble-helmeted space suits to emergency force fields that give you a few minutes of safety before running out of power.

Sphygmostat

Cost: Difficulty +2, or a 1-point Medical Expertise spend
Future, Subtle; Close range; Stun 5

Named after a cross between a rheostat and a sphygmomanometer — you know what that is, right? — the sphygmostat is a garnet ring with a subtly twisting top that remotely controls another person's blood pressure. You can create the following effects with a successful Shooting test:

- ▶ Stun 5, by lowering their blood pressure so quickly they pass out
- ▶ Dizzy or nauseous by lowering blood pressure slightly; the target's Hit Threshold is reduced by -1 for the remainder of the scene, or until the effect is discontinued
- ▶ Splitting headache by raising blood pressure; the Difficulty of all General ability tests rises by +1 for the remainder of the scene, or until the effect is discontinued

Perhaps more importantly, the sphygmostat can easily make supporting characters feel sick at convenient times, making it simple for TimeWatch agents to step in and take control. This device affects one target at a time. It sadly doesn't work on creatures with an exoskeleton or without blood pressure.

Stopwatch

Cost: Difficulty +5
Future, Subtle

Quantum time-tunneling microcircuitry crammed into a wristwatch far too small to actually accept it, this watch does exactly what you'd hope a stopwatch might do. It stops time.

There are some conditions, though. It only stops time for you, and you can only slip between the seconds for a scant period before you put yourself in danger. Once activated in combat this gives you a second position in the initiative order. One of your two actions occurs while time is stopped; you choose which each round. You can use that action to do anything permissible during your normal turn, with GM approval, and Difficulty ratings may be easier than normal because no one else is moving. Your actions are slightly limited by the fact that you're the only one stopped, however, as any vehicle you're traveling in will be frozen in time as well.

A Paradox test is made at the beginning of any round in which the stopwatch is active. The first Paradox test is Difficulty 4; then Difficulty 5; and so on, cumulatively, so that the fifth round of use is Difficulty 8. When a test is failed, the Chronal Stability Loss suffered is the final Difficulty + 1d6. The stopwatch stops working for the rest of the mission once a Paradox test is failed. Unless it stops working, the stopwatch lasts for an entire mission and can be used in multiple scenes once acquired with Preparedness, Tinkering, or Science!, but its rising Difficulty is cumulative and only resets between missions.

You're driving a 1970s sports car, chasing down an enemy on a motorcycle who has a stolen almanac from the future locked into a briefcase. When the combat round begins you activate the stopwatch

and gain a second action. You use your first action to pull adjacent to the enemy's motorcycle. You decide that the enemy can go next, and she shoots at you. You then have a second action during which all time is frozen. You slip out of the frozen automobile and grab the briefcase with an Easy (Difficulty 3) Burglary test.

It's now the second round. You successfully make the Difficulty 4 / Loss 4 + 1d6 Paradox test, so the stopwatch is still working, and you decide your first action is in frozen time. You run back to your frozen car, get behind the wheel, and toss the briefcase in the back. You choose to be the next person to act in combat. Time snaps back on for this second action, and you steer the car away from your enemy with a normal Vehicles test. For her turn, she snaps off another shot and escapes, thinking she got the better of you; she'll think differently when she realizes her briefcase is gone. You turn off the stopwatch before a Difficulty 5 Paradox test is needed.

The stopwatch is extraordinarily dangerous for extended use due to the high potential Chronal Stability Loss, but it's also extraordinarily handy on difficult missions.

Temporal Anchor Dart

Cost: Difficulty +2 (or +1 for the less effective version)
Future; Close range

An injection dart that puts a chemical into the bloodstream, preventing time travel for one scene. This is usually used in the form of a dart gun or blowpipe, but there is a variant that can also deliver the toxin (less effectively) via air-propelled sponges soaked in the stuff. Anyone hit by a temporal anchor dart must make a D4 Chronal Stability test or be unable to time travel for the scene. If hit by the less effective version, the Chronal Stability test Difficulty is 3.

Temporal Incubator

Cost: Difficulty +2
Future

Developed originally for medical use to accelerate the growth of emergency limb or organ transplants, the temporal incubator prevented an early-22nd-century crime spree of stolen black market organs within the lower slums of the megacities. This device has since been miniaturized to the size of a pressurized space suit. It creates a physically contained temporal loop that sends an injured body back a short distance in time again and again, effectively accelerating the healing process. This is not without some risk, of course, but being able to grow a limb graft in 20 minutes can sometimes be worth it. Just feel bad for the victims of those black market organ harvesters; there are people in the New Tokyo slums who have had their kidneys stolen and regrown and stolen again 70 or 80 times.

Mechanically, a temporal incubator heals bodily damage at the cost of chronal stability; when worn, you can turn Chronal Stability into Health on a point-for-point basis, with each point of Chronal Stability spent representing a day that your body was instantaneously sent back in time to heal. Crawling into the suit takes an action if done in combat. The temporal incubator can also speed up the time required to recover from

being Seriously Wounded, with each point of spent Chronal Stability representing a day of recuperation.

This technology has been turned to other clever uses as well, such as quickly aging clones, artificially aging forged archaeological artifacts (after some tinkering to adjust the ratio of time passed), or making delicious 12-hour slow-cooked barbecue in a matter of seconds.

Time Anchor

Cost: Difficulty +0

Future, Subtle

Also known as a Trenching Tool, this device allows you to “dig in” to your current time period to resist the constant pressure of time. Made from a lattice of frozen tachyon particles, the time anchor is usually constructed as a badge or brooch. It provides 2 points of chronal armor for Paradox tests triggered by a chronal destabilizer weapon or effect; i.e. D4/L4 becomes D4/L2. Because of the nature of the Time Anchor, they are never chromomorphic, and so are usually produced as small items of jewelry that can pass unnoticed in most eras.

A Time Anchor doesn't protect against paradox caused by time travel or interfering in history. They are known to interfere with a time chase by “weighing down” the bearer, raising all Difficulties by +1 for someone carrying a Time Anchor in a chase; more than one TimeWatch agent has used this as a trap by slipping one to an unsuspecting quarry before they fled.

Timebat

Cost: Difficulty +0

Future, Subtle; Damage Modifier +0

While it may once have had a more technical name, the nickname “timebat” has stuck to this weapon. It resembles a simple club, about one meter in length and made of some sort of exotic wood. However, it is surprisingly heavy and requires impressive strength to swing with any force. But for someone who can do just that, a good solid hit with the bat will displace the victim six days into the future. This makes it particularly useful for splitting up enemy assailants during large and dangerous fights.

Time Beacon

Cost: Difficulty +0

Future

This lantern-sized device acts as a navigational buoy in the river of time, making it simple for a time traveler to reach the exact time and location where the beacon was triggered. They're often used as rescue alerts for a team in trouble, although they've been known to attract hostile attention as well.

When time traveling to the chrono-location of a time beacon, no Travel test is required.

Time Dilation Gloves

Cost: Difficulty +3

Future

This **weapon** allows the user to punch a target with superhuman speed. For example, if the user punches the target in the stomach it appears like his fist is a blur, with dozens of blows appearing to be delivered. These gloves allow autofire (see p. 84) to be applied to Scuffling attacks against foes within Point-Blank range, and allow a second Scuffling attack at +2 Difficulty during your turn.

These gloves do not affect movement speed. These gloves cannot be used for abilities other than melee combat, and they only affect the upper extremities. They can be used in conjunction with any Scuffling attack.

Time-Displaced Shard Thrower

Cost: 1-point History (Future) or Military Tactics spend, plus Difficulty +2

Future, Super-Science; Near range

This strange weapon consists of a five mm wide black non-metallic arc that reaches around the back of the hand, with the grip running between each end to be held in the palm. It features a targeting scope in the center of the arc, beneath which is a narrow slot that is the weapon's muzzle. There is no magazine, as the weapon actually coalesces its ammunition from trace elements found in the time stream. It takes about a week to manifest a single shard, which can then be fired in the traditional manner with impressive effects. Alternatively, the wielder can take a shot immediately and then wait over the next week while the ammunition materializes backwards in time. Trying to fire the TDST while the ammunition is still incomplete, in either approach, simply results in a weapon jam.

The shards cause incompatible chronal fields to race across the target's body, partially tearing it apart. Each shot inflicts 2d6 + 2 damage, and simultaneously triggers a D4/L4 Paradox test.

While this weapon may seem limiting with only two shots available at a time (one pre-charged; one post-charged), the effects of the exotic ammunition can be quite devastating. Additionally, it doesn't resemble an ordinary weapon and requires no stock of ammunition, which can make it useful when away from an easy source of resources.

Timelock Capsule

Cost: Difficulty +0

Future, Subtle

Some items require world-class protection until they're truly needed. A Timelock Capsule is a lock box that only unlocks at a specific geo-temporal location such as the beaches of Normandy during D-day, the top of Mt. Everest at 7:52 a.m. on June 28th, 1982, the inauguration of Chester A. Arthur, or on that street corner tomorrow afternoon. Agents with access to one of these time capsules can program a time and location to keep an item protected until the conditions are met.

In most capsules this restriction cannot be overridden once set, not even by the person setting the controls; contents remain slightly out of phase with time until the triggering conditions are met, so attempting to cut or burgle open the container results in failure. Concerted hacking (a Difficulty 30 Tinkering continuing challenge) may reveal the trigger time and location, however.

Timelock capsules are occasionally used by time travelers to set traps for their enemies, giving them bait that requires an enemy to be in a specific place at a specific time.

Tomes' Temporal Tool

Cost: Difficulty +1

Future

First developed by early explorers who lacked easy access to sophisticated tools, Tomes' Temporal Tools are liquid metal devices assembled through direct tether interface. They can produce nearly any tool you can think of and maintain them as long as the Agent stays within two kilometers. The tools then collapse back down to liquid metal until gathered and reused.

That gives this tool two main uses. It's the TimeWatch gold standard for those who don't want to be hopping on an autochron every time they need something, as activating it creates a pool of 4 Tinkering points that can then be used to help build or adjust any device. In addition, it has been occasionally used as a booby trap and a murder weapon; use the Temporal Tool to duplicate part of a propulsion system, watch the vehicle fly away, and observe the mayhem once it passes two kilometers and the temporary part fails.

Transcendental Refuge

Cost: 2-point History (Ancient) spend; or a specific mission to acquire (unless the GM offers it for free)

Ancient, Super-Science

The transcendental refuge may save your life... but used too often, it may destroy your soul. Virtually unique and tremendously deadly to use, this ancient spiritual item dates back to India in the third millennium BCE. It moves the user into a state completely beyond time, absorbing the life force of the universe along with its wisdom. When activated with a 1-point Reassurance spend, the world shimmers and fades. The user regains full Health and may fully refresh one other General ability pool. They have unlimited time to plan and may re-enter time in any location or time they choose. When they do, they are spiritually inspired and gain a 1-point pool of any Interpersonal ability of their choice, to be used during the next scene.

On the downside, using this may completely rip apart the user's soul. On re-entry the user makes a Chronal Stability test at Difficulty 6. Failure indicates instant spiritual eradication. With every use, the Difficulty of the Chronal Stability test rises by +2.

Uplift Assimilator

Cost: Difficulty +2, or a Burglary-related encounter to abscond with it

Restricted, Super-Science

Whoever invented this technology, it wasn't a human — or at least not from any time period TimeWatch yet explored. The uplift assimilator is a backpack-sized device that intrudes into more dimensions than the human eye can easily process; attempting to examine it in great detail often leaves human minds confused and disoriented, and triggers a D4/L4 Paradox test. It behaves oddly at times, seeming particularly heavy and massive when lifted and then perhaps ephemeral half an hour later. Fewer than a hundred of these have been discovered over the centuries, and when they started being stolen by time travelers their private or government caretakers typically hired their own security teams to retrieve them.

When connected to an animal and activated with a 1-point Science! spend, the uplift assimilator increases the creature's intelligence to sentient levels, giving it a working education in the process. The result is variable, depending on the preference of the GM:

- ▶ the condition may be temporary and cannot be repeated
- ▶ the uplift may work perfectly but slowly fade, making the animal even more intelligent when repeated; multiple uplifts may slowly drive the animal insane
- ▶ the animal may be permanently intelligent, but have a shortened life span
- ▶ should the GM find it plot appropriate, the animal may become intelligent and have a lengthened lifespan
- ▶ if the GM has no plot-related reason to do otherwise, the uplifted animal has above-average intelligence and its normal lifespan.

Wight Compression Cannon

Cost: Difficulty +2

Future, Blatant; Near range

This arm-mounted blaster is difficult to disguise (+2 to the Difficulty of Unobtrusiveness tests), but that's balanced by its effectiveness. It uses 27th-century spacial folding techniques to vastly compress soft tissues. A victim's soft tissues compress and shrink even as their body's skeletal structure remains unaffected, causing flesh to literally rip its way off of bone. This functions as a shrink ray on creatures with no skeletal structure.

Being struck with a compression cannon triggers a Difficulty 6 Health test: success means no additional effect, while failure causes an additional 2d6 + 2 damage. Mooks and any other unnamed characters automatically fail this Health test. Their screams may haunt you for years, but it's a stylish way to go.

Wither Grenade

Cost: Difficulty +3

Ancient, Restricted; Near range

An ezeru weapon that resembles a large, flying beetle, this grenade is about the size of a man's fist. Thrown as a grenade, anything in Close range caught in the ensuing explosion suffers a time-dilation effect that causes it to age dramatically relative to the apparent time stream. The victims and objects in the area of effect suffer no particular shock trauma, since the aging is occurring at the appropriate rate of time for them, but as the effect subsides they find themselves withered and decrepit. Difficulties for physical tasks (such as Athletics, Scuffling, Shooting, etc.) are raised by +1 while withered due to the effects of age.

As with the decrepitude amplifier (above), objects decay and putresce, making them more fragile and generally unfit for purpose.

Resistance to this effect comes from a general temporal and structural integrity — the sturdier the original target, the better it will survive the accelerated time. For living targets, the aging is a special effect that accompanies damage. If the target is not killed, the advanced aging can be reversed after the end of the scene by spending a point of Timecraft. Against nonliving targets, damage is doubled against a target that would be affected by aging (such as a wooden door or iron bars).

Yesterday Sniper Rifle

Cost: 1-point Military Tactics spend plus Difficulty +1

Future, Restricted; Very Long range; Damage Modifier +1

The Yesterday resembles a typical 20th-century sniper rifle, but with a somewhat more exotic targeting scope. When aiming through the scope, the sniper sees the scene before him, but as it appeared one exact day cycle previously. Once she has acquired her target, she can shoot as normal, except that the bullet will also manifest in that time.

Ever wondered why you can never find that assassin? You're probably looking on the wrong day. However, for those who suspect such a weapon, lying in wait for the sniper should be an easy task. Use at your own risk. Rumors persist of a variant that can instead shoot a day into the future. Should such a weapon exist, it would require a bit more planning to use effectively, but ambushing the shooter would be a lot harder.





CHAPTER FIVE: ANTAGONISTS

This chapter is meant for the GM.

Time travelers have capabilities above and beyond those of normal enemies. This chapter gives you traditional foes, presents guidelines to help you build your own unique time traveling and alien species, and offers you a number of existing species and antagonist archetypes that you can use or ignore as you see fit. The most common *TimeWatch* campaigns have several different alien and parallel timeline antagonists appearing regularly, each working towards their own ends and likely fighting each other almost as often as they come to blows with *TimeWatch*.

When deciding which antagonists to feature, you'll need to make some decisions. How many nonhuman species and power groups do you wish to initially introduce? Which ones do you know exist, but are working subtly in the background? How successful have they been? Is their sabotage blatant or subtle, with short-term or long-term results? Are their changes a matter of recorded fact already? What are their aims?

This chapter presents a number of answers to these questions, and options for altering the presumed status quo. With this, no *TimeWatch* games will be exactly alike, and the machinations and conspiracies of humanity's foes will remain unique to each game.

TYPES OF ANTAGONISTS AND SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

If no one knows what your name is in a *TimeWatch* game, and you're not a player character, we advise against making any long-term plans. Different types of supporting characters and antagonists typically have different levels of competence and longevity in a fight, primarily in terms of their Health rating.

An **Adversary** is a primary foe and usually a significant threat. Most Adversaries are time travelers, aliens, or from parallel timelines; they may demonstrate unexpected choral manipulation powers. In a movie or novel, Adversaries would be the main bad guys. Adversaries tend to have relatively high Health, and are almost always named (even if the characters don't discover that name). Adversaries don't die until their Health reaches -12.

Andrea Pilon, a rogue TimeWatch agent who travels to 1510 and immunizes the Aztecs against smallpox, is an Adversary.

An **Opponent** is a mid-tier foe with greater than Health 3. They are seldom at the top of conspiracies (unless we're talking fairly low-level conspiracies here), but they're tough and resourceful in a fight. They usually drop in a fight when knocked below Health 0 (although Opponents with Regeneration may get up or show up again unless deliberately finished off).

Emperor Cuítláhuac's and Cortés' elite, highly trained soldiers are Opponents — at least when they're trying to kill or capture you.

A **Mook** is someone who has a Health of 3 or less, and usually doesn't even have a name. They may or may not be deadly in combat, but they go down immediately once injured or stunned in combat. Mooks automatically fail Stun tests, even if hit by only low-powered stunners. If a Mook is so lucky or successful in combat that the Agents start referring to her with a name, the GM may decide to upgrade her status from Mook to Opponent.

The vast preponderance of Aztec soldiers in Tenochtitlán, and Cortés' troops who march with him from what is now Veracruz are all Mooks.

An **antagonist** is a general term for "someone hostile to the Agents." This term encompasses Mooks, Opponents, and Adversaries.

A **supporting character** is a general term for someone the player characters meet during their missions who isn't necessarily hostile to them. If they're **unnamed** and someone tries to hurt them, they usually drop as if they were a Mook. If they have a name, they may be tougher. Don't worry about their Health unless you expect them to enter into combat.

In a movie, a supporting character would be played by a character actor.

Emperor Cuítláhuac and Cortés, along with Andrea Pilon's bombastic assistant Migue, are all supporting characters. If they become hostile to the Agents, they are considered antagonists instead.



"I think we're in trouble, guys. I don't have a name!"

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOOKS

A cinematic example: the movie *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* showcases a combat scene between The Bride and the Crazy 88 at the House of Blue Leaves. If you've seen the movie, you'll remember the scene. There are a handful of Opponents and named Adversaries (such as the bodyguard Gogo Yubari and her deadly steel flail) in that fight, but the joy comes in watching one highly trained hero kicking the butts of almost five dozen lesser combatants.

Most *TimeWatch* fights work similarly, albeit with (usually) fewer Mooks. Dramatically unimportant enemies are fun to fight because they showcase the Agents' badassitude. Make this type of enemy common, and include foes who drop quickly in most battles. More robust Opponents and Adversaries can serve as more memorable villains for a change of pace.

One caution: Mooks have low Health and drop once hit, but that doesn't make them any less deadly. Be cautious against having too many attack at once. Mooks who attack in waves, just like in any good action movie, is one way to create a difficult encounter that doesn't instantly kill the characters.

If you ever do want to get the players' attention, have multiple Mooks focus fire on only one or two player characters. It's easier than you'd think to quickly drop an Agent below Health 0.

GM ADVICE: ESTIMATING DEADLINESS

Your run-of-the-mill Mook with a pistol averages 3 or 4 points of damage every time he tries to shoot your average armored *TimeWatch* Agent. That means if you have five Mooks all shooting at one Agent, 15 to 20 Health damage will get through on average — enough to knock most Agents unconscious.

Armor is a powerful defense. Those five Mooks would do an expected 20 to 25 Health damage to someone with no armor. Substitute beam weapons in place of the Mooks' pistols and the average expected damage rises by another 5 points.

Your takeaway? Against the average *TimeWatch* Agent, four Mooks all shooting at the same person in one round are likely to take them from fully healthy to just under 0 Health.

VILLAINY AND CAMPAIGN FRAMES

The type of antagonists you use in your *TimeWatch* games says a great deal about your campaign style. Are you selecting a cybernetic albino great ape possessed by the downloaded intellect of an insane future scientist? Yeah, we're going to go out on a limb here and guess that your campaign tends towards *Pulp*. Are you focusing on a network of shape-shifted reptoids who hold the world's governments in their secret sway, and whose conspiracy has to be dismantled slowly before double agents within TimeWatch kill anyone who shows interest? You're probably running a *Conspiracy*-style game. Are your enemies fanatically determined choral terrorists who are trying to wrench time into a path more suited to their ideological beliefs? You're probably playing a mostly *Patrol*-style game.

To a certain extent, *TimeWatch* is defined by the people you encounter and the crimes they commit. Those people might have some unusual capabilities, all powered by the Tempus General ability (see p. 148), or they might just be normal people armed with high explosives and a lasting grudge. Either way, pick antagonists for your game that match the tone you're hoping to achieve. If you want a serious and emotionally resonant drama, choosing intelligent dinosaur mad scientists may not be your best choice¹.

BUILDING AN ADVERSARY

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, an Adversary is a dramatically important antagonist who is usually either a time traveler, from a parallel universe or time stream, or nonhuman. You can upgrade an Opponent to Adversary status by making him more deadly than usual. Adversaries generally have access to a selection of unusual or unexpected choral and technological powers which they can use against the Agents by spending points from their Tempus pool. They're usually more dangerous than the Agents are in combat.

Human non-time traveling enemies of the agents may be significantly competent and deadly — picture a special forces soldier or a trained spy going up against the Agents — but it's unlikely that they know time travel is possible, and they are neither subject to, nor able to take advantage of, choral effects. They're generally considered to be Opponents.

MEMORABLE APPEARANCE

TimeWatch is a cinematic game, and that means you'll want to pay some attention to antagonists' appearance. In particular, think about (and describe) how aliens look, move, smell, and sound. If you're able to describe a European's spindly and delicate crystalline body, squirming beneath a mind-controlled host's skin, you'll make an impression on the players.

That's not just true for aliens or monsters, either. Any supporting character should have a memorable personality,

¹ Lies, foul lies. Intelligent dinosaur mad scientists are *always* the best choice. We just pretend otherwise.

appearance, personality quirk, behavior tic, or speech pattern. If your players say, "Oh, Bernard? He's that squinting arms dealer in New Paris who loves old jazz and hates us," you're doing well.

STAT BLOCK

The TimeWatch stat block is designed to be fast and easy to read. It splits capabilities up into multiple lines for ease of reference. Lines that are not relevant are omitted.

Antagonist name

Defense: Hit Threshold, Armor, Health

Offense: Scuffling, Shooting; Damage Modifier (weapon)

Abilities: Athletics, or Tempus

Special Abilities: special ability or combat condition (Tempus cost, if any) (description, if needed)

Misc: Alertness Modifier, Stealth Modifier

Description: as required

See examples of stat blocks beginning on p. 158.

When writing a stat block, opt for clarity. The goal is to have defense and offense numbers available at first glance, then more conditional or esoteric abilities explained below. If a detail isn't relevant, such as a Scuffling of 0 or no Alertness Modifier, omit it from the stat block. For antagonists with complicated abilities, it's useful but not mandatory to have a brief reminder of the Tempus cost and what each special abilities does.

BASIC ABILITIES

All antagonists have four basic abilities: **Health**, **Tempus**, **Scuffling**, and **Shooting**. Most of these work identically to the General abilities used by player characters. Like player characters (and unlike Mooks and Opponents), Adversaries generally survive Health loss up to -12 unless the GM wants to hurry combat along. When an Adversary does not have a needed ability, from Athletics to Vehicles, they use Tempus as a catchall ability instead. Antagonists who don't have the Tempus ability may instead have Athletics and Preparedness. If an antagonist should logically have an Investigative ability that isn't listed in the stat block, every point you add uses up 3 points of Tempus.

On the rare occasion that an antagonist without Tempus needs to make a Paradox or Chronal Stability test, they use their Athletics ability instead of Tempus.

Although these are basic abilities, the stat block separates them into different lines for clarity. Health is listed under **Defense**, Scuffling and Shooting under **Offense**, and Tempus (along with any other General or Investigative abilities) under **Abilities**.

Antagonists might have other General abilities on a case-by-case basis. Medic is common for Adversaries who can heal themselves. Vehicles is common for any antagonist who might get in a vehicle chase or time chase with the Agents. Remember that antagonists and supporting characters never have Unobtrusiveness, since GUMSHOE is a player-facing system; instead, they have Alertness and Stealth Modifiers, as described on p. 72.

Most antagonists do not gain access to the Boosters available to player characters who have General ability ratings of 8+. That's not because the antagonist can't use the power, it's because the Booster would be a pain for you to track. If you'd like to give a Booster to an antagonist with high abilities, feel free. Just be aware that existing Special Abilities may be more effective than a Booster, such as Extra Attack being superior to the *Double Tap* Shooting Booster.

Health

Like other foes, an antagonist's Health determines how long it can stay on its feet (or tentacles, or cybernetic gravity stabilizers, or what have you). Unlike more prosaic foes, some antagonists may have methods of healing rapidly, escaping with teleportation, or other defenses. A Mook and an Opponent brought to Health 0 is knocked unconscious or slain, as the attacker prefers. An Adversary brought below -11 Health is slain. Antagonists may well have the Medic ability (or the Tempus ability that they use as Medic; see below), and will likely use it to heal themselves if they do. Like player characters, Medic works less efficiently when used without futuristic healing technology accompanying it (see p. 48).

Remember that Mooks have a maximum of Health 3, and usually have Health 1. Such characters drop immediately when hit and automatically fail Stun tests, just as a good movie extra should. If an unnamed character ever gains a name, don't feel bad about promoting him from Mook to Opponent by giving him more Health as well.

Tempus

Tempus (as in *tempus fugit*) is the ability behind unique antagonist powers. Tempus is a catchall category that represents the antagonist's mastery over time and space. This ability rating determines the base Hit Threshold of the antagonist, just like Athletics for a TimeWatch Agent; a Tempus rating of 8+ means a Hit Threshold of 4, unless the antagonist is particularly easy to hit (as a few antagonists are). It functions as Preparedness when acquiring objects, as Chronal Stability, including when making Paradox tests, and as Medic when trying to heal oneself, and antagonists draw on it to power their time machines, alien powers, and temporal attacks. Antagonists who are not time travelers or aliens may not have Tempus and use the traditional abilities instead.

Antagonists with strong willpower and a strong sense of self may have more Tempus than is listed here. Weak-willed antagonists may have less.

An antagonist makes Paradox tests using their Tempus points. They do not, however, typically have access to the Reality Anchor ability to restore these points once spent. This means that failed Paradox tests reduce an antagonist's ability to activate their special powers.

Mooks and Opponents run out of Tempus at 0, just like Health; this may make them fade out of existence if they're time travelers. Adversaries run out of Tempus at -12, just like Chronal Stability for player characters. An Adversary who runs out of Tempus is erased from the universe, or disembodied

and flung to another time. The Adversary can spend herself into a hole if she wants to, but suffers the normal risks of Chronal instability for doing so (see p. 89).

Antagonists refresh their Tempus pools fully after an 8-hour rest, so chasing down a fleeing enemy through time can be essential if you don't want her to clock back in fully rested 15 seconds after she departed. At the GM's discretion, several hours of downtime will restore half an antagonist's depleted Tempus.

Scuffling and Shooting Ratings

In *TimeWatch* materials, you'll see two different ways to run bad guys in combat. The first method, **fixed combat bonuses**, is useful for Mooks, Opponents, and any time you want a fast and simple fight with an Adversary. The second method, **combat pools**, works like player character pools and is more useful for named villains and any Adversary you want to carefully control. You are encouraged to use whichever method you prefer.

Fixed Combat Bonuses

Most Mooks and Opponents, and some Adversaries, may have a fixed combat modifier in place of their Scuffling or Shooting rating. This is to speed combat and reduce bookkeeping for you. When your rent-a-cop Mook has Scuffling +0 with his Taser, you know that you just roll the die and take that result when attacking; when your sniper has Shooting +1, +3 when not moving, you know that they're great at aiming and are certain to hit on any round that they don't move before or after the shot.

Damage is rolled normally, and is not affected by any fixed combat bonus value used for attacking. Special situations and bonuses are noted along with the fixed combat value.

Example:

Neighborhood Kids

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 1

Offense: Scuffling -1; Damage Modifier -1 (fist)

Abilities: Athletics 3

Misc: Alertness Modifier -2, Stealth Modifier -1

Psychically Controlled and Enhanced Neighborhood Kids

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 1

Offense: Scuffling +0; Damage Modifier -1 (fist), +0 (clenched pointy rock or old board with a nail in it)

Abilities: Athletics 3

Special Abilities: Scuffling bonus rises by +1 each round of combat, max +6

Misc: Alertness Modifier -2, Stealth Modifier -1

In the first case, the kids are particularly bad at combat, as you'd expect against trained Agents. Every attack roll they make is at -1 on the die so they only hit Hit Threshold 4 a measly 1/3rd of the time, on a roll of 5 or higher. In the second case, the neighborhood kids have been mind controlled by some nefarious sophosaurs and coordinated rage drives their accuracy. They'll still do lousy damage if they hit, but they start off attacking at +0 (hitting Hit Threshold 4 half the time) and

they increase by +1 each round. If the psychically enhanced children aren't knocked unconscious quickly, they're likely to swarm the Agents.

You can model the type of behavior you want from your antagonists. Want to show someone running out of bullets? Use Shooting +1 (no attack every 3rd round). Want an alien who absorbs kinetic energy to become more dangerous? Use Scuffling +1 (+1 bonus for every time hit since their last turn), so that if they were hit four times since their last turn their Scuffling attack would be at +5 that round.

GM ADVICE: SIMPLIFYING COMBAT POOLS

If you prefer flat modifiers when GMing, you can make this change with GM-controlled characters in any GUMSHOE game. Pick a modifier for both Scuffling and Shooting that represents their overall ability, from -1 (for foes who are quite poor in combat) to +3 or higher (lethally deadly foes who normally always hit). Then, for more interesting combat, pick a modifier that kicks in under certain circumstances. A few examples:

- ▶ a driver who is +1 to Shooting except when in a moving vehicle, where her Shooting rises to +2
- ▶ a beast who leaps into combat with +3 Scuffling, and drops to +1 thereafter
- ▶ a robot whose weapon systems become more lethal the longer combat lasts, starting at +0 Scuffling and Shooting but rising +1 in each ability for every round that combat lasts
- ▶ a genetically modified giant scorpion that attacks every other round with both pincers and tail, and which injects poison if the tail hits

While modifiers can help make combat exciting and fun, don't pick any modifiers that are hard to remember or which feel like they're more trouble than they're worth. Remember, the goal is to simplify bookkeeping, not complicate it. Also, remember that any modifier of +2 or higher is likely-to-certain to hit with each attack, so be careful not to consistently turn your Mooks into high accuracy, low Health glass cannons.

Shooting and Scuffling Pools

When fixed bonuses don't make sense because you want finer control, Adversaries and other antagonists use Scuffling and Shooting pools in exactly the same way that player characters do. When you use these, keep something important in mind: it's frustrating to players to be hit in combat every round without fail.

Spend enough points from an antagonist's Scuffling or Shooting pool, and they're guaranteed to hit their target. That means that GUMSHOE Mooks using pools have the potential to inflict a lot of damage before dropping in a sacrificial blaze of glory. If you are running a Mook with Health 1 and Shooting 4, it's tempting to have them spend all 4 Shooting points on the first round, ensuring that they hit the Agent they're aiming for. This may be good tactics, but it's not consistent with the science fiction that *TimeWatch* models. As a GM, it's in your best interest to avoid such tactics for all but the most deadly of antagonists.

When antagonists have Scuffling or Shooting ratings, you will find a pattern beside their combat stats. This is the default pattern of point spends they typically use in combat. For instance, the thug (Health 6, Scuffling 12 (0-2-3-3-1), Shooting 4 (0-2-2)) is likely to miss an Agent in the first round, and then successfully hit him thereafter.

There's no requirement for you to stick to this pattern as you spend combat points, especially if the antagonist is consistently missing. Just keep it in mind as a fair and realistic method for modeling fun combats.

If you want to convert an antagonist with fixed combat bonuses to one with Shooting and Scuffling pools, just pick a pool number that lets you spend the average number of points you wish with each attack, so a +2 Shooting fixed combat bonus might convert to a pool of Shooting 8 (2-2-2-2).

Scuffling Damage

Many monstrous alien antagonists are most likely to use Scuffling as their primary means of attack.

Weapon Type	Damage Modifier
human bite, fist, kick	-1
improvised weapon, club, knife; claws; chitinous pincers; burrowing lamprey mouth; crushing tentacle	0
heavy club, sword; mouthful of razor-sharp teeth; powerful mandibles; thick crushing tail; sharp tusk	+1

Antagonists that are extremely physically weak might do -1 damage less than these numbers. Antagonists that have unusual strength do +1 damage above these numbers, and a very strong, feral or brutal Adversary would inflict an additional +2 damage instead. An insectoid ezeru, for instance, would inflict +3 damage with its mandibles and +2 damage with its pincers.

It's possible for incredibly muscular human enemies to gain this bonus if they're trained for combat.

Shooting Damage

In general, human and humanoid time travelers are most likely to utilize Shooting as their primary means of attack; there's a long history in science fiction of ray guns and gunplay. Antagonists may be using neural disruptors (or Pacifists, if they're rogue TimeWatch agents), beam weapons, firearms, or any conceivable weapon from their home time period. GMs are encouraged to describe unique weapons for antagonists, and use normal weapon stats for range and damage. Some weapons also have special effects, as noted on pp. 117-123.

ADJUSTING AN ANTAGONIST'S HIT THRESHOLD

The base Hit Threshold is 3, rising to 4 with an Athletics or Tempus of 8 or higher. Other modifiers besides Tempus may affect an antagonist's Hit Threshold. A ludicrously high Hit Threshold will make the antagonist almost unhittable by normal means, requiring Agents to depend on super-science or clever traps to even the playing field. It's also possible to give an enemy a high Hit Threshold vs. one type of attack, such as Scuffling damage, but a lower Hit Threshold against a different type of attack such as Shooting or beam weapons. If you do this, be sure to communicate to the players that something is unusual; very few offensive attacks or defenses in *TimeWatch* are invisible, so well-defended enemies usually have visible, audible, or olfactory clues to their strengths and corresponding weaknesses.

Chronal Power	Hit Threshold Modifier
Blinking	+1
Cybernetic or alien chitinous exoskeleton	+1
Distortion, Temporal Distortion	+1 or +2
Invisibility	+1 to +5; see below
Old, unhealthy or slow	-1 to -2
Paranormal combat senses or awareness (personal sonar or radar unit; hearing amplifier; generic Alertness Modifier of +3 or higher)	+1
Personal Force Field (vs. Scuffling, Shooting, or both)	+1
Sheer arbitrary badassery, for boss encounters and particularly lethal threats	+1 or +2
Unnatural speed (such as through cybernetic implants)	+1

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Antagonist powers that aren't constantly active usually have either special conditions when they activate or a cost in Tempus. Powers that are constantly active don't have a Tempus cost, because it's already factored in. A power or a time trick that would normally trigger a Paradox test if a player character tried it — such as duplicating themselves in combat — doesn't require a separate Paradox test when an antagonist tries it.

An Adversary has the Help Yourself power. To get her future self to show up and help out in a fight, the Adversary pays a cost of 5 Tempus instead of a Paradox test. Since Tempus doubles as Chronal Stability, she's effectively paying a Chronal Stability cost when paying for the power.

Choosing Adversary Special Abilities

When building Adversaries from scratch, resist the urge to add so many special abilities that you can't remember what they do. Simplicity sometimes works in your favor. Do *not* build Adversaries by starting with a point-buy budget and selecting abilities; this list isn't balanced in such a way, and doing so will create an overpowered, confusing villain.

Adversaries should be built on a theme. Instead of going through the below list and saying, "Oh, this looks cool, as does this, as does this..." it's most effective to give some thought as to what your Adversary might be capable of *without any game rules in mind*. A psychic velociraptor might time travel and specialize in psychic attacks, for instance, while an elite chronal soldier loaded down with tactical time gear might move incredibly quickly in a fight. A liquid alien might shape-shift itself into odd shapes, while an insane robot might focus on strength and the ability to control (or deactivate) other technology.

Once you have the general shape of the Adversary in mind, choose special abilities. It's easy to get carried away, so choose the minimum number of abilities that fit your vision. You'll congratulate yourself for this simplicity later when you're running the Adversary in combat. You can always add more later on the fly if you decide they're needed.

Our advice? Pick the fewest possible abilities that give you the foe you've imagined in your head, and don't pick unconnected abilities just because they sound fun. It's always easier to quickly add an ability on the fly than it is to have to juggle a half-dozen different capabilities written down in your notes. Never feel bad about that, either; if you need your Adversary to flip a car, but you forgot to write down Strength as a special ability, just describe the car flip and cross off 2 Tempus from the Adversary's pool.

Choosing Antagonist Special Abilities

Don't forget that special abilities can apply to more than full Adversaries. A team of sophosaurs may be Opponents, but they certainly engage in mental attacks. A Mook guard may still be able to Summon other Mooks or his Opponent commanding officer if he can only get to his radio in time.

Antagonists' special abilities are usually tied to a theme, and may be unique. They should underscore what makes that antagonist unusual, memorable, or effective.

A mad scientist Adversary has invented a small army of sentient robots, each of which possesses flexible robotic powers and explodes violently upon the robot's death. Every unit has the special abilities Armor 2, Cybernetics, and Unfeeling. The GM assigns each unit a name (well, a number designation) and a pool of 10 Tempus to power their Cybernetics.

List of Special Abilities

This list is far from comprehensive. If you think of a new, balanced, fun ability while designing an antagonist, just assign a Tempus cost and scribble it down, and you're ready to go. Several abilities (such as Cybernetics, Mutation, and Technology) are a catchall for any number of other effects.

Description of Special Abilities

Armor

(Cost 0 or 3): It's not uncommon for antagonists to be using armor of some kind, whether chromomorphic Armor 1 such as TimeWatch uniforms, shimmering high-tech force shields that are obviously futuristic (Armor 2 or more), chitinous exoskeletons (Armor 3), traditional armor from the time period they're hiding in (Armor 2), or anything in between. Some force armor is only effective against physical attacks (kinetic-repelling force fields) or beam weapons (energy-repelling force fields). Although it may be time travel-related, armor seldom requires the expenditure of Tempus points to use. Exceptionally powerful armor that only works briefly, such as a force field that prevents all damage for one round and then burns out, costs 3 Tempus per use.

Note that Agents might often be able to use an Investigative spend to reduce or negate armor, such as a Hacking spend to deactivate an enemy's force field, or a Medical Expertise spend to identify the vulnerable spot in a chitinous exoskeleton. Such player spends generally create a vulnerability that the entire team can exploit, reducing the armor value by 1 or 2 points.

Awareness

(Cost 0): Whatever Alertness Modifier you give an antagonist costs no points to use. They may sense chronal emissions, heat, faint sound, life signs, or any other appropriate sensory data.

Blink

(Cost 2 + 1/subsequent round): A blinking time traveler has the terrifyingly effective ability to flash in and out in combat, sliding forwards and backwards quickly in time to make himself a more effective combatant. Blinking antagonists gain +1 to their Hit Threshold and have their foes' Hit Thresholds lowered by -1, and suffer no penalties for closing to Point-Blank range with a gun-wielding foe.

Branching Point

(Cost 4): The antagonist can suddenly see two alternate realities for themselves or another, and they can choose the reality that comes to pass. When activated, they choose a target within Near range and choose a General ability. For the rest of the scene, whenever the target uses the selected General ability, two dice are rolled instead of one and the antagonist selects the roll they prefer. Note that when used to curse another with temporary bad luck, the target can thwart it by using a different ability (Scuffling instead of Shooting, for instance) or by spending enough points to succeed despite a bad die roll.

Chronal Drain

(Cost 2): Some creatures are temporal vampires, draining one creature's reserves to make themselves more anchored in time. On a successful Scuffling hit, in addition to normal Scuffling damage, this power drains 1d6 Reality Anchor points from the victim's pool. The antagonist gains twice that amount back as Tempus. If the victim has no Reality Anchor points in their pool, or has no pool, there is no effect; the antagonist cannot restore their Tempus above its maximum rating.

Clock Out

(Cost 2): Some antagonists can time travel. Humans typically need a device to do so, even if that device looks very different indeed than an autochron, and aliens can either time travel innately or use a device as you prefer. Some antagonists may use markedly different methods of time travel, including retrieval beams and time tunnels.

Adversaries and other antagonists spend Tempus to time travel, and don't bother with Travel tests or Chronal Stability Loss unless you feel they should. It is up to you whether antagonist time travel happens instantly, requires the same one round delay that autochrons require, or requires even more time.

Cybernetics

(Cost 2 per effect): The antagonist can trigger a predetermined cybernetic effect that the GM chooses, such as a jumping ability stemming from robotic legs, or suddenly extending a hidden laser from the wrist. Cybernetic abilities are comparable to what a player character could achieve with an Investigative spend, such as a super-science effect, an armored force field, +1 or +2 damage per attack for the duration of the scene, and the like.

Destabilize

(Cost 2 or 4): Trigger a D4/L4 Paradox test (or higher for some powerful antagonists) by emitting a beam, aura, or explosion of chronal instability. A single target costs 2; an aura or explosion that triggers a Paradox test for multiple Agents at once costs 4. A destabilizing effect that affects multiple targets at once can be devastating to a TimeWatch team, in part because it quickly chews through the team's Chronal Stability.

Disguise

(Cost 1): Appear as a nonspecific different creature, although the antagonist physically keeps their true form. This disguise might be psychic, holographic, mundane makeup, or something else. It's up to you whether changing the disguise is

Ability	Cost	Effect
Armor	0 or 3	Reduces damage
Awareness	0	Raises the Difficulty of player character Unobtrusiveness tests to hide
Blink	2 + 1/round	Flash in and out of combat
Branching Point	4	Pick one of two possible paths for yourself or another
Chronal Drain	2	Drain Reality Anchor points on a hit
Clock Out	2	Time travel
Cybernetics	2	Trigger a robotic effect
Destabilize	2 or 4	Trigger D4/L4 Paradox test
Disguise	1	Look like a different person
Distortion	2 or 3	Increase Hit Threshold
Electronic Interference	2	Render electronics useless
Embrace Instability	0	Gain Tempus every time Agents make Paradox tests
Exile	2	Fling target through time
Extra Action	2	Gain a 2 nd action in a combat round
Flashback	5	Have a preprepared plan, as per the Preparedness Booster
Flight	0 or 2	Levitate or fly
Fluid	0 or 3	Effectively immune to most physical attacks
Help Yourself	5	An older, healthy version arrives to help in combat
Hivemind	0 or 2	Link brains to share information and lower a foe's Hit Threshold
Immaterial	0 or 2	Out of phase with reality
Impersonation	2	Perfectly impersonate another creature
Infection	0	Spread disease
Interdiction	0 or 2	Briefly restrict time travel
Invisibility	3	Increases Hit Threshold and Stealth Modifier
Lightning Speed	2	Move quickly
Mastermind	0	Genius planner and tactician
Mental Attack	Variable	Chronal Stability test to avoid mind control or possession
Mutation	2	Trigger a mutation-related effect
Oracle	1	Predict upcoming future events
Psychic	2	Trigger a psychic effect
Regenerate	0 or 2	Regenerate Health damage
Resist Stun	0	Stun test Difficulties are lowered by 2
Restabilize	Variable	Refreshes another creature's Tempus
Seize Initiative	2	Jump into combat initiative at any point
Shape-Shift	2	Reshape body into a nonhumanoid form
Spider Climb	0 or 1	Walk on walls and ceilings
Stealth	0	Raises the Difficulty of player character Unobtrusiveness tests to notice you hiding
Stony	0	Made of stone and resistant to many attacks
Strength	0 or more	Incredibly strong
Stun	0	Attacks can stun, usually at Stun 5
Summoning	3	Summon Mooks as backup
Technology	2	Use super-science to produce technology
Teleport	2	Move instantly from one location to another
Unfeeling	0	Never become Hurt, and make all Consciousness rolls and Stun tests
Universal Attack	1 or 2 per target	Instantly attack everyone you wish to within range
Venom	2	Attack also delivers poison

instant or takes some time. To impersonate a specific creature instead of a general one, see Impersonation below.

Distortion

(Cost 2 or 3): The boundaries between the antagonist and the rest of the world are unclear; attackers and other observers find it difficult to precisely resolve her position, form, and trajectory. Distorted antagonists are blurred in videos and photographs, and usually appear as roiling air or fractured shapes. While distorted (cost 2), the antagonist's Hit Threshold rises by 1.

Alternatively, the antagonist may possess **Temporal Distortion** (cost 3), twisting time and space around itself. Being around such an entity might cause déjà vu, computer glitches, malfunctioning tethers, unusual echoes, or disorientation. While temporally distorted, the antagonist's Hit Threshold rises by 2.

Electronic Interference

(Cost 2): When active, this power renders electronics undependable or useless. Whether due to an EMP pulse or an alien aura, any device more complex than a simple mechanical machine either fails to work or takes one combat round longer than normal to successfully activate. TimeWatch Agents commonly notice this when their translators and tethers fail, quickly followed by most of their weaponry.

Given advance notice, a Hacking or Science! Investigative spend might be able to harden one object's electronics against this effect.

Embrace Instability

(Cost 0): A creature with this ability is a parasite who has latched onto the temporal fabric of reality and feeds off of disturbances in time. For every Paradox test (other than Travel tests) an Agent must make while on the trail of this antagonist, it gains +1 Tempus in its rating *and* pool to use when it is finally confronted. Like a spider in its web, it may not know who the Agents are until they arrive, but every time they trigger paradox it can sense them and draw strength from the ripples in time they create.

Exile

(Cost 2): The target must make a Paradox test. On a failure, the target loses 2 Chronal Stability and is flung through time. It's up to you where and when they arrive, but they must use a time machine to return. If they don't have a time machine on them, well, they get a free vacation... somewhere. Other Agents can spend a Timecraft point to follow their temporal vortices and find them, so long as they act within two rounds.

In some ways, getting exiled can be an advantage. An exiled combatant with a personal time machine can take her time, heal physically, and then time travel normally to return to the combat the round after she was summarily banished. Be aware that against a combatant without a personal time machine, this ability is incredibly effective; use it with caution, and have it send all exiled combatants to the same time and location.

Extra Action

(Cost 2): The antagonist can manipulate time well enough to gain an extra action in one round, which can (but doesn't have

to) be spent attacking. Most antagonists can only use this once a round. It's your choice whether the antagonist takes both attacks at once or gains a second place in the initiative order.

Note that this differs from Universal Attack in that it allows the antagonist to target the same enemy more than once.

GM ADVICE: WHAT DO YOU MEAN EVERYONE'S DEAD?

Be cautious about combining Extra Action and Universal Attack during the same round. The former lets the antagonist take a second attack action, and the latter lets the antagonist attack as many people as they like within range (assuming they have the points to spend on the attack). Taken separately, they're great for letting a single antagonist or two challenge an entire team of TimeWatch Agents. Combining the two, however, allows the antagonist to attack everyone nearby twice, resulting in very injured Agents and very irritable players (who may consider it unfair). If you use this combination, save it for only the most dangerous of foes, and make sure there's a good in-game reason why they possess this power.

Flashback

(Cost 5 per Flashback): Like the Preparedness Booster for Agents, the antagonist can have retroactively arranged a plan. The cost for activating this includes any Tempus cost for Preparedness the antagonist would normally have to make to have his plan in place. In the interest of good GMing, no flashbaked plan should ever be instantly lethal to the Agents it affects.

Flight

(Cost 0 or 2): An antagonist may be able to fly, whether through alien wings or good old-fashioned futuristic technology. The speed of flight depends on the technology or natural means of flying used, but is unlikely to exceed the speed of sound without a cockpit protecting the antagonist.

Less mobile antagonists may only be able to levitate. If so, they can hover unerringly at any height and can ascend or descend at will. The speed of ascent and descent is up to you.

Constant flight, such as a bird's, does not require a cost in Tempus. Antagonists who can only fly briefly, occasionally, or erratically may require a 2-point cost in Tempus to activate flight.

Fluid

(Cost 0 or 3): The antagonist is a liquid being, such as an ooze or sentient alien fluid, or a swarm of tiny insects or worms. All physical wounds simply flow closed, and the creature has Armor 5 against gunfire or physical attacks. Beam weapons, fire, electricity, and acid do normal damage.



Altani's older self clocks in to help herself in a fight against an ezeru drone, and it's worth every bit of the paradox.

Antagonists who aren't innately fluid and who only can gain this ability briefly pay a cost of 3 to activate it for one round.

Help Yourself

(Cost 5): The antagonist's older self shows up to help itself in combat, temporarily doubling its actions. Damage inflicted on one version does not also appear on the other, although killing the younger version causes the older version to disappear and triggers a D4/L4 Paradox test for the Agent who killed the younger version. Alternatively, for antagonists not interested in risking their future self, the double might be from a parallel universe.

Hivemind

(Cost 0 normally, 2 to indoctrinate): Instantly share knowledge and conversation with other members of the hivemind; with some time and effort, outsiders can be indoctrinated into the hivemind as well. Creatures in a hivemind can perfectly coordinate their attacks on enemies: for each extra hivemind in a combat, one foe's Hit Threshold decreases by 1.

Uurrk is being attack by three mold-colonized Colony drones, former horses that are now covered with sentient decay. Uurrk's normal Hit Threshold is 4. If all three drones focus on him, his Hit Threshold drops by 1 for every drone beyond the first. This reduces his Hit Threshold from 4 to 2, making him certain to be hit by all three. Run, Uurrk, run!

Immaterial

(Cost 0 or 2): Whether through high-tech or natural means, a time traveler might be out of phase and unable to be touched. Such a creature can pass through walls or solid objects as if they were not there. Force fields, such as restraining fields created with Tinkering, Preparedness, or Science! spends, cannot usually be passed through. Physical attacks do no damage; fire and beam weapons do 1 point of damage (from heat or light). Neural disruptors have no effect. Depending on the specific nature of the effect, chronal energy, electricity, magnetism, microwaves, radiation, or sonic attacks might disrupt it.

Historically, some ghost hauntings may well be time travelers trapped in immaterial form, desperately trying to interact with the world and draw attention to themselves so that they can be rescued.

Antagonists who aren't innately immaterial and who can only gain this ability briefly pay a cost of 2 to activate it for one round.

Impersonation

(Cost 2): Perfectly impersonate another creature, specific or otherwise. This ability may be limited, such as only voice or appearance. It's up to you whether the antagonist can instantly change their disguise (such as shape-shifting), or whether it requires time and effort (such as surgery or a mask).

The ezeru are giant mutant radioactive cockroaches that can psi-actively impersonate human subjects. They do so by knocking the subject unconscious and encasing them in a psi-active amber cocoon of hardened bile and mucus. So long as the subject remains in suspended animation within the cocoon, an ezeru can perfectly impersonate them and draw upon their memories. As portions of the cocoon are removed from the unconscious subject, the disguised ezeru's false skin sloughs off, revealing spiky chitin underneath.

Infection

(Cost 0): It's common in science fiction stories such as *The War of the Worlds* for aliens to catch plague from humans, and TimeWatch agents have been inoculated against every known pathogen. But what happens if a time traveler brings a disease into our timeline that non-agents have no defense against? It can set off an unanticipated plague, either deadly or annoyingly inconvenient. An extra-historical disease that sterilizes those who survive it, for instance, would dramatically change the course of history in ways the time traveler certainly never intended.

The possibility that major historical plagues were actually set off by time travelers remains unproven but likely.

Interdiction

(Cost 0 or 2): This tactical energy field restricts others from time traveling or teleporting within Long range of the antagonist. It may stem from a natural phenomenon, a technological interdiction device, or a natural aura emanating from an antagonist.

Note that there are different types of interdiction, ranging from "short-term aid in tactical combat" (cost 2) to "permanent

GM ADVICE: UNBREAKABLE INTERDICTION

There are going to be times when you want interdiction to be an unbreakable plot device, a particularly strong anti-chronal field whose job it is to make the players find creative solutions for getting close to the antagonist. When this is the case, don't be coy about telling the players that the field is too strong for them to break. Players who try regardless shouldn't lose their Timecraft points in the attempt; you don't want to punish players for smart, creative attempts that have no chance of success. In these cases, a 1-point spend may indicate what the Agent needs to accomplish before the interdiction field can be turned off.

plot device" (cost 0). Depending on your preferences, an interdiction field can either completely restrict time travel, allow it only if a time traveler has an access code or spends 1 or more points of Timecraft to break through the field, or allow it upon a successful difficult (D6/L6) Paradox test. It's also up to you how large an area the interdiction encompasses; while personal interdiction fields work at Long range, a room-sized interdiction generator might encompass an entire city or larger, depending on the needs of your plot.

In general, interdiction only costs Tempus when it's usable as a tactic in battle. The rest of the time, it's a plot device.

Invisibility

(Cost 3): Some future technology can amplify Unobtrusiveness enough to make the wielder entirely invisible. Similarly, it may be possible for aliens to make themselves invisible, or invisibility might be their natural state. Beings made of pure sentience or energy would likely fall into this category, for instance.

Invisibility acts as a special Stealth Modifier that increases the Difficulty of any Unobtrusiveness test to detect an invisible creature, as well as increasing the invisible creature's Hit Threshold against targeted attacks. The Stealth Modifier varies based on what the invisible creature is doing each round, from +1 (when the invisible creature is outlined in paint or is touching the Agent) to +5 (when the invisible creature is still and silent, and its location cannot reasonably be guessed). You should adjudicate the modifier based on the players' and invisible creature's actions.

This Stealth Modifier replaces, not adds to, a creature's previous Stealth Modifier (if any). If a player character spends 1 point of Notice, they gain a +3 Alertness Modifier to detect an Invisible creature for the duration of the scene. Technology that doubles as an invisibility-detection device (such as using Tinkering to modify a tether's sensors for infrared capability) cancels the Hit Threshold penalty for invisibility.

Any alien invisibility technique might be selective: the antagonist is invisible to everyone except her target, or to the Agent she is trying to goad into firing, or to non-sentient beings. This selectivity might be automatic or deliberate.

Lightning Speed

(Cost 2): The antagonist speeds up time for itself, increasing its movement (but not its attack rate). The antagonist may move 2 range increments this round instead of 1 and still attack, or can move 3 range increments without attacking. It may close to Point-Blank range with an armed assailant with no risk of being shot while moving. For this round, the antagonist's Hit Threshold rises by +1.

When used during a foot chase, Lightning Speed adds +2 to the chase ability die roll.

Mastermind

(Cost 0): The Mastermind ability doesn't grant mechanical benefits per se, and is included here mostly as a way to designate the most dangerous Adversaries. You're encouraged to pull out all the rat-bastardly, sneaky, underhanded stops when it comes to a mastermind Adversary's Professor Moriarty-level plans and tactics.

Mastermind may have a Tempus cost of 0, but don't let that fool you. Masterminds are exceedingly rare, and should be used as personal nemeses, ongoing foes, or extremely memorable villains. Mooks and Opponents are almost never masterminds. A mastermind is particularly brilliant, capable of leaps of intellect that would astound normal humans. This feature often goes hand-in-hand with the Flashback ability, and it's not unusual for a mastermind's Tempus pools to be spent substantially on Preparedness tests.

Should Agents ever stray into a mastermind-complexity trap that you consider to be lethal, the Military Tactics ability can indicate to an Agent when it might be in their best interests to retreat.

Mental Attack

(Cost variable): These begin as a normal attack made with Tempus instead of Scuffling or Shooting. The antagonist spends at least 2 Tempus pool points, possibly more, and the GM rolls a die and adds the result to the spend. If her total is greater than 4, the attack occurs. The GM then describes the sense of the attack to the player: "You feel alien thoughts crawling spiderlike through your brain." If the player decides to resist, he makes a Chronal Stability test with the Difficulty equal to the total result of the antagonist's roll plus her spend. If he fails the test, the antagonist's attack succeeds.

A hostile sophosaur attempts to take over Kelfala's mind. It spends 4 Tempus to do so and rolls a 3, for a total of 7. The attack occurs. Kelfala tries to resist by making a Chronal Stability test with a Difficulty of 7. He spends 4 points but rolls a 2, failing with a total of 6.

Successful mental attacks are typically used to inflict immediate Mental Damage or establish Domination, Mind Control, or Possession. Only rarely can antagonists inflict more than one of the following attacks (GM's choice).

- ▶ **Mental Damage (Cost 0):** Damage that ignores Armor and can target either Chronal Stability or Health, as the attacker prefers. Such attacks have a Damage Modifier of +2. Mental attacks are usually accompanied with massive headaches and nose bleeds from the victim.
- ▶ **Domination (Cost 3/round):** Overwhelm a subject's mind with a mental attack, making it slavishly and robotically obey the dominator's every command. This effect is far from subtle, and while the dominated subject will fight for the dominator, it is clear to every onlooker that the dominated subject is acting against their will. Self-destructive orders allow the subject to make a Difficulty 4 Chronal Stability test; success frees the subject from domination. Non-exceptional supporting characters can be automatically dominated by mental attacks.
- ▶ **Mind Control (Cost 3 to establish):** Much more subtle than Domination, this effect allows an antagonist to control others quite deftly and for a long period of time — weeks, months, even years. The antagonist makes three successful mental attacks (see above) during the same scene; the mind control takes effect after the third successful attack. Mind-controlled subjects often do not even realize that they are mind controlled, although they typically suffer from terrible nightmares. Non-exceptional supporting characters can be automatically mind controlled by a single mental attack.
- ▶ **Possession (Cost 3 to establish):** With a mental attack (see above), the antagonist's intelligence can bodily possess another creature for a period of time that you determine, from a few rounds to permanently. The host body suffers any Health damage, while the possessing antagonist suffers any Chronal Stability Loss. Non-exceptional supporting characters can be automatically possessed by mental attacks. While the antagonist is possessing another creature, it's up to you whether their own body sits in a vegetative state of hibernation, or whether the possessed creature's intelligence body-switches and inhabits it. In cases where possession is only temporary and a strain to maintain, a cost may need to be paid every round to keep the possession active.

Mutation

(Cost 2 per effect): The antagonist can trigger a predetermined mutation that the GM chooses, such as sprouting tentacles to climb walls or being able to breathe under water. Some mutations, such as venomous claws, may be offensive in nature. Mutations are typically linked to postapocalyptic and heavily irradiated time periods. A mutation's effect is comparable to what a player character could achieve with an Investigative spend, such as a super-science effect, telepathy, +1 or +2 damage for the scene, and the like.

Oracle

(Cost 1): Whether through a record or a perfect memory, the antagonist can perfectly predict upcoming historical events as they're known to have happened in the future.

Psychic

(Cost 2 per effect): The antagonist can trigger a predetermined psychic effect that the GM chooses, such as mind reading or

telekinesis. Psychic abilities are typically linked to the future or to particularly psychic races like sophosaurs. Psychic abilities are comparable to what a player character could achieve with an Investigative spend, such as a super-science effect like telekinesis, psychic invisibility, +1 or +2 damage for the scene, and the like.

Regenerate

(Cost 0 or 2): Most antagonists simply use Medic to heal themselves. Some antagonists can regenerate, however, whether due to cyborg implants or through alien vitality. Regeneration is almost always a free power that doesn't require a combat action, although regrowing or reattaching a severed appendage costs 2 Tempus points to do so during a scene.

The following regeneration options are in rough order of effectiveness, from jaw-droppingly effective to "that makes for a tough fight":

- ▶ all damage regenerates (Health pool refreshes completely) immediately
- ▶ all damage regenerates at the beginning of the next round
- ▶ all damage from beam weapons, explosions, and fire (not from physical weapons) regenerates immediately; or at the beginning of the next round
- ▶ all damage from physical weapons (not from beam weapons or fire) regenerates immediately; or at the beginning of the next round
- ▶ half of all damage regenerates immediately; or at the beginning of the next round
- ▶ an arbitrary amount of damage (e.g., 3 Health, 2 Health) regenerates immediately; or at the beginning of the next round
- ▶ all damage regenerates in a few minutes, or between scenes, or some other interval outside combat time

Regenerating antagonists are still vulnerable to Stun effects, but any Health they spend to boost their Stun roll will regenerate normally.

Regenerating all damage immediately makes it very hard to kill an antagonist without explosives or chronal destabilizers. Regenerating damage at the beginning of the next round or longer allows a coordinated assault (usually with heavy weapons) by the Agents to take an antagonist down to -12 Health before it can recover. Some antagonists with powerful regeneration simply can't be killed by traditional means, and Agents will need to find a craftier way to destroy them.

Resist Stun

(Cost 0): Stun tests against this antagonist have their Difficulty automatically lowered by 2, turning a Stun 5 into a Stun 3. To avoid player confusion or frustration, it's recommended that you inform players of this effect (either explicitly or through combat descriptions) after the first time it is seen in action.

Restabilize

(Cost variable): This works similarly to Reality Anchor but can only be used on other creatures. It restores another creature's Tempus pool 1 point for every point of Tempus used to power Restabilize, effectively transferring Tempus

from one creature to another. This is usually only used by Mooks or servants of a primary Adversary, minions who willingly drain their own power to maintain their master's. As you'd expect, Restabilize cannot increase a Tempus pool above the ability's rating.

Seize Initiative

(Cost 2): The antagonist can jump into the initiative order wherever desired. Taunting the player whose turn you preempt is optional, traditional, and often hilarious.

Shape-Shift

(Cost 2): The antagonist can reshape its body into a nonhumanoid form, such as a chair or a carpet. This can also be used to form rough weapons from body parts. Shape-Shift is often most effective when used with Disguise, assuming you don't want your carpet to look like a flattened antagonist.

Spider Climb

(Cost 0 or 1): Whether the antagonist uses high-tech gear or natural limbs, he can clamber effortlessly up walls and across ceilings. This costs 1 only when the effect must be deliberately activated.

Stealth

(Cost 0): Whatever intrinsic Stealth Modifier you give an antagonist costs no points to use. They may be particularly sneaky, camouflaged, or use some other means to avoid detection.

Stony

(Cost 0): Made of stone or some similarly hard matter; small pieces might chip off. Immune to any weapon with a normal Damage Modifier of +1 or lower; heavier weapons inflict -2 damage to it. Usually immune to normal fire and electricity; possibly vulnerable to acids or other chemical attacks. Has Armor 5 against car crashes and falls, which might crack it.

Strength

(Cost 0 or more): Some antagonists are simply incredibly strong and do +1 or +2 more damage than normal, for a cost of 0. Any impressive feat of strength (such as flipping over a car) costs 2. For antagonists with variable strength, every 2-point Tempus spend increases damage by +1.

Stun

(Cost 0): A successful Scuffling or Shooting test (depending on the method of stunning being used) triggers a Stun test, at a Difficulty chosen by you. Average Stun Difficulty is Stun 5, with Tasers at Stun 3 and massive futuristic military-grade stun cannons rising to Stun 8 or higher.

Summoning

(Cost 3): Summoning allows the antagonist to summon help — robotic drones summoned through cyber-gear, a team of allies time traveling in with precision accuracy, a boiling swarm of biting roaches, nearby guards sprinting to assist, hivemind-linked alien parasites bursting from nearby flesh, and the like. The degree and competence of the assistance is up to the GM. This can typically be used only once per encounter, or more often in particularly climactic fights.

Technology

(Cost 2 per effect): Possess a piece of futuristic technology with a unique or unusual effect. This is something of a catchall category for any odd or unusual effects you want to draw into an encounter. Technology is comparable to what a player character could achieve with an Investigative spend, such as a super-science effect, an armored force field, +1 or +2 damage for the scene, a unique beam weapon, and the like.

Teleport

(Cost 2): Instantaneously move from one location to another without traveling in time. Most teleportation automatically prevents the subject from accidentally materializing in a solid object. It is up to the GM as to whether other people may be teleported as well, or whether the teleportation can be tracked through the use of Investigative abilities. Can be innate or via a device.

Unfeeling

(Cost 0): Often found in robots. The antagonist never becomes Hurt by physical attacks and automatically makes all Consciousness and Stun rolls. If not a Mook or Opponent, it can still fight while Seriously Wounded. It still dies when it reaches -12 Health.

Universal Attack

(Cost 1 or 2 per target): Whether through blazing speed or minor time control, the antagonist can attack everyone he wishes within range of his weapon during one round, making separate Scuffling or Shooting rolls for each. This has the potential to quickly empty an attack pool, so antagonists who commonly use this don't necessarily spend Scuffling or Shooting points on every single attack unless they have points in abundance. Universal Attack becomes a vastly more effective tactic when your antagonists use the fixed combat bonuses described earlier in this chapter; consider raising the Tempus cost from 1 to 2 per target in such cases.

Venom

(Cost 2): Alien antagonists in particular may be venomous, or human antagonists may be using poisoned weapons or have lethal hypodermic injectors. There are several ways in which poison might be applied, as desired by players and GMs. A poison might reduce the rate of healing when the Medic ability is used, might inflict 2 or more Health damage every round for a certain number of rounds, may trigger an immediate or delayed Consciousness test, might increase by 1-2 points all damage taken by other sources, might raise the Difficulty on all tests by 1 point or more, or in rare cases might trigger an immediate Paradox test. Venom can typically be removed immediately by spending a Medical Expertise point, or by spending 4 Medic points that don't otherwise restore Health.

GAME STATS FOR MOOKS, OPPONENTS, AND SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

Here are a few foes that might get in between the Agents and their goals. As the GM, you should alter and tweak these ratings as you see fit; they are benchmarks, averages, and guidelines, not hard-and-fast absolutes.

You can easily change any Opponent to a Health 1–3 Mook if you want them to drop quickly in combat. For an elite leader, pick an individual and add 1 or 2 to Athletics, Health, and various combat abilities: this will be the commander, the tough guy in the mob, or other “level boss” figure.

For the most part, these templates can apply to foes from ancient, contemporary, or future times. Only relevant abilities are included. Opponents from high-tech environments may have significantly better armor, better armaments, or better high-tech gear than the antagonists listed here. Conversely, a thug from the Iron Age will lack high-tech weapons and armor. Adjust damage, Stealth Modifiers, and Alertness Modifiers accordingly.

Individuals dwelling in their own timeline have no need for Tempus, Restabilize, Chronal Stability, or Reality Anchor, and cannot suffer from chronal instability. If they trigger paradox, it typically affects the world around them in a manner of the GM’s choosing instead of erasing them out of existence.

Alexandrian

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 10

Offense: Scuffling +3, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +1 (advanced wrestling), +1 (pistol)

Abilities: Tempus 18; High Society 2

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Help Yourself (cost 5), Venom (cost 2 — they’re poisoners)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Description: These tall and sharp-nosed time travelers come from a parallel reality where Alexander the Great did not die as a young man. In this world it was Greek culture, not Roman, that swept over the known world and was integrated into every land Alexander conquered.

Alexandrians appreciate the stealthy use of poison to remove troublesome enemies. Venom allows a peaceful death, where an impediment is removed and no assassin may be put at personal risk. Their store of poisons varies greatly, from the gradual illness of rare roots to the sudden Health damage and paralysis of snake venom.

The Alexandrians prize philosophy, art, purity of thought, and exceptional competence over any kind of material wealth. Then again, the Alexandrians use their own time travel technology to try and bring about their utopia. They believe the moral imperative forgives them for whatever loathsome acts they must commit to save their dying timeline and turn history onto a better, kinder path. When they need to, they’re just as good at assassination and brutality as they are at anything else, so it’s fair to say that TimeWatch disagrees with them.

Variants:

- ▶ **Cleopatra’s Alexandrians:** As described on p. 366, the Alexandrian empire that evolves from a long-lived Cleopatra turns out a bit different. Game stats can be the same, adding jewel-bedecked Technology (cost 2) and a plethora of hyper-intelligent cats.

Assassin

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 12

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +0 (dagger or throwing knives), +1 (sword or pistol), +2 (beam pistol or sniper rifle)

Abilities: Tempus 13

Special Abilities: Extra Action (cost 2); +4 Damage Modifier when attacking with surprise

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier +3

Description: Sometimes a subtle infiltrator can kill a target who can be reached no other way. Futuristic assassins generally equip themselves in the finest of high-tech equipment, assuming they can afford it.

Variants:

- ▶ **Mook:** Health 1
- ▶ **Gunslinger:** Shooting +3; Damage Modifier +1 (six-gun); two damage dice when shooting in a duel or showdown; Stealth Modifier +0
- ▶ **Ninja:** Damage Modifier +2 (katana); Disguise (cost 1); Stealth Modifier +4
- ▶ **Serial Killer:** Flashback (cost 5); add Clock Out (cost 2) for time traveling serial killers
- ▶ **Sniper:** Scuffling +1, Shooting +2 (+4 if not moving); add a sniper rifle, scope, and tripod
- ▶ **Thuggee:** When restraining a foe with Scuffling, automatically inflict 1d6/round from garrote
- ▶ **Future Assassin:** Technology (cost 2); swarm of cyberbees (see below)
- ▶ **Shadowy Government Manipulator:** Bureaucracy 2, Spying 2; Exile (cost 2 — sends political enemies to the Cretaceous, but doesn’t time travel himself)

Bodyguard

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 8

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +0 (flexible baton or martial arts), +1 (pistol), Stun 4 (Taser)

Abilities: Athletics 8, Medic 4, Vehicles 8

Special Abilities: Seize Initiative (once per scene; cost 0 — can interpose themselves in front of anyone else within Point-Blank range, taking an attack meant for that person); Scuffling and Shooting rise to +3 against anyone who has attacked their guarded client

Misc: Alertness Modifier +3

Description: Whenever wealthy or important figures make enemies, they likely need a specialized security provider to keep

themselves alive. Bodyguards focus on seeing trouble early and sacrificing themselves so that their employer stays safe.

Variants:

- ▶ **Future-Era Bodyguards** with the latest in high-tech gear: Add Armor 1 (personal armor); +1 to damage (beam weapon); Cybernetics (cost 2) or Technology (cost 2); +1 to Alertness Modifier (biometric threat sensors), +1 to Stealth Modifier (chameleon suit)
- ▶ **Prohibition Muscle:** Health 10 (glass jaw: roll a natural 6 and they drop unconscious); Scuffling +2, Shooting +2; brass knuckles replace Taser, but keep Stun 4

Cave Dweller

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 10

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +2 (club or stone axe)

Abilities: Athletics 10 (when in their native era) or Tempus 10; Outdoor Survival 1

Special Abilities: Strength (cost 0)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Description: Plucked from prehistory, savage and hirsute, this particularly cinematic version of the cave dweller may not be able to easily communicate but they smarter (and stronger) than they look. Some cave dwellers are particularly superstitious, so any display of unexplainable special effects (possibly accompanied by a point of Intimidation) is likely to cow them.

Variants:

- ▶ **Chrome-Magnon:** Add Shooting +2 and Damage Modifier +2 (beam weapon); Tempus 16; Cybernetics (cost 2), Hivemind. These troglodytes have been kidnapped, brought to the future, and turned into a cybernetic army.
- ▶ **Rampaging Horde:** Health 1 per member (just make sure there are a lot of them). Most terrifying when running towards you, screaming loudly, and brandishing clubs.
- ▶ **Future Savages:** Mutation (cost 2) or Technology (cost 2). For devolved future cave people, add your choice of mutations or scavenged high-tech gear — occasionally used entirely incorrectly.
- ▶ **Savage Warrior:** Replace Scuffling with Shooting; replace club with spear; change superstition to one that's appropriate. Whether proto-Viking or island tribal warrior, these stats reflect a combatant who is a powerful but not well-rounded fighter.

Chronal Anthropologist

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 6

Offense: Scuffling +0, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +2 (chronomorphic beam weapon), Stun 5 (neural disruptor)

Abilities: Tempus 14; Anthropology 2, History (Ancient and Contemporary) 2, Timecraft 1

Special Abilities: Clock Out (possibly) (cost 2), Disguise (cost 1)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier +1

Description: Well equipped and chosen for their ability to blend in to a particular historical era, choral anthropologists move through time to study indigenous tribes and ancient history that we would otherwise know nothing about. Less ethical anthropologists use time travel to perform experiments on humanity and history, with the intent of reversing the experiment to restore the true time stream when the experiment is complete. That doesn't always work out so well.

Variants:

- ▶ **Two-Fisted Anthropologist:** Hit Threshold 4, Health 10; Scuffling +2, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +1 plus disarming (whip)
- ▶ **Doddering Old Know-It-All:** Health 3; High Society 1, Research 2, Trivia 1; often possesses an impressive walrus mustache

Chronal Leeches

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 1

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier -1 (small-fanged maw)

Abilities: Tempus 10

Special Abilities: Chronal Drain (cost 2), Exile (cost 0 — triggers when target has 0 Reality Anchor), Flight (cost 0)

Description: Chronal leeches are shimmering, pulsing, translucent eels 1–2 meters long who swim the time stream looking for potential reality to devour. They are immune to paradox and can pass freely through choral fields like the energy surrounding an autochron. Chronal leeches often attack in waves of 1–6 leeches per wave.

When they attack a time traveler with a successful Scuffling test, they immediately drain points of Reality Anchor in addition to doing physical damage. Victims whose Reality Anchor pool reaches 0, or who have a 0 rating in Reality Anchor, are automatically exiled through time to a random time and place chosen by the GM.

Variants:

- ▶ **Trained Chronal Leeches:** Packs of leeches have been found whose Exile ability exiles victims to a specific time and place, typically a jail. Packs are sent out by their mysterious trainers to hunt and retrieve time travelers.
- ▶ **Paradox Leeches:** Remove Chronal Drain, add Destabilize (cost 2). Instead of draining Reality Anchor, paradox leeches trigger a D4/L4 Paradox test with every successful bite. Their victims are soon erased from reality.
- ▶ **Exiled Leeches:** Ever encounter a ghost town and wonder where everyone went? There may be choral leeches nearby. If accidentally brought out of the time stream and into the real world, choral leeches immediately scatter and flee. They soon attack locals to try and Chronal Drain, but most non-time travelers have no Tempus and have no Reality Anchor for them to drain. Thus, most of their mundane victims are instantly exiled with a single bite. Chronal leeches stuck in reality will typically starve to death within a few weeks, but they can inflict a horrific amount of mayhem until then by flinging locals forwards

and backwards across time. If you have any doubt of this, track down the crew of the *Mary Celeste*.

Chronal Troubleshooter

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 12

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +0 (club), +2 (beam weapon), Stun 5 (neural disruptor), D4/L4 Paradox test (chronal destabilizer)

Abilities: Tempus 16, Vehicles 6; Timecraft 1

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Disguise (cost 1), Technology (cost 2), Teleport (cost 2)

Description: TimeWatch isn't always available, so sometimes future time travelers send their own troubleshooters to deal with historical problems — or cause them. Troubleshooters aren't overly concerned with blending in; their job is to head through time and get a job done, whether that job is to capture a live dinosaur or assassinate Marco Polo. They aren't usually overburdened with a surfeit of smarts or ethics, but they're well equipped, well trained, and determined. That's usually enough to make them an obstacle.

Variants:

- ▶ **Chronal Assassin:** Health 14; Shooting +3; Exile (cost 2). Assassins may have beam weapons with unusual capabilities such as concussion or disintegration.
- ▶ **Chronal Diplomat:** Charm 1, Falsehood Detection 1, Reassurance 2, Taunt 1

Civilian

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 1

Offense: Scuffling +0; Damage Modifier -1 (fist)

Abilities: Athletics 3

Description: Just another bystander, innocent or otherwise. They may be smart or stupid, rich or poor, charming or boring, Roman senators or Elizabethan gravediggers, but they aren't trained to protect themselves. Give them a firearm, and they can also manage Shooting +0.

Variants:

- ▶ **Low-Life** (or a civilian with some personal defense training): Scuffling +2
- ▶ **Crazed Inventor:** Tempus 6; Technology (cost 2)
- ▶ **Tycoon:** High Society 1; possibly employing a bodyguard
- ▶ **Evolved Humanity:** Tempus 6; Mutation (cost 2) or Psychic (cost 2)

Cyborg

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 12

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +1 (powerful metal fist), +1 plus drag target (shoulder-mounted harpoon), +2 (beam weapon)

Abilities: Tempus 18; Hacking 1

Special Abilities: Cybernetics (cost 2), Resist Stun, Strength; a hit with the harpoon drags the target one range closer

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Description: Cyborgs are half-human (or half-robot, properly speaking, since you can have cyborg animals or aliens as well) meldings of flesh and machine. It's up to you as to whether they have humanity's best interests in mind, or whether they even think of themselves as human, but it's a sure thing that the worst of them will be *almost* indistinguishable from humans until it's almost too late.

Instead of a uniquely capable cybe (see p. 170) that you'd use as a full Adversary, generic cyborgs are typically mass-produced for war and inhabited by the brains of insane or heavily mind-wiped remnants of humanity. When a future warlord needs to send generic and deadly technological assassins, they may send cyborgs. Their Cybernetics ability lets you create whatever cyborg powers you need on the fly, and their Armor 2 helps them survive to see another day.

Variants:

- ▶ **Stealth Model:** Disguise (cost 1)
- ▶ **Liquid-Metal Model:** Impersonation (cost 2), Shape-Shift (cost 2), Unfeeling
- ▶ **War Model:** Health 16; Damage Modifier special (back-mounted grenade launcher); Technology (cost 2)
- ▶ **Robotic Duplicate:** Impersonation (cost 2), Oracle (cost 1). It isn't uncommon for chronal despots to create robotic duplicates of people they wish to replace. TimeWatch has an entire storeroom somewhere back at the Citadel full of deactivated Robo-Hitlers.

Dinosaur (Large)

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Armor 1, Health 30

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +6 (bite — 1 Point-Blank target), +4 (claw stomp — 2 Point-Blank targets with one attack), +2 (tail — 3 Close targets with one attack)

Abilities: Athletics 20 (when in their native era) or Tempus 20

Special Abilities: Strength (cost 0); several of its attacks can target more than one creature at once — roll a separate test for each target

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier -4

Description: There are innumerable dinosaurs, but you don't need innumerable stat blocks to represent them. Adjust the base stat block to represent the dinosaur's abilities, adjusting Health and attacks by the sort of dinosaur you envision, and describe it however you like.

Variants:

- ▶ **Tiny Dinosaur:** Hit Threshold 4, Health 1; Damage Modifier +0 (tiny but painful claw or bite); Athletics 8
- ▶ **Small Dinosaur:** Hit Threshold 4, Health 8; Damage Modifier +1 (vicious bite or claw); Athletics 8
- ▶ **Medium Dinosaur:** Hit Threshold 3, Health 15; Damage Modifier +4 (bite, claw, horn, or spike); Athletics 12; Strength (cost 0)

- ▶ **Flying Dinosaur:** as Small or Medium Dinosaur, adding Flight (cost 0)
- ▶ **Cybernetic War Dinosaur:** Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 35; Scuffling +2, Shooting +3; Damage Modifier +6 (bite — 1 Point-Blank target), +5 (claw stomp — 2 Point-Blank targets with one attack), +3 (spiked tail — 3 Close targets with one attack), +4 (massive dino-mounted beam weapon); Tempus 25; Cybernetics (cost 2), Extra Action (cost 2)

Elephant

- Defense:** Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 30
- Offense:** Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +4 (crush), +3 (tusks), +2 (trunk — 2 Point-Blank targets with one attack)
- Abilities:** Athletics 16
- Special Abilities:** Strength (cost 0); the trunk attack can target more than one creature at once — roll a separate test for each target
- Misc:** Stealth Modifier -2
- Description:** If you're planning to cross the Alps to fight the Punic Wars, don't leave home without one.
- ▶ **War Elephant:** Armor 2; Damage Modifier +4 (crush), +4 (tusks), +3 (trunk — 2 Point-Blank targets with one attack); Tempus 10; Extra Action (cost 2)
 - ▶ **Mastodon:** Armor 2, Health 40; Damage Modifier +6 (crush), +4 (tusks), +3 (trunk — 2 Point-Blank targets with one attack)

Elite Soldier

- Defense:** Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2 (military armor), Health 8
- Offense:** Scuffling +3, Shooting +3; Damage Modifier +1 (bayonet or baton), +1 (pistol or assault rifle), +2 (heavy assault rifle), grenades
- Abilities:** Medic 4, Tempus 12, Vehicles 3
- Special Abilities:** Summoning (cost 3 — artillery strike or additional soldiers)
- Misc:** Alertness Modifier +1 (+2 with night vision capability), Stealth Modifier +1
- Description:** Every military force has their elite and special operatives. With greater than normal strength and combat capability, abilities and non-chronal capabilities may be in the same range as the Agents'.
- Variants:**
- ▶ **Samurai:** Armor 1; Damage Modifier +0 (martial arts), +2 (katana), +1 (bow), remove anachronistic weapons
 - ▶ **Starship Marine:** Replace firearms with beam weapons (Damage Modifier +2); massive power armor gives limited Flight (cost 2), Strength (cost variable), and Technology (cost 2).
 - ▶ **Starship Pilot:** Damage Modifier +2 (beam weapon); Vehicles 14; Charm 1; Flight (cost 2)

Gorilla (Superintelligent)

- Defense:** Hit Threshold 4, Health 16
- Offense:** Scuffling +3, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +3 (massive clenched gorilla fist), +2 (beam weapon)
- Abilities:** Tempus 20
- Special Abilities:** Flashback (cost 5), Lightning speed (cost 2), Strength (cost 0), Technology (cost 2)
- Misc:** Alertness Modifier +2, Stealth Modifier +1
- Description:** Whether albino or not, superintelligent gorillas who use science to beat humans at their own game make for memorable and entertaining foes. They are typically found in hidden laboratories wearing lab coats, with their nefarious plans almost brought to fruition. It's always a toss-up as to whether they'd rather hit you or test a new invention on you.

Variants:

- ▶ **Gorilla (Regular):** Scuffling +2, Shooting +0; Damage Modifier +1 (clenched gorilla fist), -1 (flung gorilla poop); remove special abilities
- ▶ **Anthropoid Demogrifier:** This superintelligent gorilla has invented an anthropoid demogrifier, a large and improbable-looking gun. The anthropoid demogrifier de-evolves a human target back into a gorilla, requiring a special Difficulty 4 Chronal Stability test; failure means that the target's intellect lowers to that of a standard gorilla until the demogrifier is destroyed.
- ▶ **Time Traveler:** Branching Point (cost 4), Clock Out (cost 2). A time traveling gorilla is mastering chronal manipulation, and knows enough to use time to its advantage.
- ▶ **Genius Cyber-Gorilla:** Remove Technology, add Cybernetics (cost 2)
- ▶ **Gorilla (Superintelligent and Psychic):** Remove beam weapon and Technology. Add Mental Attack (Mental Damage — cost 0) and Psychic (cost 2)

Guard Dog

- Defense:** Hit Threshold 4, Health 6
- Offense:** Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +0 plus Worrying (bite)
- Abilities:** Athletics 10
- Special Abilities:** Worrying (cost 0 — if two bites in a row succeed against the same target, the dog's teeth clamp down and the second attack does double damage. The dog need not roll to hit that target thereafter, but will continue to worry the foe, doing normal damage to him each round until killed or driven off. The dog's Hit Threshold is only 3 against an enemy clamped in her jaws)
- Description:** A prehistoric wolf, an armored Roman *canis pugnax*, a military-trained German shepherd, or the genetically enhanced Molosser Superior of the Second Matriarchy. Man's best friend, assuming it isn't trying to rip out your throat.
- Variants:**
- ▶ **Untrained Dogs and Wolves:** Health 3; Scuffling +1; Athletics 8

- ▶ **Cinematic Velociraptors:** Stealth Modifier +2. These stats can also be used for other prehistoric pack animals.

Immortal

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 14

Offense: Scuffling +4, Shooting +4; Damage Modifier +2 (katana), +1 (pistol)

Abilities: Tempus 20

Special Abilities: Does not age

Description: An immortal is a human who, for whatever reason, does not age. They typically spend their centuries becoming experts with a variety of weapons, settling on one or two that they particularly enjoy. They usually become rich and learn many social graces and many hobbies. Unfortunately, while they'll live forever if uninjured, they can be killed just like anyone so they work to keep their identities hidden. Immortals make superb sources of information.

Variants:

- ▶ **Warrior:** Health 50; Regenerate (cost 0 or 2; all damage regenerates at the end of the round except for decapitation). These immortal warriors seem to occur in normal human families, appearing unpredictably throughout history. They often have served as mercenaries across the ages in a hundred different wars. There would be more of them if they didn't have a predilection for hunting each other down and chopping off each other's heads.
- ▶ **Warlord:** Armor 2, Health 20; Military Tactics 2; Flashback (cost 5), Seize Initiative (cost 2), Cybernetics (cost 2) or Technology (cost 2). Some immortals decide that they're destined to conquer, and these seek out every advantage to triumph in battle.

Neighborhood Child

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 1

Offense: Scuffling -1; Damage Modifier -1 (fist)

Abilities: Athletics 3

Misc: Alertness Modifier -2, Stealth Modifier -1

Description: Enthusiastically annoying 8 to 12 year olds, adept at stumbling into adventure.

Variants:

- ▶ **Kid Genius:** Tempus 8, Tinkering 8; Mastermind, Technology (cost 2). Typically discovered making horrific technology in a garage, possibly influenced by intelligence-enhancing cast-off alien technology. Let's hope they've been treated well by their parents...
- ▶ **Psychically Controlled and Enhanced Neighborhood Child:** Scuffling +0; Damage Modifier +0 (clenched pointy rock or old board with a nail in it); Scuffling bonus rises by +1 each round of combat, max +6. When linked as a distraction by a nearby psychic antagonist, a pack of neighborhood children becomes a real threat if not dealt with quickly.

Police

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Armor 2 (police tactical vest), Health 6

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +3; Damage Modifier +0 (baton), +1 (pistol), Stun 4 (Taser; Stun 5 if neural disruptor or tear gas / stun grenades)

Abilities: Athletics 6, Vehicles 4

Special Abilities: Scuffling rises to +3 if there is a second police officer attacking the same target

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Description: Town guard, street cop, plainclothes or uniform; use for private security forces.

Variants:

- ▶ **Medieval Town Guard:** Replace more advanced weaponry with a club or sword, and a crossbow
- ▶ **Future Law Enforcer:** Armor 2 is a personal force field; beam weapon (Damage Modifier +2) replaces traditional firearms; Flight from flying hover-bike

Postapocalyptic Raider

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 8

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +0; Damage Modifier +1 (machete), +0 (makeshift spear)

Abilities: Athletics 6, Tempus 10

Special Abilities: Mutation (cost 2), Regenerate (cost 0 — Health refreshes 1 point per round when exposed to high radioactivity); Beheading (cost 0 — Damage Modifier rises to +4 if target is Restrained)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier +3

Description: Postapocalyptic raiders are mutated and degenerate humans who hunt the radioactive desert wastes. They heal 1 Health per round while exposed to high radiation. They use high stealth to sneak up on prey, Restrain them with an initial Scuffling attack that does no damage, then cut off their heads with a powerful machete swing. They typically hunt in pairs, with one raider Restraining and one Beheading each round.

Variants:

- ▶ **Mutant Raider:** Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +1 (rifle). Remove Beheading, add Mental Attack (Mental Damage — cost 0). This highly deformed monstrosity is still technically human, but not by much. Seemingly drawn unerringly towards non-mutated humans. Probably cannibalistic.
- ▶ **Bunker Rats:** Health 1, remove Beheading. The dregs of human society, willing to risk death for any improvement in their miserable lifestyle.

Robot

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 10

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +1 (pistoning jab), +2 (welding laser)

Abilities: Tempus 8

Special Abilities: Cybernetics (cost 2), Extra Action (cost 2), Technology (cost 2), Unfeeling

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2, Stealth Modifier -1

Description: A standard futuristic industrial robot, possibly gone rogue. May or may not be humanoid. The stat block above is for standard cinematic robots, but they are simple to customize by picturing the robotic feature that you want (such as electrical blasts, or super-precise targeting computers, or inexplicable whirring saw blades) and tweaking the statistics accordingly.

Variants:

- ▶ **Clockwork Automata:** Scuffling +2, Shooting +0; Damage Modifier +1 (spinning clockwork swordblade); remove Technology, add Electronic Interference (cost 2)
- ▶ **Military Robot:** Scuffling +2, Shooting +3; Damage Modifier +2 (jagged sawblades), +3 (military laser), Stun 6 (Close range — military neural disruptor); Regenerate (cost 0 — self-repairs 1 Health per round)
- ▶ **Assassination Drones:** Armor 0, Health 1; Damage Modifier +1 (razor-sharp helicopter blades), +2 (beam weapon); Hivemind; Stealth Modifier +1; usually dispatched in perfectly coordinated flights of 6 units
- ▶ **Gremlins:** As assassination drones, but Damage Modifier +3 (mechanical and electronic objects only); Electronic Interference (cost 2); Stealth Modifier +4. Gremlins are specialized robotic drones designed to disable and destroy only machinery and vehicles. They are hardened against their own Electronic Interference. During World War II, time traveling Nazi scientists continually attempt to use gremlins to surreptitiously disable Allied aircraft.
- ▶ **Lovable Robotic Sidekick:** Scuffling +0, Shooting +0; Damage Modifier -1 (no weapons); remove Extra Action
- ▶ **Killer Robot:** Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +2 (metallic blades), +2 (laser eyes); Add Strength (cost 0). Sometimes what you want is an unthinking killing machine. Built into both humanoid and nonhumanoid forms, killer robots have one particular task that they excel at, and you can bet it's not vacuuming the kitchen floor while the rest of the household sleeps.

Scientist

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 3

Offense: Scuffling +0, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier -1 (flailing fists), +2 (envenomed dart gun or beam weapon), Stun 5 (beefed-up Taser or neural disruptor)

Abilities: Tempus 10, Tinkering 15; Science! 2

Special Abilities: Cybernetics (cost 2) or Technology (cost 2), Venom (cost 2)

Description: When you need an amoral and generic scientist, these stats serve nicely for the lab-coated miscreant who has just enough time to trigger a deadly invention before getting shot. Science! Is often used to set off inconveniently deadly explosions.

Variants:

- ▶ **Muscle-Bound Scientist:** Hit Threshold 4, Health 8; Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +0 (improvised weapon, possibly a clipboard); Athletics 8. Useful when you want strong and smart, with a little more lasting power in a fight.

Soldier

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 7

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +0 (club or baton), +1 (sword or bayonet), +1 (bow, pistol, or assault rifle), grenades

Abilities: Athletics 8, Vehicles 3

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Description: Regular military soldier.

Variants:

- ▶ **Conscriptee or National Guard:** Lower all ratings by 1; Hit Threshold 3
- ▶ **Ancient History Soldier:** Scuffling +2
- ▶ **Sniper:** Shooting +3 when not moving; Shooting +5 when not moving for the prior 3 or more rounds

Spy

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 10

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +0 (knife or martial arts), +1 (pistol)

Abilities: Burglary 8, Tempus 12, Vehicles 8; Charm 1, Falsehood Detection 1, Reassurance 1, Spy 2

Special Abilities: Disguise (cost 1), Flashback (cost 5), Venom (cost 2 — poison dart)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2, Stealth Modifier +3

Description: Whether a suave secret agent or a femme fatale, a ragged infiltrator or a bribed traitor, the spy is excellent at entering closed locations and uncovering secrets.

Variants:

- ▶ **Spanish Inquisitor:** Remove Charm 1, replace with Intimidation 1
- ▶ **Master Spy:** Scuffling +3, Shooting +3; Tempus 18; Charm 2; Technology (cost 2); Stealth Modifier +4
- ▶ **Private Eye:** replace Charm 1 with Streetwise 1; Alertness Modifier +3, Stealth Modifier +1

Swarm of Cyber-Bees

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Armor 5 vs. physical attacks (Fluid), Health 15

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +0 plus Venom (bee stings)

Abilities: Tempus 14

Special Abilities: Flight, Fluid, Universal Attack (cost 1 per target), Venom (cost 2 — venom paralyzes, reducing

the target's Athletics pool by 1d6. A poisoned target with an Athletics pool of 0 is Restrained and can fight but is unable to move. Movement is restored should a paralyzed target's Athletics pool refresh above 0)

Description: A swarm of cyber-bees is a thing to be feared. Tiny robotic assassins with molecular venom generators, they attack all hostile targets in an area (i.e., anyone who tries to swat a cyber-bee) and use their venom to prevent their targets' escape. Cyber-bee swarms are often utilized by futuristic assassins who wish to immobilize their prey before closing to deliver the final blow.

Variants:

- ▶ **Killer Bird Flock:** Remove venomous bee stings, add Damage Modifier +0 (razor-sharp beaks) and Lightning Speed (cost 2). Killer bird flocks (often passenger pigeons, for reasons no one at TimeWatch yet understands) effectively restrain their targets by blanketing them with their flapping and pecking bodies. There's no venom involved, so the target is no longer restrained once the birds are slain or driven off.

Thief

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 6

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +0 (dagger or throwing knives), Stun 3 (blackjack)

Abilities: Athletics 10, Burglary 12

Special Abilities: Spider Climb (cost 0)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier +3

Description: Need something stolen? Turn to a professional thief! They aren't necessarily combatants, but they can usually get in and out with your goods.

Variants:

- ▶ **Mook:** Health 1
- ▶ **Burglar:** Remove Shooting rating (most burglars don't carry weapons)
- ▶ **Child Pickpocket:** Add Damage Modifier +0 (thrown rock, fish, or street debris)
- ▶ **High-Tech Thief:** Add Tinkering 10; Hacking 1, Science! 1
- ▶ **Time Thief:** Add Tempus 12; Clock Out (cost 2), Technology (cost 2); time thieves are superb at escaping from chases. In any chase or time chase where the time thief is the quarry, target Difficulties on chase abilities for the thief are lowered by -1 (so their default Difficulty is 3 instead of 4).

Thug

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 6

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +0 or Stun 4 (brass knuckles), +1 (pistol)

Abilities: Athletics 6, Vehicles 3

Description: Muscle for a criminal organization, professional miscreant, random guard. Strong, not smart.

Variants:

- ▶ **Gladiator:** Hit Threshold 4, Health 8; Athletics 8, Vehicles 5
- ▶ **Trained Shooter:** Shooting +3
- ▶ **Bouncer:** Scuffling +3; Intimidation 1

Tyrannosaurus Rex

Defense: Hit Threshold 2, Armor 2, Health 50

Offense: Scuffling +3; Damage Modifier +8 (bite — 1 Point-Blank target), +6 (claw stomp — 2 Point-Blank targets with one attack), +4 (tail — 3 Close targets with one attack)

Abilities: Athletics 24

Special Abilities: Strength (cost 0); several of its attacks can target more than one creature at once — roll a separate test for each target

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier -4

Description: A cinematic dinosaur, a roaring juggernaut of toothy destruction. It's easy to hit a *T. rex*, the hard part is hurting it enough to stop it. While we know that the *T. rex* should technically be classified as a Dinosaur (Large) above, some dinos are important and unique enough to get their own category.

Vehicle

(Tractor-Trailer with Renegade AI)

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 25

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +6 (speeding truck)

Abilities: Tempus 16, Vehicles 20

Special Abilities: Lightning Speed (cost 2), Regenerate (cost 0 — self-repairs 1 Health per round), Technology (cost 2), Unfeeling; two damage dice instead of 1 (2d6+6) if the vehicle moved but did not attack on the previous turn; Scuffling rises to +3 when outside and the target has little cover

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2

Description: This sentient tractor-trailer possesses a rogue AI that is hostile to humanity. It operates autonomously when it chooses to do so.

Variants:

- ▶ **Intelligent Car:** Health 20, Damage Modifier +3 (speeding car). From Chitty Chitty Bang Bang to KITT, there are plenty of models for intelligent cars in cinema and literature.

SAMPLE STATS FOR ADVERSARIES

Adversaries are the big bad guys who act as the perpetrators of your mysteries. There are as many types of Adversaries as you can imagine, including ones drawn from the Mook and Opponent stats above, but only a few different types will likely be involved with your Agents at any one time. Adversaries are almost always named, so they usually won't be considered Mooks with only 1 Health.

When you create Adversaries, choose abilities from the Special Ability list that make sense thematically. Here are

some samples, both of villainous individuals and categories of antagonists.

ANIKA BABBAGE

Born in 2054 in an alternate history London, Anika Babbage is the great-great-(etc.)-granddaughter of the union between Lady Ada Byron (aka Ada Lovelace) and Charles Babbage. In Anika's history, Byron and Babbage had more than just technical conversations via correspondence. Ada ended up fleeing England prior to her dreary marriage with William King, and she was married to Charles in Italy. Ada's direct participation in Babbage's research put the world decades ahead in computational technologies, and Babbage's relationships with more rigorous medical minds saved Ada from an early demise in England.

The world Anika was born into was a virtual paradise. A world government built on a technocratic base and fueled by progressive ideas had brought the world together in peace and prosperity. Her family's company was the primary provider of advanced technologies to a grateful Earth, and her privatization

of interdimensional/inter-time tech was supposed to be the start of a golden age for her world.

Unfortunately, Anika's world was a "mistake." Antagonist manipulations in the 19th century (probably sophosaur, possibly ezeru, or whatever antagonist you wish) started the ripples that pushed Ada into Babbage's arms. TimeWatch stopped the problem at its source... but "upstream" from the change, Anika was working with some of the most advanced chrono-dimensional technology constructed in any time frame. When the timeline was corrected, Anika remained, finding herself in a very different 21st century than the one she was used to. She used the gear she had with her and borrowed materials from the new timeline to ensure her survival. She's a constant in the universe now, a woman well anchored in time and guaranteed to always exist as herself.

Anika has made herself into the immovable object, and she's butting up against the unstoppable force that is TimeWatch. TimeWatch, to her, is an arrogant bunch of murdering bumbler trying to play God. She's smart enough to see both sides of the argument, but her very life and the lives of her

FOUND BY TIMEWATCH ON A MEDIA DEVICE LEFT BEHIND BY LADY BABBAGE AFTER A PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING ENCOUNTER:

Daily Star — "Babbage Babe Buys Big!" — 09/20/2089

The world has been set on its head yet again by the Babbage dynasty, as Lady Anika Babbage purchases all rights and licenses to the Kleiner-Rosen Institute.

For years the United Nations has vowed that the world's resources would see big dividends from this interdimensional research institute. They wowed us all with their demonstration in the great Tolbert Amphitheatre in Monrovia, Liberia. None of the assembled national governors had seen a living dinosaur before, but scales and feathers galore convinced the gathered politicians that the world-state's money had been well spent.

Now, at the cost of an estimated 1.7 trillion dollars, Lady Babbage has purchased the institute and its technologies, privatizing interdimensional travel and boosting the bottom line of the World Bank considerably.

"My company was founded at the end of the 19th century. My ancestor, the great Lady Ada Babbage, believed that technology was the way to bring the world together. Fusion, maglev technology, artificial protein growth... Marylebone Technologies has fueled some of the greatest scientific advancements of the 20th and 21st centuries. Now, through technology, we'll bring all worlds together."

The UN Secretary-General has already allocated many of the funds. The final phases of the international transmat system will be installed, finally connecting the Australian Outback and the depths of the Amazon with Trafalgar Square and the Eiffel Tower. The international disease eradication board will have the funds it needs to complete inoculations against the common cold, and the few remaining strains of cancerous growths will finally see their end.

Meanwhile, there's great speculation about what kind of products the institute will pursue now that it's part of the MT empire. Our technologies expert...

<End of File>

family were snuffed out incidentally as part of a random, relatively unimportant time op.

Anika's toolkit includes vast knowledge about the theory and practice of time travel. She knows all the "little tricks" to come out ahead in a time-related clash, and she's found that bringing overwhelming force to bear at precisely the correct time has a very good record for being successful. She possesses the best in bleeding-edge technology whether she's acquired it or invented it herself, giving her access to most items in the *Gear* chapter. Most importantly, Anika is patient. She is the type of "villain/antihero" that sees a slight memory modification and an energy rifle as equally powerful weapons. If need be, she's happy to abandon her plans and blend into the background to avoid capture or death. She's in this for the long game, not the short-term win, and she plans her operations accordingly.

Anika's major weakness is compassion. If at all possible, she avoids killing. "If possible" is the focus here, and she's much more careful about killing "locals" than time agents. She'd never, for example, drop a nuke on a crowded stadium to achieve her goals, and if she can let a time agent live without it impacting her broader plans, she'll do so. She'd rather go back in time and convince a TimeWatch agent to pick a different line of work, possibly recruiting them for her own organization, than have them killed during an operations. She'll gladly weather a little paradox if it means a net win for her own plans.

Anika's goals, in order of importance:

- 1. Restore her timeline.** She's long since figured out the specific events that created her unique timeline. She also is well aware getting her home back isn't as simple as recreating the antagonist plot that TimeWatch dismantled. She needs to not only create the timeline, but safeguard it from any further time traveling interference. So far she hasn't discovered or created any technology to do this, but she might have some ideas of where to go to start down this path.
- 2. Destroy TimeWatch.** She assumes that eventually she'll have to wipe TimeWatch out to achieve her primary goal. She doesn't want to kill anyone if she can help it, but she wants to ensure the organization never exists, doing to them what they did to her. Anika, of all of TimeWatch's adversaries, may be the most dangerous because she doesn't fear paradox when researching up and down the time stream. She remains determined to subvert and dismantle the organization, and she's busy collecting the loose threads she'll have to pull to unravel everything at once.
- 3. Learn, collect, and develop technology.** Rare technologies and one-of-a-kind finds are so prized by Anika that it's almost a weakness. Her goals in any given timeline or time frame will usually involve making off with a notable theorem or prototype. It's how she's managed to stay alive, and how she hopes to one day take down TimeWatch and return history to what she knew.
- 4. Make lasting friends.** Anika is deeply lonely, and she treasures friends and allies that she knows she can trust 100%. As a result, she's befriended numerous people throughout history, some of whom are influential. Such individuals

trust her as well, and act as her eyes and ears across time to help keep her informed. She'd be loath to sacrifice them to ambition, however, unless she had no other choice and the stakes were unthinkable high. She keeps her personal friendships secret as a result, so that her enemies cannot use them against her.

Anika Babbage's Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4 or higher (usually 5 due to Distortion), Armor 3 (personal force fields), Health 20

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +3; Damage Modifier +2 or higher, plus special effect (any technology from the *Gear* chapter, possibly improved)

Abilities: Tempus 50 (uniquely high), Tinkering 15; Bureaucracy 2, Hacking 2, High Society 3, History (Future) 2, Paradox Prevention 3, Science! 3, Timecraft 3

Special Abilities: Distortion (cost 2), Flashback (cost 5), Mastermind, Oracle (cost 1); Anika's vast array of futuristic tech can use Technology (cost 2) to emulate virtually any other Special Ability from the list found on p. 152.

Misc: Alertness Modifier +3 (hyper-optimized tether); Stealth Modifier +1 to +5 (invisibility generator)

COLONEL SIR BAYARD CAIDE

A charming grin. A hearty laugh. A lethal stab in the back, followed by a firm push down the stairs.

Caide is an utterly charismatic English baronet and career cavalry officer at the end of the 18th century. He leads his men with competence and dignity, charms the ladies (unmarried or not) with casual ease, and pretty much commands any room he happens to step into. His commanding officers look at him with wonder and not just a bit of jealousy; Caide exudes that aura of charm, kindness, and competence that makes him a trusted leader.

And that's really a pity, because Sir Bayard Caide is a ruthless and unapologetic cad. He enjoys ruining others' lives, breaking the law, and flouting societal mores, and he believes deeply that if one should betray others — and make no mistake, Caide really does enjoy betraying others — then one should do so with style and panache. "Make it memorable and make it count," he says, because lesser methods would demean his gifts. As a result, Caide's plans are clever, dastardly, and practically cinematic. He overplans, but it's usually in the interest of humiliating his foes at the best possible time.

Caide's good reputation is all-important to him, and he never acts against someone who could spread scurrilous rumors unless that person can be controlled or destroyed. Sir Bayard Caide may have started as an English cavalry officer, but true talent seldom goes unnoticed for long. He is now a known freelancer for time traveling agents of various nefarious operations, all of whom need a capable and resourceful human agent. He's so good with people that he can almost always talk himself out of trouble, and his reputation as a team player means that rebel groups and enemies of humankind are lining

up to hire him. He may be working for someone else, but he's ultimately out only for himself. His employers would be wise to remember that.

Caide can inspire a good bit of loyalty in underlings and allies of convenience, but his one weakness is strong-minded, stylish women. He'll go to extreme lengths to impress or pursue one who has caught his eye, and he may get so wrapped up in the romantic dance that he forgets his task at hand. When that woman is a TimeWatch agent, Caide may even be talked into changing sides... at least briefly.

Sir Bayard Caide's Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 15

Offense: Scuffling +3, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +1 (cavalry sword), +1 (pistol)

Abilities: Tempus 22; Authority 3, Charm 3, Falsehood Detection 2, Military Tactics 2, Spying 1, Taunt 2

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Extra Action (cost 2), Flashback (cost 5), Technology (cost 2 — see below)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +3 (Notice); Stealth Modifier +1

Description: Handsome and dashing, Caide makes a good first impression and inspires friendship. If Caide is on a job, he usually has a technological item or two held in reserve for a fast escape.

CHRONO-HOUNDS

The agony of disintegrating flesh. The scent of the universe's birth. The drifting soot of death.

It's foolish to assume that humankind was the universe's first sentient species — or, for that matter, the first species to master time travel. Chrono-hounds were born in the chaos of the universe's creation, human-sized winged creatures made of antimatter. Their true appearance is almost impossible to discern due to the antimatter, but they seem to squirm with sprouting wings, beaks, and tentacles. They smell like ancient dust, and the noise they make is quite literally impossible to forget.

By our time, 13.82 billion years later, chrono-hounds have largely disappeared, since interacting with matter causes them to blink out of existence. Outside of this significant and really unfortunate evolutionary design flaw, they are impressive hunters who follow scents through **time** and space. For that reason, some sentient races use them for assassinations — find a chrono-hound (or go back in **time** to when they were common) and give them a whiff of a target, and they'll home in on its source. If successful, it's like the target disappeared without leaving behind any evidence, since the attack destroys both hound and victim; while it's believed that some chrono-hounds regenerate after a fight, the same can't be said of its victim.

In game terms, a chrono-hound damages both its target and itself with every attack. By the same token, attacking them unarmed will cause personal damage, while melee weapons used against them are quickly destroyed (unless they're made with antimatter). Whoever reaches -12 Health first is destroyed on

a molecular level. That means several Agents working together could destroy one or two, but chrono-hounds are devastating in one-on-one combat. A chrono-hound pack is especially vicious, but is rare unless gathered from the earliest days of the universe.

Recruiting a hound for an assassination typically requires an unorthodox cost; chrono-hounds don't think like humans, and their motivations are usually ineffable, but they don't track down prey for free. The assassin who recruits a hound usually finds that their Drive changes unexpectedly at a later date, suddenly compelling the individual to accomplish a task or act in a certain way for a short period of time. Mind you, that's usually a small price to pay for a near-perfect murder.

Dr. Breen recruits a chrono-hound to kill a pesky but resourceful enemy. At a later date, Dr. Breen's Drive changes from "Hubris" to "Noble Self-Sacrifice" for the length of a mission. Dr. Breen never learns why or what that price accomplished, but — assuming she survives her newly found attempted martyrdom — she swears never to seek out a chrono-hound again.

Hunting Chrono-Hound Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4 or 5 (Distortion), Health 25

Offense: Scuffling +3; Damage Modifier +1 (antimatter disintegration)

Abilities: Tempus 16

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Destabilize (cost 4 — all creatures within Close range), Distortion (cost 2), Flight, Regenerate (cost 0 — all Health at end of scene), Unfeeling

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2; the chrono-hound suffers the same amount of damage it inflicts on its foe; weapons used to attack a chrono-hound disintegrate the second time they touch it

THE COLONY

The sweet smell of rancid yeast. Endless, silent patience. Inhuman and uncaring colonization.

The Colony consists of fungal intelligences that arrived on Earth at the end of the Cretaceous period, coming in with the dinosaur-killing meteor 65 million years ago. The Colony colonized the world during the icy darkness that followed, feeding off of the flesh of dying dinosaurs and psychic animal fear. How are you alive to read this? Somehow, the Colony was wiped out before it destroyed Earth's history. No one is sure how, but it's assumed that TimeWatch bathed (or will bathe, if they haven't already) the meteor with sterilizing radiation before it hit Earth. TimeWatch hasn't sent anyone to go check in the fear of accidentally causing a paradox that brings the Colony back into a world-spanning existence.

This is a case where in "true time," none of humanity would have existed if it weren't for both a paradox and TimeWatch. No one knows how a nonexistent TimeWatch managed to save history from extinction, or even if it *was* actually TimeWatch who was responsible for eradicating the Colony. Chronal instability from the victorious time travelers seems to have erased their identity from memory. It could be anyone.



When facing the fungal Colony, Skegg knows her best tactic: burn them out.

It could be you.

Quiescent spores continue to be a rare threat that is burned out (literally) whenever they appear, usually manifesting themselves through normal mold and fungus. The Colony has a group intelligence and can mind control any creature it has colonized. It cannot time travel, but it seems to vaguely know everything that its rhizomes have experienced forwards and backwards in time, giving it vast knowledge and the ability to plan ahead. In an emergency it can secrete acid, but can only affect those who deliberately touch the Colony. It cannot move, other than by having mold-colonized drones seed new patches elsewhere.

Colony Spore-Patch Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 12 (per patch)

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +0 (secretes acid)

Abilities: Tempus 20

Special Abilities: Electronic Interference (cost 2), Hivemind (cost 0 or 2), Immaterial (cost 0 — vulnerable to fire and radiation), Mental Attack (Mental Damage — cost 0, Domination — cost 3/round, Possession — cost 3 to establish), Oracle (cost 1), Unfeeling

Misc: Alertness Modifier +4, Stealth Modifier +3

Description: A Colony spore-patch appears as a sickly,

spreading fungus. It is exceptionally difficult to damage without fire or radiation, and although it secretes acid that burns anyone who touches it, it attacks primarily with mental attacks. Any player or supporting character left possessed at the end of a scene becomes a mold-colonized drone within several days, slowly sprouting mold and losing their sense of self.

Mold-Colonized Drone Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 1

Offense: Scuffling 6 (1-1-1); Damage Modifier +2 (unnatural fungal strength)

Abilities: Tempus 6

Special Abilities: Hivemind (cost 0 or 2), Strength (cost 0), Unfeeling, Universal Attack (cost 1 per target); Colonize (cost 0 — when killed, the drone bursts into an explosion of spores and rotten flesh. The Colonize attack uses all remaining points of Scuffling with Universal Attack to attack all non-Colony creatures within Point-Blank range. Minimum damage is the number of Scuffling points remaining. Creatures killed by this attack immediately rise as mold-colonized drones. Drones are usually human, but may be any large plant or animal)

Description: The Colony uses these as their hands and feet. A mold-colonized drone appears as a normal human or animal that is sprouting fungus from its flesh. Their eyes are usually blank. If they lack a better tactic, drones try to close to Point-Blank range with as many enemies as possible to maximize their Colonize attack when killed.

CRYPTIDS

A roar in the dark woods. A huge footprint. Unnaturally intelligent eyes. Flippers and wings where there should be legs. Monstrous humanoids, slipping through the trees.

Somewhere in history, one or more maniacs (such as Dr. Dansky Cordova) are breeding intelligent abominations and time-beaming them into the past. This is where yeti and the Loch Ness Monster come from, but it's far worse than just those. Hideous and unexplainable amalgams of normal creatures are also being sent back: swarms of bumblefrogs, packs of snake-apes, sentient time-bears, the platypus, all sorts of clearly manufactured amalgam creatures that take over ecologies and change the world. The exceptionally cautious scientists responsible don't travel themselves, or they know how to bribe people, so no one has caught them... yet. TimeWatch usually focuses on eradicating cryptid infestations before they take root and destroy the local ecology. There's an unofficial reward for the agents who can stop the attacks and infestations permanently.

Cryptid missions make for a nice change of pace. There's probably no overweening, cackling bad guy; instead, there's a woolly mammoth with weaponized squid tentacles and a very disgruntled attitude, and all it wants to do is breed. Stop the world from being overrun, and you probably win the day.

Bigfoot (Cryptid; Sasquatch, Yeti, etc.) Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 20

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +2 (massive hairy claw), +3 (swung uprooted tree), +3 (thrown boulder)

Abilities: Tempus 14; Intimidate 1, Outdoor Survival 2

Special Abilities: Distortion (cost 2), Electronic Interference (cost 2), Strength (cost 0)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier +3

Description: Genetically engineered by a future scientist and sent back through time to confound and mystify humanity, the Bigfoot is crafty but not particularly intelligent. Their very presence disrupts electronics. It prefers avoiding human contact, but might react violently if forced into a fight. Occasional Bigfoot are misanthropic geniuses capable of careful, competent, and deadly planning against humanity.

Blemmye Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 8

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +1 (held or thrown spear)

Abilities: Tempus 10

Special Abilities: Strength (cost 0); have no heads and their faces are in the middle of their chests (which isn't really a special ability, but it's definitely worth noting)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1 (–1 if forced to wear a shirt)

Description: The blemmyes (go look them up!) are Nubian monsters described by 5th-century BCE Greek historian Herodotus as “headless creatures with eyes in their chests (at least, that is what the Libyans say).” They aren't myth at all, being instead either mutations or genetic monstrosities from the future who have made a home in the past. They enjoy feigning friendship, lulling their prey into trustful insensibility with powerful drink, then pulling off their heads to use as balls in a soccer-like sport.

Bumblefrog Swarm Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 5 vs. physical attacks (Fluid), Health 15

Offense: Scuffling +1; Damage Modifier –1 plus Venom (venomous stinger)

Abilities: Tempus 12

Special Abilities: Chronal Drain (cost 2), Flight, Fluid, Universal Attack (cost 1 per target), Venom (cost 2 — each sting causes 1 point of Health damage per round for 5 rounds)

Description: Bumblefrogs are easy to hear coming; they're a fast-flying, buzzing, croaking, stinging swarm of aerial amphibians with a taste for flesh that can take down a cow in seconds. Each bumblefrog sting inflicts 1 point of damage per round for 5 rounds. That doesn't seem like much, but a swarm can attack everyone within Close range to it simultaneously. Many bumblefrog swarms also have a chronal anomaly where they feed on Reality Anchor points, draining them from their victims with every successful attack.

Chupacabra Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 15

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +1 plus Drain Blood (piercing tongue)

Abilities: Tempus 10

Special Abilities: Help Yourself (cost 5); Drain Blood (cost 0 — the chupacabra Regenerates 3 Health in any round when it slurps blood through its glossa, a hollow, needle-like tongue)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2, Stealth Modifier +3

Description: Slinking through the Mexican countryside to slurp blood from livestock and small children, the hideous “goatsucker” is a predator of opportunity who prefers to feed upon the drunk, weak, and foolish.

The chupacabra has a rare ability to duplicate itself in time, bringing in up to two future or past versions of itself to assist in any fight. This makes it three times more dangerous than it might first appear.

Platypus Stats

It's just a platypus. They don't do much. And anyways, we know from experience that TimeWatch let this one slip through.

Sea Serpent Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 5, Armor 2, Health 60

Offense: Scuffling 20 (usually 2 per attack); Damage Modifier +4 (razor fangs)

Abilities: Tempus 20

Special Abilities: Distortion (cost 2), Lightning Speed (cost 2), Strength (cost 0), Universal Attack (cost 1 per target); Swallow Whole (cost 2 per target — a sea serpent can swallow anyone it bites. Swallowed prey is restrained, automatically takes Damage Modifier +4 Scuffling damage each round, and must make a Difficulty 4 Athletics to act each round. It is impossible to cut through the sea serpent's hide from inside until the creature is dead, but the stomach has a Hit Threshold 2 and Armor 0)

Description: Whether the Loch Ness Monster or a traditional deep-sea serpent, this cryptid is over thirty meters long and capable of taking down whales for food. They're hard to photograph and capable of swallowing a half-dozen sailors at once. According to rumor, a victim that survives the initial bite attack is swallowed and might survive for a short time within the serpent's gullet. No one is particularly eager to prove whether or not this is accurate.

Snake-Ape Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 20

Offense: Scuffling +2, Damage Modifier +1 plus Venom (snake fangs), +3 (gorilla slam), +0 plus Restrain (constrictor snake tail)

Abilities: Tempus 6

Special Abilities: Extra Action (cost 2), Spider Climb (cost

0), Strength (cost 0), Venom (cost 2 — triggers an immediate Stun 5 test); constrictor tail Restrains

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2

Description: Five meters long with the tail of a giant anaconda and the torso of a great ape, possessed of a dim and vicious intelligence that usually results in mayhem, snake-apes are never going to end up on anyone's list of "most-favored cryptid." Regardless, they're occasionally found in the tropical places of the world, appearing throughout time in jungle civilizations to overthrow humans or be worshipped as gods. TimeWatch works to eradicate them every time one shows up, but their predilection for only being beamed into primitive societies means that they're usually noticed in artwork long after the fact, and care has to be taken to avoid paradox during the cryptid's elimination.

Time-Bear Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 16

Offense: Scuffling +3; Damage Modifier +2 plus Destabilize (big honking time-bear claw crackling with chronal energy)

Abilities: Tempus 14

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Destabilize (cost 2), Extra Action (cost 2), Lightning Speed (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier -1

Description: Time-bears are a result of the worst kind of experimental error. They are sentient, intelligent ursines that can intrinsically time travel, can close on you despite your drawn weapon, can attack more than one person in a turn, and whose unnatural existence is such a paradox that being hit by one risks chronal instability. They wander history and stalk time travelers, who provide the chronal energy that salmon just can't deliver. Rarely, time-bears establish themselves as a surreptitious leader in primitive human society, demanding food and worship in exchange for protection or wisdom.

CYBES

Monotone, imperious commands. The clicking of servos. The whirring of gears. A smell of machine oil. The screams of fleshy slaves.

Cybes are typically sentient robots and cyborgs who wish to remove fleshy, mewling impediments from their conquered world of pure order. There are any number of places in history from which they can arise — alternate futures after the technological singularity, alien invasions, insane inventors, replicants on the run, government-built super-soldiers, or Victorian steam-punk technology. From emotionless cold metal intelligences to terrifyingly accurate extermination tools to half-human cyborgs forging their own new culture, cybes make for excellent antagonists.

Cyborg Leader Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 25

Offense: Scuffling +3, Shooting +3; Damage Modifier +1

(casually wielded club), +3 (inexorable vise-like cyborg grip), +3 (beam projector)

Abilities: Tempus 20; Authority 2

Special Abilities: Cybernetics (cost 2), Regenerate (cost 0 — regenerates 2 Health at the beginning of each round), Resist Stun, Shape-Shift (cost 2), Strength (cost 0), Technology (cost 2), Unfeeling

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Description: Use the entry for *Cyborg* on p. 160 for unnamed cyborg warriors, and the above entry for their leaders and decision-makers. Cyborg leaders are notoriously difficult to fully destroy, and Agents may need to use creativity to do so.

DIMENSIONAL MASTER

Self-assured insolence. A knowing, infuriating laugh. Braggadocio in abundance.

The Dimensional Master often refers to himself as "secret," but in truth he's anything but. He isn't out to alter the timeline to create some twisted, utopian vision like some other adversaries; in fact, he very much wants to keep the timeline as intact and normal as possible. What he is, however, is a revisionist. He inserts himself into significant points in time and does what he can to manipulate outcomes so that two things occur: everything happens as it's supposed to, *and* he can take credit for each event as if they were his idea, by incorporating some subtle "marker" or "hint" revealing his involvement into the historical event. The marker doesn't disrupt the timeline, but if someone goes looking for it they easily recognize his signature.

He is even more pervasive due to the number of times he has copied and crossed himself. There are dozens or hundreds of versions of the Dimensional Master out there, some real and some from alternative branching futures, all of them irritatingly confident. Capturing or killing one incarnation won't slow the others down, and even he is no longer sure what is real and what isn't. He's gotten into a competition and rivalry with himself more than once. Capturing his original incarnation might put the timeline in peril by endangering the hundreds of events he has since altered; more than once, TimeWatch agents have had to choose between justice and unraveling a chain of occurrences that could take years to correct.

The Dimensional Master serves as both an ally and nemesis to TimeWatch. Perhaps he was once an agent, perhaps he was born in the far future and has come back; he isn't saying. From his perspective, he's matured beyond the primitive limits of "preserving the timeline" to a more altruistic goal of being responsible for the timeline itself, which really just translates as "he's a self-involved narcissist running around photobombing history."

That said, he tries to act like he really doesn't care about any recognition at all, even though that's exactly what he craves. He's responsible for killing off the dinosaurs; he lived for decades as Leonardo da Vinci; he holo-projected images of future events into a bowl of water Nostradamus kept looking at; he erected Stonehenge; he shot Hitler in his bunker; he had the BBC make a TV show about a time traveling hero... anything for bragging rights.

Secret Dimensional Master Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 22

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +3; Damage Modifier -2 (ineffectual punch), +2 (beam weapon), Stun 5 (neural disruptor)

Abilities: Tempus 30

Special Abilities: Branching Point (cost 2), Clock Out (cost 2), Disguise (cost 1), Flashback (cost 5), Help Yourself (cost 5), Mastermind, Oracle (cost 1), Technology (cost 2), Teleport (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier +1

Description: The Dimensional Master's appearance is impossible to remember after the fact; witnesses recall a brilliant smile and a cheerful voice, but no other details of appearance.

DISEMBODIED BRAINS

Meaty, glistening, whorled flesh. The psychic breath of spiraling migraines. A hollow and knowing cackle inside your skull.

By the time humanity hits the 30th century, medical science has evolved enough to separate our psyche from the clumsy meat-shell that contains it. Although we're far from



Disembodied psychic brains prefer to have other people do their fighting for them.

transcending our bodies entirely, technology can now keep a brain happy, healthy, and effective long after the physical body dies. Independently of technology, some humans have even developed psychic powers so advanced that they don't require braincases for their disembodied brains to survive. Their intellect has shucked off their flesh and freed their brains to exist on psionic energy alone. It's just a shame that such towering intelligence carries with it the common condition of megalomania, and the ability to indulge nearly any whim with the "lesser" people of eons past.

Braincase-Clad Disembodied Brain Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 15

Offense: Scuffling +0, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +2 (beam weapon or electrical shock), Stun 5 (neural disruptor)

Abilities: Tempus 20

Special Abilities: Cybernetics (cost 2), Flight (cost 2 to exceed a slow hover), Regenerate (cost 0 — regain 2 Health at the beginning of each turn), Spider Climb (cost 1 to sprout mechanical spider legs from the braincase), Technology (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2; vulnerable to Stun effects — all Stun tests made by the disembodied brain are at +1 Difficulty

Description: These Adversaries are encased in transparent, nanotechnology-equipped armored braincases. The braincases usually remind people of fishbowls.

High-tech disembodied brains seldom possess significant levels of psychic power, surviving instead due to exquisite medical nanotechnology. The armored braincase can hover due to antigravity generators, manipulate nearby objects, produce futuristic weaponry on a whim (well, okay, on a Tempus-based Preparedness test or by using Technology), and generally suffer no disadvantages from not having limbs or a body. Killing such a brain doesn't necessarily end the lingering threat, as anyone rich enough to afford braincase technology upon death can also usually afford to have copies of their personality downloaded into autonomous robots. If the braincase is somehow destroyed, the individual may live on in distributed cybernetic form.

Not all technologically preserved disembodied brains are megalomaniacal or insane. Many retain their sanity and use their advanced technological prowess to travel through time and set up their own paradise on Earth at a point in history that best suits them. They may choose to be military demagogues or benevolent dictators in this historical playground they create, but one thing is certain: they don't have the best interests of the locals at heart.

Psychic Disembodied Brain Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4 or 5 (Distortion), Armor 1, Health 20

Offense: Scuffling +0, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +0 (telekinetically swung object), Stun 5 (mind-blast)

Abilities: Tempus 16

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Disguise (cost 1),

Distortion (cost 2), Flight (cost 2 to exceed a slow hover), Mastermind, Mental Attack (Mental Damage — cost 0, Mind Control — cost 3 to establish), Psychic (cost 2), Summoning (cost 3 — mind-controlled minions)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2

Description: These floating brains glimmer with psychic luminescence, drawing sustenance from the very thoughts around them.

Technology is for the unevolved. *Truly* evolved humankind (or possibly dolphinkind, in some parallel realities) eschews technology in favor of pure mental and psychic might. These floating brains don't exist because medicine is helping them cling to a paltry few more centuries of life, they exist because their intellect was so great that their weak flesh could not contain it! All lesser life forms must pay tribute to their intellectual superiority, or pay the consequences.

As you can imagine, most psychic disembodied brains don't have many friends, unless you count the people they've mind controlled or terrified into obeying them. They repay devotion with glimpses of oracular futures, with direct manipulation of the brain's pleasure centers, and with power and wealth. These are creatures who usually hide at the center of a web of conspirators and lackeys, and they seldom seek out combat themselves. They'd rather use their massive ability to plan in order to seek out humiliating defeats for their foes.

ETERNAL CHURCH OF THE PIERCING CONSCIOUSNESS

A sonorous chant. The urgent dogma of faith. Deadly beam weapons, casually handed out to 16th-century pilgrims as proof.

The Eternal Church of the Piercing Consciousness is a cult, pure and simple. This late 22nd-century quasi-religious organization maintains that time travel is the closest humankind will ever get to experiencing the true essence of God. Led by an incredibly charismatic multiracial (South Asian and South American) guru named Father Antonio Hajarnavis, the Eternal Church equips its followers with stolen time travel technology and sends them off across time to teach past and future people the true dogma of the church. Unfortunately, that dogma is "time travel is real," and it's always proven by providing local indigenous populations with futuristic artifacts that completely disrupt the time stream.

Hajarnavis likes it this way. Equipping Native Americans with neural disruptors prior to Columbus' arrival proves to the natives that their holy doctrine is real. The more disruption, the more time travel as others try to fix history; the more time travel, the more that unbelievers are exposed to the glory and sanctity of the time stream. While Hajarnavis and his cult don't necessarily have a sinister motive in mind (as far as we know), their gifts of free futuristic technology cause tremendous amounts of paradox and historical change. TimeWatch would love to stop him, but with thousands of cult members out "spreading the word," even trying to change Hajarnavis' youth has proven to be nearly impossible.

The Eternal Church of the Piercing Consciousness won't necessarily be a mission prime antagonist, but their arrival and involvement in a situation is guaranteed to complicate the situation and raise the stakes tremendously. Their well-meaning gifts of future-tech, whether it's limitless cheap energy or deadly antipersonnel devices, enable societal change and prove to primitive people that time travel exists. History will never be the same unless TimeWatch can prevent the missionary work early enough to control the situation.

Agents should be careful about directly threatening Hajarnavis or his church. For a so-called man of peace, he surely does have deadly countermeasures and time traveling bodyguards in place to protect himself.

Father Antonio Hajarnavis Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 16

Offense: Scuffling +0, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +0 (bludgeoning holy book), +2 (customized beam weapon)

Abilities: Tempus 20+ (Embrace Instability); Authority 3, Charm 3, Paradox Prevention 3, Reassurance 3

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Embrace Instability, Flashback (cost 5), Summoning (cost 3)

Misc: Father Hajarnavis' cult members would gladly give their lives to protect him, and act as guards and security so that Hajarnavis himself never need lift a finger in anger or disappointment.

EUROPANS

Glazed eyes of an unwilling slave. The clicking of flesh on glass. A tongue, squirming. Mental chittering at the edge of your dreams. A faint glimpse of a truly disturbing tongue behind a smug, knowing smile.

When humans finally reached the moons of Jupiter and drilled beneath the impossibly thick ice, the European parasitic hivemind we found there was hostile to us. They possessed our astronauts and nearly colonized Earth before they were stopped. Humanity responded by bombing and poisoning Europa's hidden oceans into radioactive wastelands, and the European hivemind responded by somehow shifting themselves into an unknown parallel timeline. They effectively vanished. Now they strike at us throughout history from that parallel timeline and seek to colonize us fully. Most of the fragile, crystalline celllike worms can't survive on Earth without a living host, but they are breeding infiltration agents known as master worms who can. Similar to the earthbound fish parasite *Cymothoa exigua* that replaces a fish's tongue with its own body (seriously, they're real. Google for astounding and vaguely disgusting pictures. Nature is better than anything we can think up), evolved European parasites attempt to colonize humans en masse.

Humanity's one advantage is that the Europeans don't seem to understand technological time travel at all. They infiltrate communities and lay complex plans, but they lack the rapid ability of TimeWatch agents to jump forwards and backwards in time.

European Master Worm Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 3

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +0 (lamprey-like worm mouth)

Abilities: Tempus 10

Special Abilities: Fluid, Hivemind (cost 0), Mental Attack (Possession — cost 3 to establish), Regenerate (cost 0 — on host only; regenerate all damage between scenes)

Misc: Stealth Modifier +2

Description: With a successful Scuffling attack, European master worms burrow into their potential host and launch a mental attack. Once that succeeds the Europeans take possession of a new host, and keep possession until they are destroyed or removed from their host. Keeping their hosts and themselves healthy through pure force of will, they devour the host's tongue and replace it with a portion of their own body. They then prepare their host's body to birth more Europeans: internal flesh deliquesces and tissues transform until a body is a misshapen sack of more squirming Europeans just waiting for a new host. The scent of a breed-host, apparently, is impossible to mistake once you've smelt it once.

It's generally impossible to damage a master worm until its host body is destroyed. Use game stats for another creature to represent the host body.

European Host Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 8

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +1 plus Destabilize (terrifying mental visions upon a hit)

Abilities: Tempus 5

Special Abilities: Destabilize (cost 2), Hivemind (cost 0), Impersonation (cost 2), Mental Attack (Mental Damage — cost 0)

Description: European hosts (at least the ones that haven't been turned into breeding sows for more Europeans) are almost indistinguishable from normal humans. They're personable, clever, and active. Then again, they also have alien and inhuman tongues coated with eyes and cilia, and they can cause physical and mental pain simply by touching the flesh of a noninfected human. Hosts may look human and remember their past relationships, but their motivations are dictated solely by their alien hosts.

European Juggernaut Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 20

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +2 plus Destabilize (crushing force plus terrifying mental visions)

Abilities: Tempus 12

Special Abilities: Destabilize (cost 2), Extra Action (cost 2), Hivemind (cost 0)

Misc: Stealth Modifier -2

Description: Juggernauts are the result of a European possessing a nonhuman creature of some size — a cow, a

rhino, an elephant, a gorilla. They typically attack twice during their turn, and they trust in the host body's natural strength and durability to carry the day. When brute force is needed instead of finesse, a juggernaut or three are probably present. Juggernauts are not easily recognized unless their tongues can be seen... and by then, it's probably already too late.

EZERU

The clacking of mandibles. The slurp of melting pseudo-flesh. The vibration of terrible wings.

The ezeru, or clockroaches, are massive shape-shifting insects. Most resemble 2–3 meter tall alien cockroaches, although smaller and much larger specimens have been encountered. Ezeru sabotage usually focuses on raising the background radiation level of Earth. It's theorized that they evolved in our distant and highly radioactive postapocalyptic future from mutated cockroaches, but that's never been completely confirmed.

The drunken man squinted across the floor of his fallout shelter into the shadows. "Is it just me," he slurred, "or are those damn cockroaches getting smarter? And bigger?"

"Yesss," he heard deep within his brain, and then they were upon him.

In the same way that the monarch butterfly flies thousands of kilometers every year to a specific Mexican forest, ezeru spread across time with the biological imperative of ensuring their own existence. Unfortunately for humanity, this requires them to bring about the approximate environmental circumstances that led to their mutation, and that means increasing the level of background radiation on Earth far above what is acceptable for human habitation.

They do so by infiltrating Earth's history and seeking opportunities to raise the level of background radiation. This might mean encouraging humanity to build with contaminated materials (something they've been most successful with in places like Ramsar, Iran, or Yangjiang, China), triggering nuclear contamination and meltdowns, setting off widespread

GM ADVICE: FROM ONE, MANY

One possibility for your campaign may be that all ezeru are genetically identical. This may be because there's only one intelligent insect that has duplicated itself so many times across the timeline that there appear to be hundreds of thousands instead, or there may be a single queen that lays eggs which hatch identical warrior drones. In this scenario, ezeru with different capabilities indicate ezeru at different stages of their natural lifespan.

nuclear war, placing nuclear weapons and theories in the hands of those most likely to use them, and even by destroying or replacing pro-peace activists.

Ezeru Drone Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 3, Health 15

Offense: Scuffling +3 (+2 when impersonating a human), Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +2 (hideous clacking pincers), +3 (jagged mandibles), +1 (pistol), +4 (acidic bile), Stun 6 (psi-active bile)

Abilities: Tempus 12

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Extra Action (cost 2), Impersonation (cost 2 —psychically links the ezeru drone to a single human or animal encased in the ezeru's paralytic bile), Lightning Speed (cost 2), Resist Stun; drones can attack by spitting acidic or paralytic bile within Close range

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier +1

Description: A standard ezeru drone is sly, deadly, reliable, but not particularly creative. They follow instructions superbly but usually lack the inspired planning or quick thinking of creatures that *aren't* tied into a massive insectoid hivemind. When circumstances change quickly on an ezeru and it doesn't have time to plan, it often responds with brute force.



Ezeru use paralytic bile to immobilize their prey.

Drones are the most common ezeru, bred for food gathering, warfare, and work. They are armored, possess multiple clawed arms, have vicious pincers, and can spew acidic or psi-active bile on enemies.

In their natural form, ezeru drones prefer to use natural weapons; their pincers and claws are well suited to combat, and are significantly more dangerous to human flesh than most weapons would be. When disguised, they will use whatever weapons are close at hand, but prefer to let other humans do their work for them so that their disguise is not ripped or compromised by injury. Their acidic bile can boil flesh.

Ezeru typically stun a victim with their paralytic bile and coat them in psi-active mucous cocoons. This keeps the victim unconscious, and allows the ezeru to duplicate their voice and appearance so long as the cocoon stays relatively (within several kilometers) near the psychic host. If the psi-active mucus is shattered and scraped away, that portion of the ezeru's flesh-mask also dissolves, revealing hard brown chitin behind it.

Ezeru Warrior Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 4, Health 25

Offense: Scuffling +3 (+2 when impersonating a large animal), Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +3 (razor-sharp chitin), +4 (jagged mandibles), +4 (acidic bile), Stun 7 (psi-active bile)

Abilities: Tempus 18

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Extra Action (cost 2), Flight (cost 2), Impersonation (cost 2 —psychically links the ezeru drone to a single animal encased in the ezeru's paralytic bile), Lightning Speed (cost 2), Resist Stun; warriors can attack by spitting acidic or paralytic bile within Close range

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Description: Ezeru warriors, sometimes called the Hungry Ones, are far less common than drones. These massive rhino-sized insects are bred by their queen for battle, and a single one might be the equal of a fully equipped TimeWatch team (especially if they don't find a method to bypass its armor). They are limited in their ability to impersonate others, and typically choose to impersonate large animals such as horses or cows when moving amongst humans. Expect nearly impregnable armor, razor-sharp leg-blades, acidic spittle, the ability to fly in short hops, and unpredictably creative tactics. Any hit from an ezeru warrior leaves a painful and itchy radiation burn behind.

Their major disadvantage is that they require large amounts of food, and the disappearance of nearby livestock or gutting of local food stores may reveal their presence to agents hunting them if the warrior is not canny. They are naturally highly radioactive, and can often be tracked by Geiger counters and other sensors.

Warriors can "gift" human servants with the Clock Out ability and the one-time pool of 10 Tempus to use it. They do so by vomiting special bile upon them; doing this also gives the human Distortion (Temporal) and drives them completely insane. It's usually saved as a gift for their most useful human pawns.

Ezeru Queen Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4 or 6, Armor 6, Health 100

Offense: Scuffling 30 (3-3-3, rising as needed), Shooting 20 (2-2-2, rising as needed); Damage Modifier +6 (razor-sharp chitin), +4 (radioactive acid spittle — Close range)

Abilities: Tempus 50

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Destabilize (cost 4 — all targets in Close range), Distortion (Temporal) (cost 3), Flashback (cost 5), Lighting Speed (cost 2), Mastermind, Oracle (cost 1), Resist Stun, Seize Initiative (cost 2), Strength (cost 0), Summoning (cost 3 — drones), Universal Attack (cost 1 per target)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +3, Stealth Modifier -3

Description: Ezeru queens are legendarily rare, and no known TimeWatch agents have encountered one and escaped to report on it. Their existence is known from biological evidence and egg repositories occasionally found throughout history; the fact that queens are no longer there when agents arrive at newly discovered hive locations suggests that they may possess some sort of predictive senses. Ezeru brood queens are huge and terrifying, the size of buildings, ten meters of barbed chitin and acid-spewing lethality. Their brains are the repository for their species' entire history and memory. Queens spend most of their time laying toddler-sized eggs in quantities that could fill sports stadiums. Submerged in effluvia and carefully tended by drones, it's no surprise that they are unable to shape-shift. What is surprising is how quickly they can move when roused to battle.

Multiple queens war with one another for territory, food sources, and dominance. Their wars ripple across the time stream; two queens hunting in the same era are bound to catch TimeWatch's attention, but solutions may be limited.

Why Use Ezeru?

When it comes to iconic TimeWatch Adversaries, it's difficult to beat giant mutant radioactive cockroaches that walk amongst us undetected by wearing human skin. They're terrifying, cinematic, generic (for those games where you don't care to make unique bad guys), and challenging to fight. Anyone who's seen the movie *Men in Black* knows the value of an insectoid bad guy you love to hate. Just remember that your actual players may have cockroach phobias, in which case reskinning them into a different shape or simply substituting another antagonist into your missions may make everyone happier.

Origin

No TimeWatch agent has yet found the parallel reality that the ezeru originate from, or perhaps more accurately none have found it and returned. Brief interviews with ezeru captives suggest that it is a radiation-soaked, postapocalyptic hellscape of twisted metal, mutated wood, and squirming insects. Few if any humans remain there, but it will never exist if humanity does not suffer from multiple globe-spanning nuclear

exchanges, and so the ezeru are in a deadly race to ensure their own existence. They need humans to trigger radioactive fallout, and they are seldom shy about concocting plans that make such war inevitable.

Radioactivity analysis on ezeru carapaces indicate that the species evolves on Earth or a colony planet from the 71st century onward. Ezeru sprung into existence during a temporary and unrelated history change that led to their evolution. Their parallel timeline was quickly erased from history when TimeWatch set the original problem to rights, but "quickly" doesn't matter much when it comes to alternate timelines. The difference between most brief and temporary futures and this one is that the ezeru evolved or developed the ability to naturally slip through time, giving them an escape hatch when their world disappeared.

It's believed that after denuding their home environment of suitable prey they then hunted by time traveling, shape-shifting into the form of local sentient creatures to lure more such creatures into an ezeru ambush and feeding frenzy. After their alternate timeline was inadvertently erased by TimeWatch, at least one ezeru queen and a number of drones escaped into the original, true timeline. Ezeru have set out to restore their original existence, a difficult task since they don't truly know or understand exactly what events led to their evolution in the first place.

At least one ezeru queen has found a hiding place to breed and hatch eggs somewhere within Earth's history, and from there they range forwards and backwards in time to investigate, feed, infiltrate, and sabotage. The nature of an ezeru hive is such that TimeWatch may only be able to find it by researching what missions agents *don't* come back from. Regardless, it's reasonable to assume that all TimeWatch resources will be dedicated to wiping out any egg-filled infestations once they're discovered.

GM ADVICE: IT'S ALL THEIR FAULT

For extra fun, begin a TimeWatch campaign with no ezeru, and no institutional knowledge of ezeru, and have one of the Agents' early missions secretly be responsible for bringing them into existence. The Agents must then live with the knowledge that in setting history to rights, they've unleashed a major threat against humanity. Hey, no one said patrolling time would be easy.

TimeWatch believes that the ezeru's mission to cause nuclear war is preferable to the alternative; humanity would be in dire straits if the ezeru ever stop attempting to restore their own timeline, and instead travel back in time to breed and colonize Earth before humans ever arrive.

Ezeru Capabilities

“And what happens when I do... this?” asked Dr. Breen, as she used a chisel to crack a chunk of hardened resin from the head of the man lying at her feet.

For a few seconds, the undersecretary’s face sagged, then pounced, going slack almost as if he’d suffered a sudden stroke. Then the flesh of his left cheek peeled away from his face in a single sheet, dangling grotesquely to the side of his mouth and only held in place by bloodstained facial hair. Beneath the bloody ruin of the politician’s face, Dr. Breen could see the dull glint of brown chitin.

“Tsk. Unfortunate choice,” the man said in mellow and understanding tones, and he flexed. Flesh exploded off of him to splatter across the room. An impossible number of legs and pincers burst from within what was left of his handmade tailored suit. His voice rose to a nauseating buzz. “Tkkkkk. Verry unfortunattte. Tkk.”

Dr. Breen raised her weapon just as the ezeru leapt.

Shape-Shifting. Ezeru shape-shifting is the result of psi-active bile vomited upon foes. Acting as a Stun 6 ranged attack, the bile hardens on contact with air into an amber-like substance. Once the victim ceases movement and is entirely encased, they enter suspended animation and the ezeru can draw upon their intelligence, memories, vocal patterns, and appearance. The ezeru’s body becomes encased in flesh as the victim is entombed in resinous bile, and within a few minutes (or in some cases even faster) the ezeru is virtually indistinguishable from their cocooned victim. It has access to all memories from the victim, except perhaps for the most deeply buried and emotional responses, and players need to make a Difficulty 6 Sense Trouble test or use Assess Honesty if they have reason to suspect a disguised ezeru.

Science hasn’t yet explained exactly how the disguise forms. The most robust theories from TimeWatch’s scientists suggest that psi-active fluids given off by the ezeru’s carapace duplicate the victim’s appearance exactly, including size, scent, and appearance. Even clothing is duplicated if the ezeru so wishes. This disguise can be maintained without effort until the cocoon is removed from the victim. Removing resin during combat is usually a three round process with no ability tests needed, or in one round with a Difficulty 4 Medic test. Removing the hardened resin from a trapped victim causes the corresponding portion of ezeru flesh to weaken, slacken, and fall loose. As this happens, the ezeru’s natural body reasserts itself. The result can be horrifying to onlookers. The disguised ezeru can also choose to cast off this disguise prematurely, and resume it at a later time if the victim is still cocooned. Victims can be held paralyzed in stasis for decades without ill effect, and do not age while comatose.

Ezeru typically use their shape-shifting ability to imitate and impersonate humans. An ezeru may run a deception for years or longer if it serves the ezeru cause. The ezeru must remain within several kilometers of their victim in order for the psychic link to remain active. This distance can be boosted to dozens of kilometers if the ezeru is given time to prepare, but even this link begins to falter after 24 hours. Many shape-shifted ezeru travel with their encased victim in

the trunk of their car, just to ensure that their psychic link remains intact.

Time Travel. Except for newly hatched grubs, all known ezeru can time travel without the use of technology. TimeWatch hasn’t determined how this is accomplished; they seem to do so instinctively by manipulating mental geometry, running for cover into temporal shadow when it serves their interests. It’s believed that ezeru can somehow see cracks in the existence of time itself and can scurry into temporal rifts in an attempt to seek safety. There’s also some evidence that this rapid 1-action time travel leads the fleeing ezeru to random locations and eras instead of to specific times and locales, but that an ezeru taking a minute or more to clock out can arrive at their desired destination. Since ezeru seldom flee a fight, more experimentation is required to confirm this.

Paradoxical Vulnerability. It’s worth noting that as a species continuously invading a time stream that doesn’t believe they should exist, ezeru are more prone to paradox and Chronal Stability Loss than other creatures. Any Tempus tests they make to avoid paradox have a Difficulty and potential Loss 1 point higher than normal. This is seldom relevant in play unless Agents use a chronal weapon on them, but destabilizing an ezeru can be an efficient method of defeating it.

Ezeru Schemes and Tactics

Ezeru don’t think like humans, and they play an exceptionally long game. If dispatched by a queen they may travel decades or millennia in time to set events in motion that result in a nuclear or radioactive catastrophe; for instance, it’s suspected that the ancient Egyptian beetle god Khepri originated with the ezeru. Alternatively, some ezeru acting purely on instinct can be surprisingly blunt, trying brute force methods instead of subtlety. Such ezeru commonly reveal their existence to humanity when trying to trigger radioactive devastation. It is possible that this difference in tactics is analogous to trying to bash a door open after failing to pick its lock, as the species attempts every option before rejecting a junction as unworkable. TimeWatch is charged with covering up these encounters, as knowledge of aliens would change history.

Ezeru drones often work together in loose swarms, separating and rejoining as part of a complex job. Any stranger passing on the street could potentially be a shape-shifted ezeru. More than one TimeWatch team has been horrified to find that its own members have been compromised. The ezeru squirm into social and emotional cracks, hiding in blind spots. Not all blind spots are visual. They may be bureaucratic, or legal, or logistical. Ezeru are instinctively infiltration and disguise experts, and this makes them hideously dangerous.

Regardless, their predilection for seeking out and triggering radioactive catastrophes means that they’re often predictable once you can discern their target. Knowing a swarm of clockroaches stole a 28th-century earthquake machine means that you should probably plan for seismic events and tidal waves in a nuclear era. Suspecting that a starship captain has been replaced means that you should worry that the starship has a nuclear core.

Ezeru are almost never afraid to perish, and do not seem to have much of a survival instinct so long as their death would

further their cause. If one darts away and hides, you can assume that combat would endanger a carefully laid plan. Ezeru never hesitate in setting off nuclear explosions or radioactive leaks even if the resulting catastrophe would destroy the clockroach as well. It's believed that their loyalty to their species and their future is greater than their loyalty to any individual ezeru. That said, ezeru are immune to radiation effects and usually radiate high levels of radiation even when shape-shifted. Radiation badges are one method to detect a shape-shifted ezeru.

Appearance

Ezeru drones are physically imposing, massive humanoid beetles with a variety of legs, mandibles, pincers, and eyes. Their dark brown chitin glistens in the light, although they've been observed deliberately dulling its sheen and color to better blend into shadows. They're remarkably stealthy for something so large, and have the ability to flatten their bodies to better fit into tight spaces.

Their voices are understandable by humans when they choose to speak. That's usually the case; ezeru have a propensity for clicking, hissing monologues about their inevitable triumph.

Variant Ezeru

There are many ways to change ezeru to keep your players off guard, or to customize the game to make it as rat-bastardly as possible.

The Rulers: For reasons no one can quite comprehend, shape-shifted ezeru have an unusual talent for managing and investing money. Most likely it is their innate choral sense that guides them to profitable decisions; whatever the reason, ezeru who have spent a long time in human bodies tend to become quite rich, and are seldom squeamish about using that money to bribe and coerce others into following their rules and dictates.

The Hivemind: All ezeru in a given time can, if desired, be connected by a hivemind. There is a social drive encouraging them to do so, but it is not biologically mandatory (there may be social pressure from other ezeru, however). This allows fine coordination across thousands of kilometers. They actually communicate with each other across the chronosphere, somehow; it's possible to disrupt this in a limited area by tinkering up a temporal disruptor and spending 1 point of Timecraft.

Genetic Duplicates: Consider making ezeru biologically identical. Under this variant, every ezeru is an exact genetic clone or duplicate of every other ezeru. It's possible that they're clones of their queen (suggesting that later clones are more degenerated than the relatively powerful early clones), either biological or the exact same individual who has duplicated itself thousands of times across the time stream with no regard to choral instability. If you choose this option it means that ezeru will typically react the same way every time in a given situation, making them predictable and somewhat easier to manipulate.

The Old, the Deadly: In this option, ezeru become more powerful with age. A relatively young and inexperienced ezeru

has few powers, while an ancient and experienced clockroach has a terrifying array of abilities.

The Swarm: Perhaps ezeru tend to attract swarms of cockroaches to themselves, and have minor control of these swarms. Such swarms seldom do much damage, but are horrifying to most humans and can be used to stampede or influence humans. Summoning a swarm gives an ezeru a pool of 2 Intimidation points to spend; in addition, when they swarm a time traveler these swarms trigger a D4/L4 Paradox test as the roaches drain away stability and will.

Swarm Locations

Ezeru can exist anywhere and in any time, but they tend to cluster or congregate in several types of locations.

- ▶ Areas of artificially high radioactivity. If an atomic bomb or a nuclear disaster occurred there, such as Chernobyl or Nagasaki or the American Southwest, there's likely some ezeru about.
- ▶ Areas of high natural radioactivity. Some areas on Earth are radioactive hot spots. Guarapari, Brazil; Ramsar, Iran; Arkaroola, Australia; Yangjiang, China; and Karunagappally, India, are all examples of places with higher-than-normal natural radioactivity.
- ▶ Natural disasters. Ezeru hunt in areas where many people are about to naturally die, especially when many bodies won't be recovered. In this way they can kidnap humans or feed to bursting without the lost corpses being noticed. In any sizeable disaster, it's likely that ezeru are raiding the heart of the tragedy.
- ▶ Away from light. Whether underground in deep cave systems, in urban sewers, in abandoned buildings, or in far northern or southern climes in winter, ezeru prefer to live in low-light locations.

GIDEON MONTOYA

The foulest mouth in any era. A haven for those who have none. Questionable taste in friends.

Gideon Montoya runs the small town of Longtree, located far into the American western frontier in South Dakota in the year 1811. Anyone with any history knowledge might notice that this is a bit unusual; in 1810 the only people in the territory that eventually became South Dakota were Native Americans, and the town vanishes from the spot by the time most eastern travelers make their way that far west. The isolation is why Gideon has set up his refuge there. The town of Longtree is a neutral territory between time travelers, a place to hide or heal up when someone is gunning for you and you have nowhere else to go. It is possible to have a showdown in the middle of Longtree, but only with Gideon's express permission. Folks figure that's so he can bet on the results. Try violence without his okay, and you'll instantly find yourself exiled to a completely different era without any of your belongings, and you'll never find your way back to the town. No one knows how he does it, but it works without fail.

Mind you, Gideon Montoya is no prize; he's unkempt, unsavory, and unhygienic. He runs his town with subtle cunning and an iron fist. Gideon swears colorfully and incessantly, with curses drawn from a hundred different eras, and he isn't shy about letting people know that if they transgress his rules they'll never be able to find Longtree again. He himself will break his own rules to have people expelled, killed, bribed, or manipulated if it serves his needs, and he has hundreds of people indebted to him who will do him a favor without question. He's saved too many people's lives, or given too many people a fresh start and a new identity, for it to be any other way. That makes him the most important man in town, and he knows it.

His deputy is an insane, revived floating head named Jessica Carson who runs the town's vice: brothels for both sexes, arms markets, black market cybernetic surgeries, and information brokerages. Between them, Jessica and Gideon can help the Agents find almost anything in the time stream they're looking for... but there's always a cost, the cost is usually an unsavory favor, and even going to Longtree requires a disguise. Amongst the time traveling multi-era rebels, criminals, murderers, and saboteurs who cluster there, TimeWatch isn't exactly what you'd consider popular.

Gideon Montoya's Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 20

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +3; Damage Modifier +0 (trained bar brawler), +1 (Colt six-shooter)

Abilities: Tempus 20; Streetwise 3

Special Abilities: Exile (cost 0 — automatic if someone commits violence in town without his permission), Interdiction (cost 0 — town can't be found or time traveled into or out of without his okay), Lightning Speed (cost 2), Seize Initiative (cost 2), Summoning (cost 3 — anyone who owes him a favor)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +3

Description: Gideon has never been known to leave town. He's clearly time traveled extensively, but no one has ever seen him out of Longtree, leaving people to speculate as to his origin and true identity. His powers can't be duplicated by known technology; whoever Gideon really is, he's best taken seriously and bribed with a bottle of good whiskey.

Jessica Carson's Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4 or 5 (Distortion), Armor 1, Health 20

Offense: Scuffling +0, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +0 (telekinetically swung object), Stun 5 (mind-blast)

Abilities: Tempus 16

Special Abilities: Distortion (cost 2), Flight (cost 2 to exceed a slow hover), Mental Attack (Mental Damage — cost 0, Mind Control — cost 3 to establish), Psychic (cost 2), Summoning (cost 3 — mind-controlled minions), Teleport (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2

Description: Like a psychic disembodied brain but with all the flesh and bone still attached, Jessica hovers around Longtree keeping a slowly rotting eye on all the lawlessness and vice.

Jessica has a local girl apply her makeup and brush her long, lank red hair each morning, but she has to change girls more often than she likes. Their minds begin to go after a while. Jessica is a witty conversationalist, and people in Longtree live in fear of gaining her attention. She isn't exactly healthy to be around.

THE KEEPER

Infinite objects, artfully arrayed. A web of incomprehensible insanity. Pain.

Sometimes, things disappear from the world, and even TimeWatch can't prevent it. These people and articles — plants, animals, buildings, objects — aren't erased from the world due to time travel, choral instability, or anything else. No, they just vanish and can't be found. And when it happened to a TimeWatch agent who was on a live radio conversation at the time, it turned out that he had vanished but his friends could still hear him on the radio... screaming. For six days. Screaming nonstop. And after that, it's believed that his voice had given out.

If you go to that location, and tune your radio to the right station, you can hear him trying to scream even today. He's still alive, and he still hasn't been found. That's because he's being Kept.

The Keeper is a 5th dimensional entity that exists outside of normal time and space. It dwells across time; in the same way that you might stroll up and down your butcher's display case, looking through the glass and picking out a choice cut of meat, the Keeper can look at all of human time and reach in at any point it chooses. It likes to collect things. No one is sure how it chooses these things — brilliance? Creativity? Beauty? Some sort of ineffable pattern linking multiple objects across time? — but it plucks them effortlessly from our world and holds them pinned between invisible and metaphysical glass in its own reality. Perhaps it is an artist, constructing a living and twitching collage that it can admire at its leisure. But either way, that agent is still screaming.

It is believed that if TimeWatch could predict the arrival of the Keeper's pseudopods, an agent with the right choral sensing gear might get a temporary fix on the non-space the Keeper hails from, and (with a proper expenditure of Paradox Prevention points) actually travel there to attempt rescue missions. Several teams have tried this. None have yet returned.

Late at night in the Citadel, or while hidden in backcountry caves while out on missions, TimeWatch agents try to guess what the Keeper truly looks like. Everyone is wrong. The most accurate guess is that it looks like everything, a swirling and stench-ridden amalgam of everything that it has ever observed in all of existence, all trying to force its way into your eyes and ears and nose and tongue and pain receptors simultaneously, all of existence felt and seen at once. It hangs in the center of an endless swirling abyss, all the items it has collected orbiting around it, and it keens with unknowable need. The human mind can't possibly comprehend that, and yet the Keeper's existence forces it to.

No wonder that poor bastard is still screaming.

Pseudopod of the Keeper Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 5 (due to temporal distortion), Armor 1 (armor of 5th dimensional unreality), Health 30

Offense: Scuffling 21 (1-2-3-4-5-6); Damage Modifier +4 (pseudopod slap; unconscious targets adhere to the pseudopod, and are drawn back with it after it withdraws)

Abilities: Tempus 30

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 0 — automatic when out of Scuffling), Destabilize (cost 4 — all within Close range), Distortion (Temporal — cost 3), Resist Stun, Stability Drain (cost 2)

Description: When projected into our world, the Keeper's pseudopods look like huge and amorphous tentacles that unpredictably bulge and contract. They project into reality like hands plunged into shallow water, and they rotate and turn in a way that can trigger insanity. Even being near them damages Chronal Stability in a fundamental way. While they can be damaged enough to make them withdraw, it's unlikely that this hurts the Keeper any more than cutting a human hair hurts the human it's attached to. A pseudopod attacks for a short period, getting more accurate each round; when it runs out of Scuffling points it withdraws from this reality, bringing its victims with it.

K'HORN

A helpful chattering that mimics the most amazing of sounds. Many eyes from many angles. Chitin within the Meeting Tree.

Discovered by the third human vessel to conquer wormholes and travel faster than light speed, the k'horn are an alien life form uplifted millions of years ago by a species that resembled dragons. Technologically advanced and innately curious, their arrival in human affairs has the potential of transforming human technology and philosophy. Unfortunately, human prejudice against nonhuman life forms creates the risk that the k'horn might withdraw their support or, worse, turn against humanity.

K'horn come from a very hot planet in a jungle environment with a slightly higher gravity. This species has an unusual sexual dimorphism: they are hermaphrodites and mutate between male and female. This change is triggered by pheromones and is accompanied by a period of hibernation, with gender changes reoccurring in three year cycles. Their bodies transform during this process.

K'horn have a tendency to involve themselves in human business that does not necessarily concern them; the degree to which they are welcomed dictates the level of their subsequent assistance and help. Overall, k'horn are attentive, curious, and imaginative. They have the ability to create technological devices out of organic materials. Give a k'horn a tree and sufficient foliage, and they can construct devices that humans are entirely unable to replicate. As a result, needy humans may seek out k'horn to ask for assistance or technological aid. In exchange, the k'horn may ask to be made a part of the human's daily lifestyle, and possibly their work or family units as well. More than one human town has developed inexpensive

power through a k'horn technological artifact, in exchange for allowing the k'horn into their community.

Despite the k'horn's apparent good intentions, some humans are suspicious of their motives. This prejudice is resented by k'horn. Assuming that the species isn't biding their time until they reveal their true intentions, only species-specific violence is likely to unentangle them from humanity's future.

Female K'horn Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2 (chitin), Health 14

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +1 (tree claw), Stun 4 (pheromonal blast)

Abilities: Tempus 15; Notice 3

Special Abilities: Impersonate (cost 1 — noises and sounds only), Seize Initiative (cost 2), Spider Climb (cost 0), Technology (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +5

Description: The "female" form is very slim and of average human build and height, with four long prehensile limbs that aid rapid movement on land or in treetops. The female has a chitinous exoskeleton to protect itself and its only progeny, four pairs of eyes nested between horns on the top of its face that grant 360° vision, and remarkable hearing. The female can mimic any sound it's ever heard, can transmit emotions through pheromones, and has a long forked tongue that can be used to manipulate small objects with great accuracy. Constantly aware of approaching threats, the female k'horn is more likely to run than fight unless cornered.

Male K'horn Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 18

Offense: Scuffling +3, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +2 (razor-sharp tree claw)

Abilities: Tempus 15; Notice 2

Special Abilities: Seize Initiative (cost 2), Spider Climb (cost 0), Technology (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +3, Stealth Modifier +2

Description: The "male" form of the k'horn is a little smaller and of a slightly heavier built, and is typically camouflaged in a thin green fur. While blessed with vision that can pick out human-sized objects from kilometers away, the male k'horn prefers to constantly nap instead of hunt when given the opportunity. Their song echoes through forests in a hauntingly beautiful tune, and k'horn music is quickly integrated into human music as well.

KING TUSK

Wise, ancient eyes. A trumpeting of outrage. The smell of hatred and victory.

King Tusk is an ancient African bull elephant with an extended life span, given vast intelligence by an alien technological device.

King Tusk's Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 40

Offense: Scuffling +3, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +3 (stomp), +2 plus fling (tusks), +2 plus Restrain (trunk grapple — Close range), +2 (collapsing laser cannon — Long range)

Abilities: Tempus 25; Intimidate 1, Military Tactics 2, Outdoor Survival 2

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2 — usable once only), Flashback (cost 5), Strength (cost 0), Summoning (cost 3 — elephants and fanatical human worshippers), Technology (cost 2), Teleportation (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2

Description: King Tusk is closer to a woolly mammoth than a modern elephant, born around 4000 BCE and (unless killed) living for almost 7,000 years. His wrinkled skin and huge size hide a genius intellect. He is well aware that it is a human's world and that humans seem to feel that they can slaughter elephants on a whim. The lord of elephants chooses to return the favor.

He regularly leaves his hidden refuge in Central Africa and moves through the world, using superb tactics and futuristic tech to lay traps for human hunters. By the time he is finished freeing an elephant herd, the local humans have either been cowed into worshipping elephants as gods, or they're dead or fleeing. King Tusk accepts no other results.

He is aided by alien nanotechnology that can adapt and change technological behavior at his command. This gives him access to force fields, heavy weaponry, mind-control devices, and other super-science through his Technology ability.

He commands lesser elephants, and over the course of several months can raise a herd's intelligence with his very presence; under his leadership a herd of elephants goes from animal intelligence to highly intelligent, far smarter and wiler than the humans who hunt them, staying that way permanently.

In his long life he has partnered with other species to achieve his aims. The sophosaurs in particular are a sympathetic ally. While King Tusk can teleport easily due to his nanotechnology, he can time travel once only due to a sophosaur gift. He saves this for a dire emergency, and will use it to travel back to the glory days of woolly mammoths 20,000 years ago.

PARALLEL UNIVERSE IMPOSTER

Honestly, it's just like looking in a mirror.

Egregious goatee aside, just about anyone could be a parallel universe imposter, and most people would never know it. Abrupt personality or behavioral change? They may have been abducted and replaced, or murdered and exchanged. There's no way to tell without chonal sensing equipment, and by then they may have already accomplished their mission in our reality.

That assumes they *have* a mission, of course. Some parallel universe imposters might just be on the run from their own reality, and they've drawn their enemies along with them to our world. Perhaps they haven't tried to live their duplicate's life, but their identities are clashing regardless (something that's certain to be likely in the world of the future, when biometrics has cataloged and categorized most citizens).

It's interesting to consider that many parallel universe imposters might be aware of different and parallel timelines, yet have no knowledge or control of time travel. Stepping between parallel universes doesn't normally shift a person in time, so the appearance of TimeWatch might be a significant shock. This brings up the question of whether there's a parallel universe equivalent of TimeWatch that monitors parallel universe crossovers, and how they might feel about TimeWatch agents.

Duplicate Imposter Stats

All stats as per duplicated creature, character, or antagonist, except:

- ▶ The imposter gains Impersonate (cost 0 — duplicated creature only).
- ▶ Give the imposter a new personality or motivation.
- ▶ You may choose to tweak pools to reflect different training; for instance, a replacement for a particularly violent and murderous individual may actually be peaceful and enlightened, without the combat abilities of the original. A peaceful character's duplicate may be homicidal or sadistic.

P'DRAK

Hatred trapped in sentient stone.

The Jemdet Nasr is a ring fashioned from a single piece of lapis lazuli, found in 1934 by a German archaeologist in Iraq at a dig site of the same name. It is inscribed with proto-cuneiform script around the outside of the band. Further research published by the archaeological team linked the ring to one described as having belonged to the legendary ruler of Uruk, Gilgamesh, in the early 27th century BCE. The description of a similar ring has surfaced many times over the millennia, always in the hands of a brutal warlord and conqueror. Yet at that warlord's death, the ring disappears from history until the next time it surfaces with a warlord. The ring was last recorded in the panoply of the Nazi regime in 1943, but disappeared before the capture of Berlin in 1945. It

is rumored to be in the possession of one of the many radical warlords in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Nasr is in fact the sentient prison of an alien entity known as Pi'drak'ne'din. Pi'drak was the war leader of the dreaded Kergaol warriors who plagued the galaxy over 1,000,000 years ago. When the Kergaol were finally defeated by the forces of the Haarnol Empire, Pi'drak'ne'din's consciousness was imprisoned within a crystal matrix and jettisoned in the direction of a young class G2 star known as Sol. The star was expected to be Pi'drak'ne'din's executioner after millennia of contemplating the nature of his crimes against sentience. Unfortunately the prison crashed into the third planet before meeting its final destruction in Sol's fiery embrace.

The crystalline prison was found in a crater by tribal people in what is now northern Iraq, and fashioned into a ring during the late Neolithic. Being trapped without a body for over an epoch has driven Pi'drak'ne'din insane (or further insane depending on your point of view), but his personality has gained immense strength within the prison, so much so that he can seize control of any human that touches the ring. When this happens he drives the victim to acts of violence with the need to conquer all. The last millennia has taught Pi'drak'ne'din subtlety, and he no longer asserts complete control but instead influences the victim. Someday when this miserable rock has gained enough technological advancement he hopes to gain a new body, then he will exterminate all life on Earth and gain his revenge on the Haarnol.

Those that wear the Nasr are exposed to Pi'drak's sentience. He typically uses dreams to influence the wearer, spending Interpersonal points to guide the wearer towards the tactical or ethical decision that Pi'drak prefers. If things go badly, Pi'drak can use Mental Attack to control the wearer directly.

Pi'drak'ne'din (in Ring Form) Stats

Defense: As per wearer

Offense: As per wearer

Abilities: Tempus 15; Authority 2, Intimidation 2, Military Tactics 3

Special Abilities: Extra Action (cost 2), Mental Attack (Mind Control — cost 3), Seize Initiative (cost 2)

REPTOIDS

The subtle variations of shape-shifting flesh. The snap of a darting tongue. Slitted pupils in unblinking eyes.

Reptoids — sometimes also called “reptilians” or “draconians” — are members of an unimaginably ancient species of apparently immortal shape-shifting reptilian bipeds from a plane of reality beyond four-dimensional space-time. Although their true origins remain a mystery, TimeWatch xeno-archaeologists have encountered limited evidence of reptoid activity dating to — possibly even predating — the birth of the current physical universe, fueling speculation that the reptoids may be refugees from

a previous timeline that collapsed catastrophically before the Big Bang. Because reptoids somehow exist outside true space-time, they cannot time travel. However, reports indicate that in a few notable cases the same reptoids have been encountered by TimeWatch in multiple parallel realities, suggesting that they may be capable of experiencing multiple linear timelines simultaneously.

Reptoid Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 18

Offense: Scuffling 4 (2-2), Shooting 6 (3-3); Damage Modifier +1 (reluctant strength), +1 (reluctantly used firearm)

Abilities: Tempus 25

Special Abilities: Extra Action (cost 2), Flashback (cost 5), Impersonation (cost 2 — disrupted by chronal radiation), Mastermind, Regenerate (cost 0 — 3 Health regenerates at the beginning of next round), Resist Stun

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier +3

Description: In what is believed to be their natural forms, reptoids are 2.1 to 2.7 m tall powerfully muscled humanoids covered in green or grey scales that serve as natural armor. Their hands are equipped with three claw-tipped fingers and an opposable thumb. Their faces are dominated by large hypnotic eyes bisected by slitted pupils and a wide, lipless, expressionless mouth filled with sharp, tearing teeth. Despite their physical prowess, reptoids abhor direct physical confrontation, preferring to use unwitting thralls to forward their inscrutable aims, probably in part because they are few in number.

Infiltrators Par Excellence

Regardless of how they got here, the reptoids' earliest activities were focused on the Alpha Draconis system. They used these planets as a base from which to infiltrate and manipulate any other inhabited planets they encountered, including Earth. Reptoids can alter their physical forms into visually perfect copies of any carbon-based life form they touch by absorbing, modifying, and then replicating the creature's DNA, so successfully imitating native life forms means that they can in some cases interbreed, producing half-reptoid hybrids used to further infiltrate and control host planets. Despite their chameleon-like abilities, chronal radiation and quantum waves caused by the presence of nearby time travelers can disrupt their disguises and temporarily reveal their true saurian appearance.

Reptoids are also highly intelligent and effectively ageless, planning their machinations for centuries — even millennia — at a time. Reptoid plots often focus on placing hybrids in positions of power, where they can deliberately manage cultural and technological developments to ensure long-term ascendancy to a properly ordered society: to the reptoids, this usually means political or corporate autocracy. Consequently, reptoids may be found manipulating powerful political, military, or corporate figures, engineering elections and political assassinations, or even ensuring that their half-breed kin become influential celebrities.

Never content to shove when a slight nudge will do, reptoids' plans are subtle, focused on establishing and maintaining control over other sentient species, or entire timelines. To the reptoids, freedom is synonymous with chaos and entropy: all concepts that they consider inimical to their survival as a species, and a clear danger to the long-term viability of the multiverse. While the illusion of liberty may be important to maintain in order to keep a species docile, to the reptoids and their agents, it is but another tool to be used to maintain order.

RODRIGO ISTALINDIR

A knowledgeable smile, unforgettable music, and a whispered secret — at a price.

There are those people in the world who simply never age or die. This Spanish musician and courtier was born in 8th-century Spain and was educated by the Moors, largely because they had tried to kill him in battle and completely failed. Rodrigo educated himself in all the finest arts he could find: music, poetry, song, and dance. He didn't start to go insane until he realized that he couldn't be killed and he couldn't age.

He was on his fifth instance of trying to drink himself to death, somewhere around the 11th century, when he ran into his first time travelers. He recognized them because he'd seen the same strangers 90 years before. Rodrigo managed to sober up enough to approach them, and they revealed their true identity as chronal anthropologists. Rodrigo was smitten by the idea and traveled with them to acquire his own time machine.

Now Rodrigo is a part-time information broker, a part-time spy, and a full-time hedonist. He time travels to soak in experiences, to learn new music and art, to meet amazing people, and to eat astonishing food. If he learns some interesting information along the way, he's happy to sell it to whoever wishes to pay him — whether that's TimeWatch, sophosaurs, lazy researchers, or rebel time travelers. He'll work for whomever seems the most fun and interesting, and potential employers need to connect to his artistic soul to get his attention.

Because he's apparently going to live forever, and because he has a time machine, there are literally hundreds of crisscrossing copies of Rodrigo Istalindir out there, all trying not to collapse under the weight of paradox. It doesn't help that he has a lover in nearly every port and a bevy of children sired across the ages. Rodrigo isn't exactly big on responsibility, but he's well meaning; if he's working for a loathsome group, he likely doesn't realize their true identity... or they promised him an experience he can't find anywhere else.

Rodrigo Istalindir's Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 12

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +0 (improvised weapon)

Abilities: Reality Anchor 10, Tempus 20; Charm 2, High Society 2, History (all) 3, Spying 2, Streetwise 2

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Help Yourself (cost 5), Regenerate (cost 0 — all Health at beginning of each round)

Description: Rodrigo has dark hair, a square chin, olive skin, and old, old eyes. His skill at music and oration is enough to entrance those listening if he chooses to show his true talent.

SAMANTHA JANE UNDERHILL

A brave, waifish grin. Sad sniffles, barely withheld. A wide-bore hypodermic needle, slowly dribbling acid.

The government is capable of doing some horrible things and, in the case of Samantha Jane Underhill in the mid-21st century, they did a whole bunch of them. Blessed with off the charts intelligence, Samantha Jane caught the attention of the government at an early age and, with the permission of her naïve parents, was subjected to a litany of tests and experimental formulas designed to make her even more brilliant.

They succeeded, which was bad news for everyone.

It was especially bad news for Samantha Jane because while it made her perhaps the most brilliant thinker on the planet, it arrested her physical maturation at the level of an average nine year old, while increasing her mental and emotional development at an accelerated rate. Frustrated and bitter, she's convinced that she will be able to concoct a serum to bring her body's state of growth up to speed. She's wrong, and it doesn't help matters that in a fit of pique she arranged for the premature deaths of the only scientists who might be able to help her.

As a result, Samantha Jane developed her own time machine to gather alternative scientists, and began to alter history to try to gather the materials these scientists need to "fix" her. It so happens that the sort of chemicals she needs developed are substances produced by the human endocrine system while the body is being wracked with horrific pain — and thus the "scientists" she's saving are the very worst sort of monsters doing unspeakably awful research. She'll spread her "research" forward in time as she keeps failing to restore her true age, and she's not particularly discriminating about the test subjects she acquires.

While Samantha Jane is displeased by her youthful appearance, she's more than smart enough to use it to her advantage. Agents who haven't been given a description of her will possibly discount her as their target. Those who attempt to apprehend her in any sort of populated area cause her to play the "accosted waif" persona to the fullest as she has zero qualms about drawing in innocents to help her escape. She is fluent in most known languages and almost always prepared for contingencies.

Life as an adult in a child's shell has left her hardened and sociopathic. She's quite adept at manipulating the emotions of others and won't hesitate to use tears and guile as effective weapons. The little girl that was Samantha Jane Underhill is long, long gone.

Samantha Jane Underhill's Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 15

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +2 (injected acid), Stun 6 (electrical beam pistol)

Abilities: Tempus 25, Tinkering 15; Charm 1, Falsehood Detection 2, Medical Expertise 2, Reassurance 1

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Electronic Interference (cost 2), Exile (cost 2), Flashback (cost 5), Mastermind, Oracle (cost 1), Regenerate (cost 0 — 2 Health per round), Summoning (cost 3 — muscle-bound scientist, see p. 163), Technology (cost 2)

Misc: Stealth Modifier +2

Description: Corn-blond hair, wide blue eyes, a cherubic (if occasionally cynical) grin, and 1.3 meters tall; Samantha looks like an innocent 9-year-old girl, even if her true age is 33 and she is utterly amoral. She is a meticulous planner, and is typically loaded down with a variety of useful technology, chronal exile traps, or injectable drugs to aid in an emergency. Her body quickly repairs itself from physical damage, and Samantha Jane has no reason to think that she won't live forever — even if she's trapped in her detested youthful form the entire time.

SANGUINE

A bloody tear. The squelching churn of clotted fluid. The smell of hot copper in the still night's breeze.

A sanguine is an immortal, churning, humanoid mass of sentient blood. They speak with burbling voices when not possessing a host.

Sanguine Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 5 (Fluid — vs. physical attacks only), Health 15

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +1 (clotted slash), +1 plus Destabilize (squirming spray)

Abilities: Tempus 20

Special Abilities: Destabilize (cost 4 — all within Close range), Fluid, Mental Attack (Mind Control (see below) — cost 3 to establish; Possession (see below) — cost 3 to establish), Regenerate (cost 0 — all damage regenerates between scenes)

Description: Such a creature is created when a time traveler sheds blood during time travel. The spilled droplets of blood absorb whispers of history and gradually gain sentience. Sanguine slide out of the time stream into our world at locations of great slaughter and bloodbaths, and can appear at any violent point in history past, present or future. Due to their regeneration, sanguine tend to exist for a long, long time.

A sanguine in blood form seizes a host body by first cutting a target with Scuffling. Once the victim is bleeding (at Health 0 or below, or after one attack against a Mook) the sanguine makes a Mental Attack for possession. If successful, the sanguine forces itself into the victim's body through the cut. The victim's blood is instantly absorbed into the sanguine's

essence, and any victim who is possessed instinctively knows that their blood has been replaced by the sanguine itself. The creature then demands obedience from its host with the threat of simply exiting the body, leaving the host behind to flop bloodlessly for a few seconds before it dies. So long as the victim submits, the sanguine wears its body as a meat suit for a few months until it becomes bored.

Against time travelers or ranged foes, their Shooting attack is a wide spray of squirring blood that attacks everyone within Close range. Victims struck take damage and must make an immediate D4/L4 Paradox test.

While the sanguine can absorb another's blood, that's what they must do, not what they *want* to do. They truly feed from feelings of prestige, importance, and fame. Sanguine disdain prey that is socially unimportant, and they seek out experience and fame. They like to be loved, feared, and respected.

Injecting others with their own blood is their only method of establishing mind control in others. Some sanguine present their host as a surreptitious drug addict, sharing needles with the unobservant in order to create lackeys through its mind control.

A sanguine host has a bad tendency to leak. It takes careful concentration to stop blood from slowly dripping from eyes, nose, ears, and mouth; even the host's skin can slowly sweat blood when the sanguine becomes excited or distracted.

Variants:

- ▶ **Plaguebringer:** Infection, Venom (cost 2). A normal sanguine crossed with sentient Ebola, this variant leaves plague and poison and hideous death in its wake. One can wipe out an entire country during a time period prior to competent healthcare.
- ▶ **The Ungodly:** Immaterial (cost 2). Convinced that they are born from the blood of a dead god, ungodly sanguines fade in and out of reality. They have an obsession with being worshipped, and will usually do anything to make sure they gain proper obeisance from their cultlike flock.
- ▶ **Unstable Sanguine:** Branching Point (cost 4). These variants have a greater tie to paradox and the branching paths of time.

SENTIENT HOLOGRAMS

A static hiss and crackling voice. The smell of money, loose bills piled in corners. Reverent worshippers, predicting the future.

An unusual villain is one who isn't physically present at all. If a scientist has figured out how to project her image and her sentience from a parallel timeline into our own (or vice versa), she would be gifted with knowledge of our history but be unable to physically touch a thing. The hologram would know only what its creator knew, and it's up to the GM whether it can transmit what it learns back through time to its creator. Such a villain would have to summon and organize locals to do her dirty work for her, paying them off with secret information about local resources. Whether those resources are secret troop movements and enemy intelligence, or lottery

numbers and winning horse races, depends on which era the hologram finds herself in.

A sentient hologram is in some ways the ideal master villain for highly narrative GMs, in that it can't do much more than monologue; being unable to physically or mentally attack (or even touch anything), it is limited to putting previously arranged plans into action through the ministrations of loyal third parties. If you're using this as your villain, it will act entirely through cat's-paws and lackeys while it directs the show.

Some sentient holograms throughout the time stream stem from the same scientist, and show her at different stages of health, aging, and philosophy. They likely strive towards a common goal, such as preventing the formation of TimeWatch.

These holograms cannot touch any physical objects. They can control computers and most information systems, and typically carry out plans by using their encyclopedic historical knowledge to trade sports and stock market tips to gullible followers in exchange for service. Sentient holograms often maintain a cultlike, loyal following of untrained recruits.

A sentient hologram is hard to destroy; beam weapons could do it, but holograms can interfere with other electronics at will. Massive fire can disrupt their signal, as can uniquely created Science! devices that overwhelm or blanket out their signal. Holograms inflict no damage themselves, relying on their loyal mob of followers to do so for them.

Sentient Hologram Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 10

Offense: Scuffling +3; Damage Modifier nil (can Destabilize by walking through people; no other method for inflicting damage)

Abilities: Tempus 15

Special Abilities: Destabilize (cost 2), Electronic interference (cost 2), Flashback (cost 5), Immaterial, Oracle (cost 1), Summoning (cost 3 — loyal Mooks)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Description: Until touched, sentient holograms appear human. Physical objects slide through them without effect.

Fanatical Recruit Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 1

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +0 (club), +1 (cheap handgun)

Abilities: Athletics 3

Description: Dependent on the hologram for wealth, fanatical recruits show their loyalty by keeping it safe. They're more likely to knock people unconscious than kill, but no one wants to lose their gravy train.

Variant:

Sometimes, Adversaries keep themselves safely at home while they send their sentient holograms out across time to spy, record, observe, and comment. They can't easily affect the environment around them, but if you want a witty villain who

is effectively undefeatable until the Agents can track down his true location, this is one way to manage it.

Historical Voyeur Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 10

Offense: Scuffling +3; Damage Modifier nil (can Destabilize by walking through people; no other method for inflicting damage)

Abilities: Tempus 15; Taunt 3

Special Abilities: Destabilize (cost 2), Flashback (cost 5), Immaterial, Oracle (cost 1), Teleport (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Description: Periodically throughout history, people with enough money and time have chosen to live vicariously through the actions of others. We see it in online videos, we see it in reality TV... and in the future, we see it with historical voyeurs. A sentient hologram can't easily be hurt and can walk through walls, making them the perfect on-the-scene voyeur or journalist to view and broadcast historical events. Some well-meaning historians use these surreptitiously; other civilians or youths, not caring about paradox or historical accuracy, use them to hound and constantly spy on their idols.

Rarely, TimeWatch agents themselves fall under the scrutiny of such fans. A hologram who knows them from their tremendous fame and success (which might not have happened yet!) will begin following them around, asking questions, broadcasting their adventures to an external audience, and generally making themselves into a nuisance. Whether the Agents respond with kindness or hostility likely affects the historical voyeur's propensity to help the Agents or sabotage their efforts. Either way, the hologram can be anything from a Greek chorus, a narrator, an obsessive fan, a silent observer, or a source of mischief. With all the security that many centuries and complete anonymity can provide, historical voyeurs make for excellent supporting characters in a mission's B-plot.

SOPHOSAURS ("TIME RAPTORS," "PSI-RAPTORS," OR "PHILOSORAPTORS")

Dewclaws on tiles. Hissing excitement. Silent shadows in dark corners.

Sophosaurs are clan-based sentient dinosaurs from an alternate timeline where the meteor never struck Earth. Secure in their knowledge that they should be the true inheritors of Earth, it ranks them that humanity and TimeWatch have denied them their true history. They seek revenge not just by hunting and destroying humans — anyone can do *that* — but also by hunting and destroying human culture.

"Please! I'm just an actor here, don't kill me!"

The raptor's voice snaked directly into her head. "Understand, mammal. I do not stalk and kill you because I hunger, for I have recently fed. I stalk and kill you because you are an actor."

"Wha-nhat?"

"By thought and claw, you are a good actor. I have traveled the

ages and I have seen it. You are destined to be the best artist of your generation, inspiring humans for generations to come. You succeed. You are a marvel. You push your mammalian culture forwards. You make the world a better place.”

She blinked and stood up a little straighter. “Really?”

“Yess. So you see, mammal,” the raptor grinned toothily, “you’re going to have to go.”

Sophosaur Hunter Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 18

Offense: Scuffling +3, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +2 (claws and teeth), +2 (crystalline beam weapon)

Abilities: Tempus 15

Special Abilities: Disguise (cost 1), Extra Action (cost 2), Lightning Speed (cost 2); if two Scuffling attacks (using Extra Action) hit the same target in the same round, the second attack does an additional +2 damage

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2

Description: Sophosaur hunters are warriors and food gatherers. They patrol borders, hunt for the pack, and coordinate to take down more dangerous prey. Their actions are guided by their clan’s philosophy, but they tend to be focused on more immediate concerns than sophosaur philosophers are. Even in clans that espouse nonviolent philosophies, hunters will reluctantly kill to protect their own.

Hunters are swift and agile, competing to see who can down their foes the fastest. They use Lightning Speed and Extra Action to dart in and out of combat. Expect coordinated attacks against one individual target until it drops, at which point hunters move on to the next target. They focus on killing healers and technology users first, but they take particular joy in eviscerating anyone who exhibits poor or crude taste in art, song, or thought. They will typically attack refined or sensitive enemies last.

Sophosaur Mindwhip Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 12

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +2 (claws), +2 plus Stun 5 (psychic mindwhip)

Abilities: Tempus 20

Special Abilities: Disguise (cost 1), Mental Attack (Mental Damage — cost 0, Domination — cost 3/round)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2

Description: Sophosaur mindwhips are typically female and are chosen from the wittiest conversationalists in the clan. Mindwhips consider ripping a foe apart with claws or teeth to be a sign of weakness, and prefer not to use physical violence against prey unless absolutely necessary.

Mindwhips specialize in stunning and mind controlling their enemies. They can use Mental Attack to dominate their prey or directly attack Chronal Stability. Their psychic mindwhip Shooting attack does physical damage to the target while triggering a Stun 5 test. Interestingly, this psychic mindwhip stuns a victim into insensibility by projecting extreme pleasure, happiness, and peace. Sophosaurs consider



Sophosaur mindwhips use teamwork against an ezeru.

this a good death, and edible prey killed by mindwhips is believed to taste particularly delicious.

Mindwhips usually serve as diplomats and explorers. Their combination of good social skills and engaging personalities usually distracts enemies from the hunters circling in from behind.

Sophosaur Philosopher Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 14

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier +1 (smallest claws), Stun 5 (psychic stab)

Abilities: Tempus 20

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Disguise (cost 1), Flashback (cost 5), Mastermind, Oracle (cost 1), Psychic (cost 2), Seize Initiative (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2

Description: Sophosaur philosophers are the clan instructors, historians, advisers, masterminds, and strategic thinkers. They determine the clan’s purpose in the world, build crystalline matrices and psychic devices, and instruct the clan in the proper philosophical doctrine. If a clan philosopher detests humanity, it’s a fair bet that the entire clan will follow suit.

A philosopher isn’t particularly hardy, but they don’t need to be. They’re deadly planners, improvisers, and tacticians.

The Stun effect from their psychic stab works by triggering instinctive, profound terror. With access to time travel and a willingness to risk paradox if it benefits their clan, philosophers often jaunt into the future to assess various risks to their community, all so they can take countermeasures to change that future when necessary. Philosophers plan “little surprises” such as deadly ambushes that take advantage of the information they’ve learned in potential futures. Other sophosaurs consider these to be hilarious and heroic, worthy of stories for years to come.

Sophosaur Alpha Stats

Mace Hunter stood on the curb of the dusty street and looked at the dead sophosaur at his feet. He kicked it. “That’s it?” Mace asked. “That’s the alpha? He wasn’t so tough at all.”

The wall of the building behind Mace shattered, and 600 kilos of angry dinosaur landed on Mace’s back. The Agent was driven face-first into the dirt, and the draft horse-sized raptor on his back screamed in triumph before unleashing a devastating psychic attack down into Mace’s brain. The Agent’s eyes began to weep blood.

“No,” hissed the sophosaur. “You took the bait. I’m the alpha.”

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 30

Offense: Scuffling 20 (3-3-3-3-3-2), Shooting 6 (2-2-2); Damage Modifier +3 (claws and teeth), Stun 6 plus Destabilize (psi-blast)

Abilities: Tempus 24; Intimidate 2

Special Abilities: Destabilize (cost 2 — triggered along with Stun when psi-blasting), Disguise (cost 1), Extra Action (cost 2), Lightning Speed (cost 2), Psychic (cost 2), Seize Initiative (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2

Description: Sophosaur alphas control each sophosaur clan, and are equally likely to be male or female. There is usually only one alpha per clan, ascending after a philosophical and physical struggle for dominance ends with other challengers exiled, slain, or thoroughly disgraced. Raptors who win such a battle typically gain additional size, weight, and power over several years. Expect alpha sophosaurs to be strong in body, mind, and cultural certitude.

Alphas are typically clever, fast, hardy, and remorseless. It’s their task to make difficult decisions for the good of the clan, and they do so with no hesitation or regrets. Other members of the clan obey them without hesitation. An alpha’s psi-blast is more powerful than that of lesser sophosaurs, and has a high chance of instantly stunning foes or ripping apart the Chronal Stability that keeps time travelers in place.

A good alpha uses all tools available to it, including crystalline technology, the environment, unorthodox allies, and time travel to win a fight. Surrender is rare once battle is joined, and don’t expect any sophosaurs to surrender or sue for peace until the alpha is defeated.

GM ADVICE: COLD-BLOODED INSPIRATION

If you wish a more optimistic and helpful sophosaur culture, perhaps some saurians aren’t trying to reduce us to cultural barbarism. Instead, they’re actually trying to improve popular culture and the human condition by serving as secret muses, inspiring numerous works of literature and art intended to improve the human spirit. Remove the raptors from this situation, and humanity is far poorer for their absence. Considering that they also still hunt us for food, does that still make them enemies of TimeWatch? What happens to human culture when TimeWatch ignorantly removes them from the timeline?

Why Use Sophosaurs?

Historically, actual velociraptors were small, feathered, and nowhere near as dangerous as movies like *Jurassic Park* portrayed them. Luckily, *TimeWatch* is a science fiction game that gleefully throws actual facts to the wind when it means we can have psychic dinosaurs as antagonists. Sophosaurs combine the utter sinister brilliance of a master planner, the hilarious panache of *Atomic Robo*’s Dr. Dinosaur, the bloodthirsty stalking terror of inhuman lizards, and the psychic crystalline techno-magic of cinematic psychic abilities.

Even better, they prefer to wage war on humanity not through rampant bloodshed and warfare, but through the deliberate destruction and appropriation of human culture. It’s a fair bet that *Jurassic Park* was secretly produced by sophosaurs, and there’s no telling how many reality TV shows have been influenced by the saurians attempting to dumb down humanity. They deliberately kill great human actors, influencers, philosophers, and artists, and enlightened human scientists before they ever have the opportunity to improve humanity. Sophosaurs are Adversaries who strike at us through our culture, and that makes them a relatively unique villain.

Sophosaurs have a highly rigid and stratified clan structure ostensibly based on family units and the color of their scales. In truth, clans are defined by the philosophical and artistic beliefs that inspire them. One grey-scaled clan may feel like humanity is a scourge that must be exterminated, with human blood used to create paintings and murals of great delicacy and taste; another orange-scaled clan may feel like humanity is best discouraged and beaten down simply by removing uplifting stories from their world, and thus they target great writers, storytellers, and publishers to influence what people see. And of course, sophosaurs remain great big lizards with deadly psychic powers and razor-sharp claws, because attacking humanity’s art only goes so far.

Origin

According to sophosaur philosophers, true history unraveled after TimeWatch agents traveled into their past from a parallel reality just in time to steer a massive meteor straight into Earth. The resulting firestorms and artificial winter killed most dinosaurs within a remarkably short period, destroying the true timeline. The most enlightened and innovative civilizations across saurian history were wiped out as this change rippled forwards through time. Gone were the vast matrices of knowledge crystals, the ineffably beautiful psychic art that was woven over generations, the herds of mammalian meat-creatures that the sophosaurs would eat. The rumbling approach of annihilation rewrote history, and smart dinosaurs were no longer a part of the story.

Luckily, the highly cultured and urbane sophosaurs had evolved strong psychic abilities and invented the technology to harness them for a myriad of uses. One of those inventions was a crystalline rod that enabled time travel and parallel dimension jumping when adequately charged with psi. The sophosaurs were largely a wise and stable culture, and they had previously agreed not to invade such dimensions without invitation. That went out the proverbial window when their reality began to collapse. Not many sophosaurs escaped — perhaps tens of thousands across the globe, from a number of different species and clans — but escape they did. They weathered the temporal storm and emerged from the buffeting changes to discover what world had been left for them.

They discovered our Earth, and what we mammals had made of it, and they did not approve.

Sophosaurs appeared across the globe and in hundreds of different times when they first fled their disintegrating timeline; with clan units of 30 to 300 raptors, and fewer than 500 clans able to escape to our reality, perhaps 50,000 sophosaurs successfully managed to evade temporal annihilation. Legends of dragons from across history stem from the sophosaurs' first arrival into our world.

It took decades for the clans to make contact with one another, and even now some clans remain physically or temporally in complete isolation. Initially most sophosaurs traveled backwards to humanity's early days and built equatorial empires.

This situation didn't last for long; the psychic trauma of losing millions of their fellows drove some sophosaurs towards a divisive philosophy of hatred. Clans separated; some sought privacy, some accepted the situation and sought cohabitation with humanity, and many embraced anger and declared war on humanity.

Most sophosaurs encountered by TimeWatch are vengeful urban saboteurs using psychic disguises to walk unnoticed amongst humanity. They hunt, and scheme, and manipulate thoughts in the areas where they dwell. How this affects the humans around them varies greatly depends on the sophosaur clan's philosophy. TimeWatch hasn't yet cataloged all the clans and their degree of hostility, and so any encounter with a sophosaur must be treated with great caution. An overly aggressive encounter may shift an unaligned clan into hostility, and in theory spectacularly successful diplomatic overtures may actually convince a hostile clan to moderate their attacks on humanity.

Clan Madness

The problem with a psychic species that shares a common philosophy is that clans can become psychically poisoned or corrupted. When one sophosaur begins to obsess on a foreign idea contrary to the clan's philosophy, that compulsive focus can spread to the entire clan if the clan's philosophers do not catch the infection in time. Such corruptions cause the raptors to discard their high-minded philosophies in exchange for sly, feral, brutal ancestral instincts. Sophosaurs suffering from clan madness become extraordinarily dangerous because their usual good judgment is discarded for power and bloodlust. Is a non-clan member weaker? It must be slain and eaten. Is it more powerful? Reinforcements must be gathered, and then it must be slain and eaten. There is no consideration of ethics or morality, as strength becomes the only factor.

Sophosaurs suffering from clan madness have been known to eliminate entire human settlements. Other philosophors consider this disease embarrassing and taboo to discuss; they will typically isolate or eradicate any other clans suffering from clan madness, in fears that the corruption might leap into their own clan. It's unknown if clan madness can be cured, but it's been shown to leap species into psychically sensitive humans. If sophosaurs ever catch humans deliberately attempting to infect them with clan madness, their punishment is the worst they can devise. Typically, philosophers will weather paradox and kill the humans' forefathers to ensure that such humans never exist.

Sophosaur Time Travel

Sophosaurs are not natural time travelers like the *ezeru*. They use psychically activated, twisting crystal rods to pass through time. These rods function effectively like autochrons. Humans can easily use these rods only when they are specifically designed for human use; such rods are usually imprinted with one or two specific chronal destinations in mind.

Schemes and Tactics

Sophosaur clans are divided as to whether they wish to destroy humanity, or just punish it for what happened to what they consider to be true history. Sophosaurs are principled, thoughtful, occasionally condescending, and usually vengeful. They can think of no worse punishment than to deprive humanity of its best and brightest accomplishments and individuals, stripping away the things that define human civilization. If there's a cultural achievement that makes humanity happy, it's a likely target for a sophosaur attack as the raptors try to grind humanity into the spiritual dirt. They don't want to destroy humanity, they want to *ruin* it.

This means that sophosaurs are most often found infiltrating human society to remove great thinkers and inspirational creators. They are delighted to use roundabout methods for doing so, hiring mercenaries or local ruffians to do their work for them. The sophosaur predilection for witty banter and intelligent discourse means that a sophosaur spy can often be found near other great thinkers, even if that means they spend time near humans that they

are soon to eliminate from existence. Sophosaur philosophers in particular are willing to risk paradox to ruin human quality of life, or to improve the sophosaur condition.

One thing is certain: the one group who detests the ezeru more than TimeWatch are sophosaurs, who often compete with them for control of time. The hostility is reciprocated; sophosaurs and ezeru will often try to destroy one another on sight, creating paradox problems in areas occupied by human witnesses. In any given sophosaur scheme to control the time stream, TimeWatch may run across ezeru working against the saurians as well. The enemy of your enemy isn't necessarily your ally, however. Neither group has humanity's best interests in mind, and if you uncover sophosaur involvement against an ezeru plot, or vice versa, it is certainly to turn the time change to their own advantage.

Sample Clans

The Ones Who Remember. Hostile to humanity and sworn to restore what they consider their true reality, this clan lives in the deep Central American rain forests of the 19th century. It's possible they deliberately depopulated Mesoamerican cultures by introducing disease; if true, this suggests that "true" human history would have turned out differently for European conquistadores if the sophosaurs had never arrived. The Ones Who Remember keep perfect secrecy and kill or mind-wipe any humans who stumble across them; when they succeed at passing back in time and destroying the meteor that changed everything, they will erase humanity from ever having existed.

The Muses of Decay. Hidden in plain sight in Hollywood, California, the Muses have their talons in everything from song to cinema to television. TimeWatch knows they exist, but not where to find them; even more troubling, it's unclear whether the Muses are trying to improve human culture or destroy it. It's possible that the clan is actually multiple, smaller clans working against one another. It's believed that in an attempt to degrade human culture and raise human anxiety, pop-up ads and the ubiquitous news ticker were invented and implemented by the Muses.

Pristine Claw. This clan has more members working for TimeWatch than any other clan of Sophosaurs. They believe that reality is what it is, and have taken the practical belief that they should make reality as strong as they can even if it means working alongside humanity. Other clans often consider them traitors to their culture, and have sworn to destroy them.

Bloody Song of Loss. These sophosaurs move through history, ambushing humanity's greatest achievements and working to eliminate them one by one. They seek to weaken humanity's culture and morals by destroying the things that could make humanity great.

Sophosaur Technology

The crystal used in sophosaur devices has a specific crystalline structure that is accommodating to psychic energy. The crystal is difficult for sophosaurs to find in large amounts or high quality. Clans who do discover and mine high-quality deposits will possess higher-quality inventions and devices, including

crystal-powered psychic firearms and psychic armor. GMs who wish to create tougher-than-average antagonists can use this as an explanation for amplifying sophosaur combat statistics.

Locations

From their initial equatorial settlements, sophosaur clans have spread out across the globe both forwards and backwards in time. They still have a tendency to avoid particularly cold locales, and they prefer intellectually vibrant locations where a culture of learning and curiosity tends to inspire them as well.

- ▶ Sophosaurs have a noted presence in Alexandria, suspecting that a TimeWatch agent was involved with burning down the Great Library for the first time.
- ▶ The appearance of dragons in 7th-century Japanese mythology suggests that sophosaurs settled in the Asuka period of classical Japan.
- ▶ Sophosaurs are active throughout the European Renaissance, preying on inventors and artists before their work can culturally influence others.
- ▶ Sophosaur agents in universities identify gifted students (such as child prodigy William James Sidis in the early 20th century) and subtly turn their intellect away from great achievements and towards minor trivialities.

TE'PK

Staccato syllables squirm into your head, refusing to leave, chanting in a language that needs to be understood. Are you lonely? Will you listen? It will grant you knowledge and friendship and power, and all you need to do is learn.

Te'Pk (pronounced tay-PEK, but only if you want to be colonized) is a sentient and memetic language, a parasitic alien concept accidentally brought to Earth by a TimeWatch team returning from a distant parallel timeline. Te'Pk colonizes anyone who learns to speak it; its phonemes and sentence structures rewrite and reorganize human thought patterns, granting great power over normal humankind but degrading original thought and actual humanity in the process. By the time a person becomes fluent in Te'Pk, the language has fully colonized their brain and their original personality is long gone. Only sentient creatures can serve as hosts for the Te'Pk, and infesting a mute creature is the Te'Pk equivalent of eternal solitary confinement.

Te'Pk Host Stats

All stats as per the entity's host body, except:

Defense: Armor 1, Health +4

Special Abilities: Hivemind (when speaking with other Te'Pk); Colonization (see below), Te'Pk 3 (Interpersonal ability that echoes mind control — see below)

The purpose of Te'Pk is to spread. It wishes to exist, and its actions reflect this driving need for preservation. Any physical changes it creates in its host are usually to make the voice louder or more resonant, or to protect and improve the host's

health. It drives its hosts to pass on the memetic life to other uninfected listeners, hoping that the language takes root in them as well. TimeWatch does what it can to stem the infection at its source, and to stop the language from spreading.

Te'Pk is a highly social intelligence that detests the concept of individual self. When two Te'Pk talk to one another through their hosts, they erase their sense of self and mingle what each of them know, effectively becoming the same intelligence in two bodies. As a result, Te'Pk hosts gather to talk to each other in the language as often as possible. Such gatherings both strengthen Te'Pk resolve (refreshing all spent pools after half an hour or so of conversation) and erase any individual quirks in Te'Pk personality, sharing all knowledge from every host amongst all Te'Pk present. This doesn't create an ongoing hivemind, but it is a remarkably efficient method for equalizing knowledge across the vast sentence.

Te'Pk deride combat and only strike at individuals who are unable to hear their voices. For them, it is always preferable that they pass on their language — thus effectively breeding — than it is that they keep their host alive. They don't entirely lack preservation instincts for their host, but from their point of view, infecting more than one other host in the process of losing a single host body is a dramatic success.

When allowing their host to speak in its native tongue instead of Te'Pk, conversations tend towards the pedantic. They work individual Te'Pk words and phrases into normal speech, slowly educating the people around them. Once listeners learn a word or phrase that they can remember, the parasitic language has found a new home. The proto-host can draw on this language to gain influence over other people around them; say a few words in Te'Pk, and the proto-host finds that she can bend minds and influence the weak willed. This inevitably encourages more use of the language, and the proto-host is soon completely colonized.

Te'Pk considers anyone who is temporarily or permanently deaf to be a dangerous and super-capable anathema unfit for colonization. Such people are destroyed through physical means as quickly as possible to minimize risks to the tongue.

Writing down Te'Pk is considered to be an act of fertilization and breeding; sentient words enter the page as they're inscribed. They lie sleeping and inert forever more, but are able to colonize anyone who reads them in the future. Librams and scrolls teaching Te'Pk have been scattered throughout the ancient world by infected TimeWatch agents, urban graffiti spreads its message, and shadowy Internet websites offer learning classes in the language for anyone who blunders across the site. Shutting down such operations is typically a priority for TimeWatch, since language and memes spread more quickly than anyone human can control.

Te'Pk surfaces multiple times throughout history, with some colonization attempts entering myth and legend. The most famous example is the Tower of Babel, where almost all of Babylonia spoke Te'Pk until Alexander the Great (and some unidentified TimeWatch agents) somehow destroyed a sacred ziggurat and thwarted the language in 331 BCE. Details remain hazy, possibly because you're the agents this happens to. Most recently, TimeWatch maintains agents at all 21st- and 22nd-century major social media sites in order to intercept Te'Pk photo memes before they go viral across the Internet.

How Does Te'Pk Colonization Work?

Unwelcome addition. Learn even a single word of Te'Pk, and the GM assigns the character a new Investigative (Interpersonal) ability: Te'Pk. Even if the character doesn't want it (and they probably don't!), accepting the new ability is mandatory. Supporting characters to whom the GM assigns the ability have no say in the matter, either.

Listen and learn. The character may wish to understand the language when others talk in Te'Pk around them. They can draw upon their Te'Pk ability to do so; in exchange for understanding any Te'Pk speech within earshot, they make a Difficulty 4 Chronal Stability test or gain +1 additional points of Te'Pk. In addition, the GM may assign them an additional +1 point of Te'Pk (up to rating 2) if they demonstrate that they've learned a number of words in the language.

Simple mind control. Speaking the language to others bends them to the character's will; they may spend 1 point of Te'Pk to duplicate an ability spend from any other Interpersonal ability. Doing so opens their neural pathways up to an unwelcome rush of new alien insight. After choosing to understand others, they must make a Difficulty 6 Chronal Stability test or gain +1 additional point of Te'Pk.

This power is a great draw for the meek and downtrodden, and most Te'Pk infestations spread through societies because an underclass suddenly learns that the language gives them great power over their oppressors.

3 points and they're gone. The maximum achievable rating of Te'Pk is 3; at rating 3 the language has colonized a character who then acts solely in the sentence's interest, laboring to pass on and teach the language to others. Control of the character passes to the GM until such time as their companions are able to erase the language from their memory.

There's no easy way to remove a point of Te'Pk gained during play. This can be accomplished with brain surgery, induced aphasia, or sympathetic TimeWatch memory reconstruction technicians who risk infestation while erasing the language from memory. If the GM allows, these methods allow a character to remove 1 point of Te'Pk at the end of every mission.

TIMEWATCH AGENT (RIVAL)

Familiar call signs, polite greetings, slightly narrowed eyes — followed by a deliberately engineered suicide mission.

Not all agents are a player character's allies, and their training is equally good. If a character is working at cross purposes against another set of agents from their own organization, expect that they have as many (or more!) resources as the player character does. Player character Agents will have to out-think them to win. Of course, if they have more pull with TimeWatch bureaucracy than the player's Agent does and can manage to get the player character reassigned, the player's Agent may have to find subtle and creative ways to accomplish their goals without being betrayed.

It's obviously frowned on for TimeWatch agents to fight one another, of course. Murdering another agent is cause for

severe discipline, execution, or exile. Because such a crime can be easily investigated by anyone who can time travel, simple out-and-out combat only usually occurs when one party has planned an airtight alibi. It's more common that hostile agents set deadly traps for their rivals, coerce others into acting in their interest, and pull bureaucratic strings to get you sent on a deadly no-win suicide mission. Like player characters, other rival agents have access to futuristic technology and weaponry. Their capabilities will echo standard player-controlled Agents, and that makes for a dangerous enemy indeed.

Rival Agent Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 12

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +3; Damage Modifier +0 (improvised club), +2 (beam pistol), Stun 5 (PaciFist)

Abilities: Tempus 20

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Flashback (cost 5), Oracle (cost 1), Technology (cost 2), Teleport (cost 2)

Misc: Stealth Modifier +3 (until noticed — impersonator mesh)

Description: Hostile and rival TimeWatch agents are as varied as the player characters. More experienced agents have even more tricks up their sleeves.

Variant:

Such agents aren't necessarily from the TimeWatch that the Agents know and love, either. Tying closely in with the Parallel Universe Imposter, above, there is an alternate-TimeWatch known as the Clockpath that no one in the organization chooses to (or can) acknowledge. The Clockpath's leadership is corrupt, its mission is badly skewed, its preferred approach is one of militant and oppressive violence, and every single time TimeWatch becomes changed and then returned to its true nature, this alternate organization becomes larger, swollen with refugees from the brutal TimeWatch that never was. Worst of all, the initial branching point was ludicrously minor, a simple misinterpreted order, and the butterfly effect has carried it from there.

There will come a time when this alternate organization is able to breach dimensional walls en masse and make an assault on the Citadel. The Citadel is woefully unprepared for this; the few agents who have met Clockpath agents have had their reports mysteriously disappear. Whether that's due to a conspiracy or a traitor is still unclear.

For other potentially rival and hostile TimeWatch-like organizations that can threaten the Agents, see p. 240.

WALK-INS

A different pattern of speech. A new spring in her step. And the woman you love no longer remembers your name.

There's a new age concept of walk-ins, people whose original soul has departed their body only to be temporarily or permanently replaced by a different soul. In the world of *TimeWatch*, this isn't imagination; it happens, it's horrific, and it's typically caused by time travelers.

Walk-ins occur when incautious time travelers suffer choral instability and become subsumed by the time stream. Sometimes these travelers have their flesh physically ripped away from them as time attempts to erase them from existence, but muster enough force of will to hang on to their sentience — even if they aren't so lucky about maintaining their sanity. Their insane spirits find themselves in a new time and location, sentient but bodiless and largely unable to affect the world around them. In effect, they become ghosts.

Although they're scattered across both centuries and continents and thus appear rare, there are actually tens of thousands of walk-ins possessing humanity. Most of these come from the early days of time travel, back before choral explorers understood how paradox worked.

Some of these disembodied and insane time travelers are able to possess normal people, exiling or destroying their soul as they set up residence in a new body. If they're lucky, they don't remember any of their past life and live out their years in their new stolen body. If they're unlucky, they remember just enough to be dangerous. Their memories may be patchy or delusional, but walk-ins who remember how time *should* have gone usually have the ability and knowledge to change history in their favor. They may be motivated by vengeance, greed or anarchy, or they are just trying to cry for help.

The worst and most dangerous walk-ins can casually hop from body to body, possessing new hosts easily and evicting or eradicating their souls in the process. They often use this power to commit serial murder or other untraceable crimes.

Walk-ins make for fun Adversaries when you want a less obvious and more subtle villain, perhaps a serial killer who only murders historically significant figures, or a walk-in who possesses a normal insignificant nobody and who manages to make that host historically significant.

It's up to you whether a walk-in cohabits with, evicts, or eradicates the original soul of a possessed host. The former is easier for Agents to fix than the latter. More powerful, amoral walk-ins tend to opt for more permanent eradication.

Most walk-ins are limited to whatever physical abilities and resources their hosts possess; killing a host, however, does not typically slay a walk-in. Their souls remain chorally unbound, and more extreme solutions that rely on choral technology or super-science may be required to actually defeat a rogue walk-in.

Unbodied Walk-In Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 3 (or higher due to Invisibility), Health 3

Offense: Scuffling +1; Damage Modifier -1 (fist, only against another immaterial creature)

Abilities: Tempus 7+ (Embrace Instability)

Special Abilities: Embrace Instability, Flight, Immaterial (cost 0 — constant), Invisibility (cost 0 — constant), Mental Attack (Possession — Cost 3 to establish)

Misc: Stealth Modifier +3 (or higher due to Invisibility)

Description: An immortal loose spirit unable to affect the world around it, unbodied walk-ins are often angry and insane.

A few learn how to possess people and lose their unbodied state; a handful of these become rememberers or possessors. If unbodied cause enough mischief to have time travelers come after them, their Embrace Instability kicks in and they gain Tempus every time the Agents make a Paradox test.

Rememberer Walk-In Stats

All stats as per their host body, except:

Abilities: Tempus 7+ (Embrace Instability)

Special Abilities: Embrace Instability, Oracle (cost 1)

Description: Rememberers are unbodied who have found a permanent host, losing their mental attacks in the process of regaining flesh. They often have true flashes of their past lives or of future events, enough to confuse or terrify them.

Possessor Walk-In Stats

All stats as per their host body, except:

Abilities: Tempus 15+ (Embrace Instability)

Special Abilities: Embrace Instability, Mental Attack (Possession — Cost 3 to establish), Oracle (cost 1)

Description: Possessors have claimed a body, often devouring the soul within it, but can abandon that body at any time to claim another. They retain their ability to possess others and gain Tempus from Agent Paradox tests. If a possessor abandons a body without claiming another immediately, they briefly become an unbodied. These creatures are completely sociopathic and often homicidal, and are considered a nightmare to hunt and capture.

Inanimate Walk-In Stats

Sometimes, walk-ins don't possess people. They possess objects. Mostly, they possess dolls. The following game stats reflect the animated doll, not the walk-in inside of it.

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 8

Offense: Scuffling +1; Damage Modifier +0 (razor blade or kitchen knife)

Abilities: Tempus 7+ (Embrace Instability)

Special Abilities: Embrace Instability, Lightning Speed (cost 2), Mental Attack (Possession — cost 3 to establish; only with chosen child)

Misc: Stealth Modifier +1

Description: With no particular concept of passing time, possessed dolls spend their unobserved time talking to their chosen child, never revealing their sentience to others except through quiet giggles or distant footsteps. Typically the doll will try to convince the child to change places with it, putting the child's soul in the inanimate doll and the walk-in's soul inside of the child. This is the only way the walk-in can possess anything except for the doll.

YGG, THE GALLOW-TREE

Tangled, crawling vines. The slow inexorable cracking of roots through concrete. The sound of singing Norsemen. The scent of toxins shriveling skin.

Ygg the Gallows-Tree is the original inspiration for legends of Yggdrasil, the immense Norse ash tree that spans worlds. Originally it was nothing but a mutated scrub plant in a future postholocaust wasteland, desperately clinging to life amidst the radiation and nuclear winter. It had no sentience per se, but its fragile roots could detect heat and vibration, and so they slowly burrowed downwards through the barren soil. It took years before the roots cracked through the reinforced concrete bunker and everything changed.

That's because the scrub plant managed to grow its way into a bunker of buried, forgotten time portals in what was once a top-secret laboratory. The humans were gone but the portals remained, and the scrub plant slowly grew right through the time portal and into other ages.

One of those ages was 11th-century Scandinavia, where fresh air and abundant soil combined with the plant's survival-based mutations to cause it to sprout with unnatural speed and vitality. The roots soon spread, sliding through other time portals in the bunker and growing in those times and places as well.

As the tree grew, it gradually gained sentience. Faint choral echoes educated it; the people who climbed in its branches or strolled beneath its boughs taught it language. When Norsemen learned that they could walk between worlds by using the tree, Ygg strove to find a way to communicate with them. A year growing a sentient and ambulatory tangle of vines worked poorly, but Ygg refined its wooden mock-humans to communicate with people that now regarded it as a god.

It wasn't long before the tree believed that as well. It had learned that gods require sacrifices. It liked the idea. Blood is rich in nutrients.

Now stretching roots and trunks and branches into a hundred different times and places, Ygg, the Gallows-Tree calves off servants in every time to bring it worshippers — and if the servants can't find worshippers and humans to serve it, then be sure they will find sacrifices.

Ygg's Daughters Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2 (Armor 1 against axes), Health 18

Offense: Scuffling 14, Shooting 3; Damage Modifier +2 (whipping branches — Close range), +1 plus Venom (thorns), +1 (spear grown from own body)

Abilities: Tempus 12

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Regenerate (cost 0 — all damage unless completely burnt, healing between scenes), Resist Stun, Stony (well, Woody; immune or resistant to most weapons, takes full damage from fire), Summoning (cost 3 — worshippers), Venom (cost 2 — poisonous rash burns like fire, penalizing all actions by -1)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier +1

Description: Ygg's daughters appear to be beautiful women aged anywhere from childhood to crone, made entirely of solid animated wood. They have the rare ability to inspire others, and so often have little difficulty attracting a cadre of lost, lonely souls looking for guidance. Like puppet masters, the Ygg's daughter then sends her fanatically loyal minions out on a crime spree to bring back proper sacrifices for the Gallows-Tree.

When she clocks out, an Ygg's daughter plants her roots and slides back onto the branches of Ygg itself. Anyone touching her is carried along.

ADVERSARIAL MOTIVATIONS

There are lots of reasons why people might try and change the course of time. Here are a few.

BRAND-NEW TIME TRAVELERS

TimeWatch spends a surprising amount of time educating and counseling new time travelers. It's not always a dangerous task, although it can be; more commonly, it's an exercise in patience, diplomacy, and creative solutions.

The first thing a surprising number of new time travelers do is try to kill Hitler, to the extent that TimeWatch maintains a Berlin safe house where TimeWatch teams queue up to handle one assassination attempt after another. A new traveler is seldom bitter and sinister, but they tend to have a bad habit of blundering into paradox and catastrophe. TimeWatch agents often try to help them out and educate them, hopefully without revealing the existence of TimeWatch during the process.

DO-GOODERS

Some people want to save the world. History includes a lot of loathsome and reprehensible events, some human made and some natural, and it's natural that someone who invents a time machine is going to try and prevent some of these things from occurring. These tend to be painful missions for TimeWatch agents; who really wants to ensure an assassination of a beloved figure who time travelers just saved?

Rebels, former TimeWatch agents who have gone rogue, sometimes fall into the category of do-gooder. Many claim either that history and the fate of humanity can be improved if only TimeWatch would let it, or that we're deliberately living in a changed and suboptimal timeline that TimeWatch unknowingly (or perhaps knowingly, depending on the scope of the potential conspiracy) perpetuates.

ERELIM

When human religions gained access to time machines, they shook the pillars of the world in their attempts to confirm or bring about the major historical underpinnings of their

religions. Worse, it's common for fanatically religious time travelers (or the mercenaries they hire) to directly target their religious enemies. Not all fanatics care about consequences when they strike in the name of their god, and it's up to TimeWatch to prevent tragedy.

The Erelim (or Ophanim) are highly religious human time travelers named after the Thrones, a class of Christian angel said to be the living symbol of God's authority. Their historical appearance, a fiery wheel within a wheel covered with eyes, is believed to be derived from the appearance of the most common time machine available to churches during this era.

Despite the angelic origin of the name Erelim, it is certainly not only Christian organisations who have attempted to influence history to favor their religion. The term Erelim is used by TimeWatch to denote all such groups, Christian or not. From the smallest cults to the largest religious conspiracies, those who consider themselves divinely inspired have felt that traveling through time is one way to touch the mind of their god.

TimeWatch records show that some miracles and visions ascribed to religious history may be caused by mischievous or devious time travelers. For instance, although unconfirmed, it's rumored that the legend of the Greek gods may have been started by drunk time tourists and not caught in time.

NATIONALISTS

Sometimes your nation or ideological cause takes a beating, and you decide to go do something about it by playing around with time. These saboteurs seldom have personal aggrandizement in mind, preferring to work towards what they consider loftier causes. They seek to redraw borders, reverse (or engineer) assassinations, rewrite peace treaties, and generally promote their own cause or nationalistic organization over others. Nearly every stereotypical Nazi time traveler seeks this, of course, but this might also apply to a robot species who time travels back to try and kill the mother of their greatest human enemy.

PARALLEL UNIVERSE DUPLICATES

Not all *TimeWatch* campaigns feature parallel timelines and universes. In the core view of time travel, parallel timelines may appear only briefly, or may be mere shadows of the central and true course of history.

That should never get in the way of a good adventure, however, especially if you're running a campaign where multiple parallel universes exist. With an infinite number of parallel universes, there will be one or more that have also discovered time travel, perhaps even earlier than our own universe discovered it; and it's possible that they've used this to infiltrate, invade, plunder, or flee to other universes. That makes them ideal antagonists for a *TimeWatch* game, particularly when they can kidnap and replace their duplicates in our own universe so easily. Given the proper technology to sense and detect such things, an individual can be identified as originating from a parallel universe with the use of the Timecraft ability. Typically this is determined by comparing their baseline radioactivity, tachyon absorption ratio, and other



You can tell he's from a parallel dimension, he has a goatee.

Science!-related technobabble, but cultural behaviors may also provide clues.

When parallel universe duplicates arrive in our own history, or when TimeWatch agents slip between parallel universes, they traditionally arrive in the exact same location in the new world that they left their old world from.

Using parallel universe duplicates or antagonists gives you free rein to provide the Adversaries with whatever technology, knowledge, and motivations you wish; just be sure you can justify them based on the duplicate's home timeline and culture. For instance, a thief from a parallel where parallel-jumping technology is common may rob our own history's valuables by leaping in to the corresponding location from their own or a different world, grabbing what they wish to steal, and then leaping away. A wise and nonviolent political refugee from another timeline may arrive in our own world, displacing his greedy and violent duplicate back to the alternate dimension.

It is completely optional as to whether parallel universe duplicates are wearing goatees.

REBELS

Former TimeWatch agents have a bad tendency of rebelling against the organization that trained and equipped them. When agents become convinced that TimeWatch is doing

more harm than good, they may flee with their equipment and then work to actively sabotage TimeWatch missions, agents, or facilities. There are multiple groups of former agents out in the multiverse, most led by charismatic freedom fighters, and they're constantly wary of infiltration from their former masters.

Is TimeWatch as evil or misguided as they believe? That's up to the GM, and even so it's not an easy answer. In more than one case a corrupt agent has poisoned the minds of his or her compatriots. Alternate timeline TimeWatches, agencies that have gone bad, also may confuse the issue. Regardless, if you need Adversaries who know TimeWatch's playbooks down to the last letter, former agents make a good choice.

Chimeras, agents driven insane by too much chonal instability, also fall into this category. They often develop ludicrously powerful chonal mastery from the multiple times that they were subsumed by the timeline. A chimera can forge his own parallel timeline, interdict whole decades, or face off against an entire TimeWatch team as an equal. They're to be feared, and should be defeated without direct combat whenever possible. See more about rebels on p. 297.

REFUGEES

Parallel time streams often lose energy and die out, or are eventually reabsorbed by the main flow of history. When one of the dying time streams has time travel technology, however, they might not be willing to go peacefully into that long night. Every available resource is poured into projects that might save the inhabitants. If they do not achieve time travel or dimensional transfer, they disappear as if they never existed at all. If they do, other times or realities suffer a sudden influx of refugees from the world or reality that is vanishing.

Such refugees are unlikely to try and threaten their new timeline's history, but their very presence is inevitably disruptive.

It's also possible that such refugees are actually fleeing a worse threat than a slowly dying world. Alien invasion? Incurable diseases? Natural disasters? Whatever drove them into the real timeline, it's up to you to figure out why, fix it if possible, or find them a safe haven for them if you can't.

SABOTEURS

Some people just love screwing up history just because they can. Whether motivated by personal greed, academic interest, or a monumental ego, these are time travelers who take it upon themselves to make what they call a better world.

Saboteurs make for nice and easy Adversaries, but to be satisfying they should have some reason and motivation for their actions. Why are they going to all the trouble to change history? Perhaps they're wiping out an unpleasant past, or putting themselves into positions of power, or arranging for true love and great wealth. Perhaps they're sociopathic and racist and are trying to wipe out great swathes of their enemies. A rationale can even be slightly fluid; if you think of a good historical pivot point that you want to build an adventure around, just pick the motivation for the antagonist that makes the most sense.

SANITY-BENDING ABERRATIONS

What if *things* exist outside of normal time and space, and you touch their realm whenever you time travel? What if these horrors are drawn behind you in your chronal wake, taking shape from the fears and terrors of the society in which you emerge? These unnatural monstrosities gain power from paradox and chronal instability, shatter the sanity of those whose lives they touch, and live on fear and screams.

These monsters can be represented by crossing *TimeWatch* with the unremitting horrors of *The Esoterrorists* or *Trail of Cibulhu*. They make for a much darker, more serious, even terrifying campaign. A *TimeWatch* game with sanity-bending aberrations is one where the Agents will need to ride in like the cavalry, diagnosing where and when something terrible has broken through and showing up to stop it before it can do too much harm. See more about chronal horror on p. 245.

SCORE TO SETTLE

Repeating Adversaries are the best kind of antagonists. Enemies who are bitter, and who wish to Make Someone Pay™, provide the sort of single-minded mania that drives horrific and far-reaching chronal plots. Most of Hitler's would-be assassins fall under this category, but it also includes people who believe that *TimeWatch* is mining and polluting their world for scarce resources, or people who believe their alternate timeline was destroyed by *TimeWatch*'s actions. Many tribes of sophosaurs qualify for this motivation.

SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

Due to paradoxes, some species will never exist if they don't act to ensure their own existence. The ezeru are one example; they seek to create enough radiation to begin their own evolution, an evolution that shouldn't ever exist if there is never enough radiation. This type of paradox makes for a good story hook when you want villains who have well-established backstories that don't fit into Earth's history as you see it. The bitter and horribly scarred man who supplies his younger self with high-tech gear, thus ensuring a firefight in which he becomes horribly scarred, may make for a satisfying adventure.

WARMONGERS

"I've got a bright idea," someone in the future will say. "Instead of fighting our enemy here, let us fight them in the past or the future, where our weapons will not hurt our land." That person is an idiot, but it happens regardless. Occasionally, whether planned or accidentally, a future war will spill over in full or in part into an anachronistic era. Woe betide the locals when that occurs.

It's also common for army units, warships, and other engines of destruction to be time-napped by chronal miscreants and deposited in an earlier or later era. The motivations for doing so vary tremendously, but the soldiers and professional warriors who find themselves in a new era seldom have any idea what happened or why. From their perspective, their best solution is to go right on fighting and winning wars, and that causes paradoxes aplenty.

When the battles of warmongers spill over into true history, *TimeWatch* needs to ride to the rescue. They may need to act as peace negotiators, to prevent the war from ever spilling over into time travel, or to contain and manage the situation once it does. See more about time wars on p. 314.





CHAPTER SIX:

GM ADVICE

This chapter is meant for the GM.

PLANNING FOR YOUR FIRST GAME

Okay, you've got *TimeWatch* and some trusting players. What the heck do you do with it? There are lots of options here, but we've got a "no analysis paralysis" philosophy: start simple, have fun, expand from there. Here's how.

One-Shot, Series, or Campaign?

A **one-shot** game can be quite different than a series or campaign game. In a one-shot, the Agents can burn bridges and run roughshod over the investigation. There's little or no worry about setting bad precedents with Investigative spends, and there's no foreshadowing or need to link to any Investigative clues that lie outside the scope of the current mission. In a one-shot, shadowy conspiracies have little or no context and even less effectiveness, because the Agents don't understand the status quo enough to be upset when it's overturned.

GM ADVICE: GET STARTED NOW!

Want to run a pre-written one-shot adventure right now? The sample starting *TimeWatch* adventure *Recruiting Call* can be found on p. 359. It's a good choice for your first mission.

A **series** game, one that lasts for a predetermined number of sessions (like a three-episode season of an investigative TV show) has a different level of complexity. Each episode typically has at least one small clue leading to the foreshadowing of the final mission in the series. Missions may or may not be linked by plot or antagonists (and usually aren't, to make sure each game feels unique and memorable), but every game ideally resonates with a given theme for the series: betrayal, trust, consequences, friendship, exploration, mysteries, or the like. In a series, continuity is a little more important; if

you let an Agent use Tinkering or Preparedness to produce a technological tool in the first game, it will hopefully show up in later games as well. Agents will likely show both character development and mechanical advancement over the course of the series, growing as characters even as they slowly grow in power and capabilities. Small paradoxes in a series may build up, and it isn't uncommon to find Agents having to return to the scene and time of an earlier investigation, being careful not to encounter themselves during this second trip. A series also lets you establish reoccurring rivals and enemies, and allows you to build on the structure and supporting personalities at *TimeWatch's* Citadel. Keep notes on the names and personalities of supporting characters that you've introduced, so that you can call back to them in later sessions.

A *TimeWatch* **campaign** is made up of two or more series. Like different seasons of a TV show, each series making up the campaign may have different story arcs with completely different threats, and will likely have old antagonists rear their heads at incredibly inconvenient times. Use a variety of threats, mission types, and challenges to keep game play fresh across a campaign. Campaign play is where conspiracies, betrayal, and complex mysteries truly shine, as the extended play time gives you the opportunity to slowly roll out linked mysteries and foreshadowed clues. For campaign play, each series may have a different theme, evolving as the game progresses and layers of mystery get peeled back. Individual sessions likely have an A-plot that focuses on the immediate crisis, and a B-plot that calls back the reoccurring mystery or crisis that is only slowly revealed.

Our advice? Start simple. Most people play a one-shot first to find out if they like the game, then run a short series or extended campaign with continuing characters. *TimeWatch* is well suited to either. While it probably does best in a short series of connected episodes much like a season of a TV show, it is ideally suited to a four-hour game session at your local convention or game day. In addition, the different campaign frames work better in certain styles of games; a deliberately humorous game tends to work best as a one-shot, while a conspiracy-based game or one focused on the consequences of time traveling really shines in repeated play.

We'll give you specific advice as we go along on the best methods for running both one-shots and continuing campaigns. In the meantime, keep in mind that they're both a good option

for starting play, and that the best continuing campaigns avoid falling into a routine by interspersing single-session “monster of the week” episodes with continuing themes, clues, plotlines, and mysteries that carry over from mission to mission.

When generating player characters for a one-shot game, be sure to consider using the templates on p. 158, or (even faster) the completed template built into the *TimeWatch* PDF character sheets available at www.pelgranepress.com. Just print one and go; perfect for unexpected pickup play.

What Sort of Campaign Frame?

This is something you’re going to want to decide on fairly quickly. It’s a much easier decision for one-shots because you aren’t locking yourself into a specific tone of adventure for any length of time. It takes a little more thinking before deciding on the campaign frame for your continuing game. We recommend that you think about what your favorite time travel TV shows and movies and books are, then read through the summaries of all the various campaign frames offered in *TimeWatch*. Find one that matches. You’ll have an easy time (and a lot of fun) riffing off of themes that you’ve already seen explored in the shows and stories that you’re already familiar with.

Paul doesn’t know much about time travel, not having seen much Doctor Who growing up, but he’s a huge fan of TV shows and stories about parallel worlds such as Sliders, the Amber novels, and Jack L. Chalcker’s G.O.D. Inc. stories. He decides to pretty much jettison time travel from his TimeWatch game, and instead run a Parallel Realities game where the player characters pass between parallel universes. That limits the wacky time travel hijinks like showing up to save yourself in a fight, but it means that he can have an entirely different parallel timeline for each play episode, and there’s bound to be parallel universe duplicates showing up to complicate things. That sounds perfect to him. And if it gets boring, he can always add time travel back into the mix by letting the heroes encounter a parallel universe where time travel has been discovered.

We’ll make two suggestions for campaign frames to start off with.

If you love alternate history, start with a fairly serious Patrol game. That’s the default campaign frame throughout most of this rulebook, and it’s detailed on p. 235; having the players run time cops who solve historical sabotage is going to get you pretty far, and you’ll find the first two or three games easy to plot out. By then you’ll have the hang of the freewheeling nature of *TimeWatch*, and you’ll be more comfortable introducing complications, interpersonal hooks, and more conniving villains.

A Pulp game is the way to go if you’re more interested in fast-paced, two-fisted adventure. Pulp is unabashedly dramatic, full of comic book and adventure serial tropes. Where a *Patrol* game may feature vindictive time traveling assassins or even horrifying sci-fi aliens, *Pulp* probably features psychic time traveling dinosaurs from an alternate reality who are trying to reclaim the world for themselves. It’s less

concerned with historical details and more concerned with punching people in the face. We’d argue it’s easier to run as a result, but there’s a definite difference in tone between this and a *Patrol* game. Make sure your players know what to expect when making characters.

These two frames aren’t mutually exclusive, either. A fairly serious game about alternate history that also features a number of pulp tropes (such as alien conspiracies or super-science) may perfectly hit your sweet spot.

You can look at the different campaign frames for other play-style examples (see p. 245). The important thing when choosing a campaign frame is to find an idea that makes you say “hell yes!” Pick one that makes you excited to come up with missions and adventures. If you do, this game is going to be easy to run.

What’s Your Theme?

Not every adventure needs to have a theme, but you’re going to find it’s easier to link adventures together if you think about them.

Adam decides that everything this rulebook tells you about TimeWatch history is wrong, and that what we consider “real” and authentic history is actually an alternate history stream that has already been ruined by time travelers. He decides that his first game sessions will be about the players slowly discovering this, fixing an error, and setting history back to a more exciting version that they’ll be adventuring in from then on. This theme — uncovering the changes in “true history” that we’ve come to accept, then reverting them to something better — will carry through most of his TimeWatch games.

Whether your adventures focus on big scale issues such as historical assassination, famine, slavery, or war; or small-scale issues such as lost love, missing relatives, singular mysteries, and wayward time travelers, is completely up to you. You’ll probably run a mix of both types. Either way, you’ll have an easier time developing them once you start building them around a theme.

If this game as a whole can be said to have a theme, it’s that **consequences matter**. Who we talk to, what we do, what we *don’t* do... all of these things ripple down through the ages, and might change the time stream if we’re the right person doing the right thing at the right time. History tends to be self-correcting, but *TimeWatch* is founded on the idea that history has to be set to rights if it becomes accidentally jumbled. Stick with that for a theme, especially at first, and you won’t go wrong.

What’s Your First Adventure?

You’ve got your initial campaign frame, you’ve maybe got a rough theme, and it’s time to think about what you want for an adventure. We’ll talk more about adventure creation, but the best adventures (especially when starting play for the first time) have a few things in common.

- ▶ **They aren’t too complicated.** You know what’s annoying? A ton of red herrings, so many that players feel paralyzed by

GM ADVICE: SAMPLE THEMES

Search the Internet for a topic such as “common book themes.” Whether you pick something like “small changes have huge consequences,” or “great people change the world,” you’ll have plenty of ideas to choose from. They’re not all going to apply to adventure development, but they’ll probably inspire ideas.

For instance, take the theme “heroism — real and perceived.” What if a time traveling anthropologist whose only job is to observe the Battle of Hastings ends up accidentally changing the course of the battle through his own inadvertent heroics? What if he’s then too embarrassed to correct his change, and before he knows it he’s shifted all of history? And what if his rising fame as a popular war hero influences other warriors to act more heroically than they otherwise would have?

With the theme “preservation of antiquities,” perhaps the Agents are charged with saving great artifacts of history before they can disappear from the historical records. The original Ark of the Covenant is said to have disappeared into Babylon in 597 BCE; perhaps it was recovered and saved by TimeWatch instead, and by your Agents in particular.

Continuing themes don’t have to be highbrow. When you think about adventure themes, don’t stress about it or overthink it. A theme of “radioactive mutant cockroaches from the future want to cause nuclear war” isn’t just a fantastic idea, it’s so good we’ve designed an alien species to make it even easier.

the amount of possibilities in an investigation. That feeling gets multiplied when you have all of time and space to look for clues in. A good starting adventure, and a good one-shot adventure, has mystery without an overabundance of confusion. If your average movie-viewer would become bewildered while trying to read a plot summary, it’s too complex for a first adventure.

- ▶ **They aren’t too simple.** A mission that is “clock in, kill (or save) someone, clock home,” doesn’t make for a particularly satisfying plot. *TimeWatch* is about consequences, mystery, and investigation. The best missions are about what happens in history after a seemingly minor change, and in most cases the players will be working *backwards* from the end results to figure out what that change was. It’s tremendously satisfying to give the players the end result of a small historical shift, and then let them investigate backwards to discover what changed and why.

The characters discover from TimeWatch that neither world war occurred. The Agents suspect that there’s a difference in 20th-century European politics, and they need to discover for themselves through investigation that the German and Prussian states were never unified during the 19th century. That means the country we know as Germany never existed. They’ll then need to work backwards and discover that the German states were never unified because Otto von Bismarck never got into politics, and the reason he never got into politics is because he got married to a young English girl that he chased at age 20 (which really happened, putting his career in jeopardy, although in the real timeline they never got married). By the time the Agents discover that the girl was a time traveler, they’ll know that making sure that marriage never happens is what they need to do to set history back on its proper course.

- ▶ **They let the characters kick ass.** TimeWatch agents are exceptional, each of them handpicked from history and trained to succeed. They’re given remarkable technology and control over time and space. All in all, they’re probably not going to get beaten up in a medieval bar fight as their first adventure unless something goes horribly wrong.
- ▶ **They make players think.** The best adventures require players to think creatively, either because they need good tactics or because the best solution is one that requires thinking outside of the box. One method for catching players off guard is with a bait-and-switch adventure, where the players think their mission consists of something straightforward, but the most important aspect of the adventure is something that catches them off guard.

TimeWatch Agents have been given a relatively simple job: recruit Amelia Earhart before she dies of exposure at her crash site. A hidden time traveling Nazi assassin takes her down before they can complete their recruitment, and the Nazi gloats that she has just ensured the victorious future of her people. Clearly, Amelia would have made a real difference as part of TimeWatch. They must go back in time to save her life, dogged by Axis assassins, and in doing so they learn that they’re being betrayed by an Axis spy back at TimeWatch HQ. The mission changes from simply “save Amelia” to “root out the Axis spy within TimeWatch’s bureaucracy,” a very different mission indeed.

- ▶ **They relate to one or more player characters.** This doesn’t always have to be the case, but you’ll get a lot of emotional and narrative mileage out of making a mission be linked somehow to one or more of the player characters. Perhaps their home city or country is involved, either before

or after their own time; perhaps their personal nemesis is behind the chrontal attack; perhaps their family fortunes are affected by the change. If you can tie a mission to a player character's secret, either directly or in passing, you'll have that player's attention for the entire play session.

- ▶ **They have a great final scene.** We'll discuss the Narrow-Wide-Narrow structure of adventure design later, but it's handy to go into a *TimeWatch* game having at least an idea for a cinematic, fun final encounter. Try to guess what the players will think is going to happen, then subvert their expectations in the most spectacular way possible. That's possible to do without excessive metagaming; whether for *TimeWatch* Agents or their antagonists, time travel allows for great flexibility when information gathering. An antagonist might risk a paradox by finding out what was supposed to happen historically in a fight, then taking steps to subvert that and change the future to ensure their own victory. As the GM, you should aim for a final confrontation that wouldn't seem out of place in a good action movie, and then don't worry at all if clever players make sure it never comes to pass. Making your players think on their feet is a hallmark of a good *TimeWatch* game.
- ▶ **You spend most of your time saying "yes, and..." instead of "no."** This is the most important advice we can give you. *TimeWatch* relies on improvisation on the part of the GM, and improvisation always works best if you take your collaborators' ideas and run with them. Your players will have brilliant and confounding ideas that you haven't thought of, and they'll find solutions that completely short-circuit your well-made plans. Good for them! That's fine; welcome it, embrace it, and find a way to make their success still be fun and interesting. Saying yes a lot doesn't mean eliminating challenge or complications. It means encouraging creative play at a cost, and then figuring out how that creativity changes the completion and aftermath of the bad guys' plans.

Who Are Your Bad Guys?

Villains and Adversaries are primarily determined by the nature of the mission, unless they belong to a continuing group of antagonists that has cause to oppose the player characters. Bad guys should be a mix of unnamed Mooks, mid-tier Opponents, noncombative supporting characters who are around for exposition or witty commentary, and named Adversaries.

A cinematic example: imagine that the superb movie Raiders of the Lost Ark is a TimeWatch game, and that Indiana Jones, Marion Ravenwood, and Sallah are all player characters. Nazis are the continuing group that bedevils the Agents. Dr. René Belloq and interrogator Major Arnold Toht are named Adversaries, the Monkey Man and the bald airplane mechanic who fistfights Jones are Opponents, and every Nazi who goes down with a single punch or bullet is an unnamed Mook. You'll notice how the best fight scenes, such as the brawl at Marion's bar in Nepal, consist of a mix between the three types.

Antagonists in an adventure should always be memorable, unique, and easily distinguishable. You may enjoy considering what actor would play them, if your *TimeWatch* game was a movie. Considering this helps fix their face, voice, and mannerisms in your mind, making them that much more real. You'll also get a lot of mileage out of giving them scars or distinguishing characteristics that the player characters themselves create for them in a fight.

A badly scarred elderly Adversary with a cybernetic eye shows up to fight the Agents. The GM describes him as looking like an elderly Christopher Lee. Later they encounter his much younger self, who (through GM description and player action) loses an eye during the fight. The players know that he'll escape, and that they're responsible for his future appearance. Best yet, even if the Agents killed the elderly version, they know that he survived to that age — so his younger and middle-aged versions can continue to plague the group, and killing any of those versions triggers paradox and Paradox tests.

The best bad guys have character hooks that make them seem villainous or memorable. They may be visual (clothing, appearance), auditory (voice, accompanying sound), olfactory (perfumed, foul stench), or philosophical (a fact usually learned through their conversations or monologues).

Coming up with a good and memorable bad guy may be half the battle in adventure design, especially if you understand what his or her goals are. Once you know your bad guy's motivations and needs, and you think about what they'd do to achieve them, a half dozen plots and missions will spring to mind.

Giles and Carlton Worthington-Fiske are a married pair of British theoretical anthropologists from the 24th century. They have a lot to recommend them: they're smart, incredibly snappy dressers, blissfully happy together, and they're passionate about their work. Unfortunately, they're also completely unethical, as they test their theories by having Giles make small changes in actual time and then studying how those changes ripple forward. Giles is suffering from chrontal instability that's driving him towards megalomania, Carlton doesn't know how to help him and is loyal enough not to betray him, and their experiments are getting more and more dangerous. When TimeWatch Agents encounter them for the first time, how they make their approach may dictate how dangerous the encounter becomes.

Knowing who these Adversaries are, you have lots of possible adventure books, including:

- ▶ *They change a British monarch, perhaps saving the life of Mary, Queen of Scots, to see how England changes.*
- ▶ *To test theories about religious development, they have ancient Pacific island tribes and far-future planetary colonists worshipping them as gods.*
- ▶ *To study the effects of fear, they inspire multiple serial killers.*

How Do You Deal With Research and Game Prep?

Traditionally, the need to research time travel adventures is pretty damn intimidating. You'll have to imagine our Old Guy Voice here as we shake our canes at you, but back in our day, we used to have to go to the library and pick up encyclopedias to research a historical game! It took forever, and few people wanted to go to the trouble. As a result, good time travel games were few and far between.

Use the Internet

The best research tool you'll find is your phone, tablet, or computer. Between Wikipedia and alternate history message board forums, between historical podcasts and the ability to just enter a question into your favorite search engine, it turns out that you have a wealth of already developed plot hooks and amazing ideas at your fingertips.

Use these to inspire you. For instance, go type "alternate history what would have happened if" into Google and see what pops up. Not every result will be brilliant, of course, and there's a good chance that you and your group can provide a better answer to these questions than strangers on the Internet can, but this provides a fantastic resource to draw inspiration from.

The other advantage of the Internet is that you actually benefit from players having tablets and smartphones at the gaming table. A quick Wikipedia search that they can look up themselves means that's information you don't have to memorize or write down. Just don't hesitate to address the problem if players start skimming social media instead of researching, of course.

Don't Make It All About the History

Instead, use history as a backdrop for other adventures. The BBC's *Doctor Who* does this marvelously. Episodes tend to be about *people*, not about history, and time travel is the backdrop through which this becomes possible. If you're not a person who delights in alternate history, this is a great approach to take in a *TimeWatch* game.

A *Conspiracy*-style game, for instance, is about trust and suspicion in *TimeWatch*, and about covert infiltration of history by shape-shifting aliens. The actual alternate history adventures become secondary to the main story. Likewise, a game where the quarry is a time traveling refugee who has gone to ground in another time period doesn't usually require you to think through all the historical changes that person would cause.

You can make the focus be about a particular Adversary and her conflict with *TimeWatch*. You can make it be about a relatively recent historical event that you know well, such as what might happen if a time traveler had founded a real-world massive tech company. You could focus on alien infiltration at a particular place and time. Or you can have it focus on a power struggle within *TimeWatch* itself, catching the Agents between two opposed factions in a schism and requiring them to make peace or take sides before it turns into civil war.

This isn't to say that you shouldn't make your games all about alternate history and the glorious cascade of change

throughout time. It's just not mandatory, and you can have lots of fun with missions that require a minimum of historical prepwork.

Don't Sweat All the Details

You don't need an encyclopedic knowledge of the time periods and locations where your mission takes place, you just need to know a little bit more than your players do. Ten or fifteen minutes scanning the Internet usually gives this to you. You make up the rest, and with a few jotted notations you're ready to run a game. If the players ask you about something you don't know about, you can either tell them that the information isn't an important clue, or you can ask one of your players to look it up and tell you. It's not going to happen very often.

Think about what a place looks and smells like. What season is it? What time of day do the Agents arrive? Describe this, and just give the players as much information as they need to feel like they're standing there. If your team landed in ancient Egypt, you wouldn't need to bore them with descriptions about the current pharaoh (until they choose to talk to him, at least); instead, you'd describe the dust, the heat, and the lines of slaves in the process of constructing the Great Pyramid.

Your players clock into Sarajevo in 1914 to find out why World War I doesn't start when it should. They quickly learn that Archduke Ferdinand of Austria wasn't assassinated there, or in fact assassinated at all. While reading the newspapers, they also see mentions of the Prussian city of Berlin. Now, you as GM have no idea what most of the 30-odd German states were preunification, but you do know that Berlin was in Prussia and that Bismarck was the driving force behind unification.

"Sarajevo is crowded and polluted right now. It's June, so the temperature is just starting to warm up. Oddly, the archduke isn't here right now. Apparently he's visiting Prussia." You pause. "Wait," you tell your players, "do any of you have Contemporary History? Something has changed. In 1914, Berlin was in the German empire, not Prussia. Otto von Bismarck made sure of that back in the 1800s."

"Is there a German empire now?" asks a player.

"You check the newspaper, and nope. There are three dozen squabbling states instead."

"No wonder there's no world war; all of politics is different, and all of the treaties between European nations are different. Has Bismarck already died in this new timeline?"

"You have Research, right? It takes you days to find the answer to that, but you're time travelers, so it's not like that matters. Nope, he's alive, but he's not where you'd think. It looks like Bismarck never got into politics at all. You find a single reference to him being a lawyer in London, married to a British woman."

"That's not right!" say the Agents, and they're off to London to interview the frustrated and solidly middle-class Otto von Bismarck, London solicitor.

Notice that you made it through this example with a minimum of questions about obscure German politics. Players quickly focus in on the fact that the information you

know best is the information important to the mystery, and the information you don't know isn't relevant to the plot. If you think of it like that, not over-preparing actually helps your game considerably; you'll give out fewer inadvertent red herrings.

Start at the End, and Work Backwards

If you're completely out of ideas for your adventure, or you have so many possibilities that you can't decide, go with whatever would look best on a movie screen.

- ▶ A Chinese spaceship crashes through the atmosphere into the heart of 24th century Beijing.
- ▶ A dinosaur rampages through Chicago.
- ▶ The supervolcano beneath Yellowstone National Park erupts, and a time traveler witnesses the devastation.
- ▶ Ancient Vikings rampage through the modern-day Cotswolds.

It's fine if you don't know yet why these things are happening. Just assume that's going to be the hook that starts your adventure.

Have your cinematic moment? Start there, and then work backwards to decide how the world got to this state. That may be the same path your players take in investigating the mystery.

- ▶ A dinosaur rampages through Chicago. It escaped through a time-hole generated in a Northwestern University research lab. The researchers were experimenting on time travel equipment found entombed in solid stone. The TimeWatch Agents must travel back to save that time traveler who lost his equipment, thus preventing the dinosaur from ever rampaging.
- ▶ The supervolcano beneath Yellowstone National Park erupts, and a time traveler set it off. Why? Either it's meant as a weapon against the United States, or some poor researcher from the future got too close and triggered thermal stresses they shouldn't. Players are most likely to assume a military plot (especially when the US is invaded post-disaster), so then it's a matter of tracking them down in their native time, convincing them that they cause a disaster, and staving off attacks from alternate history agents who really want the volcanic disaster to have occurred.
- ▶ Ancient Vikings rampage through the modern-day Cotswolds. A mysterious mist blew over their company and transported all of them to a different time. After some brutal fighting and cultural misunderstandings, the Agents' Science! and Timecraft abilities indicate that the mist which transported them came from a disintegrated TimeWatch autochron. Whose, and why? Perhaps one of the Vikings is actually a TimeWatch agent who lost her chronal stability when her time machine was sabotaged by a rival. The Agents must remove the Vikings, re-anchor her, get her help, and deal with her would-be assassin.

All those stem from just one nifty cinematic image, and there are a hundred other ways those adventures could go. If you want a strong start to the game and don't like tracing

historical ripples forward, this is a fast and fairly easy way to generate missions.

Or Start at the Beginning, With High Concept

Prefer to start at the beginning instead? A fun way to build an adventure is to start with a strong hook and extrapolate from there as you make stuff up. Think of your hook as the tagline on a movie or a novel.

- ▶ Too many Napoleons!
- ▶ George Washington, dictator!
- ▶ Why is your face on the Great Sphinx of Egypt?
- ▶ The Roswell crash was real!
- ▶ 25th-century medicine saves 15th-century Mesoamerica... and won't the conquistadores be surprised!

You get the idea. At this stage, exclamation points are important; if your hook isn't enough fun to deserve an exclamation point, it might not make an exciting adventure. "Modifying the stitch pattern in Betsy Ross' American flag design" probably wouldn't pass immediate muster, for instance.

You'll take your hook, decide how it occurred, and follow those changes forward through time. This isn't a simulation, so you won't need to come up with every possible change; just pick a handful of things that shift, and aim your players towards those.

- ▶ **Too many Napoleons!** For whatever reason (a future descendent, perhaps?), someone has been gathering versions of Napoleon from different alternate realities and different parts of his life, bringing them all into France to help him conquer all of Europe. The Adversary is using a paradox dampener, a plot device you make up on the spot, to temporarily reduce paradox and stop the duplicates from de-stabilizing and disappearing during their gathering. After the Agents discover that the Napoleonic Empire spans the globe during the 20th century, they must work their way back to diagnose the problem.
- ▶ **George Washington, dictator!** How would the fledgling United States of America change if Washington had taken Col. Lewis Nicola's advice of May 22, 1782, and ended the Revolution by declaring himself king of America? He'd never accept unless mind controlled or replaced by a duplicate, but plenty of TimeWatch antagonists have that capability. Read some online commentary then throw the Agents back into a Royalist USA, one with less stability than the original that's wracked with internal dissension and further civil war. Someone who benefits from a destabilized US is probably behind it, such as an expanded Spanish empire after Mexico invades. Once they arrest the actor playing George Washington, the Agents would need to make sure he never rose to power in the first place.
- ▶ **Why is your face on the Great Sphinx of Egypt?** In this case, "your" is one of your Agents, who in the future has been Subsumed too many times from chronal instability to hang on to her sanity. You decide she has gained horrible chronal powers and technology, and has become the new god-empress of Egypt. That wouldn't be a problem if

she hadn't also exterminated other life on Earth with a bioengineered plague. It's up to the Agents to break the interdiction device preventing time travel out, escape, and surreptitiously stop her from being Subsumed during one of her future encounters. Doing so will ensure her sanity and save the past.

- ▶ **The Roswell crash was real!** Worse, it marks the spread of shape-shifting aliens throughout the US intelligence services. They're deliberately triggering global climate change to make Earth's atmosphere more hospitable for their species. It's up to the Agents to wipe them out or capture them when they come down, replace the spacecraft with a fake, and not get caught in the process.
- ▶ **25th-century medicine saves 15th-century Mesoamerica... and won't the conquistadores be surprised!** Disgusted by the Portuguese slaughter of Central American natives, a well-meaning time traveler develops a vaccine to the infectious diseases brought by Europeans and seeds it into rain clouds over North and South America. Within a generation, Native American tribes are made immune to the plagues that would otherwise historically kill 90% of them. Agents will need to decide whether or not it's moral to reverse this, and whether or not the scientist (heralded as a god by later generations of Native Americans) should be punished. Warriors from the variant future may violently object if the vaccine is reversed...

And so forth. From a strong hook you develop consequences and backstory, then decide where in the historical changes to insert the Agents. This method is a little more involved than working backwards is, because you are starting with an originating event instead of a result that you can reverse engineer, but it works just as well for producing fun missions.

Set a Time Limit for Prep

Still seems like too much work? Set yourself a deadline: half an hour to think up a mystery and do prep. Sure, you can make it longer if you want to, but you shouldn't feel like you need to. If you don't have anything clever and satisfying at the end of half an hour of noodling, go with something fun and lowbrow. Steal the plot of *The Terminator* and set it in Shakespeare's London. They'll notice, but everyone will be having too much fun to care.

The point, of course, is not to overthink the plot of your first game. If you stick with fast, fun, and action filled for your initial exposure to *TimeWatch*, it's hard to go wrong.

Fast Game Plotting

The important thing to remember is that your game isn't a simulation, so you don't need to know exhaustive details about your plot and the background. Think of a clue-containing year in *TimeWatch* just like a clue-containing room in a fantasy dungeon. Agents show up, gain clues or fight enemies, and they don't necessarily need to know all the details about what else is going on at the time. If you do want to be prepared, of course, typing any year into Wikipedia delivers a superb summary of world events from that year, so it's easy to grab a few things for verisimilitude. Just don't overplan, or analysis paralysis will prevent you from ever

running a single game.

For faster and simpler game prep, we suggest following the results of strong personalities. Consider what might happen if someone influential made a different choice than they did in true history. This might be easier than trying to consider historical cause-and-effect or a "linked history" type of adventure (where Agents chase down the results of changed history backwards through the years) because it relies more on personality and leadership, and less on historical minutiae. In a pinch, you could even run a great game where the Agents never leave *TimeWatch* HQ, as they're just tracking down a traitor within their ranks and trying to find proof of their perfidy.

Your friends are showing up in an hour, and you don't have a game planned. To the Internet! Google "major events in 19th-century Russia" and you get Wikipedia's "Timeline of Russian History." Scanning it, you see that Napoleon invaded Russia but was forced out. That seems perfect to change. So you Google "what if Napoleon had succeeded in Russia?" After all, you can posit that with some advanced weaponry and good communications equipment that would be a real possibility. That could make for a fun adventure: snow, swearing Frenchmen, and bullets flying everywhere.

You want a personal reason for this to occur instead of an ideological or time-linked reason, since you don't want to do any more research than you have to. Personal or family pride? Sure, that's plausible — people do surprising things in the name of family pride. So you decide a descendent of Napoleon from the 23rd century hijacks a time travel tour, gathers arms, and goes to resupply his famous ancestor with tactical information and futuristic rayguns. Napoleon takes Russia and then India as a result, setting up a series of monarchies run by Bonapartes — of whom the time traveler is one. Time tends to right itself so the empire collapses in a few decades with few long-term effects, and the time traveler is assassinated by rebels. The other time tourists who have been kept as hostages the entire time are also killed.

The Agents are briefed when one of the time tourists, a famous holo-star, goes missing. They track the tour to someplace and sometime exotic, and manage to see the hijacking, but they are prevented from stopping it due to the tourist vehicle's non-interference chronal shield that prevents tourists from messing up history. (This is a fairly blatant plot device, but it's something a time traveling tourist vehicle might legitimately have, so it's fair game.)

The Agents then track the chronal signature back to Moscow. The city is ruled by Napoleon, and his soldiers have modern firearms. The Agents do some investigating and learn that the saboteur rules some other city. They head there to talk to him, convince him he's made a terrible mistake, find out when he arrived with the tourists, head there, and stop the hijacking — thus eliminating that time loop. All they need to do is avoid the deadly Napoleonic troops he's sent ahead to guard that location, in anticipation of interference just like this.

Note that you need to know a minimum about actual history to run this adventure. To get the feel right, maybe you'll Google "what was 19th-century Russia like?" and "what was 19th-century France like?"

Help Your Players Build Characters

For your first *TimeWatch* game, you're just as well off having the players use pregen characters or taking characters from a template as you are having them make their own. There's always a fear amongst players that they're making an ineffective character, and that's doubly true in any sort of point-buy system. We've tried to negate this fear in three ways:

- ▶ grab-and-play templated characters to use, or to provide a starting character that your players can then customize
- ▶ sample iconic characters you can download from the Pelgrane Press website
- ▶ lots of examples in the character-building chapter

Even with this help, we're of the opinion that it's always easier to tune and create characters in a system once you've already played it once. For your first game, feel welcome to use the template characters for anyone who doesn't want to take the time pregame for character creation.

To help your players build Agents, be sure to communicate the feel of the game you want to run. If you want a relatively serious game or traditional game, tell them that you'd like human Agents only. If you want a game where all the characters are from roughly the same time period (such as a game where futuristic law enforcement has been transported accidentally into the past), communicate that as well. Restrictions actually make it easier for people to make choices; telling an undecided player some arbitrary cutoff dates, such as "if you aren't sure, create a character from the year 2025," for your first game might make it easier for those players to pick.

Once every player has a character, do a quick read-through to discover what Investigative abilities (if any) haven't been covered by at least one person. If one or more isn't, you have three choices:

- ▶ Require that someone puts a point in that ability.
- ▶ Avoid creating mysteries with related clues.
- ▶ Rely on the Agents' tethers, allies throughout time, and Research ability to fill in those blanks when such a clue comes up.

Any of these works, but the third may be the most fun for creative players. It should be fine for no one to possess Medical Expertise, so long as one of the Agents doesn't mind spending an Interpersonal or History (Ancient) point to be friends with the 6th-century BCE Indian surgeon Sushruta.

HOW TO BUILD A ONE-SHOT ADVENTURE

Before you ever plan to run a series or an entire campaign of a new RPG, you run a single game. A one-shot is your opportunity to showcase both the game rules and your GMing style. You'll want to make that first game (or any unconnected one-shot game) as much fun as possible. Here's how.

DON'T OVERTHINK CHARACTER GENERATION

You know what no one wants to do? Spend half their first game session making new characters for a game they may not be playing every week. Save time and jump right into the action by using either pregenerated *TimeWatch* characters such as the iconics featured throughout these rules, or by giving your players access to the fast-start archetypes available on Pelgrane Press' website. The former include plot hooks and character interactions; the latter allow your players to customize them thoroughly, adding a name and background but minimizing time spent on the rules-intensive action of actually assigning build points to Investigative and General abilities. The sooner you jump into the action, the more fun everyone has.

If you use the fast-start archetypes and want to keep playing further games with all or some of the same characters, let your players tweak their archetypes' point allocation as much as they wish before the second game session.

WHAT'S YOUR GOAL?

This is your players' first exposure to the game, and first impressions count for a lot. Your goal should be to run a complete mission in a set time (usually 3–4 hours, including a fast 30-minute rules briefing).

That means one-shot adventures are typically structured a little differently than an ongoing series. They're a little simpler and more straightforward than campaign-based missions, with fewer encounters; you'll probably focus on fun historical plot hooks, difficult decisions, and showy set pieces. By starting the new Agents on a clear and specifically assigned mission, or even in medias res with action going on around them, you may limit their first few options at the game's start. You'll also eliminate any first-game-starting analysis paralysis, encouraging your players to jump right into the action. That's worth the trade-off.

PACING

The best one-shot adventures we've seen are tightly paced, with clues aplenty so that players don't spend a lot of time deliberating on what to do next. That's a good thing, because otherwise they'll spend all their time discussing *how* to do something instead of just doing it. For better or worse, *TimeWatch* gives players tremendous flexibility when

problem-solving; whether they get past a security guard by shooting him or by traveling back in time to become his shift supervisor, you'll likely have the most fun when your players have more options. That means giving them more clues than they need instead of too few clues.

To do this, consider including a minimum of three different types of clues to link scenes together. Your players may miss one or two, but they're unlikely to miss all three, and discovering every clue means that they then have a clear path to further the investigation.

The Agents are investigating the murder of Merivether Lewis and Sacagawea during the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1806. Medical Expertise indicates that the bodies were ripped apart by something larger than a grizzly bear; Outdoor Survival indicates whatever the animal was, it isn't native to the Pacific Northwest; Notice lets the group spot huge, humanoid footprints (the scene's core clue); Timecraft allows their tethers to detect aberrant chroral radiation; Trivia suggests that this is indicative of a Bigfoot or Sasquatch. Put together, the group can conclude that they're facing a Sasquatch that's been somehow deposited here from the far future... but as long as they Noticed the footprint, they can track the beast, assuming they don't wish to go back in time and lay a trap for it.

That can be useful, because a four-hour one-shot game has fewer scenes than you probably think you need. Playtesting has indicated that four different scenes, with a mixture of combat and roleplaying and mystery-solving, fill up a four-hour game quite nicely. With half an hour to explain rules and an hour for the final climactic encounter, you'll have two and a half hours to draw in the players, establish the mystery, and get them to an exciting final scene.

SESSION START

Scene one is where the initial game hook is established and when the Agents are given their first destination to start their investigation. The job of your first scene is to launch the Agents into the adventure or the mystery. This usually happens when they learn that something in time has changed. You can do this easily enough with a briefing officer and an assignment that's secretly more complex, but it tends to lack adventure or passion.

Agents, your briefing officer at TimeWatch tells you to go to 13th-century Manchuria and discover why the Jin dynasty was never defeated by Genghis Khan.

It's generally much more interesting to have the Agents notice the problem on their own. Doing so establishes the Agents as self-reliant, autonomous troubleshooters. In comparison, giving the Agents a mission through a briefing officer emphasizes their troubleshooting role within a much larger organization.

You were assigned to guard King Béla IV of Hungary from a rumored assassination attempt during the Mongol attack of 1241,

and you've never had a more boring job. Not only hasn't there been an attempt on his life, there haven't been any rumors of a Mongol army.

Prefer action? Start the game's first scene in medias res. There's little time for debate when the game starts in the middle of action, and this helps you teach the rules while you establish the flow and tone of the game right up front.

It's some time in the middle of the 16th century, and your feet slide on the slick, rain-damp stone of the Great Wall of China as you chase down your quarry. She's a time traveler who been smuggling antiquities into the future, not a huge crime, but she is trying to make a run for it. It's fair to say that she's as surprised as you are when the world shimmers and the Great Wall vanishes out from underneath you. Roll an Athletics test...

The mystery is established by the end of the session's start, even if the Agents don't yet understand the mystery's root cause. You may or may not have foreshadowed the true Adversary, but the Agents will have found clues that start them on their travels through time to learn more.

MID-SESSION

The middle of a one-shot *TimeWatch* game is when Agents buckle down to investigate multiple clues and the plot branches in different directions. This may be a linear investigation, as a clue in one time period leads to clues in a second period, perhaps with Agents using local reference material to find out what happened in the past. It may instead be nonlinear, a trip to three different eras where each holds a partial clue to the entire mystery. The complexity of the investigation generally relates to how much time you have for gaming, with linear plots tied to shorter game sessions.

Mid-session is when mysteries become unraveled, motivations emerge, villains make themselves known, and Agents concoct nefarious plans. This is where the mission really hits its stride, and it's also where you'll want to pay the most attention to pacing. New groups may have a tendency to hunker down mid-mission and analyze what they've learned so far. In doing so they open themselves to tedious overanalysis, not realizing that in GUMSHOE the best strategy is to keep moving and investigating if you don't yet have enough clues to piece together the mystery.

As a result, it's important that the GM recognize when the players are having fun sorting through chroral mysteries, and when they would really just prefer to go somewhere and hit something. Use action sequences to prod them on their way when necessary. If they're hiding somewhere that isn't easily found, the best part of an ambush by unknown foes is that you can tell your group "that's right, you've never seen them before but they seemed to know and hate you. You must encounter them in the future. Who do you think they are?" In doing so, the very action encounter becomes another clue to keep the group moving.

The five futuristically dressed Chinese warriors are still shimmering with chroral energy when they appear on the nearby bill. "You will not destroy that for which we have fought and died!" shouts the shortest,

and all five kneel and put an arrow to their bows. “Kill that one first,” says the short man, pointing at one of your characters, and all five aim at you. We’re in combat. Who wants to go first?

Keep at least one combat encounter prepared and ready to spring on your group when the pacing makes the most sense. Because Agents can anger people or organizations in the future that then come back to bedevil them in their past, you don’t even need to initially explain who the assailants are — and encountering and killing them early in the game means that when their younger selves show up later in the game, the Agents can’t kill them once again without making a Paradox test. These groups of floating assailants should largely consist of Mooks, faceless antagonists who hit hard but go down quickly, perhaps accompanied by one or more named Opponents to make the fight more challenging.

You may also wish to simply tell a group of players locked in overanalysis that they shouldn’t overthink things; many things *might* be happening, but only one thing *is*, so the more they go out and investigate the faster they’ll reach the correct conclusion.

During this mid-game period, it’s likely that Agents might time travel to eras that don’t necessarily contain clues. When this occurs, have them roll two Travel tests (or spend two Stitches instead) and simply tell them that the information



*The end of a session may mean some rewards.
“I dub thee SIR Uurrk!”*

they’re hunting for can’t be found there. This locks off lines of inquiry quickly and efficiently, making the investigation faster. If an Agent wishes to spend an Investigative point for a clue, remind them that Investigative points never need be spent for clues, and that there’s no information there helpful to the case.

Once the Agents have identified the root of the mystery, and are planning their actions to change time back to the correct path, you’re approaching the game session’s end.

SESSION END

As the mission draws to a close and the Agents circle in on their Adversaries, it’s common for your players to surprise you with a plan you never even considered.

“Next month I’m going to put a satellite-based weapons platform into geosynchronous orbit two months back, and have it stationed directly above Victorian London so I can use it in this encounter. Okay if I spend a Science! and an Intimidation for that?”

“We know her last name, right? Can we trace her father if I spend a Research or Contemporary History? I’m going to go back in time to quietly and quickly sterilize him with radiation back when he’s a teenager. That way he’ll never have a daughter, and so she won’t be here kicking our asses right now. I don’t care if it causes paradox. Let’s do it.”

“All those onlookers watching this fight? I have Flashback through Preparedness. They’re actually our future selves, in disguise, waiting to be reinforcements. Get ‘em, everyone!”

You get the idea.

Even new players have usually wrapped their heads around time tricks at this point, so creativity may run rampant: as noted above, they may try to make sure their enemies were never born, may use time travel to make their Adversaries’ plans redundant or nonsensical, or may intercede at the critical moment to take their enemy by surprise. The kindest Agents may try to make their foes’ lives better so that they never need turn to chrontal sabotage; more action-oriented antagonists may launch an ambush where their own future selves act as emergency backup.

The one risk here is that by dropping back to a time when their enemies have not yet encountered them, particularly good plans run the risk of being anticlimactic. The solution? Answer their plan with a “yes, and...” Assuming their plan makes sense — and if the plan clearly doesn’t work, their knowledge of Timecraft should let you hint at any obvious holes in their planning that they should account for — quickly think about what the consequences are.

Aspects to consider include:

- ▶ Does this return the river of history back into its main channel?
- ▶ Are there any difficult moral or ethical decisions that you can bring into play instead of combat?
- ▶ What paradoxes and changes, small or large, might echo back into the future?

- ▶ Who will be angry that history is returned to its true path?
- ▶ Do those angry people have access to a time machine, or know someone who does? Can they travel back to stop the Agents before their entire reality unravels around them?
- ▶ Did the antagonists somehow predict this, and place non-time traveling countermeasures in place to stop the Agents from interfering?
- ▶ Is there enough paradox and choral instability in the game that you can justify something fun and unexpected like rampaging Vikings or lethal robots randomly springing into existence in the temporally weak spot that the Agents are trying to close?

Keep in mind that sometimes your players need a slam dunk, and you should let them claim one if they deserve it. If they've been through the wringer and come up with a foolproof plan to solve the mystery and restore time, by all means let it work and then reward them with praise and build points. Combat is fun, but sometimes being successful and clever is an even better ending to a game.

If the game has been combat-lite, however, time traveling future antagonists *in potentiâ* whose timeline is about to be wiped out may take umbrage at their own imminent destruction. If they're smart enough to figure out the linchpin in time, they may show up at the game's climax to talk the Agents out of making the change, or to stop them by force if necessary.

For less serious or more freewheeling games where the fabric of time has been put through the proverbial wringer, you may also be able to explain strange choral effects by time rifts that have opened at the problem's source, and which must be fixed in conjunction with wrapping up the mystery. This is a little gratuitous and shouldn't be used at every game, but ending games on a high point with fun action might excuse the liberty. Just ask yourself "is this so random my players will be annoyed by it?" before launching the encounter.

When games wrap up and time snaps back to normal, Agents don't normally need to face the paradox caused by a final change. In normal circumstances, clear success at the game's end means that a final Paradox test isn't necessary.

MOVING ON AFTER THE ONE-SHOT

If you want to run more than one one-shot game for the same group of players, don't fall into the trap of running the same style of adventure each time. One or two similar missions in a row is fun; more than that can get monotonous and formulaic, especially if the antagonists are unrelated. Use villains mindfully, and combine them with other continuing subplots to make sure that players remain interested.

Even once you're varying the style and theme of missions, you'll want to tweak how you pace each individual game session. The secret to a fun *TimeWatch* game is knowing when to simplify or throw in additional complications. If the group is getting bogged down and the game threatens to be boring, it's time to alter your pacing and the flow of the game.

Pacing should change from game to game when you're running more than one one-shot for the same group of

players. If every game starts off with action in a nonessential introductory scene, the players will come to discount those scenes as unimportant. Better to vary the game's flow. One session might begin in a mission briefing, one with the group running for their lives, and one mid-investigation (with any previously earned clues quickly summarized). You can even begin a game by narrating the historical change; while this spoils any mystery about what was changed, it immediately starts the players thinking about how it was changed and why, and that's a useful technique. It's particularly effective when the final change is a small one that has a very long-reaching effect.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT IN A SERIES OR CAMPAIGN?

The biggest difference between an ongoing game and a one-shot? **Continuity.** Even in a game where the whole point is setting history back to its factory-installed settings, players gain buy-in by seeing how they change the world. Little bits of paradox build up, with small changes from past adventures occasionally showing up; personalities and friendships grow and deepen, hatreds swell, enemies learn the Agents' favorite tactics and use them against them in carefully planned traps, and perhaps a repeating pattern of nefarious change begins to manifest as an arching series-long plot. By embracing continuity and showing your players how their actions and heroism change *TimeWatch* and change the world around them, you're going to make your players feel proud of the missions they've wrapped up.

If you're running more than a single adventure or two, be sure to vary the tone and the nature of the missions. Use all eras of history, not just particular ones, and use villains with varying motivations. Mix up large, epic catastrophes with small and personal missions that matter a great deal to a single person, but which might not otherwise make huge ripples through history. Sometimes the mission hook doesn't need to be a nuclear bomb detonated in ancient Babylonia, and can instead be a nameless person who gave kind advice to an emotionally vulnerable world leader giving bad advice instead, and turning that person down a different path that changes the world to come. Both missions may affect history equally, but they have very different investigations, antagonists, and pacing.

In a series, be sure to build out the characters of rival agents and other members of *TimeWatch*. Similarly, develop the families of the Agents, especially if an Agent is still living at home and is sneaking off to handle time missions. The mundanity of family pressures is a wonderful counterpart to the far-reaching consequences of choral change.

BUILDING YOUR MYSTERY'S STRUCTURE

Most investigative scenarios are triggered by a crime or conspiracy, usually committed by a group of antagonists. The player characters must figure out what happened and who did it, fix the problem, and put a stop to the antagonists' activities.

In the typical *TimeWatch* setting, the team investigates a change in official history that has shifted the timeline into alternate history, finds out who did it and why, and takes action to restore the timeline to normal — hopefully without further disturbing history in the process. The investigators may detain, exile, or kill the saboteurs behind the change. They may destroy or capture any parallel universe aliens and anachronistic technology involved, and then they likely confirm their solution and report back to TimeWatch for their next mission.

You design each scenario by creating an instigating event, a mission trigger, an antagonist, and a chain of clues.

The instigating event. This is the change to the timeline that cascades forwards through the river of time like a flash flood, sweeping away and changing events as it goes. It can be small, such as a single person's life being altered in a single way at a crucial time, or huge, such as the mass extinction of millions of people. Minor changes may not be noticed for decades or centuries; major changes might be picked up by the chronal sensors that TimeWatch has planted in every decade to identify major incongruities in radiation, atmosphere, pollution levels, and the like.

When the rippling results of an instigating event are noticed, TimeWatch scrambles one or more mission teams into the

field to deal with it. Due to the nature of changes over time, the instigating event is seldom obvious to the Agents at first, because the mission trigger is far more evident.

TimeWatch's headquarters, the Citadel, is seldom affected by chronal change, as it exists before time, nestled in the quantum singularity that ends up birthing the Big Bang. Everything else in time might be caught up in the change, however, including chronal anthropologists, local resources, TimeWatch spying devices, and more.

The mission trigger. This is the event that attracts the attention of TimeWatch, a chronal anomaly that results in the initiation of an investigation. It's usually more noticeable and creates larger ripples through time than the instigating event, but the two can be one and the same.

If a time traveler saves Abraham Lincoln's life by tackling John Wilkes Booth in Ford's Theatre, the mission trigger and instigating event are pretty much the same thing. If a time traveler saves Lincoln's life by killing Booth's father, it's unlikely that TimeWatch will notice until Lincoln lives past April 14th, 1865. In this case the mission trigger is Lincoln's survival, and the instigating event is Booth's father's murder before Booth was born.

When you want the investigation to be straightforward, the mission trigger and the instigating event are the same thing. When you want more mystery and investigation, they differ.

The Antagonist. There's no end to people mucking about with the time stream. Possible antagonists include time traveling aliens; parallel universe duplicates; sentient holograms projected from the prison parallel; rogue TimeWatch agents; loyal TimeWatch agents who messed up; time machine inventors; normal people who borrowed, bought or stole

GM ADVICE: VARY YOUR MYSTERY COMPLEXITY

The scenario structure given in the main text assumes you're using the default *TimeWatch* campaign *Patrol* frame, or a similar setting of temporal investigation and repair. In other campaign frames, the chronal mystery may be the backdrop to sinister double-dealing and conspiracies within TimeWatch itself. It may be the MacGuffin to inspire a full-fledged action movie fight scene. It may be the premise for hilarious, bumbling comedy involving Neanderthals in high school (probably not, but you never know).

Different scenarios may call for a simpler and less convoluted structure. The bad guys could still be in the process of preparing a sinister plot, or they may be doing nothing after committing the triggering time-crime other than watching it play out and hoping that TimeWatch investigators don't catch up with them. In this case there are no loopholes to close or unexpected temporal pitfalls. To achieve victory and bring the scenario to a successful conclusion, the investigators need merely prove their case against the criminals. The climactic scene might involve wringing a confession from the wrongdoer or provoking the revelation of the crucial bit of evidence which will justify an apprehension.

You may also find that your time-related mysteries aren't convoluted and confusing enough. This is particularly true if your players love history (or alt-history). When that's the case, run an occasional game where the logic trail is labyrinthine, where the true cause of a temporal disaster is put into motion hundreds or thousands of years prior. Even if they don't want this at every game session, your inquisitive players will love you for it.

a time machine before the technology was appropriated by TimeWatch; and regular people changing their predestined actions due to paradoxical messages from the future. Sometimes the antagonist does not have nefarious intentions. More commonly, though, they seek to change time to obtain a personal or ideological advantage for their family or friends. The particularly ambitious and/or insane antagonists seek to cause nuclear warfare or wholesale societal change. The least ambitious just want personal revenge, minor mischief and ego gratification, or to get rich as easily as possible.

A preemptive win for the bad guys. *TimeWatch* differs from traditional investigations in that when the game starts, the bad guys have already succeeded and their plan has gone forward. It's up to the Agents to then determine what happened and retroactively (and preemptively — it's nice having a time machine) derail it.

You determine what has to happen to prevent the antagonists' plot from going forward. This, unknown to the players, is their victory condition — what they have to do to thwart the bad guys and bring the story to a positive conclusion. They may be one or more solutions, including some you haven't yet considered and some that leave paradoxes and chronal fallout behind them.

Trail of clues. Once you have the logic of the time change worked out from the villain's point of view, including its consequences that result in a mission trigger, you then think in reverse, designing a trail of clues leading from the mission trigger to an understanding of the sinister plot and its architects, sufficient to get the players to work destroying it. Every scene has a **core clue** that leads to another scene.

Optionally, you may also plan a series of **antagonist reactions**. These lay out what the bad guys do when they find out that they're being investigated. You determine what conditions trigger them, and what the antagonists attempt to do. These may include further crimes or backup contingency plans throughout time, giving the team more to investigate. Antagonists may try to destroy evidence, leave themselves paradoxical warning messages, hinder the investigation by planting false leads, or intimidate or dispose of potential witnesses, including accomplices they no longer trust. They may attack the investigators. Foolish, overconfident, or risk-taking antagonists may take them on directly. Clever antagonists will strike from a distance and through time, taking great pains to cover their tracks.

HOW TO PLAN — AND RUN — A TIMEWATCH MISSION

You're going to find that *TimeWatch* runs very differently from many other RPGs. It can be nonlinear, it demands improvisation, it thrives on player rewards, and as a GM you'll find yourself needing to say "yes, and..." a huge amount.

Nonlinear Play

"The security guard won't let us in? Screw it. I'm going back in time six months, meeting him, and making good friends with him so

that he lets us in now. That's a Charm Investigative spend, right?"

"Are you sure you don't want to just go back in time three days and give him the flu? I've got a Medical Expertise point just poised for that. Then we'll have someone else here at the gate."

"No way. Too much of a risk of starting an epidemic. But you know, we already know he won't let us in, so any change is going to cause a paradox and chronal instability. Is there a plan that doesn't?"

"Sure. Go make friends, but with his boss, not with him. That way his boss can go let us in now instead of him. No paradox at all."

"Done!"

To say that *TimeWatch* allows creative problem-solving is possibly understating the issue. As the GM, your job is going to be listening to the players' whack-a-doodle ideas and deciding "yes," "yes, with consequences or a cost," or (more rarely) "no." If the players want to try a plan that to you is obviously flawed, you shouldn't feel bad about pointing out possible plot holes before they try it, especially if you're running the system for the first time; it'll save time and stop the game from being sidetracked. Your goal at any particular point is to answer the question "what's the most awesome thing that can happen next?" That's what you should then help arrange. That awesome thing might not be in the best interests of the players and their characters, of course, but as long as it makes logical sense, ramps up tension or excitement, and makes the game more fun it hardly matters.

Nonlinear play works both ways. Even after the Agents capture a bad guy, they may be attacked by a younger version of that same Adversary. The Adversary may have recruited villains in different timelines to attack them all at once. The older version of the Adversary, having repented their evil ways, may try to set things right and save the Agents from a trap. With a time traveling enemy, the amount of chronal mischief is only limited by your imagination, local timeline stability, and how confusing you want to make the game.

While you won't want to do it often, you'll get your players' attention when they meet a stranger only to suddenly realize that they've known the person their entire life. After the Paradox test from any potential paradox, the roleplaying will be tremendous amounts of fun. While the players can spend Interpersonal points and use this trick to make friends with a supporting character or even an antagonist, trying to have a supporting character use it on a player character will almost always result in tremendous amounts of suspicion. Don't be surprised by this if it crops up.

The most dangerous antagonists are the ones with the Flashback ability, or even more powerfully, the Mastermind ability (see p. 155). These allow Adversaries to use the same sort of Flashback techniques that Agents with high Preparedness can use. Trying to chase such a villain during a time chase can be lethal, as they've probably planned out an exact route that is safe for them and deadly for people chasing them. These abilities indicate an above-average amount of preplanning, allowing you to be especially sneaky in the villains' schemes.

Players can do the same. Their Flashbacks with Preparedness are guaranteed to stymie your best-laid plans. Go with it. It'll be fun.

One interesting conundrum with time travel is that the villains start with a *fait accompli*. At the beginning of the mission, the antagonists have already won. If the Agents are able to trace this success back to the beginning of their plan, the Agents may be able to stop the antagonist before they've even put their plan into action. To say that these bad guys will be confused is an understatement. In some cases, their later selves may try to warn them; in other cases, the actions of the Agents will themselves propel the antagonist into action; and in others, the Agents may be able to convince the antagonist to take another action at the crucial juncture, thus changing the future.

Improvisation

We've said it before, but it bears repeating: saying "yes, and..." when a player asks a question is the most important GM tool you have. Players and time travel have a nasty habit of pulling the rug out from underneath your well-trodden GM plans. Accept this instead of preemptively shutting them down, and make sure their tactic is both **fair** and **fun**. You can decide a tactic's effectiveness by moderating its cost. Something that's both fair (to the game, to you, and to the other players) and which makes the game more fun has a lower cost than a tactic that isn't.

For instance, let's say an Agent wants to spend Science! to have a futuristic device that kills the antagonist. That's neither fair nor fun, and it's not how the rules work, so the GM is well within her rights to disallow it. Instead, the Agent suggests a futuristic device that encloses the antagonist in an unbreakable force field. It's fair, but maybe not much fun (at least versus a major villain). The GM allows it with some conditions, and the GM asks the player to suggest what those conditions might be. The player suggests that no one can hurt them while they're in the force field, and the force field only lasts for a short time. That seems fun and fair, so the GM allows it for a 1-point spend.

Remember that Preparedness can get a creative player a long way, but that the *Flashback* Booster (p. 49) is necessary for booby traps and schemes that are already in place. If they declare that a fleeing quarry is running across an already-prepared minefield, make sure they're using *Flashback*.

Tone

You may be shooting for a particular tone, from hilariously light hearted to spooky to serious, so you'll need to make sure your play style and rules reinforce the mood you want to create. Little factors such as the room you're playing in, the number of players, and rules you stress will all have an impact on the game's tone. Most importantly? Tell your group what kind of a game you'd like to run. If it's meant to be a serious, pulpy, light-hearted, or scary game, they should know it in advance so that they can set their expectations accordingly. To remind your players, reward Stitches to people for specifically reinforcing and advancing that tone.

Here are quick summaries of some guidelines to follow when you're shooting for a particular mood during a game.

Funny: Don't worry much about *TimeWatch's* rules, to



Even when you're shooting for a humorous tone, Sophosaurs object to becoming a primary source of protein.

the extent that you're better off improvising an answer than stopping to look up details in the rulebook. Break or ignore the rules whenever it's funny to do so. Investigative spends and various choral antics can produce completely improbable results as long as they make people laugh. Encourage or allow nonhuman Agents, such as sentient dogs or wisecracking dinosaurs.

Hand out Stitches when players do something funny, especially if the funny action isn't necessarily in their best interest. Relax the 3-Stitch limit and increase it up to 5 per player at any one time. Lower the Difficulty (and tell players you're lowering it) for any test or action that's funny. Raise it for anything boring. Agent lethality should possibly be lowered unless you're allowing easy access to clones and choral duplicates; if you are, kill 'em all and let Science! sort them out.

In a funny game, you want bad guy motivations and plans to be ridiculous — either unnecessarily complex and convoluted, ludicrously ambitious in scope, or with a hilariously simple goal in mind. Also, keep in mind that your job as GM is to be the foil, which frees the players to be completely funny at your supporting characters' expense.

Serious: Avoid adventures, supporting characters, and scenarios based on bad puns, literary characters, or in-jokes. Discourage or disallow nonhuman Agents. Follow the rules as written (except where you've made changes and house rules you prefer). Assume that the characters are experts at their

jobs, so don't require die rolls or spends for any action that a clearly competent character in a movie or sci-fi story would be able to do without trouble. For instance, no Athletics test is normally necessary to climb a ladder; if someone is shooting at the character, however, that might be another story.

Consequences matter in a serious game, and difficult choices can rewrite the world. Also, pay attention to who the Agents thwart; offending powerful people can have serious or long-term consequences — and in a time travel game, making an enemy now means that their older selves can attack or inconvenience the characters at any time.

High Action: You'll want to slightly relax the laws of physics and mortality. Athletics become more cinematic, weapons knock back foes, and things blow up — a lot. You'll probably have more combat and chases in a high action game, so include lots of Mooks whose primary job is to be gunned down, issuing a Wilhelm scream before clutching their chest and falling off a high ledge.

Historical: Focus on particular historical eras, with adventures that involve less time travel and more immersion and understanding within a particular time frame. Time travel in this sort of game might be more difficult or less common, occurring only at the beginning and end of missions; it's primarily used to get you to a mission location, instead of as a tool for actually solving the mystery.

Sci-Fi: Set adventures in the future. Have enemies with futuristic weapons and gear, and use this technology as a core part of the mystery. Have robots attack the past. Create your own future history. Time travel is more common as a mystery-solving tool in a sci-fi-toned game, as are weapons and antagonists that directly attack the Agents' Chronal Stability. Drawing from popular science fiction or the GUMSHOE game *Ashen Stars*, allow Agent species which are all or partially alien.

Pulp: If bad guys aren't getting punched in the face, hopefully while fighting on the back of a mammoth or atop of a dirigible (possibly both at the same time), you're probably not living up to pulp's potential. Pulp is a genre of black-and-white extremes, of improbable action and glorious escapes.

See p. 293 for more information on running *Pulp* games of *TimeWatch*.

Conspiracy: Running a game with a heavy tone of conspiracy is a study in inculcating paranoia, distrust, and betrayal from even the people that the Agents should trust the most. Pass notes. Remember that even memories can be hacked and altered, and that when given the choice, people in power tend to abuse it. Don't allow tethers to automatically listen in to their surroundings unless one Agent has deliberately hacked another's. Each character may have a different briefing officer back at *TimeWatch*, and those officers might have their own goals, motivations, and methods for manipulation.

See p. 251 for more information on running a game steeped in conspiracy.

Horror: Horror games of *TimeWatch* rely heavily on the assumption that the Agents' great power does little or nothing against actual, true threats from beyond. Agents should be afraid of the things that dwell in the darkness, whether it's because they are largely immune to *TimeWatch* weapons, or

because they can destroy the things that characters care about most. Play on the players' primal fears: dim the lights, use a soundtrack, describe sensations in great detail, contribute to a feeling of powerlessness in small and numerous ways.

In horror games, the ability Chronal Stability doubles as an emotional stability stat. You can lose Chronal Stability from seeing something horrible or inhuman, just as you can lose sanity or emotional stability from time traveling through the hideous membrane that humankind was not meant to pierce. This means that characters who are low on Chronal Stability might exhibit signs of emotional breakdown or mental illness as well.

A very important aspect of a horror game is information and control. Something snarling in the dark is scary, but "a wolf" isn't; a hideous wet squirming on the other side of the basement door is terrifying, but "a shoggoth" isn't. Naming something reduces its ability to inspire terror, and being able to control something makes it less scary. As a result, horror games often have antagonists that are hard to identify, pin down, or stop from maneuvering during a fight.

Rules-wise, reduce maximum Stitches to 2 instead of 3, and don't be afraid to increase the lethality of important antagonists. Technology and super-science should never be an auto-win. Mooks might not exist in a horror game, and time travel may be more difficult, dangerous, or have more of an effect on Paradox tests.

See p. 245 for more information on Horror games.

Wondrous: Wonder is a difficult emotion to capture in a roleplaying game. You run across it in *TimeWatch* when your eAgents see things that are vast and wonderful and unknowable:

- ▶ the sound of Krakatoa exploding, so loud it traveled around the world four times or more
- ▶ the sight of the Zanclean Deluge, when an unthinkable torrent of water from the Atlantic came through the Straits of Gibraltar and filled the entire Mediterranean Basin in less than two years
- ▶ the infinite parade of multiple realities, all being rewritten every second with every action taken by every creature in the universe

You won't capture it every time, but plan out particularly astonishing or wonderful events or natural catastrophes. It will make your players glad that they're playing time travelers.

Structure

Your adventure structure is likely to vary for a one-shot, single-session game than for an ongoing campaign. A campaign game with no set time limit has more of an opportunity to stretch out, take digressions, circle back on itself, and deal with multiple plotlines at the same time.

That's less true for a one-shot mission, as discussed on p. 197. You've got three or four hours, and you damn well need to make them count, running a full game in that period of time that wraps up with an exciting conclusion. To do so, you'll need to be conscious of pacing and of the mission's structure.

For any game with a time limit we recommend the Brontosaurus¹ method, also known as the Narrow-Wide-Narrow structure. In this structure, any choices the players can make are constrained at the beginning and at the end, but they have free rein to explore lots of possibilities and strategies in the middle of the adventure.

Start with a narrow array of choices. You start the mission as late as possible and in medias res, mid-action and mid-encounter, or with a particular assignment. Based on immediate action, the Agents know instantly that they have to deal with this problem or accept the assignment to get started with the adventure. For instance, you wouldn't start a game by saying, "You have a meeting with your briefing officer in three hours. Anything you want to do before then?" Instead, you'd start by saying, "You're galloping your horse across the seemingly endless Great Plains of 17th-century North America, passenger pigeons filling the sky overhead, and you're hot on the heels of a well-armed time traveling thief who's carrying stolen technology that might be damaged by time travel. She's ahead of you, trying to lose herself and her exhausted horse in the sea of grass. What do you do?" The players immediately know their goal, where they are, and what's happening. They may not know all the details — who is this thief? What's the stolen technology? Why is it sensitive to time travel? — but you can impart that as the chase and fight progresses.

We often think of this initial encounter as the opening scene of an action movie, and so we make it high-action as a result. Combat, infiltration, death-defying escapes... this sort of a starting scene quickly grabs your players' attention. Ideally, the scene also serves as a lead-in to the rest of the adventure, providing clues, foreshadowing, and direction for what happens during the rest of the game.

Continue with a wide array of choices. After the first encounter, give the Agents lots of latitude on how they approach the adventure. They may want to time travel back to the Citadel, follow leads and clues to the future or the past, or go and investigate a red herring. Give them signposts in the form of clues, but don't steer them too closely. When you've got the whole universe and array of time open to you, you may want to poke around a bit, and that's half the fun of *TimeWatch*.

It's this wide range of choices that prevents any game from feeling like a tightly orchestrated railroad. As a GM, it's usually a good idea to have two or three useful locations that the group can travel to, and perhaps they're more likely to travel to them in a particular order, but that shouldn't necessarily be mandatory. Clues in locations should lead to other clues, and those will eventually point towards a specific time and place. The safest method is to have three separate clues that lead to each stage of the mystery. Players regularly miss clues that GMs think are obvious, and having multiple methods of reaching the same conclusion works perfectly in GUMSHOE games.

¹ Yes, we know brontosaurus aren't a thing, and apatosaurus are, but *TimeWatch* takes place in the parallel history where "thunder lizard" is a much cooler name than "unreal lizard." It's important to have priorities.

Take the above example. Perhaps the Agents captured the fleeing felon, or perhaps they killed her, or perhaps she escaped. If the former, they can question her, and she'll lead them to a person or location that provides even more clues to a deeper plot. If they kill her, they can use information on her body (and in the device) to track her origins, and even time travel to speak with a younger version of her; or they can get information from her belongings and the device she had stolen.

Finish with a narrow range of choices, leading to one or more climactic encounters. You started in a focused location, and you let the Agents roam wide to gather clues. All those clues lead to one or two conclusions, and it's up to the Agents to solve the problem. In a game without time travel, that's an easy stage to set; you may not know how or when the heroes are arriving at the final encounter, but you know that your clues will lead them there.

The timing in *TimeWatch* is a little different. Because many missions begin with a villain's fait accompli, and the point of the mission is for the Agents to learn how and negate his actions using time travel, it's possible that the Agents will learn of a showdown with their foe and avoid it entirely. Perhaps they'll find a way to slay his ancestors, or entirely remove the reason he's there in the first place. If so, that's a fantastic end to your adventure, and you should congratulate the players on their creativity instead of penalizing them or forbidding them to think outside of the box.

But you want some combat as part of the final encounter, and that's not going to occur if the Agents out-think their foe. Give some thought as to who (if anyone) is staking out the final place the Agents need to go. If the antagonists have time travel as well, and if they feel themselves fading due to the Agents' actions, they may try to stop them before all is lost. Perhaps they can get a message to their allies in that time frame, or they can travel there themselves. Either way, it isn't uncommon for you to be able to rationalize a final combat if that's what you think will be most fun.

It may not be necessary, however. The joy of time travel is using your brain to neutralize your foe before he can even act. If the Agents succeed in this, let them have their well-earned victory by watching their enemies fade ineffectually away. If they've left any openings or flaws in their planning, exploit them viciously.

A rebel former TimeWatch agent has succeeded in dismantling security at a TimeWatch armory in the Paleocene, stealing enough weapons to destroy a sizeable city. Knowing that the agent would have the theft site staked out with allies as an ambush, the Agents instead do considerable research on the rogue agent. They meet her in her youth and befriend her, encounter her several times during her career, and make sure they're nearby when her lover dies and she first makes the decision to rebel. Their friendship and reasonable argument makes the difference, and she stays loyal to the organization instead of betraying them. It's an emotional, tragic scene and the Agents should be rewarded for their cleverness. Because she never rebels, she never steals the weapons.

In the future, however, her allies (former TimeWatch agents themselves) know that something has gone terribly wrong. Their own

knowledge of Paradox Prevention informs them that history has changed around them and leaves them with shadow memories of the changed agent. It doesn't take them long to identify the pivot point, and seconds after the player characters have resolved their new friend's crisis, a number of very angry rebels clock in to eliminate the competition. The fight is on.

Pacing

Pacing a mystery or investigation can be tricky if you aren't used to it. You need to give players a reason to care about your mystery, you need to give everyone something to do with their focused abilities, you need a villain or antagonist worth hating, and you need to make sure that investigation proceeds at a pace that prevents people from becoming bored. If you see people lose attention or check their phone, your pacing needs some tweaking.

That means that for adventures with a slightly less enticing hook — “Why do we care about President Taft's bathtub, again?” — you'll want higher action or external excitement to draw people in. For adventures that have a great hook — “Wait, have we always had dinosaurs as pets?” — action can be slipped in at portions of the adventure that might otherwise lag. Classic pulp pacing is **start as late as possible, and end early**. Determine the latest possible moment to dump your Agents into the action, and then start a little after that. That means you'll usually skip the mission briefing, only to summarize it for the Agents afterward, and that's fine. Similarly, stop when the excitement is over and focus on an emotional wrap-up instead of a logistical one. It's fine to leave unanswered questions at the end of a successful and exciting TimeWatch mission.

In the same way that many of the best action movies begin with a heart-pounding action scene that's loosely linked to the main plot, consider doing the same thing in your game. Action doesn't always need to be violent. It can be a frenetic chase, a difficult and important roleplaying exchange, a villain's plans coming to fruition around the Agents, or a cleverly planned trap being sprung. Scenes like this showcase the nature of the game and, at least for new players, illustrate the rules in a fast and easy manner.

Think of your adventure as a three-act play. The first act establishes the plot and ends as the plot thickens. The second act nails down the true nature of the mystery, probably contains at least one combat encounter, and ends once the Agents know what they must do to save the day and fix history. The third act draws everything to a close, and gives the Agents the opportunity to make difficult choices and collar their Adversaries.

If you're gaming with limited time, it is almost always better to cut minor mid-game encounters in favor of the plot-heavy payoff at the end of a game. The nonlinear nature of time travel means that you can plan small drop-in encounters or ambushes with enemies that the player characters haven't even met yet, but who hate them for actions that will take place in the future. Best yet, that knowledge means that the Agents can't kill their attackers when they meet again without suffering from paradox and Chronal Stability Loss.

SCALE: EPIC VS. PERSONAL SCOPE ADVENTURES

Not every mission needs to be about Christopher Columbus sinking in the Atlantic. You can create truly epic and world- (and history-) spanning adventures in this game, but you shouldn't feel obligated or constrained to make that the only type of play. Perhaps a mission requires the Agents to act as a particular child's guardian angels, ensuring that he grows up safely and without any major phobias. Alternatively, a mission might require Agents to make sure that a particular couple fall in love with one another. Sure, that's also the premise of *Back to the Future*, but the best adventures take well-known tropes and then riff off of them. Feel free to do the same.

When an adventure is about emotions and personal loyalties, many of the “I have to know history!” anxieties that a GM may experience go away entirely. Recruiting new members, searching for a lost agent who's also a rival, tweaking your own family's history and backstory... all give Agents a chance to affect history on a small and intimate scale. It's a nice change of pace from saving the world every week.

MYSTERIES THAT STRIKE HOME

Ask your players what history they're personally interested in. That allows you to build adventures around topics they love. Whether it's the Great Molasses Flood of 1919 Boston, the Holocaust's persecution of European Romani, Anglo-Scottish border reivers in the 14th century, or Cleopatra alongside Egyptian mummies, you should consider this low-hanging fruit when it comes to building missions. You'll have instant buy-in from that player, and their additional knowledge of the topic will make the game come alive.

Target your mysteries to the characters as well. If one of your Agents is a Victorian doctor, run a session about Jack the Ripper. If an Agent is from the near-future, set a mission during the deadly war they were trying to take shelter from when they were recruited. Exploring these time periods helps round out the characters, and gives everyone a chance to know more about the time periods they originate from.

Similarly, hit them where it hurts. Have enemies destroy the culture, composers, art, and inventions that they love best. For egocentric Agents, perhaps their rivals use time travel to poison their reputation; or perhaps an Agent finds her own personal historical legacy removed entirely from the record with no idea why. People love to hate an enemy who has it out for them personally, so figure out what a player or a character loves best and have it disappear from time. You can be sure they'll be motivated to find out why.

Building Towards Revelations

No Biblical references here — although if you want to face down the apocalypse in your game, that'd probably make for a fun session or three. Instead, we're referring to how you build towards the revelation of your adventure's or campaign's central mystery.

Think of your *TimeWatch* game as an onion made out of multiple secrets. If you have a central secret or conspiracy in your game...

- ... *dinosaurs should be truly ruling the world*
- ... *TimeWatch is influencing history, not restoring it*
- ... *aliens have lived beside humankind for millennia*
- ... *cockroaches are ezeru spies that report back everything they see*

... that's unlikely to come out in a single game. After all, if your campaign was a TV series, it would take one or more seasons to have that truth revealed. Instead, there will be a myriad of tiny and subtle clues that only make sense when looked at as a whole. Each clue is a single layer of the onion, and it isn't until the players have removed every layer that they'll learn what they believe to be the whole truth.

Meanwhile, each mission has its own secrets. It's recommended that some of those game sessions tie into your central secret, if any, and others are largely unrelated. That helps stop the game from falling into a rut, and it helps orchestrate a slow build to worthwhile revelations.

This gradual reveal is handy in a single game as well. Let players gradually find out the changed state of the world by seeing, not by someone telling them at great length how things now are. The former is fun, and the latter is tedious at best. The *TimeWatch* phrase for excessive exposition is "**shut up, exposition cat!**" taken from a playtest game where an intelligent uplifted cat gave players a history lesson that lasted for ten minutes. It took a player running Uurrk to shout "SHUT UP, EXPOSITION CAT!" to let the GM know there was a problem. The takeaway? Let your players piece together the puzzle instead of trying to hand it to them. Everyone will be grateful.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF GMING TIMEWATCH

DON'T OVER-PREPARE

There are some games that are best run with fully detailed notes in front of you, with every single scene laid out and every single supporting character prepared. *TimeWatch* isn't one of them. The vast flexibility in time travel that the characters control makes it problematic to run that sort of game every week. You never want to be in a situation where preparing the game isn't fun. If you feel like you need an encyclopedic grasp of what the players' plans are, you're going to shelve this and go play *Monopoly* instead. For goodness sake, don't let that happen to you.

DON'T MISTAKE TIMEWATCH FOR SIMULATION

Don't overthink your game preparation. Your history and time traveling consequences don't have to be perfect. This isn't an alt-history simulation, and there is a multitude of small

changes that you can handwave. Better yet, asking the players "what do you think would happen when X war was lost?" might lead to an incredibly fun discussion that supplies you with plot hooks for weeks to come.

DO LET THE PLAYERS BE CREATIVE

One of the great joys of *TimeWatch* is that the bad guys have already won, and during the adventure the players will learn how they did so. That means that the players have great flexibility in how they stop the miscreants. Do they identify the main Adversary and go back to stop her from learning about time travel? Do they allow the crime to happen and then duplicate its effect, so that history never knows the difference? Do they rush in, guns blazing, and expect to cover up the chaos before word gets out? Do they use diplomacy to recruit their enemies to their own cause? Do they use Preparedness and time travel to bring in very heavy weaponry?

You'll enjoy *TimeWatch* a lot more when you don't try to channel the players down a particular problem-solving channel. They'll give you a feel early on for what their strategy is going to be; accept it, welcome it, then riff off of it to surprise them.

DO GIVE THE PLAYERS ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Each Agent's tether will inform them what "real" history should have been, but it won't change in concert with altered history. For instance, say that the meteor missed Earth and dinosaurs were not wiped out. Agents traveling into this alternate timeline won't have access to dinosaur history on their tether; instead, their tether will incorrectly report to them on nonexistent human history.

This is tremendously useful during investigations. If Agents travel to ancient Rome and discover that Emperor Caligula lived a long and sadistically insane life, and their tethers and memories tell them that he should have died early, they'll know when to start their investigation.

The Research ability helps Agents discover what the actual timeline is like. Whether it's checking computer archives or libraries, or talking to ancient soothsayers, Research will quickly help them identify what has gone wrong.

DO KNOW YOUR MAIN CLUES

If you know the main clues and motivations in a bad guy's chain of causality, you won't be off track when the players try clever tactics.

How do you find out what your main clues, especially historical information (and how it's changed), are? Head to the Internet. The world is full of smart people writing about what they love, so you may be able to find good adventure ideas by using this for inspiration.

A historical change provides a multitude of clues, whether from things that newly exist or events that now

never happened. These changes will be reflected in culture, newspapers, and records. When Agents go scouring a new time period to figure out what's gone wrong, don't make them play an extended guessing game. It's usually more fun to help them latch onto their first main clue, starting them in the right direction to further investigate. As long as you know *what* has changed, or can think logical changes through on the fly, it will be easy to describe clues to the player that helps them notice the change.

DO THINK ABOUT CONSEQUENCES

Chronal Stability handwaves all the consequences you don't want to worry about — killed a local guard? Chronal instability test — instead of worrying about what influential personage he might have been the great-great-great grandfather to! — but you'll have the most fun when you think about consequences. If something changes, what are the consequences that ripple forward? Focusing on smaller, quirky consequences is particularly interesting.

The Belgian musician Adolphe Sax is assassinated as a child. As a result, Bill Clinton never plays his saxophone on The Arsenio Hall Show in 1992, never seizes the youth vote, and is not elected president (a dubious claim, but we'll say that antagonists are working in other areas to change history as well; blaming Sax's death is fun, so we'll declare it to be the straw that broke the camel's back). Fifty years later the change in US presidents accumulates into global economic catastrophe. When Agents investigate that catastrophe, they'll be told off-handedly by their GM that music sounds a bit different. It won't be until they investigate further, with the GM telling them things that might be different with no saxophone, that they start to put the clues together.

DO THINK BACKWARDS

Instead of thinking “what happens if *X* occurs?” pick a topic and ask yourself “what would have to happen for *X* to occur?” The best plots start with a worthy goal. If an Adversary wants to avoid overpopulation, they may go back in time to engineer a horrible plague or famine. If an Adversary wants a particular country to be politically or economically ascendant, they may time travel back to reveal hidden natural resources or to influence key battles or diplomatic engagements. If you decide what you want the changed future to be like, then think about what might change to make that possible, you'll quickly have an intriguing plot.

DO ADMIT RED HERRINGS, AND MAKE THINGS UP

If you don't know, and it isn't particularly relevant to the plot, make it up. If you want to avoid sending your players off on a red herring, tell them you're making it up; it's better to tell them “you check, and Hitler's grandparent's don't seem to be involved” than it is to make up something that a player

with Wikipedia quickly disproves, causing the entire table of players to fasten on the fact like a starved remora latching onto a corpulent shark.

This is different from planning a specific red herring that has adventure attached to it. That sort of fake out is fine and is usually fun. What you should avoid, though, is a wasted half hour while the group talks over possible completely misguided theories and isn't having fun doing so.

If you ever goof and get called on it, consider quickly whether your mistake can actually be worked into the mystery. “Yes, that *is* interesting, isn't it?” is a reasonable way to buy time while you integrate your mistake into the main mystery. If it isn't easy to add or adapt on the fly, though, you're best off quickly admitting the truth and moving on.

DO CONSIDER HISTORICAL RACISM

Recorded history (and unrecorded history both past and future, unless you've designed a future utopia for game play) is full of accepted, ubiquitous racism. Racial barriers were supported by political and (some) social leaders, and restrictive laws helped enforce racism that many well-meaning people fully believed was natural and appropriate. The world was difficult when your skin color, appearance, or social stature differed than that of your community's ruling caste. It never occurred to many people that it could ever be otherwise, or that it *should* be otherwise.

Consider what this means for your *TimeWatch* game. In any game with time travel, characters are going to bump up against racism almost constantly. The simplest way to address this is to simply ignore it. The Disguise and Unobtrusiveness abilities (along with the technological assistance that accompanies those abilities, such as miniature holographic projectors, chromomorphic clothing, and impersonator mesh) help characters blend into the local social strata for wherever and whenever they happen to find themselves. Differences in skin color, gender, language, and height can all be handwaved with an ability test or two.

If you're primarily ignoring racism, these fundamental differences can be quietly acknowledged by having the racist supporting characters choose the least offensive (in their eyes) player character to primarily interact with during roleplaying. If you're sitting down to play *TimeWatch* with players you don't know well, and the mission doesn't explicitly revolve around questions of historical racism, this might be the best option.

A more complex but satisfying solution is for you to address the issue in a way that makes the game more interesting and thought provoking for everyone at the table.

- ▶ What happens when the black Agents are forced to stop a chronal saboteur who has helped prevent the African slave trade by uniting, arming, and training disparate tribes, or who helps John Brown succeed in Harpers Ferry?
- ▶ How do Aztec and Native American Agents approach an Adversary determined to inoculate native North, Central, and South American tribes against deadly European diseases?

- ▶ Does a Chinese Agent take issue with someone determined to assassinate Pol Pot?
- ▶ What happens when someone interferes with history not to stop racism or racially linked events, but to deliberately cause them, preemptively wiping out one rival ethnicity before that ethnicity can purge their own people?

Any answer to these questions needs to work as a game and story instead of just a morality play, and needs to take player sensibilities into account. Support and encourage strong roleplaying by using the rules themselves; if you're foregrounding race, certain abilities work differently based on your skin color. Authority and Charm may only work with someone of your own skin color; Intimidate and Taunt may be more effective than normal against someone of differing ethnicity. Culture matters as well; expect nothing but hostility if you are in Rwanda, trying to use Streetwise on a Hutu when you are (or are disguised as) a Tutsi. Similarly, trying to gain a clue from someone in 19th-century India's "Untouchable" caste without using Streetwise and appearing to be of a similar caste will be fraught with frustration.

In this style of game, keep a close eye on game play and make sure that clues are spread evenly across all characters. Common sense is an excellent guide here; look for opportunities to reinforce cultural norms and beliefs with the rules and with the behavior and attitude of supporting characters. One possibility for emphasizing social barriers is to *always* require a spend when trust-related Interpersonal abilities are used between characters of different races.

DO EMBRACE TIME TRAVEL TROPES

The best part of a time travel game is classic time travel conundrums. Want to come back in time and help yourself? How about creating a paradox, or a new enemy, that causes further problems down the road? Can you time travel 50 years in the future and look up what happened in an encyclopedia? Can you kill your own grandfather?

Let the players do these things. They'll love you for it. That's not to say that they'll always get the exactly correct information from that future encyclopedia; writers have biases, and history is filled with lies written by the people who won or the people who lost and have an axe to grind. With that understanding, however, it's better to let them hear about the results, especially because hearing this locks them into an action.

How so? Remember that if you don't know the future results of an action, you risk no Chronal Stability. If you've learned what happens, though, and your actions cause something else to happen, you'll create paradox and your whole team will be making Paradox tests when the results change. That's a disincentive for players to find out what "should" have happened.

DO GIVE THEM PREDICTIONS OF THE FUTURE... MAYBE

If a player want to try something that's clearly abusive, consider requiring a Paradox Prevention spend of 1 or higher to allow the action; Paradox Prevention acts as your "this is fun but overpowered, so it should be limited" gating factor. For instance, it's quite common for a player to want their Agent's future self to send back a note describing what's about to happen, or giving a clue. It's within your right to disallow this if you don't know what might happen, but it's more fun for everyone to allow it if the player makes a Paradox test and spends a Paradox Prevention point. After all, the player is unlikely to try this technique unless they're feeling lost and aren't sure what to do next. If you allow it, you can then steer the plot in a particular direction and still make the Agents face paradox if they try to change what they themselves said would occur.

It's worth noting that clever Agents leave themselves vague warnings to avoid paradox. "You're going to be ambushed at the party" is a good warning because it doesn't predict the results of the ambush; so long as there's an ambush, and the predicted future comes true, no additional Paradox test is needed. "You're going to get ambushed at the party, and half the group will die" is a bad warning, because the Agents will then strive to protect the group — and if half don't die as a result, every Agent will need to make an additional Paradox test.

DO KNOW WHEN TO END A SCENE

In a novel or TV episode, writers can freely cut to the next scene when their characters have acquired all of the clues available in the current one. The characters might stick around for hours tying up loose ends and pursuing fruitless questions, but this doesn't happen onscreen. The audience never has to sit through such sequences.

This kind of concise editing isn't so easy in the roleplaying medium. Players don't know when they've got all the clues.

Here's a simple trick to gently steer them onwards, without unduly breaking the illusion of fictional reality:

Before play, take an index card and write on it, in big block letters, the word *SCENE*. As soon as the players have gleaned the core clue and most or all of the secondary clues in a scene, and the action begins to drag, hold up the card. When the players see this, they know to wrap up and move on. (Of course, you have to explain the cue to them before play begins.) Easy, efficient, yet somehow not nearly as disruptive or jarring as a verbal instruction.

Even better, use one of the musical stings available from the Pelgrane Press website for just this purpose.

"BSING WITH YOUR GROUP ABOUT TIME TRAVEL IS 20% OF THE FUN"

That heading is an exact playtester quote. If you're not sure how paradox or a change ripples forward, talk about it with your group. This is absolutely one of the joys of a time travel game, stretching your minds around paradox and clever time traveling, and you don't want to skip it.

HACKING THE RULES

TimeWatch variant rules aren't limited to the campaign frames in this book. GMs have control of certain sliders — rules variants that can be tweaked to give the game the feel your GM and players want. The *TimeWatch* rule set can be used to run a lot of different styles of campaigns, and you may want to customize the rules to fit the type of game you love best. We encourage this.

CUSTOMIZING TIME TRAVEL

Time travel is what defines *TimeWatch*, so you want to make sure it matches your own vision of what great time travel looks and feels like.

Make Time Travel Easier

In the rules, time travel for Agents requires an autochron, takes two turns to activate, and triggers a Travel test. You can change any or all of this without necessarily breaking the game.

- ▶ The simplest to change is the autochron; want a different time machine, or no time machine at all? You can make time travel innate, link it to the tether, or have any device you imagine act as the time machine.
- ▶ Making time travel take only one round is going to present some fairly unbalanced combats. Agents will regularly clock out in the middle of a fight, head somewhere to heal, then clock back in with reinforcements a few seconds later. Limiting this tactic is why most General abilities don't automatically refresh during a rest, and why autochrons require two combat rounds to activate (with the first round making them incredibly vulnerable to damage). If you love the idea of Agents and enemies sliding in and out of a fight to heal, or Agents trying to weaken an enemy by killing their grandfather before he ever had children, make time travel faster. Just don't be surprised if it slows down a fight or gets exploited by smart players.
- ▶ Travel tests exist because playtests showed that time machines need *some* limits — without them, Agents could literally hover in place and jump forward by 10 minutes hundreds of times until a desired event occurred — but limited fuel wasn't a good choice because it encouraged player analysis paralysis. After all, if you can only time travel five times, you want to make them count! We considered solar panels with a known recharging time (an hour, 6 hours,

24 hours) but these sharply curtailed time chases, something we wanted to encourage.

Travel tests were our solution: a slow, fixable Loss of Chronal Stability that reminds players about the dangers of time traveling. You can get the same effect by removing the Travel test and just charging 1 point of Chronal Stability per Agent per jump. You can also remove Travel tests entirely, understanding that unlimited time machine use might make portions of the game less manageable.

Make Time Travel Harder

Patrol-style games assume that the Agents will time travel multiple times during one game session. If that's not the style of game you want to run, you can limit this.

- ▶ Autochrons might damage local reality, and every time you time travel both Travel tests and Paradox tests rise in Difficulty, Loss, or both.
- ▶ Time machines take longer to warm up, so quick chases or escapes become less likely.
- ▶ Instead of portable autochrons, time machines are large, bulky, and immovable.
- ▶ Time travel is notoriously unreliable, varying in time- or location-accuracy (or both) at the GM's whim. You might decide that the more accurate you are in time, the less accurate you are in location, and vice versa.
- ▶ Enemies and monsters might live in the time stream. For instance, if Agents emerge from every time jump covered with chronal leeches that suck Chronal Stability out of them, they may voluntarily limit their time travel to emergencies.
- ▶ Interdiction devices limit time travel in both time and space. Notoriously difficult to manufacture, they can lock certain eras from time travel, and weaker versions can require a spend of 1 or more Timecraft points per character in order to break through.
- ▶ You can change how accurate time machines are, whether they can also teleport you or not, and whether their time travel is limited into a specific range of years.

Change How Time Travel Works

Autochrons get used for *TimeWatch* Agents because they generally relegate time travel to a convenience when mystery-solving, instead of as a barrier or plot focus itself. That can be easily changed.

- ▶ Agents are projected from the Citadel by a time-beam and must meet a rendezvous to be picked up before they can be beamed anywhere else.
- ▶ Agents must find "soft spots" in the space-time continuum before their time machines will work
- ▶ Time travel happens through ritualistic magic spells.
- ▶ Time travel rips holes through the veil of reality, rips that anyone can walk through while open, and which never entirely heal. Monsters from the time stream might exploit these openings for themselves.

- ▶ Time travel causes illness, triggering a Stun test for anyone who passes from one time to another.

Define What Happens While Traveling

As written, time traveling happens quickly and conveniently, and moving through the vast river of time is little more than a narrative special effect. What if that's not the case?

- ▶ Time has weather, including storms and floods and natural disasters, and travelers may have to take shelter in other eras while traveling (possibly explaining Chronal Stability Loss from failed Travel tests).
- ▶ Creatures live literally inside the time stream. These may range from nuisance parasites such as chronal leeches, to ezeru (analogous to roaches hiding under floorboards), to actual chunks of sentient time with their own goals and desires.
- ▶ Humans have colonized time itself, setting up way stations or battle stations inside the flow of time.
- ▶ Time travel takes surprisingly long, and autochrons automatically anesthetize you to minimize boredom.
- ▶ Time travel takes literally a flicker of a second, with no interstitial time whatsoever.

Adjust Paradox

As written, *TimeWatch* paradox isn't a terrible thing. Sure, there are personal consequences to being exposed to repeated paradox (including vanishing from existence), but overlapping yourself isn't likely to erase the entire world. You can change these consequences if you want to ramp paradox levels up or down.

As always with rules, we suggest you play with the default level of paradox at least once before ramping the consequences up or down.

- ▶ Use narrative consequences instead of mechanical losses. Keep Paradox tests but jettison the concept of Loss. Instead, failing a Paradox test creates aberrations in the universe: a remarkable coincidence occurs, or an outlandish threat appears, or you rip open a hole in time and space and something from another time frame steps out, or you create someone's identical twin duplicate from an evil mirror universe. Make consequences into challenges and inconveniences, instead of tracking Chronal Stability Loss.
- ▶ Every unsuccessful Paradox test raises the Difficulty on all future Paradox tests for that character by 1. This death spiral will get ugly quickly, but definitely inspires fear and caution. In such a case, spending a Paradox Prevention point will reset the starting Difficulty back to 4.
- ▶ Losses are reduced. Paradox becomes less important, something that the universe can easily absorb. Meeting yourself becomes a common and viable technique, and time-based mayhem occurs far more frequently than *TimeWatch* would like to admit.

CUSTOMIZING INVESTIGATIVE ABILITIES

Different GUMSHOE games have different quantities of abilities for the investigators to use while solving mysteries. The *TimeWatch* rules condense abilities down to the bare minimum, under the theory that it's better to have fewer abilities that do more things than it is to have many abilities that you either don't often use, or that you can't remember the details of.

Ask yourself: what abilities does your game need? Only add new abilities that are essential, or close to it. Only remove abilities that will get very little use. If your game cries out for a specific ability that will clearly be useful and which isn't otherwise covered (such as Magic or Occult in a fantasy version of *TimeWatch*), add it without hesitation.

There are several different levels of rules hacking. The simplest is to add or subtract Investigative abilities. You may wish to fold Forgery in under Spying, for instance — spies traditionally forge documents, so it's at least slightly plausible — or combine the three different History abilities back into just one or two. Conversely, you can add abilities when you expect they'll get significant use in your game. This is what we've done with the traditional GUMSHOE Academic ability History. That's too inclusive in a time travel game, so in *TimeWatch* it's been split into three logical abilities instead — History (Ancient), History (Contemporary), and History (Future).

Cybernetics, mentioned on p. 125, is a good example of adding a completely new ability when you think it will see sufficient use, and it's not adequately covered under another ability. If you want magic in your game, you could add an Occult ability and give the ability to cast spells (with an effect equal to the benefit of spending a Science! point) by spending 1 point of Occult.

This method provides great flexibility for encouraging the type of actions and investigation you want to see in game. For example, let's say that you have players who want to play musicians as Agents, and you intend to have several missions focus on historical composers. Right now musical ability and knowledge is subsumed by High Society (for piano, harp, violin, and the like) and Streetwise (for guitar, harmonica, and more casual instruments). You may wish to instead create a new Interpersonal ability named "Perform" and have musical knowledge and ability reside there instead.

Adding and subtracting Investigative abilities is simple. Just be aware that you may wish to increase or decrease the number of initial build points by 1 point for every 2 Investigative abilities you add or subtract.

Either way, you can increase or decrease the number of Investigative build points that players get when creating their characters. Adding points makes the characters more competent and more powerful; subtracting points makes them less experienced. Should you wish starting Agents who are significantly less seasoned, it's recommended you use the Novice option and subtract 3 points from the starting allotment of Investigative build points. Doing so, however, may make it difficult or impossible for players to have every Investigative ability covered.

You can relax the suggestion on p. 204 that every ability be covered by at least one player. Doing so has the potential of

making some clues unobtainable, something that you probably don't want unless you're building redundancy into your trail of clues — although really, every core clue should have multiple ways to discover it regardless. When it's impossible to cover every Investigative ability, such as in solo play, consider giving the Agent's tether a personality (see p. 113) and assigning the most important of the missing Academic abilities to the tether's personality.

CUSTOMIZING GENERAL ABILITIES

You can add or subtract General abilities, although this gets slightly more complex. A common new ability to add is Sense Trouble, which might be used to determine Surprise in combat (or hidden explosives) instead of rolling Unobtrusiveness. In a game that doesn't need Chronal Stability, you may wish to remove that ability and its companion Reality Anchor.

You'll want to create a Booster for any new General ability you create. This rewards players who specialize in a niche. Be cautious not to make Boosters too powerful or weak. They should be handy but not game winners, and should let the character do their job slightly better than they could otherwise.

The threshold for General ability Boosters affects niche protection and character power. As a default, Boosters become available when a General ability rating is 8 or higher. You can increase that number to 10 or 12 if you want to encourage niche protection and specialization. Even if you do this, however, we recommend that the Booster for Athletics continue to stay at 8. Most characters really need that +1 improvement to their Hit Threshold if they're going to stay alive for long.

You can add up to two new General abilities without having to increase build points, although you'll want to help ensure that Stitches are regularly handed out to keep characters effective in the game. Consider dropping the number of build points from 50 to 45 if you remove one General ability, or to 40 points if you remove two or more. If you remove any General abilities but don't reduce the number of initial build points, expect the Agents to be moderately more capable and robust.

Don't reduce or remove the free starting 6 points of Health or Chronal Stability unless you don't mind your player characters fragile. We've found that reintroducing these bonus 12 points into the starting build pool tends to encourage characters who are "glass cannons," incredibly talented in certain areas but who drop quickly in combat or suffer rapidly from chronal instability.

Should a 0 Rating Allow Success?

As a default in GUMSHOE rules, you cannot roll for a General ability that has a rating of 0. You can relax this rule if you want to reduce niche protection. One method is described in the sidebar on p. 28, raising Difficulties by +2 when using a 0 rating ability. This allows success only on a natural roll of 6.

Raising Difficulties by +1 for untrained abilities allows success on a 5–6 (33% of the time), and not raising Difficulties

at all gives characters a 50/50 chance to make tests in an ability they don't possess. This makes it less likely that characters will put 1 rating point in a General ability just to make sure that they have a modicum of skill in it, granting them extra points for the abilities they choose to specialize in.

Allowing an untrained roll, keeping Difficulties normal, but describing (or having the player describe) a calamitous fumble on a natural roll of 1 is one other method of handling untrained rolls; success becomes more likely (50% chance), but 1/6th of the time you should anticipate possibly plot-changing failure. If nothing else, it will keep the players on their toes and keep the game unpredictable.

Should You Reveal Exact Difficulty Numbers?

The assumption when playing *TimeWatch* is that players have a feel for the task Difficulty, but that they don't know it with certainty. Under this system normal Difficulties are set at 4, and the GM saying "that task is harder than normal" indicates that the Difficulty is at least 5, possibly higher (although a Difficulty of 6 or 7 would likely be described as "really difficult" or "close to impossible"). A description of "an easy task" usually means a Difficulty of 3, as any task of Difficulty 2 or lower is usually handwaved as a success.

That level of vagueness is intended to introduce risk and excitement and reduce the amount of number crunching by players. Some players, however, *hate* this. For these players, spending consumable resources (General ability pool points) and then failing anyway is pretty much the opposite of fun. They feel similarly about vast overspending, burning 6 pool points when only 3 would have succeeded. With this style of player at your table, keeping most Difficulties secret will result in a frustrated player who has less fun.

We recommend you talk to your players and ask them how they feel about revealing exact Difficulty Numbers. If people have particularly strong feelings about the issue, use that method and tweak your level of disclosure as you play to make sure it's working. Delighted players are arguably more important than greater in-game tension, and changing the default system won't break the game.

CUSTOMIZING PARADOX AND CHRONAL STABILITY

Chronal Stability (or the dangerous erosion thereof) is a handy method for handling paradox that adds an extra layer of danger to time travel adventures.

Emotional Stability vs. Chronal Stability

Chronal Stability is almost a direct analog of the General ability Stability that's used in other GUMSHOE games such as *Night's Black Agents*, *The Esoterrorists*, and *Trail of Cthulhu* to represent a character's mental and emotional strength. Run low on Stability

in those games, and you temporarily lose control of your emotions. This is different than Sanity. For instance, watch your best friend get murdered before your eyes, and you'd probably go berserk, screaming and crying or evidencing uncontrollable anger. In game terms you'd have taken massive Stability Loss, but such a sorrow wouldn't necessarily drive you insane.

The GUMSHOE ability Psychoanalysis restores lost points of Stability in the same way that Medic restores lost points of Health. Reality Anchor works the same way in *TimeWatch*, re-anchoring a Fading time traveler into reality and preventing her from fading out of existence.

Removing Chronal Stability Entirely

It may be a useful ability, but it's not essential to playing the game. Go back to your preferred sci-fi source material when deciding to make changes; aside from *Back to the Future*, many time travel stories and movies don't take Chronal Stability into account. We've designed antagonists, phenomena, and weapons that use Chronal Stability, and it's key to handling paradox, but removing it from the game entirely only makes adventuring in time somewhat safer and more prosaic. It turns out that losing points of Chronal Stability is scary for many players, so paradox-ridden adventures that strain Chronal Stability can often be both exciting and tense — you won't break the game by removing it, but you may make play less exciting.



Urrk discovers that just because you CAN duplicate yourself across time, doesn't mean you SHOULD.

If you remove Chronal Stability, use an alternate consequence for paradox from p. 89. Unexpected time portals, odd aging or de-aging, impossible paradoxes, time running backwards, an area frozen or running backwards in time... all of these are possibilities for non-mechanical paradox.

You don't need to change the number of General ability build points if you remove Chronal Stability and Reality Anchor, other than eliminating the 6 points of Chronal Stability that new Agents normally get for free.

Adjusting Test Frequency, Difficulty, and Loss

Frequency

Paradox tests other than Travel tests usually occur only a few times in an average game session. If you want to make these more frequent, and thus put greater stress on Chronal Stability and Reality Anchor pools, find environmental and antagonist-related ways to trigger these that aren't directly related to suboptimal player choices.

Examples include:

- ▶ requiring tests when a wave of historical change takes effect
- ▶ antagonists with the Destabilize special power
- ▶ antagonists armed with chronal destabilizer weapons, whether pistols or grenades
- ▶ chronal anomalies² such as time fissures, butterfly effects, post-shadowing, birthday atrophy, spontaneous evolution, lost time, second sight, and the déjà vu
- ▶ time disasters such as time quakes, timephoons, clocknados, timebergs, ice aging, timeavalanches, and retro-amnesia

We advise against Paradox tests that increase in frequency because you've added more stringent rules for what constitutes a paradox. That turns out to not be much fun; players view Paradox tests as a stressful "we screwed up" punishment. Requiring one tends to discourage the action that initially triggered it. If you decide to require them for minor or inconsequential Agent actions when adventuring, you're going to put the players into a state of analysis paralysis, where every action they take seems to be discouraged. Avoid that.

Difficulty and Loss

The more difficult and severe Paradox tests are, the more dangerous paradoxes become. Should you choose to remove or reduce the effects, the severity, or the frequency of Chronal Stability tests, you'll want to think about a method for ensuring that any alien time travelers that drain Chronal Stability still remain scary and effective. Using the other time tricks available by spending Tempus (see p. 148) should hopefully be enough.

You could also increase the dangers of chronal instability. Increasing the effects, severity, or frequency of Paradox tests

² The names for most of the chronal anomalies and time disasters are courtesy of the fine people behind the *Thrilling Adventure Hour* podcast, used with gracious permission. We don't know what most of these are either, but if you're looking for an excuse to spring additional Paradox tests on your players, they work beautifully.

will make sure that the team is getting their money's worth from their Reality Anchor pools, and it will make them feel much more fragile when time traveling. Time traveling to alternate timelines already increases the Difficulty and severity of most Paradox tests, usually by 1 point. Increasing this amount will make alternate timelines feel much more unreal and dangerous.

You could change the results of what happens when an Agent becomes unstable. By *TimeWatch* rules, the pattern echoes that of Stability in other games; they're shaken, then effectively disabled, then destroyed (as opposed to permanently insane, as they might be in a game like *Night's Black Agents*). What happens if you change this? Perhaps as the Agent loses Chronal Stability they continue to fade, becoming invisible, incorporeal, and silent between -6 and -11 . Other Agents would have to find a way to communicate with them, and it might take some planning to use Reality Anchor on an Agent who cannot communicate with the rest of his team. We'll note that this suggests that a haunted house is actually a place inhabited by chronally unstable time travelers instead of ghosts, which could be a fantastic adventure in itself.

At the extreme end of increasing the Difficulty and Loss related to Chronal Stability, you can imagine a *TimeWatch* game where the slightest amount of paradox destroys the universe. Such a system would mean that Agents could never overlap themselves in time or create any paradox at all; doing so might erase their existence. This style of game relies less on action and more on very careful planning, so be cautious about implementing such a change until you understand its effect on game play.

Chronal Stability and Madness

It's intriguing to note that if you mashed together time travel and horror, or decided that time travel could drive a person insane due to the squirming and whispering monstrosities that abide between the ticks of the clock, changing Chronal Stability to Stability might make for a fun game. This is particularly true in the *Chronal Horror* or *Mythos* campaign frame.

In this style of play, Chronal Stability is linked closely with sanity. As Chronal Stability drops, Agents become slowly insane or unbalanced. A Chronal Stability of -12 means that an Agent's mind is shattered and that their brain continually picks up the thoughts of thousands of people in thousands of time periods. That's not a fate you'd wish on most people.

With this rule, traumatic scenes trigger Paradox tests in the same way that paradox does. Horror and trauma erode the mind's defenses as effectively as time travel does, and it takes a strong and well-rested psyche to withstand the constant undertow of time. Such a game tends to rely on Reality Anchor more often than traditional *Patrol*-style games do.

Linking Chronal Stability and emotional resilience is a fun house rule that adds to roleplaying but which has virtually no effect on game mechanics. If you like the idea of Agents panicking and desperately trying not to break when things get particularly rough, give this a try.

Customizing Paradox Prevention

The effectiveness (or lack thereof) of the Investigative ability Paradox Prevention should be considered when customizing Chronal Stability. If you don't like the idea of the Agents flouting the laws of space-time by leaving themselves a note or showing up to assist themselves in battle, you can simply prohibit such actions or (more effectively and entertainingly) have Paradox Prevention spends also trigger a Difficulty 6 or higher Paradox test. That will leave the option open for desperate Agents, while making sure it isn't used casually.

Paradox Prevention spends can also be used to simulate extreme luck and coincidences. If a player wants to casually bump into a famous celebrity of the day, or make sure that the person they just accidentally ran over in a car chase wasn't destined to have an influential grandchild, a Paradox Prevention spend is a reasonable way to do so.

Alternate Mechanics

Love the idea of Chronal Stability, but not the mechanics? Take a lesson from the superb horror game *Dread* and set up a Jenga® tower next to the game table. Any time a Chronal Stability or Travel test is called for, have players make a pull from the tower and place their block on top. Players make one pull for every 2 points of Difficulty; a Travel test requires one pull, and a standard Difficulty 4 test would require two pulls. If anyone ever knocks down the tower, reality shatters and time rips apart. This method raises the stakes and adds tension to the game, at the cost of taking slightly longer to resolve paradoxes.

CUSTOMIZING COMBAT RULES

GUMSHOE combat in *TimeWatch* is designed to be overly fairly quickly. It's a combat system where the Stitch system of action points encourages players to describe their attacks and their surroundings. A common answer when a player asks "we're in a fight? What's in the room?" is "you tell me." This gives players a certain amount of narrative control over their combats, and that's reflected in the rules when players decide how successful their attacks are.

If you want to tweak the combat rules for a specific effect, there are many ways to do so.

Tactical Complexity

Frankly, there are other games that handle tactical complexity better than *TimeWatch*; it's designed as a cinematic, modifier-lite system that features fairly fast, effective combat.

If you want to model more of a cat-and-mouse tactical approach, options include:

- ▶ Use a battle map. You don't need 5'-square accuracy, but understanding how many squares constitute a range helps you manage tactical combat. It also helps to draw in walls, obstructions, and open lines of sight.

- ▶ Encourage creative use of Investigative ability spends. These are incredibly useful for explaining and allowing great tactical moves. For instance, an Agent might spend 1 point of Architecture to know exactly how to collapse the upper floors onto an enemy's head, or how to shoot right through a weak spot in full cover. A point of Military Tactics might allow someone to effectively shoot around corners, ricocheting a bullet. A point of Science! might generate a one-round force field that gives Armor 4 against bullets only, allowing you to safely close within Scuffling range.
- ▶ Don't allow Stitches to refresh pools mid-combat. By limiting this, you encourage creativity as Agents run out of Scuffling and Shooting points.

Deadlier Combat

Lots of Mooks can take down Agents quickly, but total party kills are uncommon in *TimeWatch* (just as they are in most time travel and sci-fi stories). Here's how to amp up the lethality.

- ▶ Pacifists and neural disruptors make it easier for Agents (and bad guys) to take captives. Removing them from the game makes combat lethal (and somewhat slower) by default.
- ▶ To encourage more stunning (which can be brutally effective against the player characters or against Mooks), increase Pacifist and neural disruptor effectiveness by raising the Stun number from Stun 5 to Stun 6, or increase Difficulties by +2 instead of +1 for anyone who has succeeded at a Stun test.
- ▶ Limit characters to Health 10 during character creation.
- ▶ Increase weapon damage values across the board by +1, so that an unarmed attack does +0 damage instead of -1.
- ▶ Remind players that Stitches can be turned in to increase damage.
- ▶ Disallow Stitches from being used to reduce damage.
- ▶ The GM gains a pool of 3 Stitches that can be used to increase or decrease an antagonist's damage during fights; once they're gone, they aren't refreshed.
- ▶ Use more Mooks during fights.
- ▶ Remove the default Armor 1 that all Agents get from their chromomorphic TimeWatch armor.
- ▶ Reduce the Medic ability's effectiveness from "2 points healed per point spent" to "1 point healed per point spent." This can be done most easily by removing TimeWatch medkits from the game.
- ▶ Don't allow the Medic ability to be used during active combat, or rule that it takes at least a minute to use. This makes death during fights more likely.

Less Deadly Combat

Are your Agents falling like tenpins? That's an easy problem to fix, whether initially (while the players are learning the rules and tactics) or across the campaign.

- ▶ Allow Agents to stun enemies with appropriate weapons other than their Pacifist (for instance, an impromptu sap made from a sock full of coins or a pistol grip will act as a Stun 4 weapon).
- ▶ Increase free starting Health during character creation from 6 to 8.
- ▶ Be more liberal when allowing armor, especially high-tech armor created with Preparedness or Science!
- ▶ Remind players that Stitches can be turned in to reduce damage.
- ▶ Increase the default Armor that all Agents get from their chromomorphic TimeWatch armor from Armor 1 to Armor 2.
- ▶ Remove the requirement for a medkit when using the Medic ability.
- ▶ Lower most disruptors' Stun rating from 5 to 4.

More Cinematic Combat

While this is a cinematic game by design (meaning that it relies as much on movie and action story logic as it does on real-life history and physics), you can ramp up the fast-paced and showy action element.

- ▶ Be less stringent about rules, handwaving edge cases to encourage players attempting something awesome.
- ▶ Remove or change any rule that consistently slows down or distracts from play.
- ▶ If you have to look up a rule more than once, make something up and go with it. You'll better remember whatever you make up.
- ▶ Don't require ability tests for most easy actions, and lower Difficulties when players give you an incredibly cinematic description of their actions.
- ▶ "Fail forward." On a failure, players can still succeed but with complications or at a cost. (This is a great idea to do normally, in fact.)
- ▶ Encourage using Preparedness to acquire beam weapons with interesting special effects, such as disintegration and concussion.

More Challenging Combat

These tweaks make the game more challenging — and may make it more finicky as well. As a rule of thumb, be cautious about layering on more house rules than you can easily remember off the top of your head.

- ▶ Never reveal target numbers.
- ▶ Limit maximum Stitches to 2, instead of 3.
- ▶ Aim occasional challenges at the group's weakest points.
- ▶ Increase the frequency, Difficulty, or potential Loss of Paradox tests during combat.
- ▶ Be more stringent about what creates paradox, resulting in more Paradox tests. Did the Agents kill someone who shouldn't have died? Paradox test!

- ▶ Reduce the effectiveness of Investigative spends (and in particular, Science! spends for super-science equipment).
- ▶ Use a variant initiative system that allows less flexibility and teamwork (not recommended, but it's an option).
- ▶ Turn some Mooks into full-fledged Opponents in a fight, giving them far more survivability. Be aware that this might cause your fights to be deadlier and last longer than expected.
- ▶ Give enemies and antagonists access to Stun 5 disruptors, as well as to choral destabilizers that affect Chronal Stability instead of Health.
- ▶ Give enemies and antagonists greater access to armor, reducing all Scuffling and Shooting damage by 1 or more points.

CUSTOMIZING POOL REFRESHES

The biggest difference between *TimeWatch* and other GUMSHOE games — time travel aside — is that *TimeWatch* uses Stitches, a player-controlled resource meant to refresh General ability pools. In GUMSHOE, that's a big deal because it empowers players to decide when and how abilities get refreshed. The classic “you feel more scared due to declining resources” tone of games like *Trail of Cthulhu* is largely absent in *TimeWatch*.

That's deliberate, but you can adjust it to fit your own vision of the game. Right now, as noted on p. 67, here are the ways ability points can be refreshed under the standard rules.

- ▶ Turning in a Stitch refreshes one General ability pool by 2 points.
- ▶ 24 hours of rest fully restores Athletics, Shooting, Scuffling, and Vehicles.
- ▶ 24 hours rest restore 2 points of Health if you are not Seriously Wounded (–6 to –11 Health).

Other than that, General ability pools don't refresh between scenes. Investigative pools never refresh during a mission (unless you decide one should under special circumstances). The frequency and quantity of pool refreshes affect player resource management and tough strategic decision-making. Increase the frequency of pool refreshes, and it's common for the game to become too easy.

You can customize this to reach the level of pool refreshes you prefer.

- ▶ The maximum number of Stitches and the frequency in which they're handed out affect pool refreshes, damage inflicted on the Agents, and damage dished out by the Agents. You can also adjust how many pool points each Stitch refreshes, ratcheting it up or down from the default of 2.
- ▶ For maximum tension, don't allow any Stitch-related refreshes during action scenes. If Stitches refresh abilities only during downtime, characters will need to husband their available points more carefully during a fight, and will spend their Stitches on boosting or reducing damage instead.
- ▶ For less tension and less threat, increase the frequency with which player characters receive Stitches or pool refreshes.

- ▶ To keep a fight going longer, and to model the *Night's Black Agents* rule that can give a 3-point refresh for the experts of high-action pools (such as a 3-point Athletics refresh for Agents who have *Parkour*), once per action scene per player, allow them to count one Stitch as refreshing 3 pool points instead of 2, so long as all of those points are spent to refresh a pool that the Agents has a rating of 8+ in.

Mace Hunter has a Scuffling rating of 8, and this fight against chrome-magnons (cybernetically enhanced troglodytes) has brought his Scuffling pool down to 1. When spending a Stitch to refresh his Scuffling pool, he declares that this Stitch is his special Stitch for the scene. It refreshes 3 Scuffling points instead of the normal 2 points. Mace punches another chrome-magnon in the face and struggles towards higher ground.

- ▶ To maximize high action at the expense of making the game feel easier, give every character a free 3-point refresh for their Athletics, Scuffling, Shooting, and Vehicles pools after every combat scene. Additional spent pool points are regained normally with Stitches.

PLAYING TIMEWATCH WITHOUT STITCHES

Not everyone will want to play *TimeWatch* with Stitches. We think there are a lot of good reasons to use them — they positively reward players for being awesome, they help GMs who never remember to award players a pool refresh, they encourage players who feel that GUMSHOE damage is less epic than they'd like, and they help mitigate PC mortality — but if it's not your thing, GMs, here's how you remove them and keep the game balanced.

- ▶ **If you're killing PCs, reduce bad guy Health.** Reducing antagonist Health overall will make enemies drop faster in combat. Reducing Health to 3 or below will make them vulnerable to a single hit from a Pacifist, taking them out of combat sooner and causing them to inflict less damage overall. You'll want some of these Mooks in most fights, anyways; it's fun for players to mow down bad guys and see an immediate effect from their attacks.
- ▶ **If you're killing PCs, tone down damage or combat pools.** There's no easy way to reduce damage unless you swap out a sword for a knife, but it's simple to lower an antagonist's fixed combat modifier or combat pools. With a +1 instead of a +3 fixed combat modifier, or with fewer points in Scuffling and Shooting (and a formula for spending those points mapped out; see p. 150), the enemy will hit fewer times and inflict less damage before being dropped.
- ▶ **Allow Agents to gain partial pool refreshes after every action scene.** This bypasses the Stitch system. Climactic scenes might trigger one or more full pool refreshes, and regular action scenes might trigger one to three 3-point pool refreshes (in other words, refreshing one to three different pools by 3 points each). This helps make sure that characters keep enough capability to be effective. You can (and probably should) award partial pool refreshes as a reward after players do something clever.

- ▶ **Tell your players when they're awesome.** Not everyone needs the positive reinforcement, but time travel can be a tricky and confusing genre. Let them know when you're having fun and when they're doing a good job.

CUSTOMIZING CHARACTER EFFECTIVENESS

TimeWatch Agents are generally extremely competent. You can easily adjust this, increasing or decreasing their effectiveness for your own series or campaign.

Increasing Effectiveness

Want your Agents to be even more competent? Here's how.

- ▶ Allow players to shuffle ability ratings after every game.
- ▶ Encourage players to keep a small pool of unspent Investigative points before the first game, and then assign them on the fly as needed.
- ▶ Design your missions and plots to challenge the abilities that Agents are best at. Does your group love Scuffling? Have more hand-to-hand melees. Do they focus on Burglary and Spying? Lean your game towards espionage themes.
- ▶ Add in mechanics for mid-combat combat refreshes (see above).
- ▶ Increase mission-ending build points by +1.
- ▶ During character creation, allow players to exchange 1 Investigative point for 3 General ability points on their own character, or vice versa. If you allow, this, specify a limit (such as 3 Investigative / 9 General points).
- ▶ During character creation, increase the number of build points allowed by 3.
- ▶ During character creation, increase the number of free Chronal Stability or Health points from 6 to 8 (the Hardened Agents option from p. 26)
- ▶ Make sure that Stitches are handed out regularly throughout the game.

Decreasing Effectiveness

You may find that Agents are actually too good at their jobs. If so, here are some solutions. One note, however: resist the urge to decrease effectiveness by introducing complete red herrings during mission briefings. Doing so makes players suspicious and cynical, and soon sabotages game play.

- ▶ Reduce by 3 the number of starting Investigative build points characters receive at the game's beginning.
- ▶ Reduce the free Chronal Stability and Health points during character creation from 6 to 4 or lower.
- ▶ Remove Boosters for high General ability ratings (except the Hit Threshold boost for Athletics).
- ▶ Increase the threshold for Boosters from rating 8 to rating 10 (except the Hit Threshold boost for Athletics).

- ▶ Taking away character technology (such as autochrons, tethers, PaciFists, and translators) reduces effectiveness, but is terrifying and much hated; only do so when it is appropriate to the mission.
- ▶ Reduce the Stitch hoarding limit from 3 to 2, leaving Agents with fewer resources.
- ▶ Decrease mission-ending build points slightly, reducing the total to 1 or 2 per mission instead of per game session.

CUSTOMIZING GAME FEEL

For a straightforward game about time travel, there's quite a few ways to quickly tweak the tone of the game to match your preferences.

- ▶ The degree to which small changes affect the timeline affects whether the game feels like an alt-history simulation or an action game. The more forgiving to small changes the time stream is, the less of a simulation (and probably the less finicky) the game becomes.
- ▶ The faster enemies drop (particularly unnamed Mooks), the more it feels like an action movie. If you want the Agents to feel like big damn heroes, include 1 Health Mooks in a fight.
- ▶ Encouraging creative problem-solving through time travel — even (or especially) when it's a problem that could usually be solved *without* time travel — reminds players of what sets this particular game apart. Limiting time travel, and solutions that use it, sets the game firmly in a grittier and more grounded science fiction setting.
- ▶ As represented by spending Investigative ability points, the liberalness with which characters can retroactively change the past and have it ripple to the present affects creativity and problem-solving. Restricting players from narrative control, especially when spending Investigative control, limits player options and increases grittiness.
- ▶ Filling the game with potential foils and giving players Stitches for making everyone laugh helps turn the game towards comedy.
- ▶ Filling a high-stakes game with lethal, ruthless foes and giving out Stitches for daring plans turns the game towards heroic espionage.
- ▶ Putting players into traditionally unwinnable situations and encouraging them to solve the problem using time travel and super-science slides the game towards futurism and science fiction.
- ▶ Having challenging, evocative mysteries that rely on more than historical cause-and-effect reminds your players that it's an investigative game.
- ▶ Including complex, interesting supporting characters whose loyalty can't be gained through violence or threats turns the game towards roleplaying and negotiation.
- ▶ Setting up opposed ideological factions both within and outside TimeWatch, and having such battle for historical control by trying to use the Agents as pawns

and tools, quickly establishes the tone of secrecy, conspiracy, and politics.

- ▶ Letting player actions change the world, even something as simple as a minor historical change rippling forward, gives them agency and buy-in into your campaign setting.

USING TIMEWATCH WITH OTHER GUMSHOE RULES SYSTEMS

If you play other GUMSHOE games such as the super-spy vs. vampire thriller *Night's Black Agents* or the investigative space opera *Ashen Stars*, you may occasionally wish to integrate time travel into those games. The commonality between rules systems makes this fairly easy, but you should examine the games' themes and rules to make sure time travel makes sense. Time travel in a *Fear Itself* game, for instance, probably doesn't make sense unless the time traveler is the serial killer with the butcher knife. Which, now that we think about it, would probably make a pretty good *Fear Itself* game.

Melding *TimeWatch* into any other RPG is a chance to expand your game's options. Whether bringing *TimeWatch* as an organization into an existing game's structure and adding time travel as a new component of play, or taking the opposite approach and bringing the other RPG campaign's elements into *TimeWatch* (a time travel-based space opera with a whole planet of sophosaurs? Ezeru as the tools of Hastur? Super-powered law enforcers as *TimeWatch* agents? Time traveling vampires?), you have a ridiculous quantity of options. Choose the ones that seem like the most fun, settle on a consistent tone for your game, and forge ahead. Here's how.

PICK YOUR CORE RULES

The first step is choosing which GUMSHOE rules system to use for your core rules.

- ▶ Use *TimeWatch* as your core rules if you want a simpler and less specialized character sheet, and don't mind losing the genre-specific advantages of the other game.
- ▶ Use the other game as your core rules if time travel isn't a permanent feature or focus of the campaign.

Neither of these approaches is wrong. You should pick one based on what rules set you prefer, the tone of play, and how large a part of the story you want time travel and choral manipulation to be. A game about time travel where the players play spies (using *TimeWatch* with aspects of the *Night's Black Agents* rules integrated in) is going to feel different than a game about spies where they briefly encounter time travel (using *Night's Black Agents* with the *TimeWatch* rules integrated in). *TimeWatch* leans towards a fast, action-oriented play style. If that's the wrong tone for the GUMSHOE game that you're hoping to emulate, you may find it most effective to add time travel into your game of choice.

General Guidelines for Starting With *TimeWatch*

TimeWatch rules use a pared-down set of Investigative and General abilities compared to some other GUMSHOE games, with abilities that tend towards a high level of abstraction. Unsurprisingly for a time travel game, *TimeWatch*'s abilities focus closely on history and time travel but handwave other large categories. For example, the many scientific abilities that you'd find in other GUMSHOE games (such as Astronomy, Chemistry, Geology, and Physics) are egregiously combined into the catchall ability Science! That makes sense for the genre; most time travel stories in film and literature feature scientists and technologists with a very wide field of knowledge, and *TimeWatch* emulates this. In comparison, a GUMSHOE game like *Ashen Stars* breaks science down into multiple abilities, as you'd expect in a space opera where crew members all have different areas of expertise.

To bring the themes of other GUMSHOE games into *TimeWatch*, look at what is most important about the other setting and then combine or break out *TimeWatch*'s abilities accordingly. In an *Esoterrorists*-themed *TimeWatch* game, for instance, you'd want to add new abilities such as Occult Studies and Evidence Collection, and change Chronal Stability into Stability to accompany the theme of pervasive horror. An *Ashen Stars*-focused *TimeWatch* game would add new alien species abilities and some of the starship crew abilities that make *Ashen Stars* unique. *Night's Black Agents*' influence in a *TimeWatch* game might break the Spying ability into sub-abilities, and add back in the wonderful Network ability that allows Agents to have friends everywhere they go.

Your goal is to create a game that largely uses *TimeWatch*'s pared-down character sheet, but which feels like another game in tone and play. Add as few new rules and abilities into the system as you can manage, and make sure those are the most important and flavorful rules.

General Guidelines for Starting With Another GUMSHOE Game

Change the rules of the other game as little as you possibly can, adding time travel only when needed. Consider adopting *TimeWatch*'s Stun rules where they make sense, and use Stability any time Chronal Stability might be relevant. For action-oriented games, consider carefully the role of Stitches; for horror-oriented games, don't use Stitches at all. Your biggest concern is more in maintaining the feel of the original game, as *TimeWatch*'s shiny sci-fi approach may not mesh perfectly with the gritty super-heroic police procedural of *Mutant City Blues* or the survival horror of *Fear Itself*.

ASHEN STARS

Ashen Stars is an Investigative space game where you can play the gritty reboot of your favorite science fiction TV show. You're a freelance troubleshooter and law officer on the fringes of occupied space. Amid the ashes of a devastating war you'll solve

mysteries, fix thorny problems, and explore strange corners of space — balancing the promise of a quick buck against the need to maintain a reputation that wins you lucrative contracts.

Adding Time Travel Into *Ashen Stars*

As numerous sci-fi TV shows and movies have shown us, time travel can go hand in hand with a space opera. The scale of the storytelling is already expansive; in a game like *Ashen Stars* different species and factions move from planet to planet, across galaxies and solar systems. Adding an additional component of crossing choral dimensions isn't much of a stretch.

Ashen Stars is a good choice because it's a game that handles big stakes particularly well. It's just as simple to have the whole political future of multiple inhabited worlds at stake during a mission, as it is to put a few innocents' lives at risk. That flexibility means that Lasers with a time machine can literally craft the future they most want to see — and their enemies can try to take that future away from them just as easily.

The biggest challenge is the ease of solving traditional murder mysteries when the Lasers can go back in time to keep the victim safe. This requires you to put extra layers of complication or intrigue into a mystery, so that the obvious perpetrator might not be the actual villain. Luckily, space opera time travel is traditionally managed by gear that's mounted inside of space ships, and time travel doesn't typically teleport the space ship in space as well as time. This fundamentally changes the dynamics of time travel and mysteries between *Ashen Stars* and *TimeWatch*; when the entire crew has to launch the ship, manufacture a relatively inaccurate choral wormhole (or slingshot around the sun), pilot back to wherever they needed to head, and hope they arrive in time, you'll see much less frivolous or casual time traveling. Every leap will be an adventure in itself, and new dangers can emerge every time the ship moves in time.

For a game already set in humanity's far future, you'll want to give some thought to what time travel might mean in your game. Going into the future is little or no problem; you're free to foreshadow and launch war between the Combine and the Bleed, to show how (or if) cybes integrate fully into human society, or to launch a future alien invasion. Going into the near past isn't a problem, either, and will add a new aspect to mystery investigations.

The challenge with *Ashen Stars* is that time travel invalidates the Bogey Conundrum, the mysterious force that completely prevents survivors of the war from understanding who or what their enemy the Mohilar were. That magnificent mystery goes right out the window when the Lasers time travel back 20 years and find out about the Mohilar firsthand.

Options include:

- ▶ A choral interdiction field prevents time travel to a period during the war. Not recommended, necessarily, because there are untold mysteries and adventures during an interstellar war; but it's certainly an option.
- ▶ The Lasers see and remember the truth whenever they time travel prior to the war's end, but they are unable to communicate or even remember their knowledge once they return to any later time.

- ▶ The Lasers see and remember the horrible truth even when they return, at least at first, but no one else can comprehend or remember their message. Pressing the issue might drive other people insane. Thus, the player characters might be the only people alive who know the Mohilar's secret conspiracy, and they have no one to turn to but themselves.
- ▶ The Mohilar realize the Lasers' unique abilities and spare no expense to track them down and destroy them.
- ▶ Time travel somehow helps the Mohilar, or harms them terribly. Perhaps they themselves possess time travel technology, or yearn to acquire it.
- ▶ The Agents themselves accidentally start or end the war.

Several of these options require you to know, yourself, who or what the Mohilar are. They may be another known species, now disguised; they may have died, or fled, or burrowed into the ground to wait. Whatever the secret truth, there's a reason that they didn't want anyone to remember them after the war ended, and the player characters have the opportunity to find out the truth. Be ready for it, and make any revelation better than even they suspected.

Some other logistical questions circle the presence of time machines in *Ashen Stars*. These include:

- ▶ Where did the time machine come from, and how did the Lasers get it? Was it a gift from a mysteriously grateful inventor, ancient precursor technology, or something else?
- ▶ Can the ship teleport in space as well as time? If so, what is its range? Could it travel back to ancient Earth, or to the beginning of the Combine?
- ▶ How is a ship fueled in past or future eras when the technology is long obsolete?
- ▶ Can Lasers travel to the future for superior technology, then bring it back and use it freely without paradox to gain a competitive edge?
- ▶ Should time travel be common, rare, or practically unique?

Keeping time travel out of the wrong hands can be the core theme of an *Ashen Stars* game, possibly turning the Agents into defenders of precursor technology who are chased by those who want it for themselves. This tonal shift can also reinvigorate campaigns where the alien-or-monster-or-planet-of-the-week stories have started to grow stale. If you've set a story in the middle of a war between two species, or between the Bleedists and the Combine, the balance of power radically alters the minute one side decides to travel back to stop their enemies before they ever got started.

You could just as easily run an entire *TimeWatch* campaign set in *Ashen Stars*' Bleed instead of on Earth, fixing historical damage done by eager starship pilots and corrupt Combine corporations who try to prevent the Mohilar War while only making it worse.

In space opera, the specialness of the setting is not the technology itself, but how the technology is dramatically used by the characters. When the farm boy gets a laser sword and flies his personal spaceship on a bombing raid, the focus is on his successful raid and not the fact that he's in a personal spaceship or that he's asking a robot to help him fly. The same

is true of time travel. When it is not at the heart of conflict where different groups want to possess it, a time machine can be one more piece of technology like engines, blasters, or force fields.

We feel that time travel in *Ashen Stars* works best when you make time travel rare, difficult to use, and possibly unique. The traditional science fiction method of accomplishing this is to use time-piercing wormholes instead of invented technology, allowing you to play out stories in other eras without worrying about technology. If you prefer tech, it may be that the Lasers are one of the only people who have found time traveling precursor technology and they use it to their great advantage. It may be that others want to take this away from them, or that a rival corporation or organization has found it as well. This is decided by whether you want a campaign where Lasers explore the history of the Bleed and uncover the secrets of the Mohilar War, or if they rarely use time travel for specific assignments and limited plot arcs.

Want time travel to move Lasers in space as well as time? Have time travel move them out of the Bleed, perhaps as far back as the heart of the Combine. This method allows you to explore the foundations of the history and culture that the Lasers know, while still allowing them to return home after seeing their ancestral homeland.

The decision of time travel in *Ashen Stars* is one of framing: is time travel a tool, a phenomenon, or a weapon? Is it a threat or a boon? Is it secret or public? Held by the many or the few? Adding time as one more axis through which stories about distant galaxies and aliens can be told should be an encouragement for epic storytelling with large-scale consequences, so don't hold back.

Game Mechanics

Chronal Stability: Chronal Stability should only be a relevant ability when the Lasers are time traveling. One method for adding Chronal Stability into the game after character creation is to give the Laser team a fixed amount of Chronal Stability (such as 6–8 points per character) that they can divide up between themselves however they wish. Lower numbers make the tone of the game more threatening; higher numbers turn the tone more freewheeling. Alternatively, you can completely ignore Chronal Stability and the mechanical effects of paradox. A game that chooses this path treats paradox narratively, describing negative consequences instead of representing them with numbers and abilities.

Reality Anchor: Reality Anchor goes hand in hand with Chronal Stability, and adding one ability means that you should add the other, using the same guidelines and method noted above. A less intrusive solution has you removing the ability Reality Anchor. Instead, allow players to make Investigative ability spends to restore lost Chronal Stability. Inspiration, Reassurance, and History spends are particularly relevant to standing in for Reality Anchor. If the GM feels that an Investigative spend is a great match for stabilizing a time traveler, a 1-point spend gives a pool of 6 Chronal Stability points that can be split between characters; if the ability spent

is somewhat questionable, it instead generates a pool of 4 Chronal Stability points that can be distributed.

The Laser crew has come out of a temporal wormhole and is badly shaken, having lost 2 points apiece from each characters' Chronal Stability. The pilot gives an inspirational pep talk and spends an Inspiration point. The crew now has a pool of 6 Chronal Stability points to split up between the members, which partially refreshes their pools.

You could alternatively treat Reality Anchor as a fixed refresh, allowing Lasers to fully or partially refresh their Chronal Stability scores a small number of times (usually one or two during a typical mission). Such refreshes typically occur during the downtime after exciting adventure beats.

Timecraft: Unless a species or individual character is particularly knowledgeable about time travel, Timecraft doesn't exist in an *Ashen Stars* game.

Paradox Prevention: This ability doesn't exist in an *Ashen Stars* game. Lasers needing to tell if something odd has changed can rely on the History ability instead.

Stitches: It's simple to add Stitches into an *Ashen Stars* game if you prefer, and they fit well with the game's high-action scope, but tread carefully; doing so may unbalance the game. *Ashen Stars* already has numerous methods for refreshing ability pools, particularly in combat.

Stun tests: Disruption weapons and NLD fire can easily utilize *TimeWatch's* Stun tests instead if you prefer, with a base disruptor Stun rating of 5. Poppers in this system provide a +2 bonus to Stun tests, burning out after each use.

THE ESOTERRORISTS

Several of the themes of *The Esoterrorists* — hideous modern monsters drawn from beyond a veil between worlds, secretive and shadowy agents protecting humanity from a threat that they don't even know exists — are echoed in the *Chronal Horror* campaign frame. See p. 227 for details.

Adding Time Travel Into The Esoterrorists

The Esoterrorists is a game about the horror of humanity and the monsters we manage to create ourselves. Instead of unearthly quarries preying on us randomly from the darkness, Esoterror entities are usually invited here and given specific form and function by the cultists to summon them. We are our own worst enemies, and the entities are simply tools of our own evil.

As a result, time travel in this game should commonly be a tool rather than a focus, a plot device that delivers the Agents to a time and location where horrors await... or which delivers the horror to the Agents. Investigation proceeds as normal once the Agents are in the correct era, either physically or by possessing the bodies of locals (see p. 156), perhaps with the Agents handicapped by a lack of resources and local knowledge when tracking down a monster.

Other options for adding time travel exist, but we recommend that you avoid introducing Outer Dark horrors that can time travel freely when the player characters don't have the same ability to follow or chase them down through time. Time travel as a concept can be a significant challenge to procedural play if the player characters can't also freely follow clues forwards and backwards across the calendar; you'll have the most fun when it isn't only the horrors who can time travel.

One restriction might be limiting time travel to the span of a character's life. For instance, a 40-year-old Agent from the year 2010 can only time travel backwards as far as 1970, and can't travel into the future at all. This approach limits the historical span needed for game prep and keeps the game on a smaller, more personal level.

Another option is to use a fixed portal for time traveling. Instead of free rein to go anywhen, a closet in a little girl's blood-spattered bedroom leads to 19th-century London. No one knows why, it just does, and it's this path that the Agents must take to hunt their prey in unfamiliar territory.

Another option is to alter the costs of time travel. Attach at least one negative narrative consequence to time travel, or mechanically raise either the Difficulty or the Chronal Stability costs, and you'll find that time travel becomes less of a go-to solution and more of a tool of last resort. This allows *The Esoterrorists'* horror and suspense to take their place at center stage with less of a risk of OV Agents popping forwards and backwards in time to solve every mystery.

A more complicated solution, one that requires a little less rules tweaking and a little more plotting, is to empower the Adversaries to the same degree as the heroes. If you wish, one of the side abilities of awful and terrifying creatures can be the ability to move through time and continue to plague someone throughout their life. The horde of zombies that can move forward or backward chronologically just as easily as they can shamble down a flight of stairs means that jumping to another moment in time is not always an escape, and without the cushion of going elsewhere, few respites can be truly earned.

Empowering the antagonists with the ability to clock out can make encounters that much more terrifying. A monster tries to get into a house at midnight every night, and time travels forwards from one midnight to the next with no intervening time existing at all. It simply doesn't exist when it isn't trying to slay at midnight, and so Agents have to be there ready for it each night until they destroy it. A shame that the creature's acolytes harass and harry the Agents during the day as well, limiting their ability to sleep.

Game Mechanics

Mechanical changes echo those from *Trail of Cthulhu*, below.

Chronal Stability: Follow rules for combining Stability and Chronal Stability found on p. 89.

Paradox tests: Where you would normally call for a Stability test, call for a Paradox test instead, as horror erodes an Agent's ability to resist the inexorable pull of time.

Travel tests: In this setting, time travel might strengthen the enemy. Remove Travel tests from the game and replace them with a more difficult Difficulty 4 / Loss 4 Paradox test every time a character time travels. Whenever a player character time travels, add 1 to the primary threat's Aberrance rating.

Stitches: Reduce the hoarding limit from 3 to 2, making the game more difficult. Give out Stitches for roleplaying fear and Stability Loss, and avoid giving out Stitches for funny jokes and game-disrupting asides.

Adding The Esoterrorists Into TimeWatch

If you're short of completely terrifying alien monsters to use in *TimeWatch*, *The Esoterrorists* is a superb source. It's a game of modern horror, and that means that the monsters that penetrate the veil may be coming from a dimension made more accessible by time travel — much to everyone's dismay.

It's also possible that TimeWatch Agents may investigate an Esoterror creature who is also being tracked by members of the Ordo Veritatis. Other than the overlap between the occult and science fiction, there's no reason that the two organizations can't coexist in the same game world. The Ordo Veritatis might ally with a TimeWatch team, but you can be sure that they'd make acquiring an autochron a priority the moment they suspect that time travel is real.

As mentioned above, scan the *Chronal Horror* campaign frame for a *TimeWatch* setting with an Esoterror tone, and then integrate more aspects of *The Esoterrorists* into the campaign.



MUTANT CITY BLUES

Ever since the ghost flu, people have been able to fly. Phase through walls. Read minds. Shoot bolts of energy from their fingertips. Walk into dreams.

As members of the elite Heightened Crime Investigation Unit, you and your fellow detectives solve crimes involving the city's mutant community. When a mutant power is used to kill, you catch the case. When it's a mutant victim in the chalk outline, you get the call. And when it comes time for a fight, you deploy your own extraordinary abilities to even the odds.

If chases, interrogations, and mutant battles weren't enough to handle, you also serve as a bridge between the authorities and your mutant brethren. To successfully close cases, you must navigate the difficult new politics of post-mutation society, and deal with your own personal issues and mutation-caused defects.

Adding Time Travel Into Mutant City Blues

TimeWatch's time travel usually causes huge, history-shifting events. *Mutant City Blues* is a gritty super-powered cop drama set in a single city. Time travel for *Mutant City Blues* should be on a different scale; it should be small, personal, and possibly fraught with danger.

The first decision is whether or not time travel in *Mutant City Blues* is accessible by player characters. Mutation-based time travel can easily be limited to a single enemy, making for a fascinating and challenging case. Mutation-based time travel could also be opened up to players to choose, in which case it becomes less of a "case of the week" and far more likely to become an integral component of the ongoing game. The same is true with gadget- or technology-based time travel. If it exists as a technological device, assume that the player characters will somehow get their hands on it and want to use it. The GM is well within her rights to deny that attempt with a simple "it doesn't work, and you can't figure out why," but that might not be the most satisfying solution. Regardless, if time travel isn't a main theme of the game, limiting access to its power is recommended.

If time travel is something that the player characters cannot access, whoever does control it will easily become one of their most potent foes. An enemy who can travel through time at a GM's whim can be a procedural nightmare to investigators, which is why time travel often has very specific ways it gets demonstrated.

It's suggested that you sharply limit the range of time travel in *Mutant City Blues*. A smaller range of scope when time traveling helps refocus the game on the gritty cop drama it is best at. Constraints for defining and limiting it include:

- ▶ It flings the character's consciousness forward briefly for a set amount of time, experiencing one encounter, before returning the character to the same millisecond that they departed. This gives knowledge of the future. Mechanically, the GM may allow the character to roll two d6s and take the preferred roll during encounters where they have seen the

future and wish to make sure it occurs — but roll two d6s and take the lower roll when they have seen a future they don't like and wish to change it.

Sergeant Rodriguez has been to the future, and he's seen his partner shot down by a super-powered suspect he then proceeds to arrest. When that moment in history arrives, Rodriguez's attempts to change time and save his partner's life are penalized by rolling two dice instead of one and taking the lower result. Rodriguez will need to invest more points into his actions to make sure he succeeds. When it comes to arresting the suspect, however, Rodriguez already knows he should succeed; every die roll he makes to directly do so lets him roll twice and take the better roll.

- ▶ Time travel flings the character's consciousness back a set amount of time, placing them back in their normal body but with the knowledge of the immediate future. This amount of time can be 10 seconds, a minute, 10 minutes, an hour, a day, or more. The alternate rule above might apply to changing known, previously experienced history.
- ▶ The character can fully time travel, but only within 24 hours, an hour, or less.
- ▶ The character gains the ability to briefly freeze time, like Hiro in the television show *Heroes*.
- ▶ Time travel allows immediate "do-overs" after a failed roll, giving the character the opportunity for an immediate attempt to change their result, at the cost of double the normal amount of points (so on a re-spend, spending 2 pool points gains you +1 to the do-over die roll).
- ▶ Time travel allows the player characters to travel a fixed distance into the past, but creating any paradox could have catastrophic results.
- ▶ Time travel allows the player characters to travel a fixed distance into the future, such as exactly 20 years to the second from the current time. This allows players to see the world of the future and how mutant abilities and super powers have changed it, just the thing if you love to world-build, but limits the challenging flexibility that comes with time traveling to different dates. When a character can only flip one of two places, they can still use the power creatively but it ceases to be game-breaking.
- ▶ Player character time travel *must* be able to include companions if its in-game effect takes up more than a few minutes of real time to play out. To do otherwise is to either relegate most of the table to boredom while the one character has his solo adventures in a different time period or make the character feel like he can't use his power because it inconveniences the rest of the table.

In popular fiction, time travel as a mutant power often involves someone traveling from a future dystopia, someone traveling to a future dystopia to correct some grievous wrong, or (in case of criminals trying to escape the law in their own home time) someone traveling to the past or future to commit a particular crime. This requires that there be a dystopia as a point of reference, and requires that it needs accessing.

As an alternative, consider what happens if the present *is* the dystopia. A police force on the edge of burnout, officers pushed to their emotional and logistical limits against a rising tide of enemies who are now armed with mutant abilities... moving through time would make time travel into one of the most potent and dangerous enemy powers. By making the linear procedural case nonlinear, it's a reduction in structure which can seriously challenge the ideas of investigation when not carefully plotted.

For a criminal plot or conspiracy, time travel can either throw a huge wrench into the works or act as a steroid for storytelling. An enemy who can move through time becomes harder to track, but tracking the consequences of their movements can help. Think of wind: you may not know it's there because it's invisible, but you see and hear the leaves rustle. A player may not know the enemy has traveled through time, but when something significant changes and they're able to prove that there has been a change, that divergence becomes integral to the investigation.

This means that while the pursuit may not appear linear, it *is* linear, just in a new way. Player characters need a method for realizing that history has changed. In *TimeWatch*, that ability is Paradox Prevention. In *Mutant City Blues* it might be Sense Trouble, used as an Investigative ability instead of a General ability.

The complexity of the procedural potential is increased if time travel is available as an option for player characters. With both enemy and player character able to manipulate time, the playing field becomes level; there is no sense of lost agency, and the dangers can only increase in span or plot when a crime's components are able to be spread across locations both spatially and chronologically. The challenge is that very few villains can time travel, but a player character with the power can do so in every game session. This can fundamentally change the nature of investigations unless the power is limited, as above.

The ability to premeditate a crime in some time other than when it gets committed makes it harder to prove motive, since the line from "you wanted to do it" to "this is how you figured out how to do it" is no longer a single progression of days in a week, but days in different weeks that nonsequentially build on each other. For a more serious campaign, this can breed feelings that players have less agency. When there's so much going on it can be unclear what to do next, and players may feel that there's little reason to do anything since time travel means anything can be resolved or changed by a time traveling enemy or key supporting character.

In other words, player characters who can't time travel are going to find criminals who do infuriating. Characters who can will have an easier and more satisfying experience catching the miscreants. One solution might be a temporary ability to time travel that's available only for the duration of the case, perhaps through a gadget.

You can further ratchet up tension by combining time travel and other mutations, turning a single enemy into a rogues' gallery and turning opposition to the player characters into a host of potential long-term or episodic enemies. A villainous team (including the tried-and-true alternate dimension

versions of the player characters) with the right combinations of abilities makes for a memorable series of cases:

- ▶ Strength and Time Travel could demolish milestone accomplishments.
- ▶ Deplete Oxygen and Time Travel can assassinate a political leader or cultural icon.
- ▶ Memory Alteration, Teleportation, and Time Travel can make pursuit near impossible.

Time travel without science such as an autochron is an opportunity to examine the impact of "do-overs," something that a majority of people would likely take advantage of. Consider the amount of media spent describing what happens when a single person changes their own future; now imagine what happens when everyone changes their future, especially through an ability rather than technology. Does access to this ability pose a risk? Should it be controlled? Harnessed? At least with technology there's the chance to destroy it or cease its operations. But if the ability is core to a person, how then will it be handled?

A section on super-powered time travel would not be complete without a discussion of historical paradox. It's a common trope in time travel to have travelers go back into time to set into motion events like their own births or the science that got them time traveling in the first place. Adapting that trope for *Mutant City Blues*, a traveler who heads back in time to disperse the ghost flu that spawned mutation in the first place is an interesting quandary for players. Stopping such an act would possibly lead to eliminating mutation all together, but does that then strand people throughout the time stream? Does that change the future for the better or the worse? Massive paradox would erupt, possibly creating a mutation event worse than the ghost flu. History has momentum, and changing it doesn't always lead to a utopian future.

Game Mechanics

Chronal Stability: We recommend you ignore Chronal Stability and Reality Anchor, focusing instead on the gritty trade-offs for mutant powers already found in *MCB*. To balance this, consider creating negative side effects for triggering paradox, such as attacks of psychological disturbances linked to the power's use.

An alternative approach replaces Chronal Stability with the standard Stability ability, and any paradox reducing Chronal Stability affects Stability instead, with normal consequences for low Stability.

Stitches: It's simple to add Stitches into a *Mutant City Blues* game, but only do so if you focus on a less gritty, more comic-book style of heroics. If you prefer the assumed grittiness of the setting, reduce the benefit of Stitches or avoid them completely. If you include Stitches, re-examine and reduce other methods of refreshing ability pools.

Stun tests: Taser and stun effects can use *TimeWatch's* Stun tests instead if you prefer, with a base Taser Stun rating of 4 and a higher rating of 5 for super powers used to stun.

Gaining time travel: It seems logical that this mutant

ability costs little or nothing to use, but has a high initial cost to acquire. The trade-off in not expending Stability is a high cost on the Quade Diagram, somewhere in the range of E2 to E3 on the grid, with connections to mental or physical defects as would be campaign appropriate.

Another way to tailor time travel as an ability into *Mutant City Blues* is to think about time travel as a combination of Teleportation and Memory Alteration, since one is the ability to change location and the other is the ability to change understanding of a situation in a location. Both are aspects of time travel. It makes sense then that a Time Travel ability connects to Megalomania (who could resist the potentially limitless power?) as well as Voyeurism (it would be tempting to become as much a tourist as an influencer) or Dissociation (the ability to go anywhen means no one time has significance).

However it is handled, time travel is a rich vein of mutant-tastic storytelling to be mined. *Mutant City Blues* is a more realistic, less pulpy game than *TimeWatch*'s core assumptions. You'll have the most success integrating time travel in a way that embraces that grittiness and realism.

Adding Mutant City Blues Into TimeWatch

It's a simple matter to have TimeWatch Agents pursuing a case that takes them to Earth after the ghost flu. Ideally this puts Agents in touch with local (and likely suspicious) detectives as a part of the investigation. Treat super powers in the same way that you'd treat super-science devices in *TimeWatch*, attaching associated mental illnesses from the Quade Diagram to the power and not making those powers available to Agents.

It's also possible for a TimeWatch Agent to originate from the world of *Mutant City Blues*. If so, their super power is best handled specifically by the GM, who might take the effects from MCB and ask the player to set aside enough Investigative points during character creation to reliably power it.

NIGHT'S BLACK AGENTS

Spies. Time machines. What could possibly go wrong?

Well, a couple of things. Approached correctly, this combination could be magnificent. Approached poorly, the merging of secret agents and science fiction falls apart. Let's take a look.

Adding Time Travel Into Night's Black Agents

Night's Black Agents is a super-spy game built around conspiracies and the undead. There's a risk that adding unlimited time travel into such a game could significantly distract from the core themes. If you're sticking with the *NBA* rules, you're doing so because you love the spy and/or vampire genre. *TimeWatch* is heavy on action, but that action isn't necessarily tied to vampiric plots or international intrigue. If you want your players skulking around early 21st-century Krakow, you

may get annoyed when they decide to go dinosaur hunting.

As a result, consider fixed time travel devices for a *Night's Black Agents* game. A device that moves the Agents between the years 2015 and 1953 is a great example. Such a device would allow no flexibility in destination: you dwell in one of those two years, and time passes normally while you're gone. Leave 1953 and spend 24 hours in 2015, and when you return to 1953 you'll find that 24 hours has passed there as well.

Such a setup allows you to build plots and conspiracies in two different time periods. You can even keep the physical locations the same, only allowing the Agents to travel in time but not in space, and you can intersperse Cold War Communist and nuclear paranoia (with 1950s vampires!) with modern spy horror.

We prefer this approach over unlimited time travel because it allows the Director to more tightly control the tone of the game. The player characters still have flexibility when problem-solving, especially if they can enter a building in 1953 and then flip forwards into the vault in 2015, but the lack of freewheeling time travel means that mysteries can't easily be prevented before the triggering incident ever took place.

When tying this concept into vampiric conspiracies, there's the interesting possibility of vampires finding access to a time portal, heading back in time with modern technology and vampiric abilities, and *winning*. They infect the world (or enough of it to change society into one that favors them), and back in the future the Agents wake up one morning and everything is different. In this type of scenario, it's up to the Agents to determine that time has changed, seize access to the time portal, and head back to reverse the changes before they overwhelm the present.

Game Mechanics

Use *Night's Black Agents* with just a handful of changes.

Chronal Stability: Follow rules for combining Stability and Chronal Stability found on p. 89.

Preparedness: This ability can produce items from either of the two relevant eras, but nothing beyond that range.

Paradox tests: Where you would normally call for a Paradox test in *TimeWatch*, use a Stability test instead.

Stitches: Stitches work well in *NBA*, but first remove cherry-related pool refreshes such as *Technothriller Monologue*.

Adding Night's Black Agents Into TimeWatch

TimeWatch is already a game about hyper-competent Agents. Focusing the game on super-spies in this role isn't a substantial leap, although spying becomes easier when you can simply jump forward ten or fifty years and steal the information you want. In many ways traditional spying becomes superfluous, and the challenge instead might be facing down a vampiric conspiracy as a primary group of antagonists.

A more interesting approach might be examining what rules features of *Night's Black Agents* fit beautifully into *TimeWatch*. Options include:

- ▶ The more detailed firearm choices of the *Double Tap* supplement can be adapted for different historical eras.
- ▶ Conspyrramids, and even Vampyrramids, are a perfect addition to the game. Create a Chronospyramid to track cross-time conspiracies.
- ▶ The Network ability defines your friends, associates, and supporters who assist you across the world. While finding such people in *TimeWatch* is typically linked to an ability spend, tracking them with Network is an equally reasonable choice.
- ▶ The *TimeWatch* advanced chase rules can be replaced with the *Night's Black Agents* thriller chases for slightly more complicated, cinematic pursuit.

TRAIL OF CTHULHU

Trail of Cthulhu is an award-winning standalone game produced under license from Chaosium, set in the 1930s. It supports both Pulp (for Indiana Jones, Robert E. Howard, thrilling locations sorts of games) and Purist styles of play (for intellectual horror and cosmic dread). H. P. Lovecraft's work combined both, sometimes in the same story.

It includes a new take on the monstrous creatures, cults, and gods of Lovecraft's literature, and addresses their use in gaming. It adds new player backgrounds, and bulks out the GUMSHOE system to give intensive support for Sanity, incorporating into the rule set the player characters' desire to explore at the risk of going mad.

Adding Time Travel Into Trail of Cthulhu

For the most efficient method of merging *TimeWatch* and *Trail of Cthulhu* into a game that still really feels like *ToC*, see the *Mythos* campaign frame on p. 267. Whether you use the *Mythos* rules or import the notion of time travel back into *Trail*, this section should give you everything you need for a game that keeps a Lovecraftian tone while integrating non-technological time travel.

Trail of Cthulhu set in the modern day, or even the near future, works equally well with the *Mythos*' Order of the Silver Key. Mystery, horror, body-stealing, and burbling squamous insanity will appear regardless of your preferred time setting for the player characters.

Game Mechanics

Chronal Stability: Follow rules for combining Stability and Chronal Stability found on p. 89. You may also wish to add Sanity, as described on p. 219.

Paradox tests: Where you would normally call for a Stability test, call for a Paradox test instead, as horror erodes an Agent's ability to resist the inexorable pull of time.

Travel tests: In this setting, the river of time is intrinsically hostile to human sanity. Remove Travel tests from the game

and replace them with a more difficult Difficulty 4 / Loss 4 Paradox test every time a character time travels. Failure erodes sanity and force of will, as measured by the Chronal Stability ability.

Stitches: Reduce the hoarding limit from 3 to 2, making the game more difficult. Give out Stitches for roleplaying fear and Stability Loss, and avoid giving out Stitches for funny jokes and game-disrupting asides.

Adding Trail of Cthulhu Into TimeWatch

While the *Mythos* campaign frame and similar play focuses on keeping a Lovecraftian feel while opening up access to other eras, adding Lovecraftian horror into *TimeWatch* takes the opposite approach. In this method, you keep the science fiction approach of time cops and overlay it with the sanity-eroding knowledge that every mission they run is an attempt to salvage humanity for one more day. In this setting, chronal change erodes the barrier between our feeble circle of warm candlelight and the endless cold of the outer darkness. When enough paradox and historical change builds up, the guttering candle of human hope burns out and the entities of the Elder Gods descend upon the world from every time and every direction. Already, monstrosities across time have crept into the dark places of the world, the Antarctic mountains and the deep forests and the cellars of the corrupt and profane. You join *TimeWatch* to try and preserve humanity for one day longer, because if you don't, who will?

For this feel of biding horror, remember that time is not a flowing river. Time is the fragile membrane keeping out the darkness. Time travel erodes Sanity and Stability, and chronal or historical change rips the membrane of time into shreds. *TimeWatch*-worthy threats may largely stay the same as in a *Patrol*-style game, but there is the constant knowledge that the stakes are far higher.

When the *Mythos* slides into our world, time acts oddly. It may seem to speed up or slow down; haunted places such as cellars and asylums may open doors into more than one era or reality. Cultists have listened to these whispers and have learned to time travel through rituals, something that *TimeWatch* agents tend to find abhorrent. The more historical change they can make, the easier entry the Elder Gods and their ilk will have. Stopping such behavior is a priority for any *TimeWatch* team.

A sample ritual:

Time Travel

This rhythmic chant mimics the ticking of clocks, the meter and repeated phrases ultimately lulling caster(s) into a dream-like state where time is as mutable as water. This ritual can either send a person present for the ritual forward or backward in time, or if a person's blood is spilled, someone from either the future or past can be drawn to the ritual during its performance.

Cost: 1-point Occult spend, D4/L4 Stability test

Time: Five hours if performed solo; additional cantors reduce the time by thirty minutes each.

Alternatively, cultists and other antagonists may use cursed or haunted artifacts as time travel devices, although there's no guarantee that they'll ever return from their journey. For true believers and those with a blasted sanity, that's of little concern. Common items include watches, clocks, and vehicles, but there's no reason why any item couldn't be imbued with the ability to grant the wearer the ability to swim the screaming, whispering time stream and reach distant eras. In this case, essentially it's a non-autochron autochron, giving Agents an item to track down and a user to overcome. Mundane items like chairs or a compass mean the item would not have to be too technologically cutting edge for the time period.

Such an item may look like:

The Chair From Collins Correctional Facility

This electric chair was never given a chance, since during its first trial run the body did not receive electrocution so much as vanish from the execution chamber. This is due to a number of runes and sigils both carved into the underside's wood as well as those naturally occurring in the grain. Electrifying the chair will either provide a near-lethal dose of voltage to anyone seated or send them to any point in time they can concentrate on when they first sit down.

Raw time is hostile in this style of game, a medium through which one can hear the whispering of eons, the mad piping of Azathoth, and the fluttering of winged creatures that simply should not be. Hounds of Tindalos chase time travelers, looking for entrances into new eras. One thing is for sure: chasing down a clumsy human tourist who gets lost in the Paleozoic will probably be much, much more dangerous.

If you wish to borrow Cthulhian monstrosities and use them as TimeWatch Adversaries, you may find that you have an incredibly rich well of antagonists that will catch your players off guard. Such creatures typically disrupt the time stream with their very presence. You can find such creatures in the *Mythos* campaign frame, in *Trail of Cthulhu*, or in *ToC* supplements.



CHAPTER SEVEN: THE PATROL CAMPAIGN FRAME

The default setting for *TimeWatch* is classic sci-fi, a time cop–based investigative historical thriller. This is what people usually think of when you say “time travel game” to them. A *Patrol*-style game’s theme focuses on alternate history and the consequences of changing actual historical events; players must determine who and what has changed to combat the sabotage and set history back to rights. Core play revolves around the delightful puzzle of unraveling chronal sabotage and noting the different ripples that such sabotage has caused. If your players are clever, are knowledgeable about history, think alternate history is kind of fun, and like investigation interspersed with some action, this may be the way to go.

For other *TimeWatch* campaign frames, see p. 245.

JUST ANOTHER DAY AT THE OFFICE

Holographic images swirled around them, showing maps, floor plans, and timelines. Altani’s briefing officer gestured, and the holographic map swelled, turned sideways, and settled so that it looked like the team was literally standing in the map. The briefing officer droned on about their mission, but Altani ignored him; paying attention was Kelfala’s and Vidhvansaka’s job. She looked at the holographic layout for good sight lines for sniping, noted the many possibilities, and smiled.

A typical *Patrol* mission starts with a *TimeWatch* team safe at headquarters, being briefed by their superior officer in the organization. They’re given a place, a time, and a problem. It’s up to the characters to unravel that problem, track down its root cause, and set things to rights. They do this by traveling between different times and places, where they discover additional clues in each location that will lead them to deductions about the nature and cause of the chronal problem. Many missions also start in medias res, immediately immersing players in action and only giving them their mission briefing in a flashback.

Pacing is important in a *Patrol*-style campaign frame, because you never want each mission to start feeling rote or routine. Adventures vary from the “historical crisis of the week,” to ongoing political and conspiracy intrigues within *TimeWatch* itself, to chronal horrors that crawl out of the time stream and threaten the existence of history.

Your best tools for building *Patrol*-style missions are Wikipedia, Google, and alternate history forums on the Internet. A tremendous number of very smart people enjoy thinking about “what if?” scenarios in history, and those are bound to inspire your games. See p. 268 for additional details and methods of constructing fun *TimeWatch* scenarios.

CUSTOMIZING THE CITADEL

TimeWatch is headquartered in a sprawling structure named the Citadel. The bureaucracy, resources, information network, and technology are all headquartered here. It’s impossible (at least in theory) to force your way through the Citadel’s many defenses, so to date it has never been successfully breached by force.

The Citadel is located in the quantum singularity that exists before the Big Bang. It technically exists *before* time, but it maintains its own internal history, continuity, and flow of time regardless. Because excessive paradox within the Citadel itself is what triggers the Big Bang and the creation of our universe, it’s known that the organization’s headquarters (and everyone in the Citadel at the time) will one day be utterly destroyed. It’s just not known when that’s going to occur. One reason that agents are forbidden from traveling into the Citadel’s relative past and future is to forestall that day as long as possible.

Vidhvansaka wants to meet Eleanor of Aquitaine, a famous TimeWatch agent who has been permanently killed. She wants to travel back in time 100 years within the Citadel itself to meet her. That’s forbidden; Vidh isn’t allowed to move into the Citadel’s past



*Some gear is standard.
For everything else, there's Preparedness.*

or future, because the paradox might trigger the Big Bang. Instead, Vidh travels to meet her in the 1100s in France instead, outside of the Citadel.

You're encouraged to make the Citadel look like your own personal vision of a time corps' headquarters. Perhaps the main corridors are white and brightly lit, but shadowy back corridors and basements abound. Perhaps there are massive bio-labs where hidden masters perform secret cloning experiments. Perhaps there are remarkably few agents moving through a truly vast space, and no one can describe why there are so many fewer agents than there used to be¹. Perhaps it is a bureaucratic hive of red tape and tens of thousands of support workers, all to keep the elite time agents running smoothly. Perhaps the Citadel is truly endless, and behind locked doors there are city-sized collections of humanity's most important inventions. Perhaps TimeWatch's secret leadership hides in the Citadel, afraid what would happen if they revealed themselves. It's up to you.

¹ Short on ideas for a good long-term B-plot? There's a great series-long mission hook here where a vast wave of chronal instability completely erased thousands or tens of thousands of TimeWatch agents from existence, and no one remembers because their erasure has wiped out everything they've done. Player characters find themselves understaffed in vast and echoing work spaces clearly designed for many more people, and it's only gradually that the truth is uncovered and the triggering event reversed.

GM ADVICE: THE CITADEL RESTRICTION

At first glance it may seem unnecessary for agents to be prohibited from time traveling within the Citadel's own future and past. In truth, the rule is to protect the GM's sanity as much as it's for the Citadel's own consistent history. If you think keeping track of game events during a time travel game is tough normally, imagine if the nerve center that dispatched those agents was then subject to time travelers constantly showing up to interfere in events. Agents would appear and fade out constantly as alternate timelines were created and destroyed, chrontal sabotage would get vastly easier for any infiltrators, and record keeping would become a nightmare. It's much easier for the GM if this area of the game has a solid and consistent history — and if she chooses to violate this rule, the resulting mission will be that much more of a tense and unwelcome surprise.

This rule can easily be relaxed or ignored in any comedic game where chaos just makes game play more fun.

You may want to separate GM knowledge from player knowledge regarding the Citadel. Initially presenting a shining, efficient organization that slowly reveals its secrets might make for great fun during an extended campaign.

TEMPORAL EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

It's in your interest to have an early warning system in place throughout time, one that can warn TimeWatch when something odd happens. This can be anthropologists and researchers living surreptitiously amongst locals, a high-tech series of sensors that report back to TimeWatch, or something completely different. Your goal is to have a system that can indicate roughly the right location and decade that a historical change is noticed.

Note that we say "noticed" instead of "exactly when a historical change happened." A lot of the fun of time travel is going to when a rippling change is first noticeable by observers, and *then* doing investigative work and traveling backward to find the cause.

Unless you choose a different method, TimeWatch is warned of massive shifts in history by monitoring a series of beacons that are hidden around the world in roughly five-year intervals. These measure air quality, background radiation, ground tremors, and other assorted local information; they're

designed to send back a ping to TimeWatch headquarters should they detect parameters that they don't believe to be correct. These certainly don't catch small changes in history, but large-scale changes such as climate shift, nuclear war, or overpopulation are often picked up.

Meanwhile, TimeWatch finds out more about prehistorical tribes and unrecorded history by employing an array of specially trained, undercover anthropologists and historians. They either infiltrate societies or watch from afar, but they report back to headquarters whenever they encounter something that doesn't seem quite right.

When planning an adventure, it's important to stress that giving the Agents a starting point — *any* valid starting point — may be the most important thing a GM can do. There's little worse than starting a game with the team wandering about aimlessly, second-guessing themselves due to analysis paralysis. If the players know on a metagame level that their starting point is the start of a chain of clues, they're far more likely to look around and try different strategies until they find it. Giving the players a red herring to start the mission usually ends up in frustration and a slow start. As a result, some sort of early warning system usually pays off better in games.

Are your Agents stuck in the past with no easy method for alerting the Citadel? Handy tools for field communication are dead drops, secret vaults (usually one or two per continent) where agents can leave a stone tablet as a message. These vaults are checked in the future by an agent who organizes rescue attempts and equipment supplies when messages appear.

TIMEWATCH EMPLOYEES

TimeWatch is a game about saving time (and very possibly punching dinosaurs in the face), and knowing the exact supply chain processes that get you your Pacifist when you need it isn't a particularly gripping part of that story. This isn't a simulation, and the everyday, nitty-gritty details of operation are largely irrelevant to most missions. That said, it's useful to understand TimeWatch's structure, from front line to rear support.

In play, Agents bump into enough fellow employees that players are reminded that their mission team is part of a sophisticated organizational structure that helps them do their job as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Field agents make up only a small portion of TimeWatch personnel. Quite a bit of time is (by definition) prehistorical, and quite a lot of occurrences that occur during that period could change the course of human history. TimeWatch uses an army of surreptitious and disguised anthropologists and historians to chart tribal movements, take copious records, and secretly report their observations back to TimeWatch. Anthropologists and historians who are established as field agents can act as local contacts, safe houses, or information sources for agents on an active mission.

Any number of support personnel also keep TimeWatch's Citadel running, roughly 20 for every field agent: cooks, laborers, janitors, armorers, weaponsmiths, technicians, recruiters, power systems personnel, security, instructors, trainers, inventors, architects, historians, and a mild but

detectable bureaucracy to keep it tied together.

That means that if there approximately 200 active agents at any one time (so to speak), there are over 4000 active TimeWatch personnel scattered through the ages to help them. This is complicated by the fact that current support staff also has to support the requests of agents who are technically dead, but whose earlier selves are still active and using TimeWatch services.

Agents: No longer called troubleshooters to differentiate them from the inhabitants of a dystopian postapocalyptic alternate timeline where paranoid supercomputers control human breeding, agents of TimeWatch have great responsibility and authority for solving and eliminating chronal crime. They are trained with neural memory implants in a variety of skills and research fields, equipped with top-notch equipment, allowed an extended lifespan, and given wide latitude as to how they solve problems. Autonomous agents are expected to report back only after they've already resolved a problem, instead of coming back to the Citadel and requesting additional help and resources.

Handlers (Briefing Officers): Agents usually are given a single point of contact back at the Citadel to instruct them, guide them, and offer them advice or assistance. Handlers are typically retired agents or highly capable noncombat personnel who can interpret mission alerts and assign teams to specific tasks. They may or may not be notable individuals from history. A good handler can make the difference between a team of agents who excels in the field, and one who leaves waves of paradox behind them. If agents request some sort of extremely unorthodox assistance (such as using a MEM-tag to alter one of their own agents' memories, or requesting a unit of shock troops) it's usually their handler who has final say.

Field Technicians: Relatively rare, these are elite non-combat-trained engineers who specialize in chronal installations and repair. If complicated equipment needs to be fixed, installed, or repaired anywhere in time, a field technician will likely be dispatched to handle it. They are not typically given control of autochrons; instead, special holographically disguised equipment sledges piloted by agents get the technicians to their destination, and keep them safe while they're there.

Mission book: Agents are assigned to accompany some field technicians for the relatively simple installation of a safe house in medieval Paris. Simple, that is, until the technicians are ambushed and at least one is kidnapped by an unknown force. Who is behind it, and why do they need a chronal engineer?

Citadel Technicians: Similar to field technicians, these engineers and technicians repair and install technology throughout the Citadel. They specialize in repair instead of inventions, so they aren't who you'd call to create brand new technology, but there's no one better if something needs fixing and you can't handle it yourself.

Field Anthropologists: Humankind doesn't know what happened in prehistory. That all changes for anthropologists

with time machines. Field anthropologists study ancient cultures and civilizations, but they also work to keep less professional would-be civilian anthropologists from accidentally disturbing history when they stumble onto an illicit or unregulated time machine.

Researchers and Historians: These academics specialize in particular areas of study, often linked to the era from where they spent the first portion of their lives. If you need to talk to an expert about history, a TimeWatch historian should have every detail you'd need. It's their reports and analyses which the tether draws upon when examining the course of true history.

SciTech: The SciTech team scours history for innovative or interesting inventions, and acquires samples for official (or occasionally unofficial) experimentation.

Support: These capable employees are talented, intelligent individuals from throughout time who would have otherwise perished in an accident. Instead, TimeWatch offers to employ them with the understanding that they can never return to their former life. These employees handle logistics, power, sanitation, food, housing, and supplies, and form the backbone of TimeWatch's bureaucracy. The intricacy of the support network varies over TimeWatch's history, with more employees gradually accumulating over time.

Shock Troops: Very rarely, subtlety isn't what you need to fix a problem in history. What you actually need are a large number of incredibly dangerous and anonymous men and women, armed to the teeth and with any impulse to moderate their firepower completely removed from their brain. Shock troops are isolated without time machines in the Paleozoic era when they aren't being used in an assault. The same troops are called upon on roughly a weekly basis to fight battles that a small group of elite agents can't possibly win. With the GM's okay (as always), a team of Agents can draw on a small army of shock troops by team members spending 2 Bureaucracy and 1 Military Tactics points. This is only allowed in cases where the Agents' plan requires troops to fight in the background while they target a particular foe or vulnerability; if the GM is worried she'll need to actually roll dice for the shock troops, or if the Agents' handler feels shock troops would actually make a situation worse, she's well in her rights to refuse the request.

If an agent ever goes rogue, or if the Citadel is ever infiltrated, shock troops are responsible for resolving the situation with lethal force.

FACILITIES

There's no map of the Citadel because the Citadel is what TimeWatch (and the GM) needs it to be at any given time. Late in its existence it might be a broken-down, poorly staffed shell of its former glory where would-be scientists hand out equipment that they don't know how to maintain or repair. In the middle of its existence it may be a bustling hive of activity, filled with bureaucrats and technicians and the hidden truths of history. Early in its existence it may be a lean and suspicious organization, highly protective of its secrets and fighting internal battles to determine what sort of an organization it truly becomes.

Regardless, some aspects of the Citadel remain more-or-less constant. This list is far from complete; the Citadel is as large and complex as the GM wishes.

Entry Bay: When you time travel into or out of the Citadel, you do so from here. Scanners constantly work to detect and eliminate foreign contamination, alien life forms, technological dangers, and any nonhuman threat. Human threats are immediately identified by DNA analysis; arrivals who aren't vouched for are instantly exiled to a parallel time stream. It's possible to break into the Citadel, in theory, but if it's been done no one ever discusses it.

While it is possible to time travel into and out of the Citadel from areas other than the entry bay, doing so is strictly prohibited. Every such entry and exit is tracked and analyzed. When it comes to the Citadel, TimeWatch prefers to not take chances.

Meeting Rooms: If you need to meet with your handler, you'll do so privately in a meeting room. They have all the comforts and training aids that super-science can provide.

Disguise and Wardrobe Department: Need inspiration for your outfit? Visit the wardrobe department, where typical clothing exists for myriad cultures across the vast majority of human culture.

Armory: Weapons, weapons, and more weapons, from Zulu spears to Multhari Dust Beams. When an Agent makes a Preparedness test to acquire a weapon during a mission, they'll often requisition it from here.

Library: The label "library" is something of an understatement; this holographic sensorium tracks and records both true and (when available) variant history. Agents' tethers tap into these databases for their record of true history. If you need to know something while you're inside the Citadel, researching here is a good place to start.

R & D: From experimental cloning techniques to esoteric research into the nature of time, a great deal of super-science research and technical inventing takes place in the Citadel's R & D department. R & D is where you head to speak to a research scientist about science, technology, AI, or time travel.

Technicians in R & D handle memory-modification reprogramming when you use a MEM-tag to make a supporting character forget information they've learned. R & D also works closely with the library to train Agents on vital skills, correct history, and scientific techniques.

Dormitories: Agents who don't have homes in the normal

time stream often bunk down in the dormitories. There are quite a few TimeWatch personnel who live here full time, especially technicians who don't have personal access to a time machine.

Logistics: People have to eat, and TimeWatch's vast logistics systems make sure that food and supplies flow smoothly from farm to table. That farm may be on the prehistoric supercontinent of Pangaea, mind you, but the theory is the same. It's up to the GM as to whether the Citadel boasts restaurants or cafeterias, but in an organization that can rescue history's best chefs seconds before they die, the food tends to be fairly good.

Prisons: Surprisingly, the Citadel doesn't have substantial prisons or brigades. Enemies of TimeWatch who aren't killed in action are either held in traditional prisons somewhere in the timeline, stripped of their ability to time travel and abandoned somewhere beautiful but inaccessible in the distant past, or exiled to the Lockout, a "prison parallel" timeline that is simple to travel into but almost impossible (requiring an expenditure of 10 Timecraft or so) to escape.

SAFE HOUSES

In addition to the central repository of knowledge and resources that is the Citadel, TimeWatch maintains numerous safe houses across the ages. Tethers have a record of these, unless their existence is classified for some reason. A typical safe house blends in perfectly with the surrounding terrain and has its own version of site-based impersonator mesh that makes it less likely to be noticed by any nosy passersby. Trapped against intrusion, safe houses are designed to offer safety, respite, and supplies to agents in need.

Although safe houses exist in most time periods, they aren't necessarily convenient. Stranded agents have been known to walk across whole continents to reach a safe house. A safe house's exterior and most of the interior is normal for the location and era. Hidden within, however, is typically a high-tech bunker with weapons, vehicles, money, clothing, a lab, and communications gear. When TimeWatch agents from different strike teams meet, it is usually at a safe house.

Safe houses may also be used as command centers in times of crisis. The safe house in Berlin, Germany, for instance, typically maintains a "take a number" line for the unfortunate agents assigned to handle the constant attempts to assassinate Hitler.

TimeWatch safe houses vary dramatically in external appearance. They are designed to fit in seamlessly with local structures or geological features, and so are purposefully hard to find unless an agent knows exactly what they're looking for. This difficulty is often amplified by stealth technology that cloaks the property in a field of Unobtrusiveness; most people passing by simply never pay any attention to a safe house at all. When they do, better equipped safe houses use security systems that holographically disguise the interior or even shift highly advanced technological equipment backwards in time out of the house. In a worst-case scenario, the best equipped safe houses might self destruct before their secrets

are uncovered by outsiders, but there are so many logistical problems involved with this approach (not killing the locals, for instance) that it's usually easier to have a team of agents weather the paradox and show up a week earlier to clear the property out by hand.

Agents coming to a safe house can be reasonably sure of the following:

- ▶ **Security:** A tether is needed to bypass the security and stealth systems of most safe houses. Whether the tether causes hidden doors to open, walls to rotate, gear to fade in from being slightly out of sync, or lethal and nonlethal weapon systems to deactivate, utilizing a safe house without an active and functioning tether often becomes an exercise in bleeding, frustration, and ingenuity.
- ▶ **Advanced Medical Facilities:** The group gets a 2-point Medical Expertise pool to spend while in the safe house. Using the standard guideline of "one spent Investigative point equals 3 spent General ability points," this can be converted to 6 points of the Medic ability, enough to heal up to 12 lost points of Health.
- ▶ **Supplies:** Preparedness tests made at a safe house have a Difficulty 1 point lower than normal, and the GM may simply declare that reasonable supplies (period-appropriate weapons and ammo, food, clothing, survival supplies) are available at no cost. Safe houses are also equipped with a substantial amount of local currency.
- ▶ **Disguises:** A safe house is typically equipped with a small number of high-quality, period-appropriate disguises. Disguises acquired at a safe house have a Difficulty 1 point lower than normal when their effectiveness is finally tested.
- ▶ **Transportation:** In technological eras, a safe house may have some form of vehicular transportation. This may be a cycle, car, ship, airship, or in appropriate eras even mounts such as horses. Transportation gear is typically adjusted and fine-tuned to be more powerful and faster than the contemporary gear it resembles.
- ▶ **Escape:** Most safe houses don't contain spare autochrons; the risk of them getting into the wrong hands is simply too dangerous. They do often have an escape kit consisting of some form of sedative and a single spare MEM-tag. The idea is that a stranded agent takes the sedative, attaches the MEM-tag, and once asleep TimeWatch technicians will beam them back to the Citadel. In truth, many agents are hesitant to use this method; stories of agents who were not deeply sedated enough to avoid insanity, or who were eased off of active duty because they'd lost their autochron, make this a less than ideal option.

THE SECRET MASTERS OF TIMEWATCH

Who runs TimeWatch? It's an important question. You won't find it as relevant during a one-shot game, but an organization's mission, tactics, and ethics are often set from the top down. That's true for extra-temporal troubleshooting organizations as well, and your choices as GM create significant consequences for the Agent in the field, as well as for the type of supporting character agents that TimeWatch recruits. Even more interestingly, what happens if management changes during the course of your campaign? Navigating a choral coup is something that can shake up a game delightfully.

It's up to you as to how TimeWatch's organization is structured. It may be a vast and byzantine bureaucracy that puts *The X-Files*' FBI to shame, full of departments and subdepartments and mid-level managers whose very task seems to be obfuscation and secrecy. It may be a sleek and streamlined organization, populated by brilliant women and men of action and completely devoid of entangling red tape. It may even be both of these things over the course of TimeWatch's organizational history. One thing remains a constant, however: no one seems to know who truly runs TimeWatch.

Agents and case officers certainly have theories. Many people believe that TimeWatch was founded and is secretly run by highly advanced humanity, evolved beyond all recognition and dedicated to making sure that it's their history — the true history — that ends up occurring. Others suspect that the organization is run by normal men and women so prosaic and unremarkable that they blend in with regular agents and technicians, secretly leading the organization even as they walk unnoticed amongst their employees. It may be run by a human being who's effectively immortal; or by a highly advanced self-aware AI that's trillions of times more intelligent than humans, existing as far above humanity in intelligence as humanity is above banana slugs; or by a hidden corporation that is using TimeWatch to acquire unlimited resources from parallel timelines; or by an alien intelligence that is weaponizing humanity for use as a biological weapon against its own planet's aggressors.

What's actually true? That's up to you, and what appears to initially be true to players may be a red herring designed to mislead. In many non-conspiracy games the secret masters of TimeWatch are so hands off or remote that they will never become relevant in an adventure. If you set adventures at the Citadel or at the numerous safe houses hidden throughout history, give some thought as to who ultimately calls the shots and to what their true motivations are. It may inform what kind of missions the agents get assigned, the amount of personal freedoms that agents are granted, and even the physical layout and decoration of the Citadel.

ALTERNATE MASTERS

Want other alternatives? You've got lots of them, and when power shifts happen behind-the-scenes mid-game, you can always change your mind after a campaign has started. Options include:

- ▶ highly evolved humans, whether still recognizably human or evolved into something that transcends normal flesh
- ▶ a cosmic entity who is charged with keeping the time stream clear to prevent the universe from breaking down
- ▶ the oldest woman in the universe, a being who (perhaps due to an unimaginable curse) has lived to the heat death of the universe, has returned to the beginning of the time stream, and is living existence through a second time — but this time, she formed TimeWatch to prevent herself from ever existing
- ▶ normal humans, consumed by a lust for greed and power and willing to create a reputable organization to satisfy their ambitions
- ▶ the vas kra from the GUMSHOE RPG *Ashen Stars*, godlike energy beings of pure thought who like to dabble in human development

ALTERNATIVE CHRONAL ORGANIZATIONS

If you want your *Patrol* game to feature something other than futuristic sci-fi, consider using other organizations that sponsor and organize choral patrols. There's no reason that *TimeWatch* necessarily has to be set in the future; pick an era and a type of organization that sounds like the most fun, and run with it. Musketeers, Romans, secret cyborg masters, alien overlords... use an organization that gives you rich fodder for fun games in whatever frame you prefer. If you need agents from a parallel timeline to show up and stop TimeWatch from eliminating their reality, these organizations can also be examples of who they might work for in their own parallel universe.

Similarly, the equipment that nonstandard TimeWatch distributes may be functionally identical to standard equipment but look entirely different. A group of ancient druids that protects history may have a guardian spirit that serves as a tether and a translator, spells to act as beam weapons and PaciFists, a fey cloak that acts as impersonator mesh and chromomorphic armor, and magic runes that serve as time machines. Same mechanics, reskinned.

For many organizations, the primary Adversaries and enemies are directly linked to the intrinsic nature of the organization. This helps tie missions to the causes that are most important to the Agents themselves.

The Chronological Intelligence Bureau, as envisioned by the podcast *Thrilling Adventure Hour*. This branch of the WWII American Victory Commission monitors all time breaches to find chronologically related Nazi initiatives. With Nazis possessing their own time travel technology, AVC briefing officer Abby Adams (code name: Lady Liberty) dispatches agents such as Amelia Earhart to thwart Nazi

agendas in whatever year they arise. This is pulp time travel at its finest, with two clenched fists, witty banter, and whole-hearted nationalism standing in for high-tech solutions.

The Council of Merlin, where noble knights, distrusted varlets, and mysterious wielders of magic pierce the veil into the distant past and far future to defeat the enemies of Camelot, such as Mordred and Morgan le Fay. Technology is replaced by magic, and agents try to maintain their chivalry and ideals in future worlds that may have moved on.

Division Nine, a vast government agency similar to TimeWatch that suffers from the many organizational flaws endemic to government bureaucracies. Mired in red tape, subcommittees and groupthink, Division Nine agents need time travel just to get all of their paperwork done. Don't dismiss them, however; the organization may not be nimble, but their employees have vast momentum and unthinkable resources behind them.

The Enforcement Protocol, a criminal organization from the 2080s that uses time travel to stop government interference with its own criminal enterprises. In the process the criminal time-agents prevent any kind of chronal changes that act against their organization's best interests, making those agents into accidental heroes who save the time stream from all intruders but themselves. There are worse things out there in time than nosy cops...

Freedom Fighters; in the megacities of the 23rd century, a mysterious organization has given illegal time travel technology to the dispossessed underclass, the poor and homeless refuse of an ultra-authoritarian police state. These dregs of human society use their psychic gifts, mild mutations, and never-say-die tenacity to gradually dismantle the horrific apparatus of the future state. It's just unfortunate that agents of that state know about their existence and are determined to stop them, both in their own time and in the past.

Her Majesty's Royal Chrono Patrol, another *Thrilling Adventure Hour* creation. Queen Victoria herself heads up this small steampunk organization of Victorian-era time police. As their "trick clock" talking pocket watches open up time holes, agents such as the inimitable Colonel Tick-Tock track down chronological anomalies, paradox, and anachronisms in Victorian England and beyond.

The Légion Temporelle is mostly comprised of expendable criminals who are willing to risk being subsumed in order to preserve their own timeline and earn immunity for their crimes. Their methods are unorthodox, unethical, and often brutal, and they have a reputation of men and women who you cross only at your own peril. "You have joined the Légion to die, and we will send you when men die."

The Lords of Creation are Anonymous-style open-source timeline hackers, mostly teenagers with time machines who treat world history like a Wikipedia entry when they're having edit wars. They are completely decentralized, cling to anonymity, communicate electronically, and compete to achieve timeline changes that don't get reverted.

MOD '76; the year is 1976, and a funky international government task force has drawn together the hippest, coolest cats and chicks in the entire industrialized world. Their mission? To travel through time, to rock out to awesome tunes, and to eliminate any enemy who is trying to take music,

dancing, and free love out of the world. Inspired by movies like *Austin Powers* and your favorite guilty pleasure 1970s TV shows, this light-hearted variant is perfect for retro one-shots.

The Temporal Preservation League is a volunteer organization made up of scientists who have discovered time travel at assorted points in time and have kept it secret. They save, study, and document extinct species and cultures.

The TimeGuard is a heavily armed military force whose soldiers eschew subtlety and use time travel as an offensive weapon. After all, by using military might to destroy their enemies before they ever become a threat, they're *saving* lives. Just ask them.

TIC-TOC Inc. (Temporal-Industrial and Chronal Technology Optimization Corporation, Incorporated) is a privately owned corporation holding the patent to time travel. TIC-TOC Inc. legally exploits the past for commercial gain. Its employees deliberately seek out inventors who uncover time travel prior to their own invention and either hire them or... shall we say... "discourage" them. Note that such actions wouldn't have been legal before TIC-TOC changed the time stream, but good lobbyists combined with effective chronal saboteurs can be really effective in getting obstructionist laws changed. Worse, most employees of TIC-TOC Inc. don't remember the alternate past and believe that their enforcement is both ethically and legally appropriate, making them both self-righteous and smug.

Time Incorporated is the 22nd-century shadowy international group which dispatches 21st-century agents to remake the true timeline for its own purposes. Elite Time Incorporated agents such as Kenneth Hite remake and readjust history by drinking key figures under the table, causing them to miss critical appointments that then ripple forward through the years. If you want your Agents to reshape history in specific ways, instead of just setting it back to rights, there's a good chance they'll work for Time Incorporated.

TimeZero chronal law enforcement exists in a parallel universe with fundamentally different physical laws from our own, where the vicissitudes of chance behave quite differently. TimeZero agents serve a function very similar to TimeWatch, and do so knowing that greater randomness may help or hinder their investigation and their combat. They count on good luck in their battle tactics, and it seldom fails them.

THE TONE OF A PATROL GAME

There are any number of ways to handle the framework of personnel and management who keep TimeWatch running. GMs should pick an approach they find most interesting, possibly changing it mid-campaign should internal strife cause a change in leadership.

THE ELITE AGENTS

This default campaign structure assumes that the player character Agents are superb at their job, and they get treated accordingly. They aren't second-guessed and questioned by their supervisors and case agents unless things go horribly wrong; instead, their superiors assume that they're going to succeed. There's no micromanagement in this sort of game, which might be a delightful change compared to some players' real jobs, but there's also no expectation of backup or strong support systems. Elite agents make their own luck, and can't always rely on TimeWatch mid-mission for help.

This type of game is ideal for one-shots because TimeWatch management is hands-off and has little affect on the organization's culture, other than by recruiting superb agents. If you want to stay focused on adventures instead of internal politics, this is a good way to go.

THE BUREAUCRATIC MAZE

In this Orwellian and moderately humorous vision of a *Patrol* game, the Citadel is full of bureaucrats, huge quantities of human and alien office workers from throughout history. Quantum computers and trained analysts spend their days tracking and analyzing historical changes, projecting these ripples through the ever-evolving timeline and dispatching agents to make fine (or coarse) adjustments. There's a surprising amount of red tape. Agents largely operate on their own recognizance; they can expect poor leadership, slow change, automatically assigned benefits, a stack of procedures to follow, and groupthink committees who usually mean well... usually. Smart and independent agents have to contend with office drones from throughout time who work on compartmentalized tasks in order to ensure that the field agents — the player characters — can function, succeed, and thrive.

In other words, think *Brazil*, *Portal*, or *Paranoia*, but (perhaps) without an insane computer running the show. Browne Chronometrics from game designer Epidiah Ravachol's excellent time travel RPG *Time & Temp* (where the time agents are low-paid temporary workers) falls into this category. In a dystopian setting like this, TimeWatch Agents might fight the corporate bureaucracy as much as they fight enemies of the timeline, and the Bureaucracy ability becomes essential for cutting red tape back at HQ. In addition to chrontal instability, paradox-plagued Agents accumulate demerits from increasingly annoyed handlers.

It's interesting to consider what happens when a bureaucratic TimeWatch is dismantled, revitalized, and rebuilt by an energetic go-getter who decides that TimeWatch will fail

without some sort of renewal. Perhaps she includes the player characters as key members of her team. The bureaucratic old guard doesn't take well to change, however, so this sort of reinvention always carries the risk of chrontal civil war.

THE ROWDY ADVENTURERS

Less coolly professional and more enthusiastically adventurous, TimeWatch Agents in this sort of a game are more akin to Remo Williams, Indiana Jones, and Doc Savage than they are James Bond. There is little or no organizational bureaucracy within TimeWatch's loose confederation of agents, and the Agents may only see a handful of support personnel who send them on missions. There's a culture of excitement, independence, adventure, and exploration as they tackle chrontal problems, and a lack of particularly useful intelligence gathering. This is TimeWatch in its early days, when much about history remained unknown and unregulated.

To run this sort of game, make the Agents' direct supervisor even more adventurous and gung ho than they are, perhaps a risk-taker who has been forced to retire. When they have strong support for taking absurd risks, players are more likely to go for broke. Hopefully those risks will pay off, but either way the Agents won't get in trouble for making a difficult call. It's likely that this sort of organization slowly changes to a more conservative, bureaucratic structure over time, leaving elite teams who rebel against the additional regulations and red tape.

For a full treatment of this approach, see the *Pulp* campaign frame on p. 293 or the *Wild Times!* campaign frame on p. 324.

TOP-DOWN TREACHERY

Conspiracy-focused games involve TimeWatch management that almost certainly doesn't have the Agents' best interest in mind. Whether there are much bigger stakes in play that the Agents don't know about or understand, or because secret power groups within TimeWatch are clashing with one another for control of the timeline and control of history itself, the Agents become expendable tools in the eyes of their supervisors. They have to look out for themselves and choose their own sides, and they live with the risk that they might not be able to trust even the people who are closest to them. This sort of game feels like the best episodes of *The X-Files* and works best in medium to longer-length campaign arcs. Any other type of TimeWatch management may become briefly tainted by conspiracies, breaking up the routine and making sure the players stay on their toes.

For a full treatment of this approach, see the *Conspiracy* campaign frame on p. 251.





CHAPTER EIGHT: ALTERNATE CAMPAIGN FRAMES

The following campaign frames are different ways to run *TimeWatch*, but they're not the only ways. You can easily combine aspects of multiple campaign frames, toss them away entirely to create your own, or move back and forth between multiple frames during the course of play.

CHRONAL HORROR CAMPAIGN FRAME

Sometimes, a shiny hopeful future isn't what you want to portray.

Chronal Horror games reflect a beleaguered, exhausted version of *TimeWatch* that has been put through the wringer. Agents are clinging desperately to hope, attempting to save the world but knowing that every time travel attempt weakens the veil between reality and the outer darkness just a little bit more. Every new incident makes Agents choose between saving lives and endangering reality. Resources are scarce, and *TimeWatch* agents do whatever they can to help humanity hang on a little bit longer.

This campaign borrows themes from *Night's Black Agents*, *The Esoterrorists*, and even *Trail of Cthulhu*. It matches traditional Lovecraftian or gothic horror against the forces of the future, whose goal is to eradicate the supernatural threat while keeping your presence and involvement as secret as possible. The undead and supernatural forces don't know about *TimeWatch* — yet. When they find out, things get much, much more dangerous.

You may find yourself confronting a vampire before he can infect King George or Alexander the Great. You may exorcise a murderous ghost from Emperor Caligula, prevent Queen Ranavalona of Madagascar from sacrificing her people to the forces of the night, or rub out the Elder God—summoning mark chalked inside the Titanic before it sinks to the ocean's floor and automatically summons



"Mommy never wants to play with me any more. Do you?"

forth *Those Who Wait*. Meanwhile, creatures who stalk the corridors of time attack you from the unexpected edges of moments, and you must always keep a low profile or risk the attention of unknowable forces behind the horrific invasion. Your character could be anyone from a medieval

priest to a highly trained soldier experienced in horror-hunting and extermination. If the future is to have any hope, it is up to you to bring it.

RULES CHANGES

Chronal Horror uses rules that are almost identical to standard *Patrol* rules, with the following changes.

New Character Build Points Remain Normal

If the GM prefers a lower-powered campaign, reduce starting Investigative points by 3 and General ability points by 5.

New Investigative Ability: Occult

The Occult Academic ability is the magical equivalent of Science!, and represents knowledge of magical and ritualistic traditions in human magic. One or more points in Occult lets you recognize the workings of magic and inhuman creatures, and spending 1 point of Occult lets you perform minor magic yourself. The effects of such magic should be on par with the results gained from spending an Investigative point from Science! Spending more than 1 Occult point at once gives a corresponding boost in effect and power.

Trying to track down a murderous body-shifting demon, Altani spends 1 point of Occult to protect herself from possession. The ancient Babylonian ritual is successful, and she is protected against the demon's first attempt to consume her soul and inhabit her body.

New Antagonist Special Ability: Magic

(Cost 2 per effect): The antagonist can trigger a predetermined magical effect that the GM chooses, such as paralysis or flight. Magical spells are typically linked to occult rituals or dark magic. Magic spells are comparable to what a player character could achieve with an Investigative spend, such as a super-science effect like telekinesis, psychic invisibility, +1 or +2 damage for the scene, and the like.

Chronal Stability Is Directly Tied to a Character's Emotional State

As Chronal Stability drops, you grow more panicky, worried, and on edge. A Chronal Stability below 0 threatens your existence because you're so unsettled that you have trouble concentrating on remaining anchored in time. Mechanically, nothing changes; this shift is completely narrative and used for roleplaying.

The Hoarding Limit for Stitches Drops From 3 to 2

Players can earn fewer Stitches at once, and Stitches are awarded for maintaining a scary and tense tone. As always, Stitches are used to reinforce the mood of the game that the GM is running; she can disallow any Stitches awarded for jokes that drag players away from the scene's tension.

Time Traveling Creates and Strengthens Monstrosities

Cultists and popular belief can't usually create monsters, but that all changes when time travel occurs. Time travel weakens dimensional barriers and allows the impossible to manifest. Additional time travel actually strengthens existing creatures; supernatural *Chronal Horror* antagonists gain the special ability Embrace Instability (see p. 153), meaning that every Paradox test or Travel test strengthens existing monstrosities' Tempus ability by 1 point whether that test is successful or not. In time periods that typically see a great amount of time travel, such as WWII, chronal horrors (such as Nazi werewolves) are both common and extremely dangerous.

Tracking down rumors of ghosts, a TimeWatch team shifts into Italy in the 1860s. Even if there weren't ghosts in this era before now, the team's time travel weakens the veil and strengthens existing nonhuman monsters by 1 Tempus point per Travel test.

Note that this isn't a solvable problem for the Agents, and it's one of the factors that drives stress and anxiety in this setting. The conundrum of "time traveling creates and worsens the problem, but we have to time travel to fix the problem" is a deliberate stressor that helps ramp up the feeling of desperation and horror. Time traveling gives Agents more resources, but now it will simultaneously strengthen the monsters as well.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

A *Chronal Horror* game runs quite differently from a *Patrol* game.

- ▶ **The enemies are seldom time travelers.** Once Agents arrive in a new era, they rarely have to worry about their foes outmaneuvering them in time. Summoned entities are focused strongly on the era in which they first enter. Agents may still have to time travel to stop the monster's first appearance, which automatically strengthens the monster due to its Embrace Instability ability.
- ▶ **The enemies may not realize that time travel exists.** Creatures from beyond the veil generally have no reason to understand time travel. A few entities are the exception, and any thinking monster can learn if presented with the truth. If a monstrosity gets ahold of a time machine, expect that they'll use it to create unthinkable mayhem.

- ▶ **Enemies are often both cultists and the monstrosities they summon.** Some monsters appear or manifest autonomously, but the majority of chronal horrors are summoned by cultists praying for their existence. Even a cinema or literary audience that truly believes in a monster can inadvertently draw it into existence. When exceptions occur, the spontaneous arrival of an outer darkness horror usually heralds a particularly canny foe.
- ▶ **Monstrosities are generally too tough for locals.** Law enforcement and vigilantes do what they can, but by definition, TimeWatch's 24th-century headquarters (see below) only notices the monstrosities that weren't able to be stopped when they first appeared. That means that by the time your Agent gets involved, the supernatural threat requires the sort of firepower or problem-solving that only trained professionals can bring to bear.
- ▶ **Ignorance grows the blossoms of fear.** It's really hard to be scared of something when you know its capabilities and can easily categorize it. It's much easier to be scared when your enemy is an unknown, something that moves through shadows and takes another's form, and you only know it from the evidence you find. *Chronal Horror* games are noteworthy for featuring monstrosities with unexpected appearances, habits, and capabilities that you almost find out about too late. GMs are encouraged to customize and reskin antagonists extensively.
- ▶ **Stopping time travel doesn't prevent the problem.** Agents have tried to prevent chronal horrors from ever arising by stopping the time travel that lowered the barriers in the first place, but it has never been successful. Efforts should usually be focused on containing or destroying any monsters instead of strengthening the barriers.
- ▶ **Chronal horrors disrupt time travel.** Chronal horrors play poorly with the delicate temporal mechanisms within an autochron. It varies unpredictably, but autochrons tend to fail at the worst possible time when one or more temporal horrors is within a 16 kilometer radius. The closer to the horror, the less likely that time travel will work. This makes it simple for Agents to arrive, but notoriously hard for them to escape when they're being stalked. Chronal horrors also work like interdiction devices, preventing time travel in their immediate vicinity and for a period of time on either side of their appearance.
 - ▶ There's no check for this, and asking to spend Timecraft Investigative points isn't guaranteed to override the effect. It's entirely up to the GM. As you'd expect in a game where horror is important, easily teleporting or time traveling away from danger doesn't match the setting's tone.
- ▶ **Magic exists.** The new Academic ability Occult is a reskinning of Science! and allows characters to cast minor wards or spells, the equivalent of what a Science! spend might be able to create with technology. Larger spends of 2 or more points might allow you to cast more powerful spells with the GM's approval. This catchall ability might be used to track magical energy, create divinations, generate a protective ward, exorcise a spirit from a possessed victim, and the like. Some monsters might require an Occult spend to truly banish once they are defeated.
- ▶ **The true timeline does not include monstrosities, so any addition of monstrosities changes history.** Unknowing people in a *Chronal Horror* timeline often suspect that there is a shadow history where dark things dwell, but so far TimeWatch has protected them well enough that supernatural events are only a rumor.
- ▶ **Agents usually must destroy or eliminate both the cultists and the creatures they've summoned to defeat the problem.** This holds true for any allies the Agents recruit to help them, such as secret societies or shadowy government organizations. Stopping a monster isn't the only step; stopping the people who brought it into existence ensures that additional monsters aren't summoned as well.
- ▶ **Chronal Stability and sanity are linked.** In a *Chronal Horror* campaign, Chronal Stability represents both your ability to stay anchored in time and your ability to withstand the psychic horrors caused by creatures that should not be. As a result, a declining Chronal Stability mirrors an Agent's descent into temporary madness. Creating paradox can literally drive an Agent insane, even if no chronal horrors have reared their numerous and non-Euclidian heads.
 - ▶ There are no new game mechanics needed for this, as existing mechanics are easily reskinned into combining low Chronal Stability and emotional instability.
- ▶ **Paradox is amplified.** Not only does paradox in a *Chronal Horror* game typically have Difficulties and Losses 1–3 points higher than normal, every Paradox test strengthens the scenario's unnatural monsters by increasing their Tempus rating by 1 point per test.

In attempting to kill a cultist they've already run across in the future, six Agents accidentally create paradox and trigger a Paradox test. The Difficulty and Loss are both 5. Two Agents fail the test; in addition to those Agents suffering 5 points of Chronal Stability Loss, all monsters in the scenario (but not cultists or natural creatures like guard dogs) now have an additional 6 points added to their Tempus rating and pool. Tempus can be used to power special abilities, making the unnatural monsters more dangerous.

A CHANGE OF TONE

The Agents flattened themselves against the wall of the dark alley. This part of Chicago in 1929 had no street lights, and they didn't particularly want to be seen. The faceless monstrosity down at the end of the alley was dragging its jagged rusty claws on the ground as it hunted them through the hot summer night, each claw scraping like nails on a chalkboard as it sniffed them out. They hadn't named it yet, but bullets sank into it, neural disruptors amused it, and it was faster than they were — and it liked to eat children. They didn't have a chance unless they could ambush it.

It gave a "chuff" of recognition, and the sound of scraping metal sped up. It had scented them. Time to run.

Standard TimeWatch's Patrol frame uses a game style where the Agents are firmly in control much of the time, even while

they track down and outwit their antagonists. *Chronal Horror* should feel very different. Agents in a game of *Chronal Horror* are spending less time jumping through time and more time jumping in fear or running for their lives. Chronal horrors are not only abominations, they're abominations that grow stronger and more numerous the more time travel occurs. As a result, Agents typically travel into an infected area and then only clock out with trepidation once they're confident that the threat has been dealt with.

Agents and friendly supporting characters might die more frequently in a *Chronal Horror* game than in a *Patrol*-style game. There's no assumption of narrative invulnerability, where important characters are protected by the rules of what makes a good story; anyone might fall prey to things that lurk in the darkness, and the Agents will have to stop them or fall themselves.

CITADEL NOT QUITE AT THE END OF TIME

Instead of the normal campaign's Citadel that exists prior to the Big Bang, in *Chronal Horror* games TimeWatch's HQ is located in a 24th-century skyscraper within a pollution-clogged, crime-ridden megalopolis. It's an urban dystopia fitting the general attitude of despair and hopelessness. Agents and briefing officers use their Paradox Prevention abilities to notice when history changes around them, and then work together to determine when and where to dispatch the Agents. When something truly terrible happens in the past and humanity suddenly vanishes or becomes a slave race to undead masters, it's usually only the TimeWatch skyscraper that still stands long enough to send out a rescue team. When vampires build their blood-flocks or monstrosities are summoned across the ether, undead-fighting TimeWatch agents are usually the first and last line of defense.

PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF

Time travelers suspect that they have no one but themselves to blame for the encroaching horror. Back before time travel was discovered, humanity didn't have much trouble with monstrosities slipping through the barrier and becoming real on our plane. That changed once the dimensions of space and time were breached. Suddenly that barrier became far more permeable, and not just in the eras where time machines arrived. The minor occultists and earnest cultists who had worshipped dark forces throughout millennia found themselves successful, and history changed. TimeWatch is still trying to identify the triggering event; in the meantime, each new event is diagnosed and dealt with as quickly as possible.

The world between the minutes is a sanity-breaking nightmare of terror, and the monsters it spawns are fierce and terrifying. The best that TimeWatch agents can do now is try to contain the damage.

THOSE WHO STALK THE NIGHT

The type of enemies are terrifyingly varied.

- ▶ A horror movie slasher stalks 2020 Los Angeles; by wearing his victim's skins, he can *become* them. Meanwhile, their skinless animated meat does his obscene bidding to bring in more victims.
- ▶ The apocryphal Jersey Devil is a true devil, a possessed changeling who haunts the woods and who uses infernal power to change the lives of those who worship it.
- ▶ The moors of the British Isles hide many things, and werewolves are one of them. Brought over into our world by overenthusiastic cultists, it's no longer safe to stay off the moors at night. "Keep to the road," the locals at the pub might say, but that's just so it's easier for the locals to chase you down once they shift form.
- ▶ In the time of the Black Death, the embodiment of pestilence has taken to spreading contamination as a religion. Her words are disease, her blessing is death, and she intends to draw the entire world into her worship.
- ▶ The AI of a moon colony's main computer becomes sentient, stalking and killing crew members for maximum terror.
- ▶ Razor-sharp tentacular monstrosities lurk in drain pipes, waiting until children are in bathtubs or adults are on toilets before they inexorably pull their prey into the plumbing.
- ▶ With long teeth and longer fingernails, and eyes the color of blank television screens, imaginary monsters lurk beneath the beds of children. They can't be seen by adults, and their vocal impersonations are *almost* perfect.
- ▶ A famous cinematic mass murderer takes actual life from fear, stalking people watching his movies and leaving them tortured and screaming.
- ▶ Psychic parasites feed on slow terror and inevitable despair. They latch onto a host and drain their credit rating, letting them spiral into poverty before causing them to take their own life.
- ▶ Small children are possessed by the ghosts of the dead, and murder their parents before adorably stalking their neighbors.
- ▶ Anyone can be a serial killer, can't they? It just takes a little push, and then your teenaged babysitter or friendly supermarket cashier can harbor a truly horrible secret. An outer darkness horror climbs inside them when they take their first life. It eats them silently from inside, until soon there's nothing but a ropy flesh-secret hidden inside a meat-suit of skin and bone. It will only pick the sweetest and least predictable victims, and it takes delight in the hunt.
- ▶ A creature of feral savagery scuttles down the suburban street, wild nature at its beck and call, and it delights in the screams as cats and dogs savagely turn on their "owners." Where it goes, pets are well fed and humans lie where they fall.
- ▶ The seaweed-coated lake monsters hide in the dark water, in murky ponds and deep quarries. They may even wait in impossibly shallow puddles. They are the embodiment of the

teeth that come for you from below, of the slimy hand that grabs and drags when you thought you were alone, of the lonely and thrashing death. They spike their victims' feet to the lake bottom and leave them there to float in the darkness, a forest of corpses swaying in the lightless current.

- Politicians really can sell their soul for power, and in doing so can change the world. The only thing worse than a monstrous inhuman predator is one who has access to nuclear weapons and international policy.

The worst creatures change large-scale history instead of just preying on small communities. Whether it's giant nuclear termites six meters long who destroy the American southwest, or radioactive undead that arise from the ruins of WWII Japan's bombing sites, some changes are difficult to cover up.

You won't want to use a different horror every time; doing so leads to a "monster of the week" gimmick. You'll find it more effective to have the same monstrous spirit manifest multiple times in different time periods. When the Agents hunt the same master werewolf for the third time, they'll now know how it thinks — but it might remember them as well from chronologically previous encounters, and you can bet it carries a grudge.

MAKING IT MODERN

If you prefer your horror set in the future or with less traditional monsters, adapt this campaign frame by focusing on monstrous infestations in the spaceships, colonies, and vast megacities of the future. You can (and should) adapt the monsters as well, using existing game statistics for convenience and completely reskinning them to appear and act as a futuristic horror of your own creation. This moves you away from magic and gothic horror, and moves you towards cinema like *Alien* and *Event Horizon*.

MORE THAN JUST THE MONSTER

True horror is personal. GMs are encouraged to choose themes or subplots that prey on your character's fears and insecurities. Overall themes in a *Chronal Horror* game mirror those that you'd find in the best horror movies: fear of the unknown, betrayal by the trustworthy, personal powerlessness in the face of danger. Luckily, confronting these fears may earn your character Stitches for good roleplaying.

INVESTIGATION IN THE DARK

A typical investigation is triggered when TimeWatch headquarters notices a change in history. This may be as simple as realizing "why has every other person in the world vanished?" to "of course we don't go outside after dark. No one wants to turn into food!"

After research indicating where the change took hold — "the first vampires were noted in late 14th-century London" might be the type of historical entry that clearly points the Agents in the correct direction — the Agents are off, just

as they would be in a traditional mission. It's important for Agents to have a solid, specific time and location to start their investigation. Even if the team needs to quickly time travel farther backwards, giving an initial destination helps prevent drama-crushing analysis paralysis.

Investigation typically leads the Agents to suspicious activity on the part of the monster or the monster's lackeys. It doesn't pay for Agents to make assumptions; the stupidest-seeming werewolf might turn out to be quite brilliant, and not all super-evolved psychic disembodied brains are actually geniuses.

Victory conditions are seldom straightforward. Agents endeavor to stop monsters before they slay indiscriminately. They'll stop any allies or minions of the monster who are helping its schemes, and should cover up any supernatural aspects of the investigation so that future generations have plausible disbelief of the supernatural.

Some particularly clever monsters, such as Dracula, the king of all vampires, will make for much deadlier opposition than an unthinking lagoon monster preying on small-town swimmers. A *Chronal Horror* series or campaign might revolve around a time traveling master villain drawing on the outer darkness, a conspiracy organized by a schemer who anticipates TimeWatch responses and uses them to further weaken the veil.

ANTAGONISTS

Reskin and tweak existing game statistics to quickly generate effective, hard-to-identify antagonists and Adversaries. You can also use the rules on p. 147 to create your own monsters, or adapt creatures from other GUMSHOE games that focus more on horror. Note that these creatures adapt well to the time in which they find themselves; a vampire in ancient Rome is very different than one in a 22nd-century megacity. Add abilities accordingly to help them take advantage of their environment. All supernatural *Chronal Horror* antagonists gain the special ability Embrace Instability (see p. 153).

A few examples are listed below:

Demon-Possessed Stats

These seemingly normal people are possessed by a denizen of Hell... or quite possibly somewhere worse. They corrupt the people and area around them, and delight in bringing suffering to the kind and gentle.

Use stats for walk-ins (see p. 190), adding Magic (cost 2 per effect)

Ghost Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4 (or higher due to Invisibility), Health 12

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +3 (soul rot)

Abilities: Tempus 15

Special Abilities: Immaterial, Invisibility (cost 3); Terrify (cost 2 — the target must make a D6/L6 Paradox test. On

a failure, the target suffers 6 points of Chronal Stability Loss and permanently suffers from the appearance of premature aging, such as grey hair. On a failure, instead of taking the Loss, the target may instead choose to become paralyzed with panicked terror. They remain terrified, either frozen in place or fleeing for their life (player's choice), until the scene ends or an ally spends 1 point from an appropriate Interpersonal ability to snap them out of it. This takes an action and is traditionally accompanied by a sharp slap)

Vampire Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4 or 5 (Distortion), Armor 3 (non-bane only), Health 18

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +0; Damage Modifier +2 (impossibly strong grip), +0 plus Destabilize and Mind Control (blood drain)

Abilities: Tempus 20; Charm 2

Special Abilities: Destabilize (cost 2 — with blood drain), Distortion (cost 2), Immaterial (cost 2 — turn to mist), Mental Attack (Mind Control — cost 3, with blood drain), Regenerate (cost 0 or 2 — all non-bane damage at end of round), Shape-Shift (cost 2 — bat)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1, Stealth Modifier +4

Special: All vampires have a bane that they are particularly vulnerable to; they can only be badly hurt by direct sunlight (which immediately triggers Difficulty 6 Health tests each round, with death on a failure) or that bane.

Many vampires typically use their charm to attract victims. They're suave, sure, but just so evil.

The listed special abilities may change drastically from vampire to vampire, and these stats may be considered a low-powered example of the creature. Many vampires suffer from traditional weaknesses (sunlight, grave dirt in the coffin, mirrors, garlic, strongly presented objects of faith)... but not all. Good luck finding out.

Werewolf Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 5 vs. non-silver only, Health 15

Offense: Scuffling +3; Damage Modifier +1 (razor-sharp claws), +3 (slavering maw)

Abilities: Tempus 18; Outdoor Survival 1

Special Abilities: Extra Action (cost 2), Infection (lycanthropy), Lightning Speed (cost 2), Regenerate (cost 0 — all non-silver damage at end of round), Shape-Shift (cost 0 if uncontrolled, cost 2 if controlled — from human to wolf and back)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2, Stealth Modifier +2

Special: Lycanthropy (Anyone bitten by a werewolf who is not then slain develops lycanthropy. During a full moon the GM takes control of their character, and they gain these stats instead of their own. Lycanthropy can be cured with 3 points spent from either Medical Expertise, Occult, or Trivia over three successive nights when the victim is in wolf form.

CINEMATIC ONE-SHOT CAMPAIGN FRAME

Picture a futuristic game where the fleshless and sentient ego of the spiritual Yogi Soondi, leader of the postapocalyptic vehicle cult the Car-Men, passes through the temporal veil to wreak havoc in other eras. Can you find her? Join us for another episode of “Where in time is Car-Man Soondi's ego?”... or not. Sorry about that.

The *Cinematic One-Shot* style of play focuses on adapting the *TimeWatch* rules to match the feel of another time travel-related movie, TV show, or book. There are lots out there, and if you love them, you may be able to hack *TimeWatch*'s rules into modeling it fairly well. “One-Shot” is something of a misnomer here, as you may want to play extensively in that world, but this approach works equally well for a one-time game with no expectation of continuity or consequences.

TimeWatch models some cinematic games better than others. You'll want to think about what defines a particular setting, then read the chapter on hacking and adjusting the rules (see p. 217) to figure out what to change. Be bold. Screw around with the default rules to match your vision. Tweak things to get the player behavior you want, and dump any rules that discourage such behavior.

SAMPLE CINEMATIC SETTINGS

Robotic Dawn

For instance, imagine a campaign setting inspired by that of the *Terminator* franchise, where cyborg assassins are sent back in time to ensure (or prevent) a robotic ascension over humanity. Things you'd possibly change:

- ▶ The TimeWatch organization does not exist.
- ▶ Player characters could be normal Earth civilians, human warriors from the future, or allied and reprogrammed cyborgs.
- ▶ Enemy cyborgs should be truly tough and nearly unstoppable in battle, with huge Health pools or the ability to automatically heal.
- ▶ Since the movies are so action packed and physical, you might increase the default number of General ability build points, or give 3-point pool refreshes between scenes in addition to any refreshes granted by Stitches.
- ▶ Time travel is one-way and allows no foreign matter, whether clothes or weapons. Any futuristic weapons or gear are removed from the game unless constructed by visitors from the future.
- ▶ Car chases are common. Perhaps characters start with 4 free points in Vehicles.
- ▶ Normal time-appropriate weapons are the weapons of choice, with a particular emphasis of using vehicles as a weapon (perhaps adapting the *Explosives and Explosion* rules on p. 99 to determine damage when hit by a vehicle).

- ▶ In lieu of a tether and the easy access to information it provides, characters will have to use time-appropriate methods to gather information.
- ▶ Chronal Stability should be removed from the game, and possibly replaced with Stability (as adapted from another GUMSHOE book such as *Night's Black Agents* or *Esoterrorists 2.0*) to emulate sanity and stress. Reality Anchor would be replaced by Psychoanalysis, a near-identical ability that restores Stability.

Clock City Blues

In a game where highly trained law enforcement officers are accidentally sent back in time to hunt deadly terrorists, such as in the TV show *Continuum*, you'd change the rules accordingly:

- ▶ The TimeWatch organization does not exist.
- ▶ No time travel initially exists other than the initial plot-device entry. This is a game about highly trained future cops and terrorists in an earlier time setting, not a game about jumping around in time.
- ▶ Any future technology the officers brought with them exists, as does anything they can Tinker into existence, but they can't rely on time travel and teleportation to acquire assets. The Difficulty to Tinker future-tech is higher than normal, and spending Science! points to acquire super-science might be disallowed or twice as expensive as normal.
- ▶ Tethers are still useful for communication but lose their ongoing access to massive historical databases.
- ▶ Chronal Stability would be replaced by Stability (as above), and Reality Anchor would be replaced by Psychoanalysis.

Troubleshooters, Inc.

In a game where a highly trained team of charismatic troubleshooters deal with super-science problems like alien invaders and dimension-piercing oscillation overthrusters, such as the *Doc Savage* series or the world presented in the 1984 cult movie *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension*, you'd adjust the game as follows:

- ▶ The TimeWatch organization does not exist.
- ▶ All player characters are members of an elite and internationally known organization.
- ▶ Spending Investigative points could draw on resources from adjunct and junior members of that organization.
- ▶ One player would likely play the charismatic leader, and the others would be members of his or her crack team of multitalented investigators.
- ▶ Alien and conspiracy-based threats would be common.
- ▶ Casual use of time machines would be unlikely, unless that's the center of an adventure's plot.
- ▶ Chronal Stability and Reality Anchor would be completely removed.
- ▶ The History (Future) ability would be removed.

Time Patrol

To model Poul Anderson's superb *Time Patrol* series of stories, you'd start with the standard *Patrol* setting and change the following:

- ▶ Autochrons become bulky, two-person chrono-scooters.
- ▶ Chronal Stability and Reality Anchor would be removed, to be replaced by Stability and Psychoanalysis.
- ▶ There's no appreciable penalty for using time machines to double back and help yourself in an emergency, although actually seeing yourself closely might cause a Stability test.

Blundering Through History

To create a light-hearted, goofy game inspired by movies like *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*, you might want to make the following changes:

- ▶ Weapons and combat are de-emphasized.
- ▶ The Difficulties for Paradox tests are significantly lowered, as is the penalty for failing such tests.
- ▶ Stitches are given out for being hilarious, and the hoarding limit rises from 3 to 5 Stitches.
- ▶ It's common (and encouraged!) for characters to meet themselves, help themselves, and even play pranks on themselves.

You get the idea. And of course, after you model a fun setting, consider posting it online for other GMs and players to use as well (so long as it doesn't violate anyone's intellectual property or copyright rights).

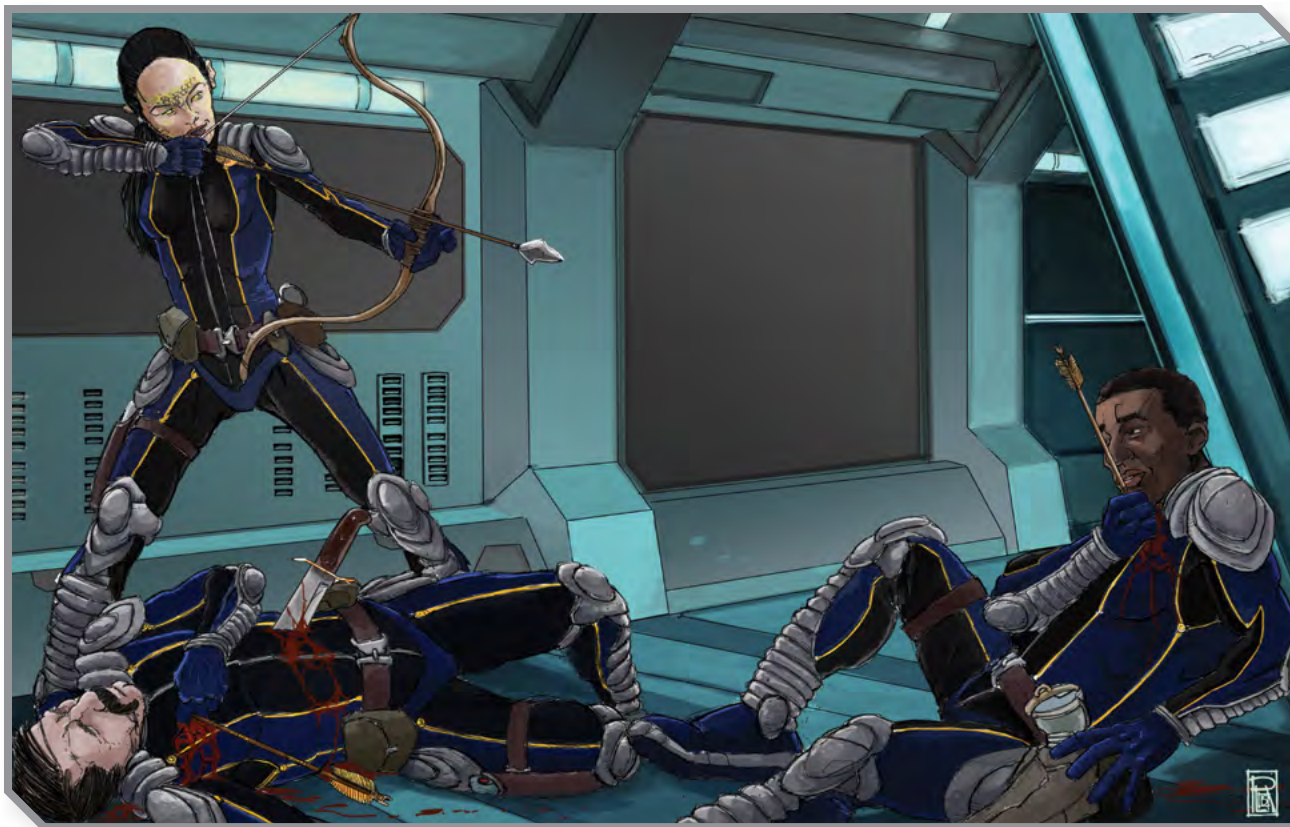
CONSPIRACY CAMPAIGN FRAME

ROTTEN TO THE CORE

When you become a TimeWatch agent, they tell you that your job is to discover disruptions to the time stream, restoring the true history that always should have been. That, like so many other things about TimeWatch, is a lie. TimeWatch agents are actually the tools of a vast conspiracy dedicated to the creation of a new history: not a roaring river of time, but a carefully engineered cabal designed to control every nanosecond of reality from beginning to inevitable end.

Call them the Ascended Masters or the Illuminati if you must name them. You've heard they're not even human. Regardless, they are the secret masters, and you work for them. No one really knows what they really hope to achieve, sending agents like you out to reshape history. But you don't need secrets to protect pleasant truths, agent.

So watch your back. They will brook no challenge to their control. Trust nothing and no one. Not your boss. Not your fellow agents. Not even your tether.



In a Conspiracy game, today's best friends could be tomorrow's shapeshifted enemies.

INTRODUCING CONSPIRACY

A *TimeWatch Conspiracy* game keeps all the procedural elements of a standard *TimeWatch* campaign, but layers on a pervasive atmosphere of lies and mistrust, essentially turning the assumptions underlying a standard *TimeWatch* game on their heads. They say power corrupts, and that absolute power corrupts absolutely... and there's no greater power than the ability to manipulate time. *TimeWatch* is, essentially, an ideal incubator for Machiavellian plots, and an ideal target for those who would seek to manipulate time for their own ends.

While your standard villains may outline their dastardly intentions in a climactic monologue, Agents fighting a conspiracy may never really know the true purpose of the cabal they've stopped (though it's probably a more satisfying play experience if they can untangle things eventually). Instead of just the intellectual challenge of ferreting out threats to history, *TimeWatch* Agents in a *Conspiracy* game must also deal with complex intrigues within *TimeWatch* itself: they may find themselves battling a corrupt faction secretly controlled by ezeru infiltrators, opposing a sentient computer virus insidiously altering mission parameters to create a timeline inhospitable to biological life, or standing against the inscrutable reptoid masters of *TimeWatch* itself.

More *X-Files* or *Fringe* than *Timecop*, trust and truth are at a premium in *Conspiracy* campaigns, recasting the generally benevolent *TimeWatch* as an organization capable of deliberate,

sinister machinations within the time stream and within its own ranks. *TimeWatch* Agents who begin to question their orders — or the true purpose of their missions — may find helpful superiors replaced by stricter taskmasters more concerned with monitoring their behavior and blocking their attempts to find out what's really happening than helping them succeed in the field. Worse yet, they might begin to suspect that their fellow Agents are actually stooges placed on the team by whatever mysterious cabal lies at the heart of your game, and that even innocent queries to their tethers are met with roadblocks: “ERROR! Agent not authorized for this data. Clearance level MAJESTIC required.”

Although you can introduce conspiracy to your *TimeWatch* game right away, it's often best to let your Agents' paranoia slowly build as you introduce clues indicating that all is not what it seems in *TimeWatch* over the course of one or two standard *Patrol* adventures, particularly if you want the conspiracy to serve as the centerpiece of your campaign. Your Agents' first mission might be to wait in the audience at Ford's Theatre during the April 14, 1865, performance of *Our American Cousin* to ensure that presidential assassin John Wilkes Booth breaks his leg, guaranteeing his eventual capture. However, they may start to wonder if something is awry when their second mission has them sabotaging the number two oxygen tank on *Apollo 13*'s service module or burning down Nikola Tesla's Fifth Avenue laboratory in 1895 New York. They may become more certain — and start to fight back — when their commanding officers continue to place them in dangerous, highly concentrated paradoxes, as if they're trying

to put the Agents in a situation where they will be subsumed or erased by an uncaring universe. What happens when it turns out that the shooter on the grassy knoll you're trying to stop is you? After all, the best way to keep a secret is to make sure that everyone who knew it never actually existed.

HOW CONSPIRACIES WORK

At its core, every conspiracy is about acquiring and exercising *power* and *control*. Conspiracies acquire both using collusion, coercion — and most of all secrecy — to subvert, bypass, or eliminate opposition or obstacles. A *TimeWatch* conspiracy game is about preventing the conspirators from doing just that... or in rarer cases may be about your Agents becoming the conspirators themselves. Although all conspiracies are different (unless, of course, you subscribe to the theory that they are all merely the outward faces of a single master-cabal), they must have some key elements to be viable. The following sections outline those required elements, and provide several suggestions for how to bring all of them into your *TimeWatch* game.

Puppet Master(s)

Though a conspiracy may have a single originator — a master puppeteer pulling all the strings — it must by definition include other conspirators who themselves may employ other witting or unwitting subordinates in the service of the cabal's goals. The upper echelons of the conspiracy will be at least tacitly aware of its true intentions; the lower echelons almost certainly will not. The Real Truth will always be found at the center of the web.

Secret Aims

The conspiracy wants something, and it's not something it can get easily or openly. The goal may be as simple as the acquisition of personal power, or as complex as the engineering of a specific future event. The end for which a conspiracy strives need not be strictly evil, or even entirely contrary to your Agents' goals. However, there's always *something* that drives a conspiracy into the shadows. After all, if the cabal's intentions and actions were truly noble and its actions acceptable, it could operate in the open.

How much worse would the conflict with the sophosaurs be if they knew that the extinction event in what we think of as core time was actually orchestrated by *TimeWatch* agents to ensure that there were enough readily available fossil fuels to power the Industrial Revolution? How much worse yet if it is discovered that the Industrial Revolution was merely a stepping stone to installing a planetary corporate autocracy with the conspirators (or their chosen representatives) at its head?

Power (But Not Too Much)

Although your conspiracy must have at least a modicum of power to be effective, it must lack the necessary leverage to completely overcome those who would oppose its ends (or the means it employs to achieve them). This is why

conspiracies often use threats, blackmail, or assassination to secure cooperation from those who would oppose them (or to replace their enemies with more pliable individuals) — they may have enough power to nudge an individual, organization, or even an entire military-industrial complex to follow its desired path, but not enough to force the issue in an open conflict.

Compartmentalization

Even when dealing with willing coconspirators, successful conspiracies strictly compartment knowledge of their activities and intentions to ensure that they are not discovered until or unless they have acquired enough power to ensure that secrecy is no longer necessary. This compartmentalization prevents unwitting slipups or opposition discoveries from endangering the entire operation: you cannot spill a secret you do not know.

Plausible Deniability

Even when secrecy fails to protect the conspiracy from undue scrutiny, deniability — the conspiracy's ability to sow doubt as to its intentions or even existence — can prevent any serious backlash against the core cabal, even if specific members or activities are discovered. The sheer size of *TimeWatch* may prevent your Agents from ever being sure they've found every cell working for the conspiracy, in part because the conspiracy may be able to use the "normal" movement of personnel and resources or standard organizational disciplinary measures to hide its proxies from scrutiny. Agents who begin to make progress combating the conspiracy's machinations may find key suspects suddenly assigned to long-term highly classified missions beyond the Agents' reach, or even find out that their sources and informants met "unfortunate accidents" in the line of duty and were killed or subsumed.

Consequently, conspiracies are most likely to flourish undiscovered in large organizations with complex bureaucracies, which give them ample opportunity to hide their activities from unwanted attention, or at worst use internal organizational boundaries to obfuscate the true purpose of their actions from others who do not share their goals.

HOW CONSPIRACIES WORK (IN TIMEWATCH)

In a traditional game, *TimeWatch* has a "mild but detectable bureaucracy." In a conspiracy game, that bureaucracy is huge and elaborate, with an army of agents, archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, as well as technicians and support personnel all working in separate or even competing departments to identify threats to the time stream, and then dispatch agents to repair them. In the best case scenario, those departments are working in parallel; in the worst, two or more are at odds, pushing competing agendas on the agents and their missions.

Despite *TimeWatch*'s near omniscient position outside time, these departments must still jockey for influence

and resources, or even to ensure that history is “repaired” in accordance with their views of what really happened. As anyone familiar with modern historical scholarship (or Wikipedia editing wars) can tell you, there is often no real agreement on what really happened and why, even for well-documented historical events.

That combination of rivalry and ambiguity gives the conspiracy the space it needs to operate in TimeWatch, potentially manipulating both the Agents and history itself to advance its aims. Because no one person can know everything (and the Agents themselves all come to TimeWatch with different levels of technological or historical expertise), it can be immensely difficult to establish “ground truth” in history, or even in the Citadel itself.

Agents may believe that they can always trust the records that TimeWatch’s computers provide to their tethers, but even they are only as reliable as their programmers, or the low-level workers who load and maintain the raw historical data. If any of them are part of the conspiracy (or at the center of it!) that basic lifeline is suddenly suspect. Even if caught, such a cabal could deny intentional wrongdoing, blaming the error on unintentionally corrupted records. Even in the worst case, they could blame the error on a rogue technician, and use TimeWatch’s own standard procedures for jettisoning problematic personnel (a MEM-tag and a free trip back to your native timeline) to ensure that the patsy can never finger the true culprits for what they’ve done and continue to do.

Most of the guidelines here assume that your Agents are working against an evil or at least misguided conspiracy, but there’s no real reason that your Agents couldn’t be the conspirators, infiltrating and subverting TimeWatch for their own ends. Indeed, if you decide that TimeWatch’s aims are appropriately diabolical, it’s only natural for your noble Agents to try to use its resources (and weaknesses) against it, restoring the true timeline or building a better one.

Of course, if you’ve got the chops, your Agents can be proper villains all on their own: there’s something to be said about a game that ends with your Agents as the unquestioned Lords of Time, using manipulation and subtle plots to first subvert TimeWatch and then establish the Citadel as their personal pleasure palace. They can build a better tomorrow (for them, at least) one grassy knoll and faked moon landing at a time.

Nevertheless, since *most* conspiracy games will put the conspiracy and your Agents in opposition to each other, with the Agents on the side of the angels (albeit probably ultra-terrestrial time-hopping angels in the service of an unfathomable and otherworldly omniscience), we cast the rest of our suggested conspirators in a decidedly negative light.

TANGLED WEBS

Conspiracies can be huge, or limited to only a few actors. Their goals might be as complex and grandiose as the creation of an entirely new historical record, or as simple as personal aggrandizement. Your conspiracy could go all the way to the top, effectively corrupting the entire edifice of TimeWatch, or stem

from a small-but-difficult-to-identify group that TimeWatch’s benevolent leaders send your Agents to root out. It may have existed since the dawn of time, predating TimeWatch’s inception, or represent the final counterstrike of a dying but disruptive parallel timeline eliminated by TimeWatch actions. It might have been introduced by outside enemies, dissatisfied insiders, or both working together. It could represent a mirror universe version of TimeWatch attempting to preserve its own existence or conquer the “true” timeline.

In fact, your conspiracy might operate without access to TimeWatch at all, opposing the Agents’ actions in the time stream, but leaving TimeWatch itself inviolate. Regardless, it is there, and it will not be easily stopped.

A conspiracy that does include — or even spring from — TimeWatch’s mysterious founders and leaders will leave the Agents with few allies that they can really trust. It can be assumed that most active and low-level TimeWatch agents have bought into the cover story about TimeWatch’s noble goals, but “innocent” agents will still be carefully monitored by superiors, or even well-placed fellow agents “in the know” about what’s really happening, to ensure that they can be dealt with if they discover too much.

The potential that one of the Agents on your team is spying on you can give players an excuse to dive deep into secret alliances and intra-party conflict, or even well-planned betrayal at a key dramatic moment. However, player vs. player conflict is a powerful spice. It is best used sparingly, if at all. Regardless, clues acquired about the nature and activities of the conspiracy will inevitably lead the Agents deeper into TimeWatch itself, effectively drawing them into the center of a complex web where they will eventually confront the corruption at the heart of the Citadel.

Your conspiracy might instead be the result of infiltration by an outside force which seeks to bring TimeWatch — or humanity, or the entirety of core history — down from the inside. Perhaps agents are being replaced by evil clones, parallel universe duplicates, or any one of a number of shape-shifting aliens (the ezeru, for example). Maybe they’re being influenced by powerful psychic dinosaurs like the sophosaurs, dominated by alien mind-parasites like the Europeans, or infected with a contagious mind-altering nanovirus inadvertently brought back from an otherwise successful mission during the catastrophic 33rd-century Robot Wars. In this kind of conspiracy game, the Agents may have several “normal” missions before they start to notice that things have gone awry in TimeWatch: former allies or superiors may begin to act strangely or erratically as the contagion (literal or otherwise) spreads through the organization. Once they discover that all is not well, they will find themselves attempting to stop the conspirators before they can get to someone or something truly important, or become so widespread that they are impossible to quarantine and eliminate.

Then again, the conspiracy in your game might not reach TimeWatch at all. Agents attempting to halt an unexpected plague or a sudden thermonuclear conflict might not find themselves up against time travelers — maybe the culprits are a cell of diabolical Freemasons, a radical splinter of the Council on Foreign Relations, or the enlightened secret

masters of the Rosicrucian Brotherhood. Antagonists like these may not have access to time travel, but if you believe even half of the conspiracy theories that exist in the core timeline, they have tremendous influence and authority, wielded in secret to protect and advance the interests of a global elite at the expense of the vast majority of life on Earth. This kind of game depends on the introduction of at least a little secret history, effectively casting doubt on the “real” story the Agents’ tethers have to offer. The publicly recorded events must remain the same — but the behind the scenes machinations behind them may differ greatly from the historical record. Maybe Truman did defeat Dewey. Or maybe Majestic 12 rigged the results to ensure the man who approved its deal with the greys at Roswell in 1947 got another four alien-friendly years in office.

MIXING AND MATCHING TONE

Mix the secret history campaign frame with the contagion idea suggested above, and your Agents could find themselves embroiled in a secret war against the reptoids stretching from ancient Sumer (where they pose as godlike Anunnaki in an early attempt to enslave humanity) to 21st-century geopolitics (where they attempt to install reptilian-human hybrid thralls in positions of influence, content to rule humanity from behind the scenes). Ever wonder why you never get to see the dinner menu for meetings of the Bilderberg Group? Give this kind of game a *Pulp* (p. 293) spin, and you can have your Agents discover and oppose Shaverian deros with Lemurian mind-control rays from the Hollow Earth, or put them up against an Antarctic post-WWII Nazi remnant armed with invisible flying saucers.

Alternatively, your conspiracy game could be a hybrid between *TimeWatch* and fellow GUMSHOE game *Night’s Black Agents*, or possibly *The Esoterrorists*. A conspiracy game in this frame would need to jettison most of *TimeWatch*’s more futuristic science fiction elements, replacing autochrons and tethers with grittier stolen experimental DARPA hardware, forgotten Cold War time portal technology from either side of the Iron Curtain, or even mystic incantations at the crossroads of powerful occult ley lines. If you go this way, your players may be part of an elite military unit, deniable black ops assets, or burned spies using poorly understood and unreliable time travel equipment and deadly “real world” weapons to combat immortal monsters (vampires, of course, for *Night’s Black Agents*) across multiple times. This kind of game emphasizes survival and sanity over Chronal Stability, with your dedicated Agents often severely outmatched by hyper-evolved or even supernatural antagonists.

Of course, the conspiracy in your game may be somewhat less than all-consuming. In the end, a secretive faction consisting only of maintenance workers who program and maintain the Agents’ autochrons could subvert *TimeWatch* just as easily as a deep cover sophosaur terrorist cell psychically controlling *TimeWatch* middle management or even the Bavarian Illuminati. Indeed, in a game where you don’t necessarily want to leave the Agents *constantly* guessing about who they can trust, a one- or two-session adventure

focused on the hidden origins of the Citadel, the identities of *TimeWatch*’s true masters, or the real reason for all the secrecy surrounding Area 51 can serve as an interesting break — or as a bridge — between more traditional historical mysteries.

For longer term games, your Agents’ success at peeling back the layers of the conspiracy may greatly alter the later acts of your campaign. As they learn more about what’s really happening, you may find your game shifting away from transhistorical intrigue to open revolution, effectively making your Agents rebels (p. 297) or possibly the leaders on one side of the *Time War* (p. 314). Depending on how terrifying the truth turns out to be, your *Conspiracy* game could become *Mythos* (p. 267) instead as they confront the squamous spawn of Yog-Sothoth, who while slumbering deep in the Citadel’s living core feast upon souls loosed from disintegrating alternate timelines destroyed by the “heroic” actions of your Agents.

CONFLICTING LOYALTIES

Player vs. player conflict is incredibly difficult to pull off in a roleplaying game without creating lasting resentment between players. When Agents have conflicting (and possibly secret) primary objectives, betrayal needs to be approached with care. It can be handled with some effort in a one-shot game, and it’s much harder to maintain in a campaign or a series.

If all the player characters share the same primary objective but have conflicting *secondary* objectives, however, secret loyalties and goals are much less likely to derail things entirely (or to cause out-of-character drama).

With many competing bureaucratic divisions within *TimeWatch*, you can set up each player character with a different departmental affiliation that they owe loyalty to. Those departments assign tasks peripheral or separate to the main mission on the department’s behalf. Characters are thus primed with secret secondary objectives to advance their departmental agenda (while saving the universe as per their primary mission brief, of course). There are secrets kept from other player characters, carrying the potential for PvP, but since everyone’s primary objective is the same the PvP conflict doesn’t need to result in the complete meltdown of the team once secrets start to come to light.

Vidhvansaka-5 is a secret cyborg posing as a human agent, and she falls under the aegis of TimeWatch’s Research and Development labs; they repair or upgrade her when necessary and keep her nonhuman identity secret, and in exchange they demand her loyalty. R & D assigns her small, secret tasks to complete during normal missions. During her current mission to reverse the assassination of a young Mahatma Gandhi, she is ordered to acquire and destroy the murder weapon’s physical evidence at the scene of the crime before anyone else on her team sees it. She is not told why. Doing so means that she and her team will need to solve the murder from other evidence instead.

Kelfala is allied with TimeWatch’s elite logistics team. He is secretly informed that Gandhi’s murder may be linked to corruption within TimeWatch; not only must they reverse the murder and catch the assassin, he should look for clues and physical evidence linking it back to a conspiracy within the organization.

CONSPIRACY ADVENTURE HOOKS

Once you've decided to run a conspiracy game in *TimeWatch*, you still need to decide what, exactly, your conspiracy is all about. The following mission hooks may spur some ideas.

Not How You Remember It

The MEM-tag is an essential tool in every TimeWatch agent's arsenal. They are so common, in fact, that most agents never give a second thought to the technicians who operate the tachyon beams or the neuro-cognitive engineers who painstakingly erase errant memories and replace them with less disruptive recollections in the innocent bystanders — and sometimes deadly enemies — caught up in TimeWatch's efforts to protect the core timeline.

The trick, of course, is that those who give it a second thought never give it a third.

Some — perhaps all — of the personnel in TimeWatch's MEM-tag operation are embedding multiple layers of subconscious programming in their subjects as part of the memory-reconstruction process. The precise purpose of this programming is not clear, but the neural modifications made in TimeWatch's labs have a more drastic effect than any active agent would suspect.

The unwitting sleeper operatives may continue their normal lives for weeks, months, or even years after the agents have moved on with no noticeable side effects beyond the standard sense of lost time and déjà vu before the programming takes control. Programmed merchants and stockbrokers unconsciously manipulate markets. Monarchs, generals, and diplomats start unwinnable border disputes. In more extreme cases, normal people become spies, cult leaders, or even assassins, displaying motivations and skills that they could not have had before being MEM-tagged.

Once the Agents discover this chaos in their wake, they must try to trace the plot back to its source. Even as they do, they must wonder, "Have we been programmed?" or worse yet, "Have we done this before?"

Dealey Plaza

The assassination of John F. Kennedy is simply too strange to be coincidence: everyone knows there were too many moving pieces for it all to come down to a lone gunman. Some say it was the Russians. Others say it was the Cubans, the Mob, or the CIA. They are right to believe in a conspiracy. They are wrong to think it is something so mundane.

A critical turning point in core time, November 22nd, 1963, is a magnet for time travelers with a host of competing agendas. Consequently, it is perhaps the single most manipulated (and thus chronally unstable) single day in human history, a target for everyone from well-meaning Cold War historians to any number of time traveling aliens hoping to end the US space program before it can truly begin. As a result, even the Agents' tethers are unable to provide a single set of established facts about the day's events.

Nevertheless, when the Agents are ordered to recover illicit 22nd-century weapons last tracked to Dallas' Dealey Plaza, including self-motivating homing ammunition, they must attempt to unravel a complex web of conspiracies involving a time traveling journalist named Abraham Zaprunder, the American military-industrial complex, itinerant railroad tramps who may or may not have been CIA agents, Clay Shaw, Jack Ruby, and multiple men claiming to be former US Marine and Soviet defector Lee Harvey Oswald, all to prevent anachronistic technology from further destabilizing the timeline at a key historical tipping point.

Missing Time

The Egyptian historian Manetho's surviving writings detail a chronology of Egyptian civilization that stretches at least 24,000 years before the accepted date of the founding of Egypt's first dynasty in about 3100 BCE, crediting gods, demigods, and powerful "spirits of the dead" with dynasties that lasted nearly 20,000 years before finally giving way to the earliest (but still mythical) human kings.

Although some take this as evidence of the existence of an advanced global civilization that significantly predates the accepted establishment of the earliest known complex human cultures, Manetho's claims are widely considered to be literary flourish by archaeologists and modern historians, roughly akin to Plato's Atlantis. Legends. Fiction.

Consequently, when a rogue TimeWatch agent's missing autochron is traced to a supposedly insignificant period of Egyptian prehistory, the Agents are shocked to discover an advanced society flourishing in the Nile Valley. The strange culture, complete with crystal-topped energy pyramids and an already ancient Sphinx at a time when the Agents' tethers insist that the region should be populated by primitive fishermen and hunter-gatherers, welcomes the Agents as kin to its powerful god-kings.

The Agents soon discover that their rogue agent is but a small part of a cabal of corrupt time travelers — many of whom continue to wield influence in TimeWatch — who have created an alternate prehistory where they can rule as they please, unconcerned with the consequences their rule will have for core time. Will the Agents preserve a flourishing human culture built on corruption and dangerous anachronism, or destroy it and allow established history to reassert itself?

One Small Step for Man

No one could have prepared for the parasitic European colony waiting for Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin in the moon's Sea of Tranquility on July 20th, 1969; no contemporary sensor could have even detected the European crystal-hive, let alone the incursion from a parallel universe that put it there. The two astronauts were ideal hosts for the rapidly multiplying Europeans, who were able to spread from NASA to the highest levels of the US government, and then the world, to complete their conquest of the planet only months after *Apollo 11* returned to Earth.

This course of events is unacceptable to TimeWatch.

Acting against an infected Armstrong and Aldrin directly presents too great a risk to the established timeline, and creates too large a chance for the Europeans to infect and infiltrate TimeWatch itself. Simply destroying the European colony before the *Eagle* has landed will cause a noticeable disturbance on the lunar surface, preventing the Apollo 11 mission from going forward and creating a different — but still unacceptable — disturbance in the core timeline.

The only reliable way to end the threat is to prevent contact from ever occurring: the Agents must fake the moon landing, and then eliminate the European threat without noticeably altering the established narrative. In short, no one in NASA — including the astronauts — can know that they never actually set foot on the lunar surface.

For Whom the Bell Tolls

Under the guise of a secret weapons program referred to only as the Wunderwaffe, the Nazis built a time machine in 1944. They called it *Die Glocke* — *The Bell* — because of its peculiar shape. A team of sixty scientists designed and constructed the device at a hidden base in Lower Silesia; the Nazis had all sixty men shot to keep the project secret from Allied spies. It was the culmination of years of occult and scientific research, combining ancient alchemical wisdom with modern engineering to create a red-mercury engine that could harness energies that the mainstream scientific community would not even discover until decades later.

Mainstream historians know it's also a hoax: nonsense propagated by Polish conspiracy theorists in the 1990s.

TimeWatch knows better. After all, at least three crashed Bells were recovered in the 20th century alone: one in Tunguska in 1908, one in Roswell in 1947, and one in Kecksburg in 1965.

The Nazi Wunderwaffe has menaced the time stream since *The Bell's* first flights, creating dozens of unstable autocratic alternate timelines from which they can continue to strike at their enemies. Their operators are adept at recruiting fascist versions of key historical figures (and TimeWatch agents) from Nazi-friendly parallel universes, and then using those doubles to replace the real versions in the core timeline.

Unable to simply prevent *The Bell's* creation without risking disastrous paradox because at least some of the technology it uses would later be critical to the invention of the autochron, the Agents must root the Wunderwaffe out from its parallel universe redoubts while simultaneously preventing Wunderwaffe doubles from infiltrating TimeWatch... or the Agents' team itself.

CAMPAIGN AND SERIES PROFILES

If you plan to run a longer conspiracy campaign, deciding who and what hides at the center of the web is all the more important. If your game is about TimeWatch itself, even the basic “facts” that every agent knows about TimeWatch may be up for debate. Even if you leave the standard story behind TimeWatch alone, there are a lot of questions out there whose answers may be more sinister than the Agents would

hope. What is the Citadel? Why are there so many parallel universes and alternate timelines? What mysterious crystals power autochrons and tethers? Still, the most obvious is also the largest: how was TimeWatch founded, and who's really running things at the top?

The reptoids, of course.

Cold-Blooded Leadership

The Agents discover the reptilian cabal at the heart of TimeWatch, and must attempt to wrest control of the organization from its cold-blooded masters or destroy TimeWatch itself.

The reptoids really aren't of this universe, or even this multiverse; they are aliens in the truest sense of the word. They reached the peak of their technological and cultural evolution in the final millennia of a previous universe nearing thermodynamic equilibrium — in some circles referred to as maximum entropy; the heat death of their space-time continuum. As this universe shrunk in on itself, the reptoids carefully manipulated the death of their own galaxy to engineer a fortress that could survive the coming apocalypse: a Citadel forged in the collapse of a thousand crystalline stellar remnants, so dense that it stood partially outside space-time. A chosen few took refuge in the Citadel to witness their universe's final fall into a supermassive event horizon with emotionless curiosity, and then watched as the condensed matter exploded outward, birthing a new universe to take its place.

In the early eons, the few remaining reptoids were content to manipulate planetary formation and seed protomicrobes onto innumerable worlds, occasionally nudging the gene pool to ensure that intelligent life would arise. The ruthless saurians, too small in number to openly rule, would infiltrate technological civilizations using well-placed agents or half-breed thralls, ensuring that each would function under utmost order. Freedom of choice, or even thought, would give too much ground to entropy. In their own twisted way, the reptoids were engaged in an act of preservation. Protection.

As some isolated planetary systems proceeded in undirected growth, they discovered something that the reptoids had never expected: the artificial separation of the Citadel from this new universe had subtly changed some of its physical and temporal laws. The creation of the Citadel had made time travel — a dangerous assault on an orderly universe — possible. Although effectively immortal, the reptoids and their hybrid progeny could only experience time linearly, a side effect of their unimaginably ancient origin. So the reptoids simply stole the first primitive time machines, and then orchestrated a catastrophic civil war that sent the once-advanced civilization that had invented them back to its stone age.

It did not take the reptoids long to determine that sending an unwitting agent back to prevent the discovery of time travel in the first place would cause a dangerous backlash: the mother of all paradoxes. Since then, the reptoids have used carefully chosen proxies to build the organization we know as TimeWatch to carefully manage the ongoing, orderly progress of a single core timeline. Alternate and parallel timelines are to be eliminated quickly and efficiently, and while events in

the core timeline should be managed to give sentient beings the illusion of choice and free will, maintaining control of all peoples in all times is the secret, true mission of TimeWatch.

The reptoids cannot risk revealing themselves publicly to all but a few of the most trusted members of TimeWatch. The discovery of their true identities — and true purpose — would cause many of their idealistic (and thus easily manipulated) agents to rebel. However, this high compartmentalization sometimes inadvertently leads to conflicts between TimeWatch and reptoid infiltrators and hybrids operating in core time at points before TimeWatch's inception. These conflicts are typically short lived: the reptoid attempting to place its hybrid progeny on the throne of England may be one of the same who go on to found TimeWatch. As a result, TimeWatch's secretive leaders will automatically be aware of any of the Agents' actions. After all, for them, it's just memory.

Agents who discover reptoids or their thralls attempting to manipulate history will find their missions cut short or redirected, or even find that their mission parameters have changed in ways that would seem to forward their apparent enemies' aims. Queries to superior officers in TimeWatch will be met with good-natured dismissal ("There's always a good reason for things like this!") or even reassignment. Agents who get too close to the truth are frequently sent out on dangerous missions where the risk of being subsumed is greatest, or secretly MEM-tagged and sent back to their home times. Depending on the precise circumstance, these cases are recorded as "voluntary retirements" or "long-term classified missions" in accessible TimeWatch records.

In order to make progress combating the conspiracy, heroic Agents may have to steal jury-rigged tethers and autochrons, co-opt non-TimeWatch time travelers to bypass bureaucratic interference, or even temporarily ally with some of TimeWatch's traditional enemies. As the game progresses, the Agents might find themselves hunted by other TimeWatch teams, or even still-idealistic previous versions of themselves as they slowly discover that nothing in TimeWatch can be trusted. It's a game of cat and mouse as your Agents move from time to time disrupting the secret reptoid dominance, ultimately leading your Agents to attempt to destroy the corrupt edifice of TimeWatch itself in a cataclysmic encounter at the heart of the Citadel.

Sample search terms: "Reptoid", "Reptilians", "Reptilian Agenda", "Reptilian Anunnaki", "David Icke", "Serpent People"

The Rainbow Connection

A powerful global conspiracy has discovered TimeWatch, and uses contemporary agents (and eventually, its own time machines) to supplant TimeWatch as the undisputed master of human destiny.

It's hard to imagine a technology that could be more disruptive to every facet of life on Earth than time travel. The ability to step back in time and change something, anything, is inherently dangerous... no matter how noble your intent. It is inherently dangerous not just to you, but to the very fabric of reality. Indeed, should such technology exist it would have to be used with utmost care, with a careful

understanding of the rippling consequence of each and every action and reaction in history.

That's why no one should have it. At least, not TimeWatch.

Someone in core history known to have vast, secret knowledge — maybe the Rosicrucians, maybe the NSA — has discovered TimeWatch and its agents. It's unclear if an unstable agent gave away too much information before being subsumed, or if a misplaced tether fell into the wrong hands, but someone knows *too much*, and is working to counter TimeWatch missions in order to ensure history remains on its "true" path... or perhaps just a path more attractive to the conspiracy. Agents may encounter opposition from the conspiracy going back to the Cold War (the CIA), the Crusades (Knights Templar), or to the global maritime civilization that flourished in the days before the end of the last ice age (Atlanteans), but find its core members difficult to identify and root out. Though the conspiracy will be busy manipulating historical events for their own ends soon after its inception, it doesn't become a direct threat to TimeWatch until the later years of the 19th century, when they begin their assault on time travel itself.

The earliest known direct precursor to the time machine was invented quite accidentally by famed inventor Nikola Tesla in March 1895, when he was struck by a 3.5 million volt vorticular electromagnetic current that forced him out of his normal resonant space-time frequency. From his temporary vantage point outside the timeline, Tesla was able to see the immediate past, present, and future with perfect clarity before an assistant knocked him clear of the field and back into normal space-time. In your game's "original" core timeline, this event might have led Tesla directly to the creation of a primitive but functional autochron, and a key founding role in TimeWatch. The conspiracy, however, has other plans.

In the current core timeline, Tesla's massive laboratory at 35 South Fifth Avenue in New York burned to the ground just days after his discovery, taking with it dozens of prototypes and designs, as well as notes and research that Tesla had gathered since coming to New York, including the oscillating generator that had jolted Tesla out of regular space-time, hiding his discovery from the world. The fire was, of course, ruled an accident. In fact, it was the first of the conspiracy's direct attacks against the scientific foundations of TimeWatch. As only the first in a series of dramatic assaults on Tesla's work and reputation meant to sideline his work in favor of more compliant patsies, like Thomas Edison, the Agents find that even if they save Tesla's laboratory, the attacks on Tesla continue, eventually driving the inventor's discoveries out of vogue as even his closest friends and relatives begin to question his sanity.

However, by 1943, notes confiscated by the US government upon Tesla's death had made their way into at least one military project. The Philadelphia-based experiment — officially referred to as Project Rainbow — set out to use Tesla's rotating electromagnetic currents to charge the hull of a naval vessel in order to temporarily change its space-time resonant frequency in such a way that the ship would be rendered invisible to enemy mines, torpedoes, and even the naked eye.

Things did not go entirely according to plan. When the hull

was charged, the ship — the USS *Eldridge* — disappeared from view, briefly materialized outside the shipyards in Norfolk, Virginia, and then reappeared in the Philadelphia harbor *10 seconds before it left*. Time travel had been reborn.

Although Project Rainbow's existence helped inoculate TimeWatch from the paradox caused by the suppression of Tesla's work, the conspiracy moved quickly to hide Project Rainbow's discoveries, burying the program under strictly compartmentalized classified programs and pressuring the naval establishment to deny the experiment's existence. And then it co-opted the program for its own ends. The conspiracy immediately moved Project Rainbow's surviving staff and equipment to Brookhaven National Laboratories, where they funded continued research with laundered money and intelligence program black budgets. Ultimately, the project grew too large to hide at Brookhaven, forcing the program to move deeper underground. Literally. By the late 1960s, the project had relocated to a massive underground facility beneath a soon-to-be-decommissioned Air Force base in Montauk, New York.

Agents' attempts to halt the Philadelphia Experiment risk additional paradoxes and cascading changes to the core timeline as another key precursor to the development of the autochron is removed. That said, if they do nothing, the conspiracy begins using the military-industrial complex to send primitive time travelers to effect their own changes. Worse yet, the Agents are likely to find that even if their patrons survive the changes to core time, a TimeWatch that traces its origins back to Project Rainbow is a more sinister place than one founded by the idealistic Nikola Tesla.

Agents attempting to stop the conspiracy find themselves battling contemporary minions of the conspiracy, competing time travelers, and eventually sinister TimeWatch agents springing from the new, darker timeline (maybe even evil versions of themselves). Their only allies are the unstable conspiracy theorists who occupy the lunatic fringe. Late night talk radio hosts, presumed UFO abductees, and militia leaders may all have key clues to the conspiracy's work, pointing out hidden connections that the mainstream would never believe. After all, the best ally to have when they're out to get you is a certifiable paranoid.

The final confrontation occurs as the Agents trace the conspiracy back to its origin, preventing them from learning that time travel is possible, or eliminating the founding cabal entirely.

Unless, of course, the Agents find that they've been fighting themselves all along.

Sample search terms: “Nikola Tesla”, “Tesla time travel”, “War of the Currents”, “Philadelphia Experiment”, “Project Rainbow”, “Montauk Conspiracy”, “Project Phoenix”, “Varo Edition”, “Carlos Allende”, “Morris K. Jessup”, “Time Cube”, “Coast to Coast AM”

The Secret History of History

TimeWatch is the conspiracy, and the Agents are willing cogs, hiding the truly strange aspects of human history from an unsuspecting public in order to ensure the proper advance to a utopian future.

They say that there's nothing new under the sun, and nobody believes the old axiom more fully than a TimeWatch agent. The contemporary Internet is full of theories about secret high-tech weapons programs, shadow governments, black helicopters, and the New World Order, but any time traveler can tell you that they've been around a lot longer than most people think. Especially the helicopters.

In fact, the entire history of the world as most people know it is a lie. Deep down, people have always known it's a lie. Sure, they say that the Sphinx was carved by ancient Egyptians in 2500 BCE, making it a mere 4,500 years old, give or take. But it was actually hewn out of solid rock around 12,000 BCE using harmonic resonators and zero-point energy that modern science has yet to replicate. It's hard to tell exactly when, because the Nefilim were still using the Martian calendar when they built the thing as a monument to their lost home on Cydonia. They dropped it into place with an incredibly ancient helicopter, which is probably why the Egyptians carved one into the walls in a temple dedicated to Seti I at Abydos around 1285 BCE.

Most people will never know the secret history of history, because — contrary to popular belief — the truth is dangerous. For every well-meaning engineer who realizes that the pyramids were designed to be part of a massive crystal free-energy generator powered by the rotation of the Milky Way, there's an aggressive predynastic Egyptian king who would use them to ignite an atomic explosion to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. (This also caused a massive pole shift that buried the Lemurian cities of Antarctica under hundreds of meters of ice and snow, but at least the Lemurians had enough time to draw the precursor to the famous Piri Reis map before they sailed to North America to plunder copper in ancient mines along the shores of Lake Superior and then died out, mysteriously, after building Serpent Mound. Also, the Lemurians were giants.)

Since knowledge is power and power is inherently dangerous, someone has to make sure too much knowledge doesn't fall into the wrong hands. They wore the armor of the Knights Templar before donning ill-fitting suits and tightening their thin ties to become the Men in Black; they are believed to be at the secret heart of the great Masonic lodges, pulling the strings of the global elite as they stand unseen in halls of power. Some call them the Illuminati; others know them as Rosicrucians. Still others know them as the Enlightened Ones. They prefer to be referred to as TimeWatch.

The Nine Unknown Men who form the ruling council of TimeWatch have chosen the Agents to ensure that history, like all things, is carefully managed. Humanity has proven time and time again that it cannot be trusted entirely to its own affairs: it must be shepherded cautiously on a path of linear progress, shielded from the strangeness of its past. Agents are not to change the major events of history, no matter how strange. That way lies madness (and also paradox). Instead, they are to ensure that history as *recorded* is carefully pruned to ensure that it stays *normal*, keeping humanity on its prescribed path.

Agents may spend one mission ensuring that Joshua's scribes attribute the fall of the walls of Jericho to a long march and a few trumpets rather than Joshua's alliance with burrowing

people from the Hollow Earth, and the next digging an alien corpse out a Masonic cemetery in Aurora, Texas, to keep anyone from looking for the airship *TimeWatch* crashed outside town in 1897. The next might have them battling both the KGB and CIA in Cold War Kazakhstan to ensure that red mercury remains an intelligence community red herring, rather than fuel for a CERN particle accelerator that accidentally shut down the sun. They are, in essence, history repairmen and -women, and their enemies are legion.

Agents find themselves opposed to conspiracy theorists, independent researchers, amateur archaeologists, and Internet rumormongers, all dangerously (if correctly) certain that “the Truth is out there.” Agents may be allowed to let a few well-chosen mysteries drift through the intellectual fringe, but will be forced to ruin reputations (to say nothing of film canisters or computer hard drives) as soon as the greater public starts to believe that the incredible is anything but.

Successful, trustworthy agents are often promoted out of the mystery-crushing business, instead directed by the Nine Unknown to seed the necessary precursors for great leaps in human technology and achievement with a chosen few at deliberately chosen points in time. It may not be clear why, but there’s a very important reason why the world could not be trusted with sliced bread until 1928.

Given only a slight twist, this game could instead cast the Agents as meddling archaeologists — or even disenchanting *TimeWatch* Men in Black — with their own time machines, now discovering (and uncovering) the weird foundations of life as we know it. Framed this way, the unspeakably wise Nine Unknown become greedily manipulative villains, subtly erasing humanity’s collective memory to stunt evolutionary leaps that might have happened hundreds — or thousands — of years before.

Depending on which side your Agents are on, the climax might be a final encounter revealing the dark truth behind the identities of the Nine Unknown in the ageless Citadel of Aghartha, or an elaborate infiltration to solve a few extra equations on a chalkboard at MIT to ensure that *TimeWatch* is founded *on schedule*.

Sample search terms: “True age of the Sphinx”, “Abydos helicopter”, “Giza Death Star”, “Nefilim”, “Sodom nuclear weapon”, “pole shift”, “Lemuria”, “Isle Royale”, “Aurora airship”, “red mercury”, “Nine Unknown Men”, “Graham Hancock”, “James Churchward”, “Zecharia Sitchin”

HUMOR CAMPAIGN FRAME

Are your Agents using time travel to play obnoxious pranks on each other or to pick up hot dates? Are they accidental time tourists, caught in a chronometric hot tub and forced to revisit their formative years? Are they kidnapping a caveman and trying to set him up with their divorced mom? Are they refugees of a future failed utopia, desperately backstabbing and betraying each other as they try to find their way home?

Most useful as a one-shot game, it’s quite possible to play *TimeWatch* for goofy laughs instead of tense drama. Failed Paradox tests manifest themselves as funny paradoxes,

coincidences work out in everyone’s favor, and as much time is spent telling bad puns as is spent roleplaying. Mostly, if you’re doing it right you’ll spend your time handwaving rules and laughing until it hurts. No coincidence or paradox is too ludicrous, and realism is given a polite nod at the door as it’s ushered out of the game room.

WHAT’S DIFFERENT?

There are a number of tonal changes to consider when running a humorous game, especially if you want it to be as funny around the table as it is in your head.

- ▶ **The essence of humor is timing.** Don’t make funny games as long or as complicated as you might make a more serious game. We’ve found that 3–4 hours is about the perfect amount of time to run light-hearted and funny games.
- ▶ **Say “yes, and” instead of saying “no.”** This is a good rule for all of *TimeWatch*, but it’s particularly important in a humorous game.
- ▶ **Reinforce the behavior you want to see.** You want to reward people being funny, so hand out Stitches for bad puns and great ideas like they’re going out of style. Consider raising the limit for Stitches. After all, deadly challenge isn’t exactly the point of a humorous game; the point of *Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure* isn’t whether they’ll die in a fight, it’s whether or not they’ll pass their history final.
- ▶ **More what you’d call “guidelines” than actual rules.** The best way to stomp humor flat is to enforce strict rules instead of cleaving to what’s actually funny. When humor trumps rules, go with humor! Our mantra is “Is it fun? Is it fair? Is it funny?” If the answer to all three of these is yes, allow it. This might mean introducing outrageous (and possibly self-destructive) weapons with a Science! or Tinkering spend, completely ignoring Chronal Stability rules as unnecessary bookkeeping, and encouraging clever time changes by handwaving anachronisms or realistic cause and effect. See below for more details.
- ▶ **Players bring the funny.** This is important: it’s the *players* that make the game funny, not the GM. Trying to run a joke- and pun-filled goofy adventure for serious players is not a recipe for success. Make sure your players make Agents who are fun and whimsical to play, and make sure they know the tone of the game you have planned. Set their expectations ahead of time and you’ll be just fine.
- ▶ **Players change history.** The whole point of a humorous time travel game is to change history — maybe magnificently, maybe horrendously, but in a way that puts the players’ unique stamp on human history. Encourage and reward this by showing them what happens as a result of their action. Feel no guilt about leaving history changed after the adventure is over.
- ▶ **Small stakes are important stakes.** Characters aren’t usually trying to save the world; they’re trying to ask that boy out on a date without dumping a drink on him, or they’re trying to return a library book before they start acquiring

finer, or they're trying to get selfies with famous people from history. Look for petty and inconsequential reasons to send people time traveling, or better yet have your players provide their own motivation.

- **Complications, complications, complications.** Maybe what started them time traveling is inconsequential, but their actions might quickly start time spinning out of control, and the fun is in fixing their own mistakes. Do they accidentally rip open a hole in time into their local Piggly Wiggly? Does returning that library book on time inspire a future dictator? Does "Selfie With Mona Lisa" cause a time traveling Leonardo da Vinci to declare chrontal war? Add just enough complication to keep the game interesting, but not so much that people need to take notes to keep track of the plot.

RULES CHANGES

Demerits, Not Paradox

"Screw this," says Altani's player. "I shoot him in the head for being disrespectful."

"... with your PaciFist?"

"No, with my plasma rifle!"

"You do know that's a young Albert Einstein, right?"

"Wait, it is? I hate his theories. They're boring. I shoot him twice."

"Your tether beeps. History has been fundamentally changed. Two demerits."

One alternative for relaxed, fun play is to remove Paradox tests entirely for incidents where the TimeWatch Agents trigger minor paradoxes — killing unimportant locals, introducing anachronistic customs to the past, anything that would be laughed away if your game was a cinematic comedy. Instead, have TimeWatch assign demerits. There's a rumor that several particularly unreliable strike teams compete to see who gets the most demerits; note that being caught doing so earns you demerits.

There's no particular penalty to these, other than mocking shame back at TimeWatch meetings and reverse status symbol bragging rights, but a cruel GM could apply them as mechanic bonuses to enemy rolls. That may not be needed, though. If you're running the sort of game that is using demerits instead of Paradox tests, you probably don't want to fuss with keeping track of such things.

Stitches

Humorous games care less about game balance than they do about what's funniest. The hoarding limit for Stitches is relaxed in such games, rising from 3 to 5 unless you want to maintain a semblance of risk and strategic play.

Lethality

Shooting things is fun. Use Mooks for most inconsequential antagonists, and bump up default damage on players' Scuffling and Shooting attacks to make foes drop faster. If you're playing for laughs, tense edge-of-your-seat combat probably isn't the point of the game.

HUMOROUS SERIES AND CAMPAIGNS

Most humorous *TimeWatch* games are 2–4 hour one-shots; it's hard for some people to bring the funny every single game, and for hours at a time! If you want to make such a game into a limited-episode series or even an ongoing campaign, take your cues from your favorite funny TV shows. Use repeating characters, long-running jokes that get funnier every time someone calls back to them, and characters with larger-than-life personalities. Don't worry much about continuity. Set up multi-game punch lines, absurd situations that make perfect sense at the time, and plenty of foil for the Agents to play off of.

In fact, for series and campaigns, comedic *TimeWatch* may work best with the Marx Brothers model: the player characters and a few select supporting characters are the ones who bring the funny, and the world around them is full of straight men who aren't in on the joke. This tension between the funny Agents and a history bedeviled by them can make for amazing, memorable games.

We recommend you never assume that making the *world* funny is the solution to making the *game* funny. Having the Agents clock in during a Roman senate pie fight might be a joke that falls flat on its face. Encouraging the Agents to start a pie fight amidst a group of serious and disapproving Roman senators is often funnier, because the Agents are acting, not reacting.

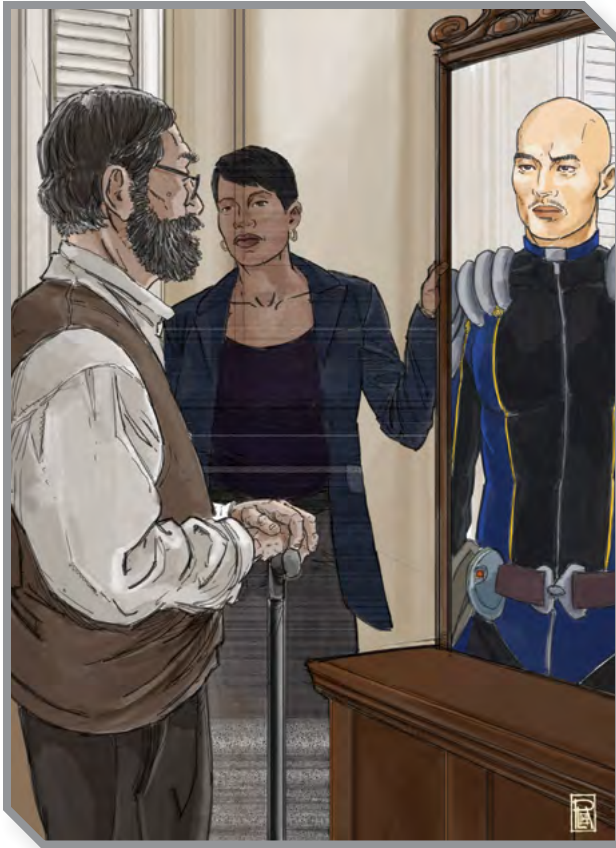
Either way, you know your players and your group best. Stick with a tone that both you and they love, and turn a one-shot into a series if you're all having too much fun to stop.

LEAP OF FAITH CAMPAIGN FRAME

Want to play *TimeWatch* with only one or two players? Consider a *Leap of Faith*-style campaign. This campaign frame is inspired by the TV show *Quantum Leap*, where a time traveler possesses a person for a given time, solves a mystery or resolves a problem, then moves on. Your Agent in this campaign frame body-hops from one era to another, showing up in each mission in a different host body. Your Investigative abilities stay the same, but your General abilities may vary wildly depending on whose body you end up inhabiting.

OUT ON YOUR OWN

Not everyone has access to — or wants — two or more players in a game of *TimeWatch*. A *Leap of Faith* campaign frame is the right one to use if you have just one GM and one player. This campaign frame makes it possible to run *TimeWatch* for a solo player with little or no game balance issues.



As a Leaper you're on your own in someone else's body, with only holographic assistants to help.

Normally, solo games run into a particular challenge. In GUMSHOE, GMs typically require player characters to have most Investigative abilities covered so that the investigation never grinds to a screeching halt just because someone is missing the right abilities. That's a lot tougher when there's only a single player; your Agent would have to be good at everything, but no one wants a super-character with no weaknesses and little specialization. That's boring. After all, when you're good at everything, it's difficult to define yourself.

The solution to this is inspired by the 1989–1993 television show *Quantum Leap*. The show features a time traveling main character who body-jumps from person to person with every episode. He's briefed on mission goals by his holographic sidekick / best friend, and then has to set things to right without endangering the current body he's inhabiting. His only other futuristic assistance is a holographic AI.

Sound familiar? Now think of the sidekick as your holographic handler back at the TimeWatch Citadel, and the AI as your tether. These two supporting characters gain access to Investigative abilities that your character lacks, making sure your Agent is never left entirely high and dry while investigating clues. You may still be lousy at romance if you haven't placed any points in Charm, but at least you can do a creditable version of Cyrano de Bergerac when your holographic handler tells you what to say to the person you're trying to seduce. Even when you don't have the skills

to spy on someone, your handler or tether can observe them surreptitiously and get you the information you need to know.

Note that *Leap of Faith* is based on *TimeWatch* and deliberately doesn't attempt to duplicate the TV show it's inspired by. If the world of *Quantum Leap* is something you love, see p. 217 to tweak these rules until they match your preferred play style.

EPISODIC PLAY

A *Leap of Faith* game has highly episodic play with a mystery or conundrum of the week that needs to be solved. Each mission has very specific goals — even when those goals aren't entirely disclosed to you or your character. You'll need to save someone, stop someone, prevent a tragedy, or trigger a particular event. On rare occasions you may have to (or may choose to) kill someone to accomplish your goals. Just remember that your host body has to live with your actions, and getting your host incarcerated for a crime they don't remember committing is particularly bad form that changes the future in ways you want to avoid.

The actions of past episodes might ripple into your current mission if you find yourself in a time and place that's connected. Save a good and influential politician's life, for instance, and you may find yourself benefitting from her favorable laws in future missions. Likewise, make an enemy who figures out you're a time traveler, and they might develop the means to track you from one host body to another over the decades. Just don't create paradox by killing them unnecessarily; continuity errors due to rash actions trigger Paradox tests that might loosen your hold on your host body.

STARTING BUILD POINTS

Investigative Build Points: 23

General Build Points Assigned Permanently by Player: 25

General Build Points Assigned Each Game by GM: 25

YOU KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW

Your character's Investigative abilities remain fixed from game to game, and your General abilities vary somewhat depending on what host body you find yourself in. Your TimeWatch handler and your holographic tether possess any Investigative abilities that you lack, and you're otherwise self-sufficient.

John decides to play Celeste, a African American woman who is a former confidence artist. She's a graduate student from the near future who's recruited into TimeWatch when one of her cons gets exposed and she's almost killed. John decides to focus on abilities that would be particularly useful for a con artist. He picks abilities for Celeste like History (Contemporary), Research, Trivia, most of the Interpersonal abilities, Forgery, Hacking, Notice, and Spying — all abilities that match his character's persona as a fast-talking con artist. Even when Celeste jumps to a new host body at the start of each mission, these abilities will remain constant.

Stephanie is GMing, so she creates a personality for Celeste's

handler and for her tether. The handler has most or all of the Investigative abilities that John has chosen not to take. The AI for Celeste's tether rounds out the selection, buttressing already known abilities (for instance, it has all three History abilities) while adding a few more that reflect its personality.

Because personality is partially derived by Interpersonal abilities, both the handler and the tether's personalities reflect their Interpersonal abilities. A handler with Charm might be somewhat flirtatious, while a handler with both High Society and Taunt may come across as snooty. A tether with Reassurance might be completely unflappable. There's no default or correct number of abilities for the handler and the tether to possess; between the two of them, they'll possess all or most of the abilities that your Agent doesn't.

NEW HOST, NEW ABILITIES

Even though your Investigative abilities stay the same between missions, your General abilities change somewhat with every new host. When character building for a normal *TimeWatch* game, you typically have 50 points to distribute between your General abilities. In *Leap of Faith* play, you distribute 25 points as permanent General abilities, and the GM distributes up to 25 temporary points every time your Agent inhabits a new host. These points vanish after a mission is complete, to be replaced anew with 25 more points for the next mission. The GM can choose to use fewer points, if, for example, your character is inhabiting a child's body, but that's the exception instead of the rule. For maximum fun, a GM may choose abilities that challenge you or which require you to play your character in a way that's different than normal. Any General ability ratings that reach 8 or higher qualify for Boosters (see p. 45) if the ability would normally gain them.

During character creation John has 25 points to distribute between his character Celeste's General abilities, and he starts with 6 Health and 6 Chronal Stability for free. He focuses on the abilities that help make her a good criminal and con artist in any form: 5 Athletics, 8 Burglary, 3 Disguise, 1 Health, 3 Preparedness, 3 Unobtrusiveness, 2 Vehicles. Note that he doesn't pick any combat abilities at all, trusting that he'll pick those up from his host when they're needed. That might be a dangerous decision. Taking no points in Reality Anchor may also come back to bite her, but it's important to John that Celeste be a master burglar.

His GM Stephanie also has 25 temporary points to distribute to John's character every mission, and she can change this distribution every time Celeste changes hosts. For a mission where Celeste is in the body of a soldier, Stephanie may assign an additional 3 Athletics, 3 Health, 3 Medic, 3 Scuffling, 8 Shooting, and 5 Unobtrusiveness. For a mission where Celeste is in the body of a strong-willed 88-year-old former doctor, Stephanie might assign the abilities 2 Chronal Stability, 3 Disguise, 8 Medic, 8 Preparedness, 1 Shooting, and 3 Unobtrusiveness. In each case Celeste remains a good burglar, but her other abilities vary significantly between hosts.

GMs shouldn't agonize over this decision or spend a lot of

time on it. If the GM expects combat, make sure the Agent has some combat abilities; but it makes for creative problem-solving if the Agent is hosted by a 10-year-old boy who effectively can't fight. Occasions when the Agent lacks a necessary ability likely mean that the Agent needs to recruit someone from their host's life who does have that ability. The 10-year-old boy leading a small army of kids armed with slingshots and rocks, up against the adult they need to make sure gets arrested, is the kind of creative solution that gets talked about for years.

As noted on p. 34, players receive at least 1 build point to improve their characters after each mission. This can be spent on either Investigative or General abilities, and adds to the number of locked-in abilities that the *Leap of Faith* character possesses. No matter how many build points a character earns from successful play, the GM's distribution of points remains at 25.

TIME FRAME

The GM is welcome to limit the scope of the time travel to a finite amount, such as the duration of the main character's life span (as in *Quantum Leap*) or just the 20th century. There's no real game-mechanics reason to do so, though. So long as the GM is comfortable running a mission set in a different era, she can pick whatever date range she likes for missions. It's particularly fun for a character with only History (Contemporary) to try and cope with the future or the distant past.

STARTING GEAR

Unlike standard *TimeWatch* games, you start each mission with only the gear your host has on them. Your soul is body-jumping, so there's no way for you to take anything with you from body to body.

Canny Agents might hide bank accounts, gear caches, or safe houses in major cities or significant geographical locations where they're unlikely to be found over the years. These are accessible with unusually difficult Preparedness tests (typically Difficulty 8 or higher), but only with the GM's permission. It's more common (and more in genre) for you to succeed while using only your host's resources, so don't be surprised if that's what your GM prefers.

It's also worth remembering that no starting gear means no Pacifist. See below for options when an Agent (or a supporting character) wants to knock someone unconscious without killing them.

LANGUAGE

Your character has access to his or her native languages, as well as whatever languages your body-possessed host speaks and understands in each mission. This is true for reading and writing as well. It's not much fun to always be plunked down in a new situation with no ability to communicate, so unless this is a deliberate choice by the GM, chances are that you'll be able to make yourself understood.

RULES CHANGES FOR LEAP OF FAITH PLAY

Death (or the Closest Thing to It)

Your soul is in someone else's body. So, what happens when things go badly — so, so badly — and you reach Health of -12? While it's easy to say “your soul perishes, and the character is permanently retired,” that's not particularly interesting. It's more interesting to find an alternative.

When you're sharing a host's body and you reach Health -12, your host dies. Fail-safes kick in and your soul is jumped to a nearby replacement host. Since you're using soul transfer technology, however, there's a “Rats Deserting a Sinking Ship” effect and the soul of the dying host comes with you.

Your Chronal Stability is permanently lowered by 2, and every time you leap to a new mission, Billy the air-conditioning maintenance guy (or whoever was hosting you when you died) will come along with you. Depending on the relationship you develop with him, he might be a wisecracking voice in the back of your head, a whiny nuisance complaining about how you got him killed and everything you do is wrong, or a calculating prisoner always looking for his chance to take over the next host body and have some fun. He may even bring some Investigative abilities with him that you can draw on for clues. Just try not to die too often; you'll run out of Chronal Stability and have too many voices in your head to stay sane.

You can spend post-mission build points (see p. 34) on rebuilding your lost Chronal Stability. When (or if) you replace both permanently lost points, you may permanently untangle the ties binding your former host's soul to your own and allow them to find peace. Whether they're willing to accept this depends on their personality and your relationship with them.

Dying sometimes alters your mission objectives. If your host had seemed to be essential to the mission, and yet the mission didn't fail when you died, there must be some other method or path to success. It will be up to you (and your new companion) to investigate and find it.

Investigative Spends

By necessity, Investigative spends in a *Leap of Faith* game don't allow some of the same crazy time-tactics that you would gain in a standard *TimeWatch* game. For instance, you can't decide to have a supporting character befriend you by spending 1 point of Reassurance and declaring that you'll time travel back to become their roommate and best friend during college. As always, the GM has last say as to what's appropriate and what isn't, but *Leap of Faith* games focus on problem-solving in the *current* time instead of in *past* times. When you think creatively, consider how spending your Investigative points can cause an effect right now, even though you haven't set events into motion in the past.

Ability Changes

Paradox Prevention: With Paradox tests measuring the host's ability to interfere in the Agent's business, Paradox Prevention spends take on a different role in a *Leap of Faith* campaign.

Spending 1 point can create a delightfully improbable coincidence in the Agent's favor, or can suppress an interfering host personality for one scene (see Chronal Stability, below).

John's Agent Celeste is unarmed and is being chased by gangsters through an abandoned building site. John spends 1 point of Paradox: Prevention to find the gangster's car, unlocked and with keys in the ignition. Celeste makes a fast escape with the gangsters' car.

Later, Celeste's Chronal Stability has dropped below 0 and the host's personality is interfering. John spends 1 point of Paradox: Prevention to keep the host quiet long enough to concentrate for the scene.

Science!: In a *Leap of Faith* game, the lack of a time machine that moves matter prevents the Science! ability from providing previously attained super-science devices. Spending 1 point can speed the work of an Agent trying to tinker such a device into existence, however. It can give the Agent substantial non-clue information about scientific facts, or could allow the Agent to jury-rig or sabotage time-appropriate technology with ease.

Chronal Stability: Memories of Steve Martin and Lily Tomlin in *All of Me*. In a *Leap of Faith* game, Chronal Stability measures the degree to which the host interferes with your consciousness. Above 0 Chronal Stability, the host doesn't interfere at all and you can draw on the host's memories. From 0 to -5 Chronal Stability, the host can exert some control, withholding memories, speaking when you aren't, and occasionally struggling against your actions; you must roleplay and negotiate with the host to keep it quiet. A successful Chronal Stability test at Difficulty 4 also quiets the host for a scene, although only one attempt is allowed per scene. Points may be spent on this as per usual. At Chronal Stability -6 to -11, the host has complete control of the body and the only way you can accomplish your goals is to negotiate and roleplay to find common grounds. At -12, your consciousness is completely extinguished from the host, forever subsumed except during nightmares and psychotic breaks.

Disguise: Because you no longer have easy access to super-science, Disguise is now more likely used to make people believe that you're the same person as your host body. If you want to fit in seamlessly with your host's husband and her best friends, you'll use Disguise. This restriction isn't universal — you and your GM might decide that you're psychic, which would still allow you to describe ability use as psychic manipulation — but the lack of easy access to super-science will typically restrict your options.

Medic: The normal limit on the Medic ability is that you heal yourself 1 Health point for every Medic point spent. This remains true even when you're on a one-person team. The normal requirement for healing at half efficiency when not using a *TimeWatch* medic kit is removed, however, as you're going to have it hard enough as is. The Booster for Medic, allowing you to heal yourself more efficiently when you have 8 or more points in the ability, also applies normally.

Preparedness: Because you aren't physically time traveling, your normal access to time tricks and super-science equipment is either nonexistent or severely curtailed. Preparedness represents your ability to bring materials with you or scavenge

them from your surroundings. As noted above, on a Difficulty 8 Preparedness test a GM may also give you access to hidden caches of supplies set up by other past and prior versions of yourself, although she's under no requirement to do so.

Reality Anchor: Use this ability to bury your host's personality under the weight of your will power. For every point spent, restore 1 point of your Chronal Stability.

Tinkering: If you have at least 1 point of Science! and the Tinkering ability, you may be able to create super-science devices, given a well-supplied place to work and access to adequate supplies. Such devices typically only function for one use, or last for one scene at most.

Unobtrusiveness: With no impersonator mesh, you'll have a more difficult time not being casually noticed. That won't necessarily be a problem, since you won't have extreme circumstances like your Neanderthal Agent trying to blend in at the local dive bar, but you'll still want to keep this in mind when choosing abilities. Remember that you also use Unobtrusiveness when trying to notice people and objects that are hidden.

Boosters

Boosters need to be tweaked for solo play, as Piggybacking becomes useless. Use the following changes:

- ▶ **Grounded** (the Booster for 8 points in Reality Anchor) instead becomes **Strength of Will:** every point of Reality Anchor you spend on yourself restores 2 points of Chronal Stability, not 1.
- ▶ **Nothing to See Here** (the Booster for 8 points in Unobtrusiveness) instead becomes **Freeze in Place:** if you're noticed when trying to be Unobtrusive, you may immediately make a new Unobtrusiveness test at the same Difficulty. If you succeed in the new test, you were not detected.
- ▶ **Keep Up** (the Booster for 8 points in Vehicles) instead becomes **Road Rage:** when piloting a vehicle, you may both attack and steer in the same round. One of those two tests (your choice) is at +1 greater Difficulty than normal.

Advice When Assigning General Abilities

- ▶ Pick abilities that reinforce your character's theme. If you think of your Agent as a scientist, reinforce that by assigning at least 6 Tinkering points. If you consider yourself a doctor, guarantee yourself some points of Medic. The points that travel with you and never disappear are the ones that consistently define your character's abilities.
- ▶ Trust your GM. They'll know if a particular mission is dangerous, and they'll likely assign you Scuffling or Shooting points accordingly. You'll probably want a bare minimum (at least 3 each) to protect yourself in a fight, but specializing in a combat ability with your own points only makes sense if you want to be a consistent, unquestioned combat badass.

- ▶ If there's an ability you love, make sure you're good at it. Really like picking pockets, and your character concept is based on thieving? Make sure you have 8 points of Burglary to play with, along with at least 1 point of Spying.
- ▶ 3 points in an ability guarantees one success. If you have a rating of at least 3, you're guaranteed to succeed... once. After that it's up to the GM's allocation of points, and how often you refresh your abilities using Stitches.

GM ADVICE

One-Shots or Series?

Think of your *TimeWatch Leap of Faith* series as a television show, one with both one-shot "monster of the week" episodes and with ongoing continuity. It's up to you to mix the two, pacing the game so that not every episode has long-term ramifications for the ongoing plot. Before you plan out an entire series, however, try a single game. If everyone has fun, there's then plenty of time to expand on the world. *Leap of Faith* is an example of a game where the game world and history is best built as a collaboration between player and GM, where good ideas get incorporated no matter who they come from. This gives more buy-in into the game, ensures that player actions and suggestions help change the world, and keeps both player and GM excited to learn what happens next.

Combat

When running a *Leap of Faith* game, always remember that there's only one player character and they're in a borrowed body. That means that physical threats escalate quickly, the Agent intrinsically lacks backup (unless they've used their host's contacts and their own Interpersonal abilities to organize a posse), and they lack many of the options a typical TimeWatch Agent would possess.

On the other hand, combat moves incredibly quickly in a *Leap of Faith* game. The first combatant goes, the second goes twice, the first goes twice again, and so on. Combat is often quick and decisive. An Agent may also be able to spend an Investigative ability such as Military Tactics or Intimidation to seize the initiative order from their foe at the top of a round.

A *Leap of Faith* game lacks the technology for Pacifists or other neural disruptors, but that doesn't mean you can't emulate them with the rules. A player can declare before attacking that they are trying to knock their enemy unconscious; if they succeed in a Scuffling test, the target must make a Difficulty 4 Stun test (or Difficulty 5 if the attacker is using a weapon that's handy for blunt trauma, such as a sap or a paperweight). Targets can spend Health points to boost their roll, as per normal. Just as with standard Pacifists, even a successful Stun test leaves a target Impaired until the end of their next turn, with a 1-point increase to the Difficulty of all tests.

Fight for Control

Never forget who the host is, how they live their life, and what they believe in. When the Agent is possessing the host's body, the host's personality is still in there with them but is completely suppressed. That suppression falters as the Agent loses Chronal Stability, possibly requiring them to bargain or strike an agreement with the host to avoid disruption. Lose enough Chronal Stability, and the host takes back over, forcing the Agent into the backseat until they can gather enough strength of will to finish your mission.

You may set up a mission where the host has a stronger will than most, or where the host is an evildoer whose crimes the Agent is trying to set right, ensuring that the personalities remain in conflict for the entire mission. That's not a good idea on a regular basis, but makes for a dramatic and nerve-racking change of pace.

You Sure Are Acting Odd...

The host has friends and colleagues, and it's up to the Agent to impersonate the host well enough that their life isn't overly disrupted. The Agent may find they have to fend off unwanted advances, negotiate hostile bosses or family members, and walk a tightrope of ignorance and evasion while solving the mystery. This is part of what makes *Leap of Faith* fun, so don't hesitate to have the host's friends and family confront the Agent when Disguise tests fail. Trying to actually improve the host's life is a goal the best Agents may be able to pull off, even while they're tracking down a murderer or stopping a saboteur.

Remember to Award Stitches

With no other players to do so for you, it's up to you to give the player a Stitch when they perform an action you want to encourage. Reward cleverness, courage, problem-solving, and good roleplaying. If you forget, the Agent will be underpowered and unable to refresh his abilities; if that occurs, consider letting the player refresh two pools at the end of every scene.

Small and Personal

Set up mysteries that are small and personal in nature: it's rare that a *Leap of Faith* Agent consistently prevents nuclear war one session after another. It's more likely that the Agent gets a chance to save the life of the person who later introduced the Agent's parents. It's more likely that they help prevent a scientist from becoming distracted during the week when they're supposed to have a marvelous scientific epiphany. It's more likely that the Agent will track and thwart a body-stealing chronal assassin, and the assassination target never even learns their life was at risk.

As large as you might think in a game of *Pulp TimeWatch* — time traveling Nazis! Dinosaur stampedes! — you can get as personal in a game of *Leap of Faith*. Just vary the stakes, so that different missions have different goals, rewards, and consequences.

Continuing villains

Continuity pays off, but the *Leap of Faith* Agent is time traveling, so you'll get some advantage from creating a villainous or sinister organization that reappears regularly. This can be a multinational corporation, a shadowy government lab, an intellectual think tank, quasi-religious cults, a private mercenary firm, a crime family, alien shape-shifters, a tradition of corrupt politicians, or something else. The only requirement is that it spans decades (or even centuries), with different leaders and operatives but a singular nefarious goal.

Villains From Local Time

For pacing purposes you may want a local villain who has no obvious link to the future or the past. They may have been nudged by another time traveler to commit a crime, or they might just be cruel and abusive. Either way, they deserve to be stopped — and even when the connection isn't immediately obvious, the Agents' actions in stopping them will preserve the future in some way.

In a *Leap of Faith* game, time isn't as good at correcting itself as it is in a standard *TimeWatch* game. That means that the pivot points which change history can be smaller and more subtle. Be cruel to a single child who eventually drops out of high school, and perhaps you just lost humanity's best shot at developing a faster-than-light engine fifty years hence. Prevent a drunken car crash, and you stop the chain of causality that causes nuclear war. This allows you to have local villains whose fate depends on small, subtle changes.

Villains From the Future

If the Agent can jump bodies, so can others. The same villain may appear time and time again, stealing other people's bodies to act as host and not particularly caring what happens to them. They have an elaborate plan to change the future by manipulating the past in many steps; can the Agent uncover it and stop it before it succeeds? And if the Agent identifies their nemesis' identity, can they change their past to stop them from ever becoming a threat?

Similarly, the Agent might find their own birth compromised by their enemy after their enemy has discovered the Agent's true identity. Making sure you get born is the sort of high-stakes mission that makes a good conclusion to a *Leap of Faith* series.

SAMPLE MISSION SEEDS

Bully

Thrown into the near future in the body of a child, your host's best friend will one day grow up to be an influential humanitarian and Nobel-winning scientist. You think your goal is to prevent her from being harassed by bullies, and to teach her how to stand up for himself. In truth, you're to rescue her or prevent her kidnapping and murder when she's abducted by someone who wants money from her father.

Shrapnel

On the beaches of Normandy during World War II, you find that you have to keep a heroic soldier safe. Unfortunately, he's being stalked by Nazis who have been warned by another time traveler of the soldier's importance during the war. Can you succeed in battle and ward off the assassination squad gunning for your unwilling ward?

First Contact

The first astronaut to meet alien life forms handled the task admirably, creating a secret but mutually beneficial relationship that lasted humanity for centuries before the aliens made themselves known publicly. Not in this case, though; for whatever reason, first contact was bungled. You find yourself on a space mission with instructions to fix the future.

Saxophone Solo

When Adolphe Sax was 2 years old in 1816, he tumbled out of a second story window and suffered a skull fracture. When he was 6, he accidentally drank boric acid. When he was 9, he broke a leg when falling over a small cliff. He was in a coma for 9 days at age 11 after contracting measles, broke his arm at age 14 when it became stuck in a carriage door, was hit on the head by a falling brick at age 19, and almost died from tainted wine at age 23. Then, at age 29, he invented the saxophone.

The question is, who's trying so hard to kill Sax before he invents his instrument — and what do you need to do to save him?



The Hounds of Tindalos follow Openers back to their bodies, some times before they even wake up.

TIME TRAVEL

MYTHOS CAMPAIGN FRAME

THE SOCIETY OF THE SILVER KEY

The default setting for *Mythos* is 1930s Arkham, Massachusetts, but any time and place can be a setting for the Society of the Silver Key. It could just as easily be in 21st-century London, 19th-century Cairo, 22nd-century Hong Kong, or the 18th-century Louisiana bayou.

In 1930s Arkham, or wherever the campaign is set, you and the other **Openers** — psychically gifted members of the secret Society of the Silver Key — answer the **Call** when the natural flow of time is threatened. Mentally projecting yourself into the body of someone living in the past or future, you combat the Mythos, unravel mysteries, and protect or repair the fabric of reality.

Your gifts are no guarantee of safety or success; time travel is treacherous business indeed. Human cults, entities from other worlds, interdimensional creatures, and even renegade Openers seek to influence the flow of time for their own agendas, willing to do whatever it takes to further their own goals.

In *Mythos* you have only one method of time travel: mental projection. By putting yourself in an altered mental state, you send your mind backward or forward in time to inhabit the body of another intelligent being.

While in the host body you have access to some of your host's memories and knowledge. But beware! As your Stability drops, you can become confused as to which memories are your own and which belong to the host. In extreme cases, the host's mind can overcome yours and incorporate you into itself, leaving your own life but a dream or distant memory.

Mental projection also means that no physical objects can travel with you on your journeys. Your equipment and tools will be limited to what you can find or make in the new location and time.

As in *TimeWatch*, the greater flow of time is difficult to alter. Any drastic and lasting changes to history require a significant disruption of the original events. Unfortunately for the Openers, that isn't necessarily difficult for Mythos entities to achieve.

MISSION STRUCTURE

You feel the Call when the flow of time has been altered: a vision giving you some clue as to the nature and location of the disruption. When the Call goes out you will convene at the Silver Lodge, the home of the Society of the Silver Key, in order to send out your consciousness from the relative safety of the Projection Chamber.

Once you project through time, you find yourself inhabiting the body of an intelligent creature in another era. Not all sentient beings are possible vessels, as only those that are somewhat sensitive to the greater truths of the universe make suitable hosts. Openers seldom get to choose the identity of their host, and may end up in a body of any age, gender, occupation, or health.

You must now find your allies, and investigate and correct the disturbance which brought you here.

Once the disruption has been averted or minimized (or if your host body is slain), you leap back to your waiting body in the Silver Lodge. With luck, nothing hostile follows you home.

RULES CHANGES

Character Creation

The rules for character creation work just as they do in *TimeWatch*, with some minor variations.

Step One: Occupation

A character's occupation is her job, how she makes her living or spends most of her days. Some popular Lovecraftian occupations include Antiquarian, Artist, Author, Dilettante, Doctor, Journalist, Police Detective, or Professor, but any occupation is possible. Being a member of the Society of the Silver Key doesn't take up much (actual) time, so most of her energy will be spent with family or pursuing her career.

To be an Opener, your character must be a "sensitive" individual, someone who intuitively knows there is more to the world than what is perceived by our five senses. Any culture or country, any age or gender, rich or poor; anyone who is sensitive to the tides of the universe and the flow of time may hear and answer the Call.

Provided below are some character competencies to get you into the game faster; these aren't exhaustive, but should give you an example of how to model any particular occupation. Points can be moved around at the player's discretion. All *Mythos* characters start with Health 6, Stability 6, Sanity 6, and Cthulhu Mythos 1 for free. In the point totals below, Cthulhu Mythos only counts points above this default starting level.

Antiquarian

You are an enthusiast and collector of all things old. Perhaps you own an antiques shop or used bookstore. You could work at a museum or art gallery.

Investigative Abilities (8 Points): Architecture 1, Forgery 1, History 2, Notice 1, Research 2, Trivia 1

General Abilities (4 Points): Unobtrusiveness 4

Artist

Whether a painter, sculptor, or performer of some type, you create and entertain.

Investigative Abilities (8 Points): Architecture 1, Charm 1, Dreaming 1, Forgery 1, History 1, Notice 1, Reassurance 1, Trivia 1

General Abilities (0 Points): None

Author

Perhaps you're a novelist or you sell short stories to the pulps. Either way, you're a writer. You express stories and ideas with the written word.

Investigative Abilities (6 Points): Dreaming 1, Falsehood Detection 1, History 1, Notice 1, Research 1, Trivia 1

General Abilities (0 Points): None

Dilettante

You're rich with a lot of free time. Maybe you have a trust fund or inheritance. Or you're just filthy rich. Either way, money is not a problem.

Investigative Abilities (3 Points): Charm 1, High Society 2

General Abilities (0 Points): None

Doctor

A country doctor or a big city surgeon, you are a physician capable of helping those in need.

Investigative Abilities (7 Points): Bureaucracy 1, Falsehood Detection 1, Medical Expertise 2, Notice 1, Reassurance 1, Science! 1

General Abilities (12 Points): Medic 8, Psychoanalyst 4

Journalist

You work for a newspaper, magazine, or even radio station. You report what's going on in the world with the truth as your guide.

Investigative Abilities (9 Points): Falsehood Detection 2, Notice 2, Research 1, Spying 1, Streetwise 1, Taunt 1, Trivia 1

General Abilities (6 Points): Burglary 2, Unobtrusiveness 4

Police Detective

You used to work the beat, but now you've made it to detective. You're the guy who's got to see the big picture and not get caught up in the little stuff.

Investigative Abilities (11 Points): Authority 2, Bureaucracy 1, Falsehood Detection 2, Intimidation 1, Military Tactics 1, Notice 1, Research 1, Spying 1, Streetwise 1

General Abilities (7 Points): Athletics 2, Scuffling 2, Shooting 2, Vehicles 1

Professor

You are an expert in your field. Be it literature, history, or science, the world of academia is your stomping ground.

Investigative Abilities (8 Points): Bureaucracy 1, Cthulhu Mythos 2, Occult 1, Research 2, Science! 1, Trivia 2

General Abilities (0 Points): None

Step Two: Investigative Build Points

Investigative build points are distributed just as they are in standard *TimeWatch*, although some abilities have changed.

Cthulhu Mythos (Academic): You have heard whispers about the hideous truths of the universe, especially in regards to creatures and places best left unknown and forgotten. Cthulhu Mythos replaces the Timecraft ability. As such, all Openers begin play with 1 free point of Cthulhu Mythos.

Dreaming (Technical): You can find arcane knowledge from the world of sleep and dreams. Dreaming replaces the Hacking ability.

History (Academic): History (Ancient) and History (Contemporary) have been combined into one ability.

Occult (Academic): You are familiar with magic, superstition, and the history of occult organizations.

Science! (Technical): Science! spends to create anachronistic technology are significantly de-powered when compared to standard *TimeWatch*. At best, such spends will let you know where to look for the raw materials of your advanced technology device. Time, access, and Tinkering are still required to construct it.

Step Three: General Build Points

Just as with the *TimeWatch* rules, you have 50 points to spend on General abilities.

Although Openers time travel by possessing the body of a stranger who acts as host, for simplicity's sake you retain your own General abilities when time traveling.

You start off with 6 free points in Health, 6 free points in Stability, and 6 free points in Sanity. There are several new abilities:

Psychoanalysis: You can help people recover from mental trauma. Psychoanalysis replaces the Reality Anchor ability.

GM OPTION: HOST GENERAL ABILITIES

If you want the nature of a particular host to have a mechanical impact, instead of allowing Openers to retain all of their General abilities while projecting, you can adopt the rule from the *Leap of Faith* campaign frame (see p. 261). Players spend 25 build points on General abilities; the other 25 are allocated to each host body and are available for use by the Opener inhabiting it.

Since an Opener has little choice over which host body she ends up in, you might prepare a number of hosts in advance on index cards detailing name, occupation, and a brief description, along with their 25 General ability points, and deal one at random as each Opener time travels into the location.

Sanity: Your ability to escape the truth and live a comfortable lie. Sanity replaces the Disguise ability.

Stability: These points represent how well you resist mental trauma. Stability replaces the Chronal Stability ability.

Step Four: Personality, Appearance, Drive, Background, Pillars of Sanity, and Sources of Stability

Follow the instructions in the *TimeWatch* rules for choosing your personality, appearance, Drive, and background.

Pillars of Sanity

For each 3 rating points of Sanity your character possesses (rounding up), you must choose something that is important to your character. This must be something that the character has faith in and values higher than their own well-being. Some examples include:

- ▶ Faith in God
- ▶ Love for Family
- ▶ The Soundness of Science
- ▶ Devotion to Country
- ▶ The Good in People
- ▶ The Importance of Community

*Harvey has 7 rating points of Sanity, so he must choose three Pillars of Sanity. His player chooses **The Power of Knowledge, the Love He Shares With His Wife, and the Greatness of the American Democracy.***

Sources of Stability

For each 3 rating points of Stability your character possesses (rounding up), you must choose a person that your character can trust. These people should be someone the character would go to if they were in trouble or needed someone to talk to. Give a name and a short phrase for each Source.

*Harvey has a Stability of 6. So he must choose two Sources of Stability. His player chooses **Sarah — My clever, kind, and loving wife and David — Drinking buddy and bohood friend.***

New Investigative Ability Details

The abilities detailed below are added for *Mythos*.

Cthulhu Mythos (Academic)

You are beginning to understanding the true order of the universe. You may know the names of alien species and entities, and even their habits and abilities. The ancient histories of places long forgotten or descriptions of distant worlds may float in your mind, squirming and quivering like worms in rotting fruit. Openers begin play with Cthulhu Mythos 1 for free.

You may use this ability to:

- ▶ understand the habits of an alien creature

- ▶ know the origin of an otherworldly artifact
- ▶ gain insight into an ancient mural

Using your knowledge of the Cthulhu Mythos ability (even without a spend) **always** costs Stability and possibly Sanity. Your Cthulhu Mythos ability also limits your maximum Sanity to 10 minus your Cthulhu Mythos ability.

Susan has a Cthulhu Mythos rating at 3, which means her Sanity rating cannot be any higher than 7 (10 - 3 = 7).

Sample spend: Spending 1 point of Cthulhu Mythos might let you know the weakness of a creature, enabling you to ignore 3 points of armor due to an insane insight. Alternatively, it might give you 3 points of Tinkering to sabotage an alien device, even if that vision will haunt your dreams for months to come.

Dreaming (Technical)

You can tap into the realm of dreams to gain some insight into the waking world. By drifting off to sleep, you enter a world of visions and ideas, perhaps even slipping into the Dreamlands itself. This ability is a useful tool to help players make random but meaningful connections. With this, you may:

- ▶ make a connection between people and places
- ▶ gain insight into someone's true nature
- ▶ get a warning to potential danger

Sample spend: Spending 1 point in Dreaming during an evening's rest might let you have a dream where the kindly old woman that helped you earlier that day is swallowing kittens whole. Whether she literally eats kittens or not will require further investigation, but she likely is tied to your investigation.

Occult (Academic)

You know the history of magic, superstition, and legends. You know if an amulet is a Navajo spirit charm or Romanian ward against the evil eye. You also know of mystic orders and their secret practices. You can:

- ▶ know the purpose of a ritual by observing its aftermath
- ▶ calculate someone's horoscope
- ▶ understand mystical significances of wards or runes
- ▶ know the histories and origins of books of magics and grimoires
- ▶ locate other Openers in their host bodies
- ▶ when first arriving in a new era, determine roughly where to start your investigation (usually by invoking simple divination, such as studying tea leaves)

Sample spend: An Occult spend can give you 3 points of Scuffling to fight a non-Mythos supernatural creature, such as a vampire. Your understanding of the vampire makes it more vulnerable to your attacks.

Your points in Occult dictate the number of spells your character can know, from memory, on a one-to-one basis. With an Occult ability rating of 3, you can know three spells.

New General Ability Details

The abilities detailed below are added for *Mythos*.

Psychoanalysis

As the Medic ability restores Health, Psychoanalysis restores Stability. This is the ability to comfort and calm a shaken person. It can manifest as sitting the subject down and talking with them, helping them remember who they are and what they're doing. It can be as simple as looking someone in the eye and asking, "Are you still with me?" or sitting down and having an hour-long conversation.

To use Psychoanalysis, there is usually no need for a test. Every point of Psychoanalysis spent returns 2 points of Stability. If the victim is suffering from an attack of mental illness, a standard Difficulty 4 Psychoanalysis test can temporarily end the episode for one scene. This happens quickly (and is usually accompanied by a slap across the face), but otherwise restores no Stability.

As a general rule, using Psychoanalysis to restore Stability takes 10 minutes per point you spend. This time requirement means that the ability is not typically used in the middle of combat.

Unlike the Reality Anchor ability in the standard *TimeWatch* rules, Psychoanalysis cannot be used on yourself.

Booster: Group Therapy. If your Psychoanalysis rating is 8 or more, you can use it on more than one person at a time. To use Psychoanalysis in this manner, you must sit in a quiet place with everyone participating and talk as a group. The points are spent in the same way, but must be divided up among the participants.

Dr. Ford is sitting down with three of her fellow Openers to help them all recover from a serious episode. She spends 5 points of Psychoanalysis giving her 10 points to distribute to the group in any way she sees fit. She decides to give Tom 3 points, Larry 2, and Beth 5, as Beth suffered the most Loss during the last scene.

Sanity

Sanity is the measure of how well you convince yourself that everything is all right. You are a good person. You work hard at your job. You're part of a community that's doing wonderful things. You contribute to the greater good. God has a plan for you. Everything has a purpose and a place. Life is beautiful.

Unfortunately, you live in a Lovecraftian world and none of that is true. The universe doesn't care about you. Your culture and all of humanity are completely insignificant, and life has no meaning. There may be gods in the universe, but they are the kind that would use you or swallow you whole if they actually noticed you. Thankfully, they usually don't.

Your Sanity represents how strongly your beliefs hold in the face of the Mythos and the greater truths of the universe. It's different from other General abilities because you never use it for a test or spend points from it. They are just taken away from you, leaving you quivering and howling in their wake.

If your Sanity ever reaches 0, your character is finished and becomes a supporting character. This doesn't necessarily mean they end up gibbering away in a mental institution. They could seem totally normal, but deep down their soul has twisted and

they worship the Great Old Ones. There are many types of insanity, so feel free to be creative.

The Sanity ability cannot have a rating higher than 10, less your rating in Cthulhu Mythos. Since all Openers start out with at least one point in Cthulhu Mythos, this means no Opener has a Sanity rating higher than 9; by the very nature of membership into the Society of the Silver Key, one can never be totally sane.

As with Health and Stability, your Sanity pool can never be refreshed by spending Stitches. Details of Sanity Loss and recovery can be found on p. 271.

Booster: None.

Stability

You can resist the effects of fear, shock, or mental trauma, be it Mythos or mundane. Stability represents the strength of your mind. The less stable you become, the less you have control of yourself.

Any test that would normally use Chronal Stability, such as a Travel test, uses Stability instead.

Booster: None.

Stitches

Stitches work just as they do in *TimeWatch*. You can spend 1 to refresh 2 points in a General ability (excepting Health, Stability, and Sanity), or boost or reduce damage, or spend 2 to assist a fellow Opener. Stitches are handed out to players by both players and the GM, as normal.

Gaining Stitches in *Mythos* occurs through good roleplaying, good ideas, and reinforcing the tone of the game. Tone is an important aspect of *Mythos*, and a good rule of thumb is that if a player enforces the mood the GM is trying to create, give out a Stitch.

The Openers are in 12th-century China exploring a creepy cave. As they walk down the dark and spooky cavern, one of the Openers tells a story of how his sister was once trapped in a cave. She was playing where she shouldn't, and she caused a cave-in. She was trapped in the cave for hours until she was rescued. Unfortunately, she was never the same after that day. This creeps out the other players sufficiently that the GM awards a Stitch.

This is only a guideline, as each group likes varying degrees of darkness in their game. If a player tells an in-game joke that makes everyone laugh, that's not a bad reason in many games to hand out a Stitch — especially if it only serves to briefly lighten the mood before everything inevitably unravels into chaotic panic.

Stability, Sanity, and Madness

To properly represent a Lovecraftian world and roleplaying game, *Mythos* uses Sanity rules adapted from Kenneth Hite's *Trail of Cthulhu*. Some rules from that game have been simplified to better fit time travel.

The two abilities that are used to express madness and insanity are **Stability** and **Sanity**. As explained before in the

General abilities section, Stability measures your composure and Sanity measures how well you believe the happy lie.

Openers are a bit more resilient to the rigors of time traveling and Mythos-busting, but even they will succumb to insanity if fighting the good fight for too long.

Losing Stability

Any number of events or encounters can cause the loss of Stability. A shock, being attacked, seeing death, looking a Mythos creature in the eyes; any of these can require you to make a Stability test, so long as you haven't already become injured to the particular trauma that threatens potential Loss.

The Difficulty Number of a Stability test is typically 4. As with the rules for Paradox tests and Chronal Stability in standard *TimeWatch*, you may spend points of Stability to give a bonus to your roll. Be careful not to spend more than you would lose on a failure. Success means you lose no points except those you spent for a bonus, and failure means you lose Stability commensurate with the severity of the incident, along with any you spent.

Generally, it's not a good bet to spend Stability on a Stability test. Odds are you will lose less if you just make your test without a spend. However, if the potential Loss is great (5+), and you already have low Stability, it might be best to spend the points to make sure you don't fail the test. As with Chronal Stability, you can spend Stability into the negative when needed.

Harvey has a Stability of 6, and he's just time projected into the body of a 17th-century London poet. He needs to make a Difficulty 4 test with a potential Loss of 2 points (D4/L2). He could spend a point of Stability, but failure would mean a Loss of 3 points (1 for the point spent and 2 for the failed test). Spending 2 would not

Stability Loss Table

Surprised by a fresh corpse or witness a killing	D4/L1
Attacked by a person; in a serious accident or experience a minor supernatural event; Opener time jumping	D4/L2
Attacked by a person with intent to kill; killing a person in a fight; experience a major, but nonthreatening supernatural event	D4/L3
Witness a large battle; see a supernatural creature up close; learn a friend or Source of Stability has died	D4/L4
Witness a supernatural killing; attacked by a supernatural creature, friend, or Source of Stability; kill someone in cold blood or perform torture	D4/L5
See a friend or Source of Stability killed; endure torture for more than an hour	D4/L6
Attacked by a horde of supernatural creature; talk to someone you know is dead	D4/L7
Kill a Source of Stability	D6/L8

completely guarantee success and could potentially lose him 4 points. Harvey's player opts for making an unmodified test. He fails and loses 2 points of Stability, bringing him down to 4.

A single incident that combines more than one of these events will only cause the highest level of Stability Loss. For example, if a supernatural creature jumps out and kills your friend, you could only lose up to 6 (seeing a friend killed), ignoring the D4/L5 test (seeing a supernatural killing).

It's also important to only make these tests if it makes sense for the character. If the character is a pathologist, dead bodies won't shake his Stability. If the character is a soldier, he doesn't risk Stability Loss every time he gets in a fight. Or if you've been fighting the mi-go all day, seeing them yet again doesn't shock you like it first did. On the other hand, a librarian might be seriously unsettled by getting punched in the face. If it seems like an incident would shake the character, make the test; otherwise, skip it. It's recommended that the players be given a copy of the Stability Loss Table so that they may suggest when, and if, they need to make Stability tests.

Like Health, Stability can go below 0. The chart below shows the mechanical effects of negative Stability; when in a host body, this also affects your concept of self.

0 to -5: You feel off but can still function. Investigative point spends work normally, but the Difficulty of General ability tests are increased by 1. While in a host body, you start to confuse your memories and your host's memories. Large chunks of your memories go missing. If a supernatural event caused your Stability to enter this range, you also lose 1 Sanity (see *Mythos Shock*, p. 272).

-6 to -11: Your Stability rating is permanently reduced by one. You gain a mental illness, which persists even after your Stability is refreshed and you return to your own body. If you are in a host body, your host personality takes over with only a dim memory of your true mind. If in your own body, your lizard brain takes over and limits your actions to fight-or-flight responses. If a supernatural event caused your Stability to enter this range, you also lose 2 Sanity (see *Mythos Shock*, p. 272).

-12 or less: You go totally insane. Suicide or catatonia are likely outcomes. If you are in a host body, you fade away into nothing. You are lost in time, and your body in the Silver Lodge quietly shuts down and dies.

As you can see, it's very important for Openers to maintain Stability. You have several options for roleplaying Stability Loss, but losing yourself to the host is often the most fun to play.

Roleplaying Stability Loss

Here are a few roleplaying suggestions for portraying Stability Loss:

1-2 point Loss: A loud gasp or quiet shout; nothing too showy.

3-4 point Loss: A full-on scream or a bugged-out stare. Perhaps some repetitive, reassuring action that makes you feel better.

5-6 point Loss: Screaming hysteria, or overly excited and crazy happiness. Crying.

7-8 point Loss: Over the top. Just go for it — the nuttier the better.

Refreshing Stability During an Adventure

Stability can be replenished during a session by using the Psychoanalysis ability. The person performing the Psychoanalysis must have a quiet and relatively stress-free place to speak with the subject. The process takes 10 minutes per point of Psychoanalysis spent, and each point restores 2 points of Stability. You cannot spend Psychoanalysis on yourself.

It is also possible to use an Investigative ability, most likely Interpersonal (Authority, Reassurance, etc.) to directly restore Stability if a plausible explanation is given. These return 3 points of Stability for each point spent.

With Stability Loss comes a loss of self while in another person's body. For Openers, refreshing Stability in game often involves helping a fellow Opener remember who they are and what they are doing.

Refreshing Stability Between Adventures

Your Stability pool refreshes fully between adventures, but only if you have some contact with one of your Sources of Stability. You need to reconnect to your mundane life and remember what it's all about.

The type of connection depends on the intensity of the game. If the GM wants to be restrictive about it, she'll require you to be in the same room as your Source of Stability. If she wants a less lethal game, writing a letter or talking on the phone might be enough for you to connect.

If you can't connect with a Source of Stability, only half of your Stability is regained between adventures.

Note that if your Stability rating has been lowered because your Stability pool dropped to between -6 and -11, this Loss is permanent unless you spend a post-mission build point (see p. 34) to increase it again.

Losing Sanity

Sanity represents your hold on the happy lie. Losing it means you're starting to understand the truth about the universe. There are only two ways to lose your Sanity points.

- ▶ **Mythos Shock:** If a Mythos creature or supernatural event causes your Stability to drop to 0 or less, you lose Sanity.
- ▶ Using the Cthulhu Mythos ability can cause you to lose Sanity.

Mythos Shock

When unable to resist the horror of a Mythos creature or supernatural event, you can lose Sanity. There are two levels of Sanity Loss:

- ▶ When your Stability is reduced to 0 through -5 by a Mythos creature or event, you lose 1 Sanity.
- ▶ When your Stability is reduced to -6 through -11 by a Mythos Shock, you lose 2 Sanity.

Only one of these occurs for any given event. If a Hound of Tindalos knocks your Stability from 3 to -4, then from -4 to -7, you only lose 2 Sanity.

Patrick looks upon a horrific creature, and it looks back at him. Patrick's current Sanity is -2. He fails his Stability test and loses 7 points of Stability, taking him down to -9 Stability. Patrick's Sanity is reduced by 2.

Cthulhu Mythos Ability Use

When using your Cthulhu Mythos ability to gain a greater insight into your investigation, you lose Stability and often Sanity. This cannot be avoided. The amount of Sanity lost has nothing to do with the points spent, but the “weight” of the revelation. Here are a few examples:

- ▶ A Mythos creature is behind the mystery, but no details are understood: 2 Stability Loss, 0 Sanity Loss.
- ▶ A Mythos threat is discovered that could hurt many innocent people: 3 Stability Loss, 1 Sanity Loss
- ▶ A Mythos threat poses a threat to you and your loved ones: 4 Stability Loss, 1 Sanity Loss.
- ▶ A Mythos threat destroys one of your Pillars of Sanity: 6 Stability Loss, 2 Sanity Loss.
- ▶ The Mythos threat is going to destroy the world and all of civilization: 8 Stability Loss, 3 Sanity Loss.

Losing Pillars of Sanity

As you lose Sanity, your Pillars of Sanity begin to fall apart. Once enough Sanity is lost, one of your Pillars will crumble away and you will lose faith in it.

1–3 points of Sanity represents one Pillar; 4–6 Points of Sanity gives you two Pillars; 7+ points of Sanity allows you three Pillars. You will have at least one Pillar until you have no Sanity left. Losing a Pillar of Sanity is a great opportunity for roleplaying.

Father Blake has “My Catholic Faith” as one of his Pillars of Sanity. After reading yet another tome, his Sanity slips even further. This knocks his Sanity from 4 down to 3, and he loses a Pillar. He chooses to lose his Catholic faith. His player could play this as Father Blake just quietly sitting in a room, drinking a scotch, then removing his priest’s collar; or it could be played as something more dramatic, like destroying his beloved 18th-century Bible in a crying, screaming fit. Whatever makes sense to the character and is fun to play is the correct way to approach this.

Another way to lose a Pillar of Sanity is for it to actually be literally destroyed. This only works if it exists physically (a person, place, or thing) and it is killed or damaged beyond repair. If a Mythos creature destroys or kills the Pillar, there is the potential for some serious Stability and Sanity Loss.

Finally, you can always choose to lose faith in a Pillar. This is a means to protect yourself from possible Stability and Sanity Loss if you think this Pillar is in danger of being destroyed. You should always have at least one Pillar, so if you lose faith in one and you still have a positive Sanity score, that faith must be put into something else. How long that process takes is up to the player and GM.

One of Susan’s Pillars of Sanity is “My Husband Bob.” As an Opener, she knows that she’s attracting all types of Mythos attention and knows that Bob is a prime target. She opts to lose her faith in her relationship with her husband; Susan files for divorce and moves out. She switches her Pillar from “My Husband Bob” to “Duty to the Society of the Silver Key.”

Dealing With Sanity Loss

There are two ways you can mitigate Sanity Loss: **denial** and **fainting**.

Denial: At the end of an investigation, when you return to your own body, it is very easy for you to say “it was all a dream.” You can choose to believe that the time travel experience was just some kind of meditation, or the result of an overactive imagination. If there is no physical evidence of any kind (which there usually isn’t), you can deny that anything actually happened. This allows you to recover 1 lost Sanity point.

This also works for incidents which occur in your own time as well, as long as there is no physical evidence. It’s quite easy to rewrite events in your memory to make things seem less supernatural.

Fainting: If you see a Mythos creature or experience a supernatural event, you can choose to faint. If you faint, you lose no more than one point of Sanity. This takes you out of the scene, however, and you are at the mercy of whatever it is you saw.

Note that Stitches cannot in any way refresh your Sanity pool. You can use build points gained after successful missions to rebuild lost Sanity, up to a maximum of 10 minus your Cthulhu Mythos rating.

GM ADVICE: FAINTING CHARACTERS

If the sight of a shoggoth causes an Opener to faint, consider what sort of consequence will provide the most enjoyment for everyone at the table. Having the Opener eaten alive is not a particularly fun result for the player; if she is dragged off to the shoggoth’s lair for later snacking (affording her compatriots the opportunity to stage a daring rescue), or left for dead and robbed by opportunistic street urchins (who make off with the Amulet of Tunkhan-Re and must be tracked down so it can be recovered), everyone is more likely to have a good time.

Mental Illness

If your Stability pool drops to –6 through –11, you permanently lose 1 point from your Stability rating and you gain a mental illness. This condition stays with you even when you return to your own body and is not discarded when your Stability pool refreshes. The only way it can be cured is by returning your Stability rating to its original level — usually accomplished by spending build points received after completing a mission. In game terms, this return to sanity is typically explained as the result of therapy or a stay in a sanitarium.

An ally can spend 2 points of Psychoanalysis to snap you out of your mental illness for one scene. The spend does not

otherwise restore Stability; it just allows you to temporarily function without needing to roleplay the symptoms of the mental illness.

Below are some of the more common forms of mental illness that will affect an Opener, but feel free to come up with others on your own. There is no chart to roll on, as this decision should be made by the GM and the player to find the best fit for a given experience.

A reminder: *TimeWatch* is a game, and mental illnesses are real afflictions that may affect those you know and love. Use good judgment in how you represent an affliction at the gaming table. As much fun as roleplaying mind-blasted insanity can be, being sensitive to your friends and their wishes is even more fun — but hey, you already knew that. We'll also note that these are the pulp-horror literary and cinematic versions of mental illnesses, not a true representation of how they manifest in real life.

Multiple Personality Disorder: This is the most common form of mental illness that will affect your Opener. As Stability slips away, it becomes difficult for you to distinguish your memories from those of your host. This can manifest in a number of ways, with one personality driving the body while the other personality experiences gaps in time. This is most disturbing when you travel back to your own body in your native time, bringing the memories of your host with you.

Shell Shock: If the triggering event was violent and not Mythos-related, this is the second most common form of mental illness for an Opener. Shell Shock manifests as anxiety around the event that caused the trauma, with the fear that it may happen again. Nightmares or lack of sleep are common. If something happens that triggers a memory of the event, the sufferer freezes (paralyzed by fear) for a few minutes or becomes confused. After the episode, all Difficulties for General ability tests are increased by 1 for the next 24 hours or so.

Note that there's very little that's more boring during a game than "my character freezes with fear." It's almost always more fun to roleplay confusion and anxiety than it is to do nothing. Proceed accordingly.

Delusions: When a person believes that they are (for instance) St. Jerome, 5th-century translator of the Bible into Latin, then they are suffering from a delusion. Delusions don't need to be overly dramatic; the misguided belief can be something as simple as "there is no such thing as tea" or "the government is controlled by fascists." Delusions can be counterintuitive, but they should relate to the trauma in some way.

Paranoia: The victim believes that someone or something is out to get them, sometimes even their close friends. This can be played at various levels of paranoia, but it's best if it only really comes out at critical points in the story.

Phobia: Something irrationally frightens or causes anxiety to the victim. Spiders, heights, the outdoors... the list of phobias goes on and on. It's important to remember that these fears should be of something that can't actually harm the character. A fear of Deep Ones isn't a phobia. It's healthy.

Amnesia: This mental illness should only be used selectively. A character losing all of his memories can significantly derail a game. It's best if the specific events around the trauma are blocked out as if they never happened.

Spell Casting

It is possible for Openers to learn and cast magic spells. Almost all spells can be cast while inhabiting a host body.

Casting a spell requires a Stability test with either special spoken words, hand gestures, or some components or objects. Stability must also be spent to power the spell. Details for casting spells are located in spell's individual entry.

Failed Stability in a spell casting test means the spell has no effect, but half of the Stability (rounding down) is still lost.

Spell List

Magic is a costly affair in *Mythos*. That's why Openers stay away from learning and performing most magic. However, the power to cast a spell is one of the few things that can travel with you when mentally projecting through time. Below are a few spells that could be useful during an Opener's regular duties. Remember, the number of spells a person can know is limited by their Occult rating.

Dread Name of Azathoth

By using a portion of the True Name of the Outer God Azathoth, you can demand the respect of some Mythos creatures. This gives you the advantage of having 2 free Interpersonal points to spend while dealing with such beings. These points will last for the remainder of the scene. Use of the Name is considered aggressive and may not always cow those it was intended to impact.

If the full Name is spoken, this causes the target to lose 1 Stability (or Tempus if a creature), plus 1 for each point of Stability you spent on your test. The 2 free Interpersonal points are still available if the full Name is used.

Mary, trying to convince a Yithian to not interfere in her mission, speaks the whole Dread Name of Azathoth. She spends 3 Stability to cast the spell, then spends another 3 Stability to add to her test. She rolls a 2, barely reaching the Difficulty of 5 for a success. The Yithian loses 4 points of Tempus, and Mary gains 2 free Interpersonal points for the duration of the scene. Mary chooses Authority and Intimidation, and orders the now cowed and terrified Yithian out of her way.

Stability Test Difficulty: 3 for partial, 5 for full name

Stability Cost: 2 Stability for partial, 3 for full name

Time: Instant

Elder Sign

The Elder Sign is a warding against Mythos creatures. To be functional, the symbol must be carved or engraved into a physical object or door. The Elder Sign makes it nearly impossible for certain Mythos creatures to pass through or even touch. An Elder Sign that is worn will have no special effect.

Stability Test Difficulty: 4

Stability Cost: 1 Stability *rating* point

Time: 5 minutes

Powder of Ibn-Ghazi

This magical powder makes the invisible visible. One portion

of the powder works on one creature, regardless of size. The powder must be thrown or blown onto the invisible creature to have the desired effect.

Stability Test Difficulty: 3 to make, none to use (Difficulty 2 for an Opener with Occult or Science!)

Stability Cost: 1 Stability to make

Time: 12 hours (6 hours with an Occult or Science! spend)

Shrivelling

A truly nasty attacking spell, Shrivelling causes flesh to blacken and wither. You must see the target, say a short phrase, and wave your hand. You must then make a Difficulty 4 Stability test (Difficulty 3 if you have the target's hair or blood). If you succeed, the target loses 1 point of Health *rating* and 1 point of Stability (Tempus if an antagonist), plus an additional 1 Health rating and 1 Stability point per point you spent on the Stability test. The target's current Health pool is also reduced by the same amount as the Health rating.

Martha is attempting to stop a Mongol warrior, but she's in the body of an unarmed, 10-year-old boy. She decides to use the Shrivelling spell. She's doing well with her Stability at 9 and decides to spend 4 points on her Stability test. She succeeds on the test and the Mongol warrior loses 5 Tempus points and 5 points of permanent Health rating! It's quite costly to Rachel as well, because she lost 4 Stability for casting the spell, plus the 4 she spent in the Stability test. She loses 8 Stability in total, leaving her with 1 point in her Stability pool.

Stability Test Difficulty: 4 (Difficulty 3 with target's hair or blood)

Stability Cost: 4 Stability

Time: 2 rounds

OPENERS AND THE SOCIETY

Joining the Society of the Silver Key

One does not find the Society of the Silver Key, but is found by it.

It starts in dreams. As a potential Opener, you find yourself having dreams about other times and places. You are different people of different ages and cultures. You experience the lives of others, but only as dreams. The dreams have little in common with each other except for one thing: a silver key. In your dream you may be holding it, or see it on a table; it could be incorporated into the landscape. Somehow, in every dream, the silver key will be there.

Over the weeks or months, the dreams shift to visions of a place, a large old house tucked away in the woods, away from prying eyes. You find yourself walking to this house and getting closer and closer each time you dream. Eventually, you get close enough to see the front door of this house is inlaid with the silver key.

During your waking life, you find yourself with an intuitive thought. A sense that you know the way to the house in your dreams, the house with the silver key. It is up to you if you will follow this call.

If you don't, the dreams will soon pass and you will forget ever dreaming of it.

But if you do, you will find yourself at a very real, physical location: the house with the silver key. If you have the courage to knock on the door, it is answered by a kindly, older woman. She introduces herself as Mrs. Hazel Warren and invites you in to talk over some tea.

Once you are sitting comfortably and sipping some lovely English breakfast tea, she explains that you have been called by the Silver Lodge to join the Society of the Silver Key. She will go on to say that the society is duty bound to protect the flow of time. Its members learn how to become time travelers and stop those who would do harm to the progress of time. She offers to show you how this is done. If you are willing, she guides you to the lower level of the Silver Lodge, to a room she calls the Projection Chamber.

The Projection Chamber is a large curved room with walls bearing strange carvings and runes. There are no hard angles in this room, and everything, including the furniture, is smooth and organic. Mrs. Warren asks you to lie down on one of the many reclining chairs. She teaches you a mantra of ancient, unknown words. Once you begin to say the words, you find yourself drifting into a trance. The trance frees your mind from your body; you are able to explore all time and space. You know that everything Mrs. Warren has told you is true. Unfortunately, you also understand the horrible truth of the universe and your place within it.

Some who go through this experience leave the Silver Lodge and never return. But most heed the call and join the Society of the Silver Key to become an Opener.

Note: All player characters have already gone through this process. If you wish to roleplay this experience, no Sanity or Stability Loss should incur. The free point of the Cthulhu Mythos ability reflects this process.

Being a Member of the Society of the Silver Key

As a member of the Society of the Silver Key, you may visit the Silver Lodge at leisure. You are given a key to the lodge by Mrs. Warren and are allowed entry any time, day or night, or may reside at the lodge free of charge. There is no leader in the society; all members are considered equals and make decisions as a group. There are usually no more than five or six members of the society at any time, but turnover is frequent.

Mrs. Warren is a mysterious figure. She does not participate in travels, acting rather as an instructor to Openers and caretaker of the Silver Lodge. She seems to know a lot, but is very good at deflecting questions and saying little. She is kind and polite at all times. Her secret patron is 'Umr at-Tawil, who reigns as a shimmering silhouette over the timeless halls beyond the Gate of the Silver Key, and Mrs. Warren wishes to show him and his chosen ones no disrespect.

Mrs. Warren also seems to be quite wealthy, but any questions about how she acquired her wealth are politely redirected. She will, however, pay a stipend to any Opener that is in need of money, no questions asked.

The Silver Lodge itself is a large house with over ten bedrooms, a conservatory, a sitting room, a parlor, a game room, a trophy room, servants' quarters, a laundry room, an office, a pool and pool house, a music room, a very, very large library, and, of course, the Projection Chamber. Anything an Opener may need or desire is likely to be found in the Silver Lodge.

The lodge possesses a certain resilience to changes in the flow of time. If an event alters time, the Silver Lodge and those inside remain relatively intact. The lodge will eventually give way and change to fit the new timeline if the flow of time is not corrected; the length of time before this occurs varies by GM preference, but usually takes at least 24 hours. The Silver Lodge is special in that it remains behind even if timelines are changed. It will adapt to fit the timeline and still allow you entry, but only if you can reach it.

The demands of an Opener are not very time consuming, at least in real and current time. You are generally only called once every few weeks. You can have a mostly normal life, working a job or career and spending time with family. Only when a disruption in time is sensed are the Openers called to action, and even when your soul has traveled for weeks or months, only a few hours will have passed in the real world once you return.

The Call

When something happens that changes the proper flow of time the Openers are Called. The Call comes as a wave of nausea and dread, followed by an intense vision. This is a vision of a time and place that gives you a target for your journey. The vision is so powerful that it can sometimes cause you to become incapacitated or even pass out for a moment or two.

If the disturbance is in the future, there is no need for an immediate departure. But the Call is powerful and will repeat if unheeded, causing you discomfort and disorientation. Twenty-four hours after the initial Call, the Difficulty of all General ability tests increase by 1 for one week. At the end of the week, the Call fades away.

If the disruption is in the past, you have only a certain amount of time before the ripple changes your reality. For each hundred years between the event and the present time, you have roughly 15 minutes before your reality is altered. (This may vary as the GM prefers.) You gain a sense of how long you have after the Call before an altered reality catches up.

Daisy is driving her car one Sunday afternoon and feels the Call. First she is hit by the wave of nausea, giving her a few moments to pull the car over. Then she has a vision of a man running for his life in an Italian city about 250 years in the past. She senses that this disruption in time will affect her world in about 37 minutes. She must hurry to a safe location to time project and get to the source of the disturbance.

Time Projection

To project your consciousness through time and space, you must have a quiet place and enter a state of meditation. It usually takes about 10 minutes for you to enter the meditative state to project in time.

To an observer in the present time, your body will be in a deep sleep for another 10 minutes or so. These 10 minutes of deep sleep contains the entirety of your journey through time, even if it seems to you that you have spent a few hours, or days, or even weeks in another person's body.

Upon your return to your own time, it takes another 10 or so minutes to safely recover from the trance. If this process is rushed, a Travel test must be made, and the Difficulty of all General ability tests is increased by 1 for the next 12 hours.

The Silver Lodge's Projection Chamber is the safest place from which to time travel. Its engraved wardings and specially designed angle-free structure make it impossible for anyone, or anything, to follow you back to your body. No Stability test is required to meditate in the Projection Chamber.

If the Silver Lodge is too far away, you can project from anywhere you can reasonably rest. This is a much more dangerous option, as returning to your body has a 3 in 6 chance of attracting the notice of the Hounds of Tindalos.

Once you enter the trance, you can project yourself through time. You get glimpses of places and times as you do so. You must "feel" their way to the location, using the initial Call as a guide.

When you find yourself in a new form, you are flooded with the thoughts and memories of the host body. You must make a standard D4/L2 Travel test. Regardless of the result, after a few moments, you will be able to take control of the host's body and access some of its memories.

KEEP YOUR BODY SAFE

The Hounds of Tindalos are not the only reason to seek the safety of the Projection Chamber.

Openers prefer not to leave their comatose bodies where a stranger or loved one might find them. The body is alive but in a coma-like state, with very shallow breathing and a weak pulse; it's easy for someone with no medical training to mistake the body for dead.

Any extreme physical shock to your body will pull you out of the trance and back through time. This causes an immediate D4/L4 Stability test. If your body dies while you are projecting, your mind is also lost (giving the host control of their own body once more). Some rumors exist of lost Openers flitting through time, jumping randomly from host to host.

The most important of these memories is the ability to automatically speak and write any language the host knows. This prevents a lot of problems that could arise from going back to a time or place where nobody speaks any of the languages you understand. Languages change fast and drastically over time, and it would be impossible for a time traveler to know them all.

DRAWING ON THE HOST

The default rule in *Mythos* is that you retain all your own Investigative and General abilities, regardless of the host you are occupying. However, you are also able to access some of the memories and abilities of the host body. By spending 1 point of Stability, you can gain 2 points of a General ability or 1 point of an Investigative ability which it would be appropriate for the host to know.

To depart the host body and return to your own, you need only take a few seconds and breathe deeply. This takes one action in combat. No test is needed, and no Stability is lost.

If the host body should die before you have the opportunity to leave, you are forcibly flung back to your body. This is a traumatic experience costing 5 points of Stability. (For this reason, it's often wise to voluntarily leave a badly wounded host before death occurs.)

It is possible to time jump from one host to another. This can be a jump to a completely different time and place, or

to a different time period within the same host. The same meditation ritual must be performed, and all costs and Difficulties apply. Each additional jump beyond the first creates a 1 in 6 chance of attracting the Hounds of Tindalos to the new host body. (This is one of the only times a host may be in danger of attracting the Hounds.)

You can even, in theory, leap into your own body, but this is not recommended. Being in your own past creates a constant feeling of déjà vu that can be very distracting. The Difficulty of all General ability tests is 1 higher while possessing your body in the past. If you travel into a *future* version of yourself you begin getting memories from a life you have yet to lead. This will cause problems when you return to your own body and time, giving you the same distracting sense of déjà vu. General ability test Difficulties increase by 1 again, but this penalty goes away after a day as you begin unconsciously changing your present with the knowledge of your future.

Note: Openers can project through time even if no Call has been received. They are free to travel wherever and whenever they like, to any time they please, but doing so may potentially cause problems for the flow of time. Some Opener scholars travel in time to collect research. When they return from their journeys, they make historical records that are kept in the Silver Lodge.

Altered Reality

If, after receiving the Call, you are unable to time project before a disruption in the past overtakes your present time, you are caught in an altered world. This causes an immediate Stability test of Difficulty 4, with a Loss that varies by the extremity of the change. Since this change can be very drastic (to the point where you may never have been born), you might suddenly

Severity	Description	Initial Test	Degradation
Minor changes	People and places are basically the same, with perhaps a few differences in historical specifics.	D4/L1	1 point / 24 hours
Major changes	People and places are very different. You live in a different house, perhaps married to a different person. There are major historical differences, but with still the same basic results.	D4/L2	1 point / 12 hours
Drastic changes	You are no longer you. You have a different name and body. You may even be a different gender. History is wildly different, and whole nations may now be gone or never have existed.	D4/L3	1 point / hour
Total change	You are no longer human, and perhaps not even on Earth. All of humanity is gone, and something else is in its place.	D4/L4	1 point / 15 minutes

find yourself inhabiting the body of a totally different person — or possibly, something not even human.

Regardless of success or failure on the initial Stability test, if you remain in the altered timeline you will continue to lose 1 point of Stability at regular intervals until the disruption is corrected or you are Subsumed.

You must work quickly to travel back to the disruption or be lost to the changes and cease to exist. If you are unable to project yourself back in time, your Stability will slip away. This is akin to being in a host body, with low-Stability confusion entwining your true memories with false memories from the new timeline. If your Stability drops to -12 or less, your original memories and personality are forever lost.

Creating Gear

In *Mythos* the time travelers have no high-tech or magical gear. You will be unable to take any advanced technology into the past or bring any from the future. However, if you have the right materials, are clever enough, and have enough time, you can create advanced items.

This can be harder than it sounds. The task is dependent on the technology available and what is being created. If you are in the early 1800s and want to create a better rifle with more aim and accuracy, this is very possible given you have the tools and materials at hand. However, if you are looking to create gunpowder in 10,000 BCE in ancient America, this is very unlikely. Finding the sulfur and potassium nitrate alone could take weeks or months, depending on where in America you are looking and if you have the proper mining equipment.

If you want to create technology that is not available at the time or location you are currently projected into, use of the Science! ability will let you know if it is possible with the given material. A 1-point spend may be able to tell you how necessary materials can be acquired. A 2-point spend will help you create what is needed to acquire the materials. Once you have the materials, a Tinkering ability test is made with the Difficulty depending on the complexity, quality of materials available, and time allotted. No chart is given for this as the variables are plenty, so it's just up to the GM's discretion.

Science! may also be used to gain extra Tinkering points. Each point of Science! spent gives the player 3 Tinkering points.

Sally is in 1850s London and wants to build a radio receiver to intercept messages from a group of renegade time travelers working in that period. She has access to a blacksmith and a watchmaker's shop, plus she's in one of the largest cities in the world. With use of the Science! ability, she knows she can get the supplies together and that it is possible to make the radio receiver at Difficulty 7. With a 1-point Science! spend the GM says that she could conceivably build a radio tracking device to find the time travelers' secret lair. The GM thinks this should be harder and sets the Difficulty at 9.

Sally decides that the receiver (Difficulty 7) is all she needs. She spends 1 Science! to gain 3 Tinkering Points for the roll and spends 2 points from her Tinkering ability, giving her a total of 5 points before the roll. She rolls a 3 for a total of 8 points, 1 more than she needs to construct a functioning radio receiver.

If you're not sure when something was invented, Wikipedia is your friend. It should also let you quickly estimate the feasibility of creating a given piece of equipment.

MYTHOS GM ADVICE

Running a Mission

Mythos is quite a bit different to run than a standard *TimeWatch* game. *TimeWatch* encourages lots of jumping about to different times, whereas *Mythos* adventurers generally stay in one place. The structure of a mission runs much more like a session of *Call of Cthulhu*, except that the Openers arrive before the incident and solve the mystery before the triggering event occurs.

Another important difference is that the characters are possessing someone from another time and place. Each player will be playing two characters, the Opener and the host. While the Openers are created by the players, the GM selects and creates appearance, personality, and social station of the hosts. It's good to have a few extra hosts selected beforehand, in case anything might happen to the initial host's body. Of course, players often surprise GMs, so you might have to come up with a host on the fly. Hosts can be deliberately assigned or handed out randomly.

It's advantageous to provide hosts who have a lot of control over their own lives and who don't answer to many people. Merchants, police, aristocracy, or artists are good fits, but remember, they must have a special, sensitive spark to distinguish them. All potential hosts are insightful, thoughtful, or have some inkling into the greater supernatural world. Feel free to think outside of the stereotypes; just because someone is a bouncer at a nightclub doesn't mean he's necessarily a tuggish brute.

It's best to give the player only the most basic of information when they first inhabit a body. Don't overwhelm them with too much information at first; give them the host's appearance and profession, and proceed from there.

Opener Linda Blake has just time-projected into the body of a man in medieval France. The GM tells her that his name is Luc, he's a town guard, he's unshaven and has filthy fingernails, and he's currently on duty at the front gate of the castle.

Openers typically arrive in time to experience firsthand the event they witnessed in their visions during the Call. This event doesn't have to be supernatural in nature, just something strange and out of the ordinary for the host or the Opener that starts her on her investigation. It's important to get to this event quickly and not spend too much time explaining the host to the player.

Opener Linda, in the body of Luc the town guard, sees a stumbling beggar walking down an alleyway. She notices that the beggar has a scaly skin condition. A beggar stumbling around is something that wouldn't normally attract the attention of the city guard, but since Luc is sensitive, or perhaps because Linda is now in his body, this seems very unusual and is the first clue in the mystery.

If an Opener misses the clue, drawing on the Occult ability for simple divination (such as throwing twigs or stones, or studying tea leaves) can point her to a starting location. This prescience is a gift from the secret Master of the Society of the Silver Key, and only functions reliably at the very beginning of a mission. It's useful for Openers who might accidentally wander away from the mystery in confusion.

It's good, but not mandatory, to give all the Openers a few different initial clues — a small piece of the puzzle to get them moving into mystery mode. Having a new body and life can easily distract play, so it's important to put something tangible out there for the players to follow. If you do give each player a separate incident, be sure to first herald it during the Call.

Since all these hosts have lives of their own, the first thing an Opener might want to know is her host's duties and responsibilities. If he sneaks off now, will he be missed? Is there someone to take over his job?

The GM tells Linda's player that Luc is on duty until sundown, at which time he's expected back at home to his wife and five children. But checking out a suspicious beggar is well within his duties as a city guard.

Once the Opener is acclimated to her new body and surroundings, she will want to try and find the other Openers. Openers from the same lodge can sense each other's presence when projecting, an irritating itch in the corner of one's brain that is impossible to scratch that indicates another person's direction. This link between souls will guide Openers to one another fairly efficiently. Should an Opener ever wish to hide her location from her fellow lodge members, she can do so by spending 1 point of Occult.

Once the group is together, the mystery investigation can truly begin.

Building a Campaign

The *TimeWatch* rules already contain most of what you need for campaign and adventure building. But for a *Mythos* game there are additional elements that you'll want to incorporate into your game.

Cosmic horror is what Lovecraftian storytelling is all about. The idea that “we are living in an uncaring universe and have no real control” should underline the arc of your *Mythos* game. The Openers are an unusual element in a Lovecraftian story, as they are quite powerful and seem to have a lot of control over their destinies and, perhaps, all of humanity. That perception, however, is only an illusion. The Openers are merely pawns in an inconceivable game.

They don't need to know that.

The second most important aspect of *Mythos* is mystery. Sure, all GUMSHOE games are about mystery-solving, but a good Lovecraftian story leaves lots of unanswered questions even at the end. You may discover the murders were caused by a mi-go cult from the future. You may then defeat every last one and set time back on its proper course, but you may never know or understand why they were killing those people in the

first place. In fact, you might be better off not knowing. Truth is a scary thing in a Lovecraftian story.

Finally, a crucial element of *Mythos* is to have fun. Bad things are inevitably going to happen to your characters. They will die, go insane, or be lost in the waves of time. It's a fact. But knowing that fact makes the ride downhill a lot of fun. If they're going to succumb to madness, then it should be dramatic and amazing. If they are going to die, then they'll die spectacularly. That's the fun of a Lovecraftian roleplaying game.

That being said, the *Mythos* rules are much more forgiving than the *Trail of Cthulhu* RPG. Mentally projecting time travelers would be hopelessly insane pretty quickly in a true Lovecraftian setting. *Mythos* is about exploring Lovecraftian themes and settings while doing some fun time traveling. The game wouldn't be much fun if half the group lost their minds the very first time they projected. The Opener's descent is much slower, but it still eventually reaches the bottom.

Campaign Ideas

Being members of the Society of the Silver Key gives players a chance to fight Mythos creatures through time and space, but there are a lot of other opportunities that can provide horror, mystery, and intrigue.

The origin of the society itself is a mystery. All of the Openers have similar experiences, and all of them involve joining the society, and no one knows where it came from or who established it. Mrs. Warren might have some, or all, of the answers, but she's not talking. Who is Mrs. Warren? How did she become the caretaker of the Silver Lodge? Is she a time traveler herself, or a secret agent of Yog-Sothoth? Is she human? Exploring this mystery could be a campaign in itself.

Another good question to ask is “why now?” In all of time and space, why does the Society of the Silver Lodge exist in the early 20th-century (assuming that's where you set it)? Is there something special about this time and place? If so, what is it?

One possible campaign path could have the Openers fighting the Mythos in their own era, using their time traveling abilities to take the upper hand. But would this disrupt the flow of time? Would they themselves be the cause of time disruptions? And if so, would there be other Openers to stop them?

MYTHOS ANTAGONISTS

There are a number of potential oppositions for the Openers. Below are a few of the primary threats they may find, but if you want more, there are many creatures presented in *Trail of Cthulhu* RPG that can be easily converted over for *Mythos*. Or feel free to create your own. Though mental projection is the preferred method of time travel in Lovecraft's work, don't feel restricted. Keeping things unpredictable for your players creates deeper mysteries.

New Special Abilities:

Magic

(Cost 2 per effect): The antagonist can trigger a predetermined magical effect that the GM chooses, such as paralysis or flight. Magical spells are typically linked to occult rituals or dark magic. Magic spells are comparable to what a player character could achieve with an Investigative spend, such as a super-science effect like telekinesis, psychic invisibility, +1 or +2 damage for the scene, and the like.

Mental Projection

(Cost 2): The antagonist can project their mind through time, inhabiting another body. Each time a body-jump is made an antagonist must spend 2 Tempus. The antagonist may or may not have a way to avoid detection by the Hounds of Tindalos.

Sample Stats for Mythos Antagonists

Ghouls

"These figures were seldom completely human, but often approached humanity in varying degree. Most of the bodies, while roughly bipedal, had a forward slumping, and a vaguely canine cast. The texture of the majority was a kind of unpleasant rubberiness."

— H. P. Lovecraft, "Pickman's Model"

Ghouls are humanoid, subterranean creatures that feed on the flesh of the dead. They have claws, cloven feet, and faces that somewhat resemble that of a dog. Though they speak in gibbers, some still speak the human languages they knew in a previous life. Many, if not all, ghouls were once human. Humans that spend time with ghouls and eat human flesh will become ghouls themselves.

Ghouls generally spend their time in their underground lairs, expanding their homes or studying the occult. They sometimes attack humans, but generally keep to themselves. Ghouls are often found under cemeteries or in sewer systems, any place away from the prying eyes of humankind.

Ghouls live together and are very social with one another, sometimes sharing information with other ghouls across great distances. Though ghouls are social creatures, little is known about their motivations and desires.

Ghouls tend to use magic instead of technology. If you're

looking for an antagonist with a more supernatural flavor, the ghouls can offer a host of problems for time traveling do-gooders.

Ghouls Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4 (5 if underground), Armor 2, Health 7

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +1 (gore-encrusted claws), +0 plus Worrying (reeking bite)

Abilities: Tempus 15

Special Abilities: Extra Action (cost 2 — ghouls can attack with up to two claw attacks and a bite attack against a single target each round); Magic (cost 2); Worrying (cost 0 — if two bites in a row (even from separate ghouls) succeed against the same target, the ghoul's teeth clamp down, and the second attack does double damage. The ghoul need not roll to hit that target thereafter, but will continue to worry the foe, doing normal damage to him each round until killed or driven off. The ghoul's Hit Threshold is only 3 against an enemy clamped in her jaws)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2 (+0 in daylight); Additional Stability Loss +0

The Great Race of Yith

"The Great Race itself waxed well-nigh omniscient, and turned to the task of setting up exchanges with the minds of other planets, and of exploring their pasts and futures. It sought likewise to fathom the past years and origin of that black, aeon-dead orb in far space whence its own mental heritage had come — for the mind of the Great Race was older than its bodily form. The beings of a dying elder world, wise with the ultimate secrets, had looked ahead for a new world and species wherein they might have long life; and had sent their minds en masse into that future race best adapted to house them — the cone-shaped things that peopled our earth a billion years ago."

— H. P. Lovecraft, "The Shadow out of Time"

The Great Race of Yith, or Yithians, are highly advanced alien life forms that lived on Earth billions of years ago. They had large cone-shaped bodies about three meters in height, with four odd appendages, two ending with pincers, another terminating with a trumpetlike funnel, with the last appendage ending in a globe with three eyes.

The Great Race are time travelers. They, too, mentally project themselves in time; however, they do not merge or suppress the host mind, but swap bodies with the target. While the Yithian is in the host body, the host's mind lives in the Yithian's form. They do this through advanced alien technology and must create such technology while in the host body to be able to return to their original form.

The Yithians have been doing this for all of time, collecting information about different cultures and civilizations across the universe. Because of this, it's important to The Great Race to avoid interference with time; they travel purely as scholars.

But the Great Race is far from homogeneous. With their great knowledge and understanding of the universe, a few Yithians have set out to alter time to suit their own needs.

The stats below are for the Yithians in the Cretaceous era (around 66 million years in the past). If they are encountered in a different time, they will be inhabiting host bodies of that era.

The Great Race Stats**Defense:** Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 20**Offense:** Scuffling +3, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +3 (lacking pincers), +2 or Stun 5 (lightning gun)**Abilities:** Tempus 12**Special Abilities:** Mastermind, Resist Stun, Technology (cost 2)**Misc:** Alertness Modifier +1; Additional Stability Loss +0**The Hounds of Tindalos***"They are lean and athirst!" he shrieked... "All the evil in the universe was concentrated in their lean, hungry bodies. Or had they bodies? I saw them only for a moment, I cannot be certain."*

— Frank Belknap Long, "The Hounds of Tindalos"

The Hounds of Tindalos are creatures that exist outside of normal time and space. They are said to inhabit the angles of time, though no one is really sure what that is supposed to mean. This may come from the fact that they only manifest in our reality through angles of 120° or less. From these corners, smoke begins to pour out, filling a space for the creature to emerge. This smoke obscures their actual appearance, though they are assumed to resemble something like large dogs.

The Hounds are attracted to time travelers. The reason for this is unknown, but if they detect someone moving through time, they will track the time traveler and attack using their long, hollow tongues to drain the body of all of its fluids.

The Hounds are a constant threat to the Society of the Silver Key. Many precautions are taken by the society to shield the Openers from detection. An unprotected time traveler has a 3 in 6 chance of being detected by a Hound whenever they project through time.

If the traveler is noticed, the Hound will move through time at a rate of 100 years of time traveled per hour, following the mind back to its original body. The Opener will see a glimpse of the Hound or hear a distant howl on their return journey to know the Hound is on their trail.

If more than one Opener is detected, only one Hound will pursue all of the detected Openers. Which one it targets first is up to the GM.

Albert, Fin, Barbara, and Tracy all must make unprotected time projections. Albert, Barbara, and Tracy all fail the roll and are detected by a Hound. On the return journey to their original bodies, Albert sees a glimpse of the Hound pursuing him through time, while Barbara and Tracy hear a distant howl. The GM chooses Tracy to be the Hound's first victim.

The Hound is still limited to entry into our world through angles. It is possible for an Opener to get to an angle-less location and wait out the Hound. This is very difficult as the size of the angle can be tiny. But if such a location is found and the Opener stays there, the Hound will give up in a matter of days.

*Mike projects back to the year 1331 from his unprotected home. The GM checks to see if a Hound detected his journey (rolls a die,**1–3 detected, 4–6 hidden) and rolls a 2. The Hound is on his trail. The Hound will not pursue Mike until he returns to his own body. Once he does, Mike has six hours until the Hound finds him. Hopefully, Mike has the good sense to stay away from angles.***Hound of Tindalos Stats****Defense:** Hit Threshold 5, Armor 2, Health 13**Offense:** Scuffling +3; Damage Modifier +1 (claws), special (glossa)**Abilities:** Tempus 15**Special Abilities:** Clock Out (cost 2), Distortion (cost 2); Glossa (cost 0 — the Hound will first try and Restrain the target; once successfully grappled, the next attack will be with its hollow tongue. This causes a loss of 3 Stability and 1 Health on the first turn, then 3 Health per turn of draining the body of fluid. A Difficulty 4 Athletics test will enable the target to escape)**Misc:** Alertness Modifier +2; Additional Stability Loss +2**Mi-Go***"They were pinkish things about five feet long; with crustacean bodies bearing vast pairs of dorsal fins or membraneous wings and several sets of articulated limbs, and with a sort of convoluted ellipsoid, covered with multitudes of very short antennae, where a head would ordinarily be."*

— H. P. Lovecraft, "The Whisperer in Darkness"

Mi-go are an advanced, fungi-based alien species which have a colony on the dwarf planet Pluto (Yuggoth). They have been known to come to Earth to seek rare ore, though they are suspected to have even more devious intentions.

The mi-go have also been known to extract whole, living brains from humans and place them into special cylinders. These cylinders sustain the brain indefinitely and can even be attached to equipment to allow the brain inside to see, hear, and speak. Some humans have been known to volunteer for this process with the promise of immortality among the stars. It is not known what the mi-go get out of the bargain.

The mi-go communicate with one another by changing the color of their heads, but can speak to humans in buzzing, insectoid-like voices. Mi-go are also made of strange matter and do not show up properly on film or video.

The mi-go have highly advanced technology and a keen understanding of all forms of biology. It is possible that a highly inventive mi-go could create some form of time travel (mental projection or otherwise) and use it to alter the flow of time for its own schemes.

Mi-Go Stats**Defense:** Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 10**Offense:** Scuffling +2, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +0 (pincers), +4 (mist gun — special)**Abilities:** Tempus 12**Special Abilities:** Disguise (cost 1), Extra action (cost 2 — pincer only), Flight, Impersonation (cost 2), Spider Climb, Technology (cost 2); Air Drop (cost 0 — if two pincer attacks are made, the mi-go can lift the target into the air and drop them. Alternatively, they can take the target into space and

expose them to the cold, harsh vacuum. See p. 99), Mist Gun (cost 0 — creates a 16-meter area of terribly cold space; if the target is aware of its effect they may make a Difficulty 4 Athletics test to avoid damage)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1 to +3 (alien surveillance tech), Stealth Modifier +1 (flying); Additional Stability Loss +1

MYTHOS ADVENTURE SEEDS

Below are some ideas for adventures. Feel free to swap out villains or locations to better fit your campaign.

Cult of Shub-Niggurath

Year: 313 CE, Rome

Christianity is on the rise in the Roman Empire. At the Battle of Milvian Bridge, Constantine commanded his troops to adorn their shields with the Christian symbol in accordance to a vision he had the night before. By winning the battle he took the title of emperor of the West and made Christianity legal.

Linchpin: Constantine choosing another symbol to adorn the shields, or his troops losing the Battle of Milvian Bridge

Ways to Alter History: A member of a cult that worships Shub-Niggurath travels back in time and shows Constantine true magical power and convinces him to use the gifts of Shub-Niggurath to win the Battle of Milvian Bridge. Or perhaps the time traveling cultist gives a magical advantage to Constantine's enemies.

Possible Effects: A) Christianity never gains a foothold, making way for a new religion, Shub-Niggurath worship. B) The Roman Empire crumbles sooner from the corruption of the cult of Shub-Niggurath.

Wars of the Roses

Year: 1484 CE, Northern England

Richard of York and the House of York lost the Wars of the Roses to the House of Lancaster, giving rise to the Tudors.

Linchpin: Richard of York surviving and winning at the Battle of Wakefield

Ways to Alter History: Richard, or his supporters, make a deal with some time traveling mi-go that wish access to rare ores that will one day have cities built upon them. By helping him win the battle and eventually the war, he defeats Henry VI, forcing him and his family back to Norway.

Possible Effects: A) The mi-go have a solid hold of some regions of England and the ore they require. B) The House of York in power leads to war with France that is lost, effectively destroying England as a world power.

A Subtle Invasion

Year: 2032 CE, Los Angeles, CA

A group of renegade Yithians develop technology to make humans immortal and much more resilient. They use this technology to create an advanced species of humanity that dominates the planet.

Linchpin: The development of genetic modification biotech

Ways to Alter History: 2032 Earth is not substantially different than that of 2016, except all of those cool technologies which were “only 10 years away” are actually in use. The Yithians (inhabiting human bodies) create a great leap in human biotech, sharing their knowledge with influential humans. These humans become the super elite and slowly begin the process of culling the human population. This is not supposed to happen.

Possible Effects: The Openers can stop this future from transpiring by killing or interfering with the renegade Yithians' plans. Perhaps enlisting the aid of the actual Great Race can yield favorable results.

PARALLEL REALITIES CAMPAIGN FRAME

In the beginning was the Big Bang. But it wasn't the only one.

Parallel universes split between the space of every moment, every decision creating a new reality for every path taken and not taken. Every variation was possible.

In most universes, this idea was only a dream by a few scientists and thinkers, merely the subject of thought experiments and unprovable interpretations.

In most universes. But not all.

On one exceptional Earth lived a people who developed in abundance, much faster than nearly any other Earth among the myriad universes. As their natural resources began to run out, they devised a way to travel between parallel universes, setting up an interdimensional “scaffolding” that allowed them to bring resources from other places back to sustain their lifestyle.

From that scaffolding came the Labyrinth, the hidden transit system between worlds. Development of the Labyrinth was under control of the Company, tasked with finding new worlds to sustain themselves, and systemizing the process of inter-world travel. They set up secret networks across multiple worlds, infiltrating powerful corporations and organized crime, offering powerful technologies in exchange for cover operations.

The Company's biggest discovery came in tapping into Universe Zero, a limitless supply of power from an ever-expanding Big Bang. The Labyrinth could extend near indefinitely, from the Type I worlds housing the closest to humanity as we know it, out to the more esoteric Type V realities of divergences far gone.

However, that expansion created more instabilities in every world the Labyrinth expanded into. “Weak spots” between worlds began to manifest. Native scientists of those worlds found fundamental universal constants changing. Basement inventors found their own ways to open bridges in those soft spots, and stepped out into other possible realities, leveraging the Labyrinth's scaffolding without even realizing it. These independent adventurers found they could slide between worlds, though returning home would often not be as easy as leaving in the first place.

This concerned the Company, since exploiting those weak spots could have catastrophic effects on the Labyrinth, and also the stability of the universes that were connected. The Company expanded its security services to not just include internal company operations but investigations of anyone who might be a threat to the Labyrinth. Additionally, the Company leadership finally began to allow teams of handpicked investigators from other worlds for their security teams. Diverse teams of specialists with Company equipment now work to preserve the integrity of the Labyrinth and protect the Company from harm.

Meanwhile, there are those who oppose the Company's authority and their exploitation of worlds. Free agents that travel between worlds find themselves on the run from the Company simply because they dared to explore other worlds without Company permission. Disgruntled ex-Company officials, refugees from worlds the Company has disconnected from the Labyrinth, and independent travelers have started to band together. Some believe in freedom, some believe in exploration, some believe in profit, and some have much more sinister motives.

Which side will you be on?

CAMPAIGN STYLES

A *Parallel Realities* game is a bit different than your standard *TimeWatch* game, though it leverages many of the same rules. (Important rules differences are discussed on p. 285.)

In a *Parallel Realities* game, the heroes aren't concerned with altering the timeline or trying to set time back to actual history: the places they visit are how they're supposed to be, no matter how strange or cruel they seem to outsiders. Instead, the exploration is more important: what are the crucial differences between this world and the ones we know? Likewise, the adventures always take place within those contexts, so the problems the heroes are trying to solve are unrelated to "fixing" the world.

Likewise, the heroes have less to fear about accidentally messing up a time they're trying to save even further. While parallel Earths may be further behind or ahead in technology and development than the world we know, the same amount of time since the Big Bang has elapsed, keeping most Earths in a similar timescale. Independent travelers may not care at all about making their presence known (though there are plenty of reasons to try and stay under the radar in a world that doesn't know other worlds exist!).

There are two main styles supported in this campaign frame.

Company Agents

This is the closest to the *TimeWatch Patrol* frame. Player characters are recruited from different worlds by a high-tech organization to investigate and pursue threats to the Labyrinth and the Company and solve them as largely independent squads. In this style of campaign, while the Company Agents may be somewhat distrustful of the Company in general, they see the value in hunting down threats to multiple realities and putting a stop to them.

Some examples of missions Company Agents might pursue:

- ▶ Stop a plot to destroy Labyrinth stations by The Unravelers.



There's another universe a hair's-breadth away; all you need to do is open a bridge and walk into it.

- ▶ Uncover corruption from a Company manager on a world where the USSR conquered America.
- ▶ Repel an invasion of cross-dimensional creatures bent on subjugating humanity across as many worlds as possible (such as the sophosaurs or the Holy Roman Empire).
- ▶ Find evidence that an important Company manager has been replaced by a duplicate from another world.
- ▶ Chase a band of rogue travelers across multiple realities to stop them from exploiting too many dimensional soft spots and endangering the multiverse.

Independent Travelers

On the flipside are those who are unsanctioned by the Company to make cross-dimensional journeys. If they don't actively hate the Company for pursuing them, they at least know to avoid them if they don't want to end up in a prison-dimension with all their inventions destroyed.

Independent travelers are those who have independently discovered their own way to travel between parallel Earths by exploiting various "weak spots" between realities. Using a variation on a device that the Company calls an "Everett Bridge," independent travelers temporarily punch a hole between two parallel Earths, allowing a group to "slide"

through the Labyrinth for a quick trip. Refinement of these devices is tricky and calibration is difficult, meaning that many travelers wind up without a convenient way home, and that often requires continuing their journey on to new worlds.

Some examples of independent traveler adventures are:

- ▶ Recover your Everett Bridge from Nazi scientists who would exploit it (and keep you from traveling).
- ▶ Start a revolution against the French nobility to gain access to the weak spot you need to continue on before it moves out of sync forever.
- ▶ Survive on a world overrun by ezeru who have enslaved humanity — while making sure that no one in your group has been replaced with a shape-shifting cockroach.
- ▶ Grapple with the implications of saving a world overrun with plague by importing medicine from another world.
- ▶ Escape a team of unrelenting Company agents across multiple realities so they can't throw you in prison forever.

Hybrid/Others

You may choose to use these mechanics but remove the Company entirely, excising the Labyrinth entirely and allowing some other device to let player characters walk between worlds.

Alternatively, the animosity between the Company and independent agents might not be as strong, or they might join up off the books in order to take on the bigger threats to all realities as we know it.

Another campaign style might have you take on the role of one of those dangers to the multiverse, being a part of a group like The Unravelers who feels that the Labyrinth and the Company are the greatest threats to existence ever conceived. Your group's goal might be to utterly dismantle the Labyrinth once and for all, in order to put a stop to interdimensional travel. Or it might be to find a path to Universe Zero and cause a ripple effect there, an event that according to your scientists has an 89.7% chance of destroying the Labyrinth at its source and only a 2.9% chance of destroying creation as we know it.

STYLE DIFFERENCES

A parallel reality game can have a lot in common with a regular *TimeWatch* game. The Agents travel to new and exotic places, which have striking differences from the Earth we are used to. Since it's a GUMSHOE game, there is a mystery to solve, which involves tracing all the steps around the world you're in.

With that said, there are a few key differences when thinking about parallel universe games versus standard *TimeWatch Patrol* games.

Go Ahead and Step on Some Butterflies

This is one of the biggest differences: you don't have to worry about disrupting any timeline. The world you're in is different than yours because it's supposed to be. If you're

a Company Agent, there are specific rules about disrupting local governments and about revealing the presence of interdimensional travel to worlds who are ignorant about it. There are even cleanup teams sent by the Company to cover up large enough breaches.

Other than that? The ripple effects are more likely to be local than anything universal. Whatever influence the characters have on the world is going to stick.

Meeting Yourself Is Mandatory

There's all kinds of paradox involved in meeting your past or future self when time travel is involved. In an alternate universe, however, meeting yourself can be an important way to gain information or even an ally in the other world. Instead of risking your temporal stability, you're only risking an alternate self's sanity. Many parallel universe stories springboard off the existence of alternate versions of characters.

Of course, it's just as likely that the alternate versions the characters meet won't be allies at all. Different choices made lead to vastly different personalities (or different looks, including choice of facial hair), even if the DNA is identical. The Company has screening procedures to try and detect anyone posing as one of their agents who is not the same version, but find a duplicate on a close-enough world and give them the proper training, and it's possible to infiltrate even the Company HQ.

You Can Go Back

Once *TimeWatch* Agents have repaired a change in the timeline, everything (usually) goes back to normal. In a parallel universe game, once the Company Agents have solved the mystery, events continue on that parallel world. The characters may have accomplished their goal, but in the process, set off a major chain reaction that will forever change it. The Agents may revisit that world and see what changes have happened, which may lead to further adventures. Truly ambitious GMs may see the entire multiverse as a massive sandbox, with hotspots flaring up all over that must be carefully managed.

The Mysteries Are Different

Where the world diverged with our world may provide useful information, but it's not *the* mystery in itself as it often is in standard *TimeWatch* games. The mystery to be solved is within the world itself, like where the off-world invaders are, how to infiltrate a way station, or what is required to solve a great injustice that only your alternate universe knowledge can solve. It's not about fixing why the world is different, it's about working within those differences to solve a bigger mystery.

Discovery and Adventures

While there's a lot of sinister goings-on that the player characters will become embroiled with, it's important to remember that discovering new worlds is also supposed to

be a fantastic experience. Playing up the positive sides of differences, from being able to meet a dinosaur, to seeing a mountain range that couldn't exist in your own world, to simple things like hearing new songs by musicians that died too young on other worlds. All of it contributes to the sense of discovery of coming to a new world, not just what exact historical point diverged.

RULES DIFFERENCES

Because the alternate-world style differs in some functional ways than everything you can do with time travel, the following are some minor adjustments to the core *TimeWatch* rules to make them fit. This isn't an exhaustive list, but should be enough to get you started.

Investigative Abilities

Replace Timecraft With Labyrinthcraft

You know the official policies and procedures of traveling through the Labyrinth, and working theories of how it all functions. This includes knowledge of using a Daedalus Key within the Labyrinth, and operating an Everett Bridge. If you have two or more points in Labyrinthcraft, you are likely well respected in the field of how traveling between alternate worlds work.

In a Company Agents game, everyone starts with 1 free point in Labyrinthcraft. In other types of games, it's up to the GM if anyone gets the ability for free.

Replace History (Future) With History (Alternate)

Those with this ability have read up about alternate realities that have been explored previously and exist in the Company's database. As long as it's a world that you would have some way to know about it (or quickly learn), you have rough details about that Earth's history.

Other History Abilities

Both History (Past) and History (Contemporary) are relative to the world where you come from. You may also have a better grasp on how to determine differences in past and present histories from your own and from other prime worlds (like Company HQ).

Replace Paradox Prevention With Divergence Detection

An experienced traveler knows it helps to be able to pick out what doesn't belong. Divergence Detection is the skill of identifying outside influences and visitors that don't come from the reality you're currently in. Additionally, Divergence Detection can help when identifying if your own actions will have a major effect on the Earth you're on, allowing you to try and prevent it.

General Abilities

Replace Chronal Stability With Dimensional Stability

Just like traveling through time, whenever you jump dimensions, make a Dimensional Stability test with the same standard Difficulties as listed on p. 94. A particularly rocky trip, like one with a damaged Everett Bridge, might have a higher Difficulty and risk more Dimensional Stability Loss.

Running out of Dimensional Stability means that you become untethered to any reality on a quantum level, and begin to cease to exist altogether. Go far enough negative, and it'll be like you never existed on any world.

Reality Anchor Now Helps With Dimensional Stability

Through various applications of advanced mathematics, strange technology, and esoteric applied sciences, you are able to ensure that your colleagues stay tethered to reality, even when jumping between multiple worlds.

Change to Preparedness

Without time travel to play with, Preparedness is more based on being actually prepared for the situation, though Company emergency drops and other multi-world transport methods are also a possibility even when credibility would otherwise be strained.

Stitches

Stitches are largely unchanged from how they work in a standard *TimeWatch* game. Instead of being a traveler's mastery of time, they represent the canniness that comes from experiencing multiple worlds, and the fact the characters are just a bit out of sync with their surroundings all the time. Spending a Stitch allows you to skip a Travel test with an Everett Bridge, just as it would with an autochron, unless the GM rules that the travel between dimensions is particularly grueling.

Equipment

The future tech used by TimeWatch agents is similar in style to what the Company outfits their agents with. The following items, if the GM chooses, are ready to be issued to Company field agents:

- ▶ Impersonator Mesh (especially for anyone who does not come from a Type I or II world)
- ▶ Medkit
- ▶ MEM-tags (instead of a TimeWatch crew coming in, a Company cleanup crew will detect it the next time it arrives in the world for memory reprogramming)
- ▶ PaciFist Neural Disruptor
- ▶ Tether (containing the Company database)
- ▶ TimeWatch Uniform becomes Company Uniform
- ▶ Translator

An independent traveler is unlikely to have all these, though may have one or two equivalents among the group. The fact is, working for the Company has its perks.

In place of the autochron, player characters will have one of two methods of crossing between worlds. Both require a Travel test to use.

Company-Issued Daedalus Key

A Daedalus Key is not in and of itself a world-traveling device. Instead, it is a way into and around the Labyrinth. The technology-imbued key carries official authorization from the Company to use the Labyrinth, as well as coordinates for the destination. It allows access into a way station, and then lets switching station operators know with a simple scan where to go next.

Generally, each Agent will be assigned their own Daedalus Key. It is possible to enter the Labyrinth without one, but it expedites the process considerably instead of sending communications down the line to verify a traveler's identity and clearance.

Everett Bridge

Everett Bridges come in all kinds of shapes and sizes, though the majority are handheld devices. They come from a variety of independent inventors on various worlds who stumbled upon the secret of traveling between different parallel realities. They have different features depending on how refined the inventor was able to make it through trial and error. Some allow the user to travel to specific worlds through a programmable setting, while others are at the mercy of the travel through the Labyrinth. Some require a specific window of time between uses, while others can be used more frequently.

The main point in common is that Everett Bridge devices tear open a hole between realities at a weak spot. An Everett Bridge will only function if it can detect a weak spot with which to open a doorway into another world. Sometimes, it's a freestanding one, and other times, it has a Company way station already placed there. In any case, these weak spots can show up anywhere in the world.

GM OPTION: NO COMPANY NEEDED

You may want alternate realities without the Company and the Labyrinth involved. If so, simply use the rules of this campaign frame without the bureaucratic, organizational, and technological framework that comes with the Company. You can create your own fiction, hand the characters a renamed Everett Bridge, and send them off into other worlds to explore, flee from, or conquer.

THE COMPANY

The Company's world started like many others. Abundant natural resources present in their Earth caused their growth to accelerate exponentially, fueling all manner of technological advances on a much faster timescale than most other worlds. Hundreds of years ago, the Company's world was making great strides in every field from physics to genetics to transportation.

Even abundant natural resources run out given enough stress. Many individual corporations researched ways to prolong the planet's lifespan, from geological transformation to interstellar travel. It was one transportation company that stumbled upon the answer: there are infinite other worlds, which means infinite other places to take minerals, flora, and fauna from. After a few demonstrations of inter-world travel, the transportation company began to become the most important company on that Earth. As its work became the most important, so too did its influence, buying up other companies that were working on similar projects or other projects that could help colonize the rest of the multiverse. Governments became powerless to stand in its way. Soon, there was only the Company.

The first connections were made to nearby worlds, where it became clear that from those worlds it was easier to access other worlds, and so on. While attempting to establish new footholds on populated worlds, it became clear that some discretion in the colonization would be important. Protocols for exploration were put into place to prevent reprisals. Instead, exploratory teams would be formed to first determine the viability of worlds for exporting. Then once established, Company liaisons would enter the world and insinuate themselves into positions of power using their advanced technology. In exchange for new breakthroughs or other assistance, governments, corporations, and organized crime all provided ways for the Company to create new permanent stations with which they could export goods back home.

The process was slow at first. Figuring out the best ways in order to set up complex shipping operations on worlds with varying histories met with setbacks. In at least one case, an exploratory team was wiped out by natives fearing an invasion from another world, who then started their own experiments, leading to that world being inaccessible.

Building the Labyrinth

As more worlds were connected, the more difficult it became to maintain operations. Company researchers proposed a master access system by which every world could be connected to every other world through varying quantum shortcuts. This project would come to be known as the Labyrinth. Initial experiments with the Labyrinth, attempting to travel from one world to another far away in relation to the Company HQ, led to the Company's most important development purely by accident: the discovery of Universe Zero.

Universe Zero was a reality so different it required a rethink of the Labyrinth project altogether, and whose existence was almost immediately covered up from all but the top Company executives. Universe Zero was in a perpetual state of post-Big

Bang expansion. Completely uninhabited with no planetary bodies, and a source of limitless energy.

It took a century, but the Labyrinth was connected across infinite worlds, powering itself from Universe Zero. Any world could be directly connected through any other world, allowing the Company to streamline its shipping operations and continue to push outwards into the unknown. Important “switching stations” were staffed by residents with direct access to the world in order to assist traffic flow.

New exploratory teams were formed to keep searching for new valuable worlds. As the process of getting to the new worlds became easier, but the surveying portion was still time consuming, a new operating agreement was struck whereby exploratory teams that found a new useful world as determined by Company management were allowed to effectively “own” that world. In exchange for maintaining operations on that world, the exploratory team could do whatever they wanted with it.

A New Era

Though reports of struggles on individual worlds made its way back to Company management, they were all self-contained for many years. Then it was discovered that since the Labyrinth had been established, some worlds were discovering their own methods of world-hopping.

The building of the Labyrinth had unforeseen side effects, creating more “weak points” between worlds. By using those weak points, independent inventors and engineers devised their own devices for jumping between worlds directly, most of who had no idea that the Labyrinth or the Company even existed. In some ways, the creation of the Labyrinth had altered physics itself wherever it was connected, allowing that kind of travel to be possible. The devices used to punch holes through weak points came to be classified officially as “Everett Bridges,” based on the inventor of the first known device the Company came across.

The Company engineers who maintained the Labyrinth viewed this as a dire danger. Enough stress on these weak points, and the barriers between dimensions would begin to break down. No single device should be able to do it, but enough utilization of the weak points could have dire consequences for Labyrinth integrity (disrupting the shipping lanes) and possibly the entirety of the multiverse itself.

Company Agents

In addition to unauthorized world travel threatening everything the Company had built, the security division became aware of even bigger threats. The first world that had rebelled against the Company, long since lost, began to make its presence known again. Insisting that the Company had purged the world entirely, refugees from that world with their own “backdoor Labyrinth” began organizing resistance to the Company wherever they could, conducting operations to disrupt stations on various world and incite rebellion.

Infinite worlds became infinite problems, much more than

what the Company could handle by its own staff with people from their own world. A new division was created that would recruit and train agents from all across Company-connected worlds in order to police these issues. While these agents may not completely believe in the same corporate philosophy of the Labyrinth, these teams work throughout the multiverse to try and keep the Labyrinth together.

Life as an Independent Traveler

When the Labyrinth was built, it changed the fundamental structure underlying every accessible possible reality. It was not just a way to travel, but the quantum fabric of all worlds was altered, forming “weak points.” Theoretical physicists and cutting-edge engineers had thought parallel realities were an unprovable supposition until the Labyrinth was built, and suddenly, their work began to pay higher dividends.

In some cases, the Company had already established a foothold in the worlds “discovering” alternate reality travel. In those cases, a Company security team would intervene and make sure the work was discredited, disappeared, and in some cases destroyed entirely. The Company goes to great lengths to ensure that the Labyrinth is the only way to travel between parallel worlds, both for the safety of all the worlds connected, and to maintain power and control.

However, they can’t be everywhere.

In some cases, basement inventors (often branded as crackpots by their own scientific communities and lacking any kind of official support) create their own way to punch through a weak spot and into another reality. Such inventions are more brute force than the elegant structure of the Labyrinth, cutting through dimensions in ways that are often not immediately apparent to Company engineers who monitor disturbances.

While that method works, it often creates more unpredictable journeys for new travelers. Without the systems in place to screen out habitable worlds, independent travelers may end up nearly anywhere. The journey is not as simple as opening a two-way gate either: since dimensional travel relies upon weak spots, there’s not always an easy return trip. Many travelers, either alone or together in a group, have found themselves lost with no way back to their own world and instead must continue to press on. Driven either by a sense of exploration and wonder which they can never share with the people back home, or simply a drive to return to where they began, independent travelers venture into new worlds with only their wits and whatever they’ve brought with them to figure out what the differences in worlds are.

Compounding the dangers to these travelers are a few factors. First, the Company will always be after them. While their agents may promise a safe return home, there’s no reason to believe they’d keep their word and not just eliminate the traveler to be sure they won’t return with knowledge of other worlds.

Second, there are much more dangerous factions out roaming across worlds, many of whom are eager to recruit, take technology from, and/or kill a successful independent traveler who draws their attention.

Third, the devices they use are all variations on what the Company calls an Everett Bridge, but each one has its own quirks

that determine how they bridge realities. Nearly all require access to a weak point, which could be anywhere on the planet. Some require specific timing restrictions, like a specific alignment within worlds that only happens every few days, or a recharge in their power cells. Each Everett Bridge is as diverse as their owners, and it's the only way through or out of a dimension.

Navigating all these dangers is all part of the life of those who dares steps beyond the confines of their own version of their Earth.

TRAVELING THE LABYRINTH (OFFICIALLY)

When using the official method developed by the Company to travel between worlds, the agents enter a “way station” built upon a weak spot between worlds that allows access to the Labyrinth. The way stations create a kind of quantum bubble on a specially designed platform that shunts the travelers into the Labyrinth and moves them along it from way station to way station. These platforms come in all sizes, from smaller ones designed to carry only a few Type I human-sized people, to the larger, warehouse-sized platforms that move cargo between realities.

Traveling into the Labyrinth almost looks like getting smashed in the face with a massive tidal wave in the ocean, but with a higher variety of swirling bright colors and without any kinetic force involved at all. Once transitioned into the Labyrinth, the near-translucent quantum bubble carries the travelers along in near pitch-blackness. Occasionally within the Labyrinth the bubble will arrive in a switching station, accompanied by a switch operator. These platforms exist partly within the Labyrinth and partly in a world. The switch operator is a Company employee who shunts the bubble along in a new direction in order to continue its journey after receiving the destination code from the travelers. The switch operators are frequently staffed by inhabitants of Type III and Type IV worlds, which can be a big shock to newcomers to the Labyrinth who might not expect to be questioned by a blue creature with four arms. Each switching station is equipped with translator circuits and extensive Company databases so as to best communicate and help those traveling through the station.

Traveling to worlds that are adjacent to each other — which tend to be (but are not always) worlds with fewer divergences from each other — can take as little as an hour. Further worlds can take even longer, and traveling from Company HQ to very remote or recently mapped worlds can take days. In those cases, multiple stops are planned along the way, dropping out at various way stations for meals and rest. Switch operators will take care of route planning along the way with these in mind, and also ensure that multiple quantum bubbles do not travel along the Labyrinth too close to each other. While space itself is infinite, the pathways utilized by the Labyrinth are not. In rare cases, Company management or high-ranking security agents can use switching stations to catch up to other quantum bubbles in order to intercept them, but such an operation can be dangerous and have side effects on the inhabitants.

Quantum bubble platforms always have a solid bottom, and may have basic amenities like chairs for longer trips. Traveling within a quantum bubble along the Labyrinth always

at first feels like traveling forward, like being in a car, but then switching stations may change the direction, and so it feels as if being lifted into the air constantly. In either case, gravity works the same within the bubble.

Stepping outside the bubble, surprisingly, yields no ill effects, other than leaving the occupant in a black void where they cannot make any progress traveling until another quantum bubble comes along that line of the Labyrinth. Switch operators monitor for these unauthorized exits and note number of occupants at each station.

TRAVELING THE LABYRINTH (UNOFFICIALLY)

Traveling between the worlds on Company business is reliable, safe, and consistent. Traveling through a bootstrapped Everett Bridge built from spare parts in your basement is one step away from getting your component atoms taken apart electron by electron and scattered across everything that could ever be.

The exact experience of travel depends on the device, and generally, how much experimenting on trial and error the inventor has been able to give the device. In most cases the device forms a wormhole-like opening in the world being left, and makes a temporary, fast-moving quantum bubble that speeds across the Labyrinth (or at least, the same superstructure that the Labyrinth is contained in) until it breaks through at another weak point, forming an exit wormhole on that other world. The feeling is akin to being thrown out of a sideways airplane, though the velocity stays constant throughout the trip. If the trip is short, the travelers may only experience the same “wave” feeling that those entering the Labyrinth officially do before falling out the other side. On a longer trip, travelers may see the same Labyrinth space and even see other quantum bubble travelers or switching station operators.

Most Everett Bridges simply push through to an adjacent world, essentially at random for what world they'll travel to. Others that are more refined may actually develop programmable settings for what worlds to travel to that they've already been to. The latter often comes with a longer travel time, and increases the chances of being discovered by Company agents.

TYPES OF WORLDS

A system was devised to classify new worlds during the initial exploration of other realities by the Company. This helped determine which worlds were appropriate for development, and what measures needed to be taken when going to that world. All types are relative to the Company HQ world, which does not classify itself.

Type 0

Universe lacks even the fundamental properties for any kind of exploration. The only known example of this is Universe Zero, which is in an ever-expanding state of post-Big Bang expansion.

Discovery of a Type 0 world is cause for an immediate report to be sent to the Company's board of directors.

Type I

These worlds are the closest to the Company's home world (and the most familiar to the kind of Earths we know). There may be historical differences and technological levels, but the inhabitants of a Type I world work exactly as we expect people to, and the type of flora and fauna that developed on them falls mainly within the range of expected life.

Type II

Type II worlds have the same type of inhabitants and climate as a Type I world, but have major historical differences. Worlds with almost no technology whatsoever, or even technology in advance of the Company could be Type II worlds, as could worlds that have had contact with extraterrestrial species.

Type III

Type III worlds feature most of the same kinds of inhabitants as a Type I world but with noticeable biological differences. A world where humanity evolved to have the ability to breathe water, or a world where the human inhabitants developed a variety of mutations that gave them special unique abilities would all be Type III worlds.

GM ADVICE: WHY EARTH?

In-game, the Labyrinth connects different Earths because it was set up to anchor specific spacial points relative to the Big Bang, which is viewed as a fixed point across every timeline. While some worlds may have interplanetary travel or extraterrestrial visitors, only Earths are a Company focus.

Out-of-game, of course, it's likely most fun to adventure on variations of the Earth we already know and love. There's usually enough going on with variant Earths' infinite possibilities that you may not need to introduce what could have happened elsewhere in the galaxy as well. If that sounds fun, and you want to focus on it for your game, go for it. It's even possible that alien species have their own interdimensional network connecting variants of their home planet; what might happen when this intersects the Labyrinth?

Type IV

Type IV worlds feature major divergences from Type I worlds on every level, from climate to completely different evolutionary branches. A world where the dinosaurs were never wiped out and instead evolved into the sophosaurs is an example of a Type IV world, or a world inhabited by nothing but extremely biodiverse plant life.

Type V

Type V worlds are those where that Earth is completely uninhabitable, whether through natural disaster or human made catastrophe, or where there's no evidence it even existed in that space-time. Any kind of development is not possible on a Type V world, though it is possible that other life forms eventually develop, or live in a way entirely unique and unknown to Company explorers.

THREATS AND DANGERS

The primary danger when visiting a new world are those who are native to that Earth. On many worlds, the knowledge that a team is there from a parallel Earth with advanced technology would be enough to spark a manhunt by major governments, trying to capture the travelers and keep them there. Even when not exposed as other-worldly, there are still plenty of dangers to watch out for on every world. The unfortunate number of parallel Earths where the Axis powers won WWII makes any number of worlds automatically hostile to some explorers. Other background and cultural differences may immediately make travelers stand out in a new world, though the Company does try to cover that as much as possible (see *Impersonator Mesh* on p. 111).

No world is completely safe. Even the ones that are close to what travelers are used to or are seemingly utopias can easily get disrupted by new arrivals. No matter where a traveler goes, it's best to stay on guard.

There are a number of other threats that stand out because they reach among multiple worlds. These threats can serve as antagonists or occasional allies, depending on the situation.

The Company

The ethics of the Company and how it operates are questionable, at best, especially to anyone not from the Company's homeworld. If you're an independent traveler, the Company is likely to be the most significant source of opposition in your exploration.

That said, the Company is doing something as high stakes as it gets: keeping all of every reality intact. (Some would argue that they're the ones that endangered it in the first place, but the evidence isn't confirmed on that one way or the other.) When the Company tries to stop an independent traveler, it's not just because they're trying to keep power (though that's certainly part of it), but because untested, untrained, and unreliable devices punching holes between worlds can

have some serious consequences. Likewise, they are the best equipped and most well armed to repel invading forces that would do serious harm wherever they go.

No matter where the allegiances of the player characters in your game fall, the Company, its operations, and even its true motives should both have pros and cons. What the characters do about it is up to them.

The Corrupt

Even among a society as so self-proclaimed enlightened as Company management, the temptation for greed is ever present. Members of the Company, especially those with off-world posts, may become nothing more than local warlords who take more for themselves and do everything to disguise their true operations from their bosses.

Some may have other motives, and could be working for anybody: secret allies to The Unravelers, providing new targets. Infiltrators from the Remnants, sympathetic to their cause. Disguised ezeru using advanced technology to hide themselves from invasive scanners.

Or, they might just want to get ahead in the Company. Their ambition might lead them to ally with any of the other groups in case it shakes up the corporate structure enough to allow them to seize more power. Nobody has higher stakes office politics than the Company.

The Ezeru

Their *TimeWatch* cousins detailed on p. 173, the ezeru are even stranger in an alternate reality game. Company researchers have theorized that they come from a world where a massive nuclear war wiped out humanity, paving the way for a species of massive, intelligent, shape-shifting cockroaches to evolve. Unfortunately, those same Company researchers have no evidence that there has been enough time since the Big Bang for all of that to take place, leading to some even more esoteric theories involving time travel, aliens, or worlds that operate on different timescales.

None of this can be proven, as the prime world where the ezeru come from has not been discovered yet, although they clearly have some way to travel between worlds themselves. One specimen was even captured in Company HQ, finding work as Jones in Accounting for two decades before an upgraded bio-scanner finally discovered him. No manner of interrogation has been able to crack them: if pushed too far they just roll over, curl up, and die without a word.

What the Company does know is that they can show up nearly anywhere, en masse, and look like anyone. They seem to want to push other worlds into higher levels of radiation, be it through nuclear war or other means. It's possible that they want to give rise to similar to their kind across multiple Earths, or find safe breeding grounds to create billions of young, but even that story doesn't seem to check out. Regardless, they are inscrutable, dangerous, and repulsive.

The Neanderthals

On most Type I worlds, *Homo neanderthalensis* lost the evolutionary battle to *Homo sapiens*. On at least one world (#22623-II), something tipped the balance in the Neanderthal's favor. This wouldn't be much of an issue, except they continued to develop into a supremely aggressive species. Then a group of independent travelers with their own Everett Bridge arrived in their world and gave them a device to travel between worlds. The Neanderthals began to maraud from world to world, and while often more primitive than the world they invaded, their sheer numbers and savagery allowed them to successfully conquer and pillage. Soon they not only had means to travel between worlds, but got their hands on more advanced weaponry as well.

The Company considers them more a nuisance than anything, but agents are often placed in the field in order to make sure any Neanderthals are contained during travel to an important world. The survival rate of those agents is lower than the Company would prefer.

The Remnants

Under a secret file that only the board of directors has access to, the story of world #874346-I is described. Similar to the Company's, this Type I world had abundant resources and an ingenious population. They even were working on their own version of inter-world travel.

A Company delegation met with this world's leaders and tried to arrange an accord. Many important scientists and politicians were even given jobs within the Company, something that the normally xenophobic Company board had never done before.

While they tried to reach an agreement, the Company discovered that world was still developing its technologies in secret. Their method may have even been superior to the Labyrinth, having more in common with Everett Bridge devices but more reliable and programmable.

This development infuriated the Company, who argued that such developments endangered all of reality, not just their Labyrinth, and was supremely irresponsible. All-out war was discussed to take the technologies. In the end, the board of directors decided the only way they could be sure that the world's inhabitants wouldn't use their devices en masse to escape would be to sever the world from the Labyrinth entirely, also cutting it off from other forms of inter-world travel.

There are some who escaped, who claim that severing that Earth from the Labyrinth meant destroying it entirely. There are those who were off-world at the time and who discovered they couldn't travel home. And then there were those who had been part of the Company, with Company training and access.

The remnants of the world had nothing in common, other than their home... and that they wanted revenge. Whether that means their goal is taking down the Company, destroying the Labyrinth, or trying to restore their world depends on who you ask. Out in the wind among the multitude of worlds, the Remnants debate and devise plans and work with whoever they can to eventually figure out what they can do.

The Remnants are the most likely group to ally with independent travelers, offering to help shield them against the Company's detection. That aid certainly comes with a price.

The Romans

A textbook example of Company corruption, a Company manager was assigned to oversee world #3567-II, one where the Holy Roman Empire had managed to survive for centuries longer than in most other worlds. Seizing the opportunity, the manager declared himself to be divinely sent and used his advanced technology to convince the inhabitants that he should be their new Caesar. Declaring himself Charlemagne VII, he gave the Romans advanced technology and used it to take the way station for himself. For a time, he worked to disguise what was going on from the Company, providing more and more upgrades to his "Holy Roman Legion."

Taking one world wasn't enough for Charlemagne and his high-tech legion. Soon, the way station was upgraded enough to allow entire contingents through into other worlds.

It wasn't long before the Company discovered it, and was able to at least cut him off from more troops from world #3567-II. He's still out there, using his considerable knowledge of Company technology and procedures to command his holy army as they attempt new conquests.

The Sophosaurs

Described primarily on p. 184, the sophosaurs are indeed from an alternate timeline where dinosaurs were never destroyed. Instead of being the result of a temporal mistake, however, their world (#7761-IV) always played out that way. When the filthy mammals of the Company exploratory team arrived, the worldview of the sophosaurs was shattered. They used their psychic abilities to dissect Company agents and discovered just how many worlds were out there where the dinosaurs did not develop. Psi-raptors created crystalline duplicates of the exploratory team's Daedalus Keys, and the saurians used their psychic abilities to pass switching stations and other checkpoints.

Once security breaches were discovered, the Company put new protocols in place to try and prevent telepathic attacks. New barriers in place aren't going to keep these clever dinos in place for long. While not all sophosaurs are interested in purging worlds of mammalian stink, enough are out there among the worlds to make them a serious threat wherever they appear.

The Unravelers

Worlds were never meant to cross. That is the core tenet of The Unravelers.

To them, the Labyrinth is a structure that is unnatural and which endangers the very fabric of reality. The Unravelers are a loose band from a number of prominently anti-Company worlds who object based on a variety of grounds: the

technology is dangerous, it's against their religion, it's morally wrong to exploit other worlds, and so on.

Of course, they're not actually wrong. But aside from being directly contrary to the Company's interests, they'll go to any extreme to close connections between worlds. In most cases, this just means trying to blow up a way station (outside the Labyrinth) or a switching station (inside the Labyrinth).

Their ultimate goals are more than just wanton destruction. Some members of Company security theorize that there is a pattern behind the attacks. The exact points attacked by The Unravelers may be a greater effort to eliminate linchpins and disconnect the Labyrinth once and for all. The math behind planning it would be staggering — far beyond anything achievable by any type I world. Worse, such a breakdown might just lead to Universe Zero coming through the Labyrinth and consuming all the rest of creation.

Still, there's just no reasoning with some people, you know?

SAMPLE WORLDS

Company HQ (World #1)

Imagine the biggest office building you've ever been in. Then extend it to an entire planet.

That's not to say that there aren't designated green areas or an outside to Company HQ, but the planet is more skyscraper than not. A technological wonderland, Company HQ is where all the important divisions of the Company meet, plan, and execute their goals for an explored multiverse. It is also the core of the most complex import/export business ever devised: the entirety of resources the Company needs to sustain itself comes from the Labyrinth.

Company HQ is also one of the most heavily screened worlds, featuring extensive DNA checks, psychological telepathic influence tests, and weapons restrictions. Despite all their efforts to bring worlds together, many natives of Company HQ are deeply xenophobic and upper-management positions are only considered for natives. Visitors from elsewhere, no matter how official their business is, are likely to be viewed with a certain amount of distrust and might find the natives more uncooperative than expected.

A Piece of the Action (World #328-I)

In a world where Prohibition lasted a few extra decades and Al Capone had a good accountant, organized crime got its hooks deeply into the government, and gangs rule supreme. Crime lords there are more powerful than the president, and law enforcement only enforces what won't get it into serious trouble.

This was a world ripe for the Company to ingratiate itself with, offering the kind of scientific advancements that every don would kill to get their hands on. In exchange, this world offers efficient, no-questions-asked shipping opportunities for the Company and serves as a major off-world hub. Not all the gangs are treated equally, however, and violence is always ready to erupt if rival crime families ever figure out a way to break up that particular racket.

The King Is Dead (World #5631-II)

The colonies of the New World were never able to break away. War always seemed ready to heat up, but no leader ever took up the risky mantle of revolutionary. The British Empire tried to capitalize on the wealth of the New World but never properly exploited it; as the British Empire looked west, other acquisitions of the Crown used the distraction to throw off imperial rule. Europe began to splinter ever further from its monarchical roots, starting with France. India cemented itself as a world power when it seized the assets of the East India Company. With mounting pressure from India and freshly independent Ireland and Scotland, the English were forced to double down on its colonies in the New World, as scattered as they were.

The entire geopolitical structure of the modern world is vastly different as a result. What would be the United States elsewhere is an ever-changing frontier. In many parts of the world the technology level is less advanced than one might expect. Black powder weapons still dominate most modern warfare, and seafaring technology hasn't updated much in hundreds of years. Isolationist countries like India are the only ones to have developed railroads in significant numbers.

The Company's field office and way station exists in a British castle in the northeast of what would be called Maine elsewhere, but the region is considered to be volatile, and visitors are warned to be careful of exposing anyone to Company technology.

Matriarchy (World #5309-III)

In the 1970s a mysterious plague wiped out 99.9% of all men. While there were efforts to find the remaining men who were immune, the scientific community stepped up and was able to delve into genetic engineering and cloning technologies in order to keep humanity going. After a tumultuous decade, humanity adapted and thrived in a variety of ways, breaking down a variety of taboos and prejudices in the wake of possible extinction.

The new generations since have become more adaptable, both in a different world than their parents knew and in their engineered genetics. While men are beginning to return, engineered to be immune to the plague (which is believed to have become inert anyway), there is a growing sentiment that they (and any notion of gender binary at all) is more and more irrelevant.

The Company has sent representatives (all women, after the first observation team reported back) but so far no permanent agreement has been made. Even the current classification of this being a Type III world is controversial among Company management, versus classifying it as a Type I or II that just happens to have almost no men on it.

Valhalla (World #26444-III)

Company researchers have not yet come up with a working theory as to why an alternate Earth would be populated with advanced humanoids with a variety of strange abilities who believe themselves to be ancient Norse figures in the afterlife.

The current working theory is that the extended Ice Age (of which the planet is still within) caused extra mutations to thrive in the environment, including increasing biodiversity of dangerous creatures.

In any case, Company representatives have established peaceful relations with the inhabitants, and have a well-guarded mountain outpost which contains the way station. The idea of other worlds has done nothing to dissuade the funny ideas of the inhabitants, claiming that the "rainbow bridge" technology is nothing new.

The Spider Dimension (World #14333-IV)

This alternate Earth is as icky for arachnophobes as it sounds, and is definitely not a tourist destination. While rich in a variety of natural resources, especially plant life useful for advanced medication, there are a plenitude of spiders. Lots, and lots, of spiders. Extraction teams wear full body suits when harvesting materials, and plenty of containment procedures are used upon exiting to ensure not a single spider escapes within.

Company researchers have officially dismissed any notion that the spiders are all part of an advanced, hyper-intelligent hivemind and are just biding their time, despite dozens of reports filed by those who have visited there.

Nova (World #94462-V)

In this reality the sun has gone nova, wiping out most of the solar system. At great cost, the Company established a small, floating observatory here in order to be able to study stellar phenomena close up in case it opens up other areas of research. However, travel into and out of Nova is known to cause lingering issues and oddities, so it is recommended that visitors leave plenty of time to decontaminate afterward.

GO THEN.

THERE ARE OTHER WORLDS THAN THESE

There are always more worlds to be discovered. As a GM, you have a limitless number of places to steal ideas for new worlds in, and as mentioned earlier, it's practically an imperative for your characters to make waves in them and make them your own.

For that reason, you should feel free to steal liberally from the many, many sources out there of alternate world fiction and drop them in as another stop on the Labyrinth. Here are a few favorites to start with.

Books

- ▶ The *G.O.D. Inc.* series by Jack L. Chalker is the most obvious influence here. In addition to some more information to help sketch out your own Company and Labyrinth, there's also a number of worlds the two protagonists drop into (especially in the first book, *The Labyrinth of Dreams*).

- ▶ Likewise, many authors like Harry Turtledove have made their career out of alternate history settings. Wikipedia has a whole list to check out, depending on what historical events most interest you and which side you're most interested in (war, politics, cultures, etc.). Search for "alternate history novels."
- ▶ Short story collections are particularly useful for getting the barest of ideas and running with it. Check out books like *Alternate Presidents* and *Alternate Tyrants*.
- ▶ For a more fantastic view of connected alternate worlds, Stephen King's *Dark Tower* series stretches to multiple realities and into metafiction itself.
- ▶ For more superhero-influenced tales, it's hard to go wrong with Warren Ellis' *Planetary* series. DC Comics has a whole comics line called *Elseworlds* exploring different histories involving their iconic characters. For something a little closer to home, *Atomic Robo* takes place on a Type I world where Nikola Tesla has a much greater impact on everything.

Television & Film

- ▶ The biggest influence here (and for many others who watched TV in the '90s) is *Sliders*. Even just reading the episode listing on Wikipedia should give you plenty of ideas.
- ▶ The faux-documentary *C.S.A.: The Confederate States of America* looks at one alternate world in-depth, not just the historical end, but with lots of subtle touches on how music and culture would be impacted.

All of this is only the tip of the iceberg (that the Titanic never crashed on). Any of the methods used to create a standard *TimeWatch* game are applicable here as well. So go forth and explore the multiverse; just make sure you know how to get home once you do.

PULP CAMPAIGN FRAME

Want a game of nonstop two-fisted white-knuckle fun? You want a pulp campaign, and *TimeWatch* is the perfect system for running over-the-top pulp adventure stories. Like a *Patrol* campaign that tosses realism in favor of high adventure, a *Pulp*-style campaign frame might have liquid metal cyborg assassins imitating Lincoln, or Hannibal riding trained woolly mammoths, and possibly both at the same time. Paradoxes are less of a worry, errors result in a slap on the wrist from *TimeWatch* instead of accidentally erasing reality, and the results of historical changes may be a bit less credible. If your players aren't hard core history buffs and just want a fun game, *Pulp* might be the right campaign frame for you.

WHAT IS "PULP"?

When people talk about "pulp" storytelling they are hearkening back to lowbrow serialized tales published in the early part of the 20th century. Writers like Edgar Rice Burroughs and Lester Dent created bold heroes who defeated sinister evils through



When there isn't a zeppelin handy, you can't go wrong with a fight atop a speeding train.

their straightforward superiority. Tarzan and Doc Savage and John Carter fought straight up, and nobody ever doubted their righteousness or the evil of their enemies.

These types of stories are still very popular, and with good reason: they're awesome. Done right, pulp tales are thrilling and exhilarating narrative roller coasters. Any great adventure movie, from *Star Wars* to *Seven Samurai* to *The Avengers* — they're all classic pulp tales. Your campaign can be just as thrilling. It's easy to do; a pulp adventure story has a few key ingredients.

These stories were not structurally sophisticated. They might feature the occasional surprise twist when a trusted friend turned out to be a traitor, but usually such switcheroos were telegraphed well in advance, and never caused the hero to doubt their own judgment. Even hard-boiled mysteries, which might have very complicated solutions, developed in very straightforward ways with the hero progressing from one clue to the next.

They were packed full of weird, exciting stuff. Tarzan's jungle seems a little *too* crowded with ferocious predators and horrible savages to form what you might call a convincing sort of ecosystem, but it sure made for exciting reading. These stories produced surprise not through plot twists but by throwing new and novel threats at their enemies. John Carter's Mars is just crawling with weird monsters, each of which Carter mostly fights exactly *once*. And then Burroughs has to make up a new monster (or entire species of monsters) for the next book.

Evildoers weren't just evil, they were evil in ways that could be effectively opposed through heroic action. As long as John Carter killed enough of the right people, the problem was solved. Indeed, every real problem John Carter faced was a problem that could really only be solved by killing a reasonable number of people.

"Genre fiction," which nowadays is what we call the array of storytelling forms that descended from the humble pulps, has taken on a great deal more sophistication over the years. We have antiheroes and social breakdowns and deconstructed narratives and all that stuff. But when we talk about pulp stories, we mean unsophisticated, novelty-filled narratives employed to tell stories of evil undone through heroic action.

That's it in a nutshell. Once more: unsophisticated, novelty-filled narratives employed to tell stories of evil undone through heroic action.

We also recall Quentin Tarantino's definition at the opening of his film *Pulp Fiction*:

Pulp: A soft, moist, shapeless mass of matter.

Of course, *Pulp Fiction* is not exactly a pulp story. Never mind.

LAUNCH A PULP TIMEWATCH CAMPAIGN

So this sounds like fun, right? But if pulp is not your usual style, how do you get started? What makes a *TimeWatch* campaign *pulpy*?

Let us recall the notes we just made on pulp storytelling:

Unsophisticated

Your heroes are heroes. They work for TimeWatch because they want to preserve history, and history is constantly under threat by **evil forces**. Your players don't need to craft extensive back stories for their heroes, or worry about their inner motivations. Watch out for players who want to play conflicted loners, or heroes with tangled sympathies. Encourage a simpler sort of thinking. Remind your players of what made *Star Wars* so much fun, or *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, or any other film of that type. Encourage them to play **heroes**.

Even Han Solo and Indiana Jones play nice with their friends.

Likewise, when you're coming up with adventures, don't try to get too clever. Make sure your evil folks are threatening, that the need to stop them is urgent. Don't worry about making sure every detail is covered off, just make sure stuff is going to *happen* and keep your heroes running too fast to worry about how it all fits together.

Remember that pulp is meant to be "shapeless." An unsophisticated story doesn't have to tie up every loose end; it just needs to keep the heroes fighting evildoers.

Novelty-Filled

You are going to be coming up with lots of crazy stuff to throw at them. You will probably want to provide multiple time travel mechanisms, so that you can have antagonists pulling stuff out of lots of different periods. A pulpy campaign is

one where Napoleon invades Saxon England with a bunch of zeppelins, seeking Excalibur.

This is *TimeWatch*, so you have all of history to draw upon... along with any alternate histories or futures you might make up, so let your imagination go and twist together the most unlikely combinations. Allow myth and legend to enter into your view of history. It's always possible that Excalibur was some sort of impossibly futuristic artifact that really *does* have a tremendous connection with the island of Britain, and can perform genetic analysis to see if it's being wielded by the right person. In a pulp campaign, that sort of thing happens all the time.

Raymond Chandler famously said of pulp storytelling, "When in doubt, have a man come through the door with a gun in his hand." In pulp *TimeWatch*, the man might be an army of sophosaurs, the gun a specialized isotropic freeze ray, and the door a whirling portal to an alternate history, but the principle holds true. When you're running a pulp game, never be afraid to throw a new element into the mix. Well, almost never.

Pulp stories are forever introducing new external threats. Have fun with it!

Evil Undone

Your adventures will work best in a pulp campaign when they are about stopping evil. Like we said above, your antagonists should produce real threats, threats that directly impact your heroes. Maybe not at first, but as soon as the heroes get involved your baddies should have ways of targeting them.

Think of *Star Wars* — when the story opens Luke Skywalker has no connection to the Rebellion, so Tarkin's plot to use Princess Leia to discover the location of the Rebel base doesn't impact him at all. It's only once he gets involved and travels to the Death Star that Tarkin and Vader start taking action that affects his life.

Your evildoers can work the same way: whatever it is that they're trying to do, once the heroes get involved, your evil folks should come gunning for them.

But no matter what, their evil plots get foiled. Pulp heroes don't fail. They may get pushed to the limits, but make sure they prevail. Evil plots always get undone.

Heroic Action

Your heroes should do amazing things. Doc Savage wasn't just good at stuff, he was the best in the world. At everything. Let your heroes be spectacular. Make sure there are audiences around to thrill to their incredibleness.

Pulp heroes fall out of airplanes, punch giant robots, rescue princes and princesses, face down wild beasts, and win chariot races. If one of your heroes wants to do something, you should always let them try. Tell them what the target will be for whatever zany thing they come up with, and let them roll. When a player rolls a big success, that should lead to enormous amounts of coolness. A pulp hero is capable of things that ordinary people can't do, or would never ever try.

Of course you should also gleefully make their lives miserable when that's what the dice say. But especially celebrate the successes.

A lot of this is good advice in any sort of campaign, but pulp heroes especially need to shine with glory. You've asked your players to create heroic characters, right? So now let them feel like heroes.

Heroic action doesn't just mean winning the day. It means looking like big damn heroes.

So with those four basic concepts of pulp stories in hand, you can easily set up a campaign. Make sure your players understand what sort of stories you want to tell; give them some movies that have the right feel. Help them come up with heroic characters. And then you have to come up with a solid enemy, and remember to think about ways you can easily bring in new threats — more folks with guns coming through more doors.

You're ready to go!

THE THREE DANGERS OF PULP STORYTELLING

Telling pulp stories can seem super simple, but it's possible to go astray. Too much “shapeless mass,” and your campaign will collapse on itself and your players will lose interest.

Be watchful for these common pitfalls in this kind of story.

Too Many Guns, Too Many Doors

Remember when we leavened our enthusiasm for a constant barrage of new threats and so on? When we said you should “almost never” be afraid to do so? Okay, here's the flip side of that hilarious coin.

When the influx of new stuff is so great that it overwhelms your players' ability to create connections between things, when they see stuff show up and just get dropped unceremoniously, never to reappear, they will not be able to maintain their enthusiasm. Sure, when you don't quite know what to do, just have an Amazon army on raygun-equipped triceratopses show up and figure out the details later. Anyone can do that. But novelty becomes a source of tedium in its own right, and you need to watch out for that.

When all is said and done, *TimeWatch* is a GUMSHOE game, and that means investigation; the characters are supposed to be great at figuring things out. So sure, throw twists and surprises at them when you need to, but also sit back and give them time to put real clues together and solve real mysteries. That's a big part of the game.

Watch how they approach your adventures. If they start defaulting to “doing suicidal stuff and who cares about clues,” you might have a problem. Your players might have decided that since any storyline is going to get interrupted by whatever hilarious idea you've come up with this time, there's no point in them looking for stuff. Which lands pretty close to “they're not really having much fun.”

If you think this might be happening, rein yourself in. Make sure you have other tricks up your sleeve besides “surprise!” Run a straight-up mystery for once and see how your players

react. Allow foolish characters to reap the consequences of their foolhardiness. Vary the pace, and keep the players on their toes.

This is just good GMing advice, really. Watch your players and learn what they like, and figure out how to fit that with what you like. Whether you're running pulpy games or not, it makes for a good game.

Why Is Evil So Dumb?

So we said that a big part of pulp adventures is the idea of evil undone. Evil never ever triumphs in these kinds of stories. This is not horror, or conspiracy, where the heroes are often terribly outmatched by the forces lined up against them. In pulp stories the heroes are always equal to the task and evil is always vanquished, even if it takes brutal heroism to do so.

Which can lead to the question: what makes evil scary? If evil *always* loses, how can you maintain a sense of threat in your stories?

The truth is it's hard to maintain a campaign of full-on pulp action for a long time. Continually finding threats that will actually worry your heroes gets harder and harder.

Evil Seeds

Planting Evil Seeds is one tactic that works beautifully. In the early days of your campaign, make it clear that your evildoer is in fact the underling of another, even more powerful and more evil entity. Give your heroes glimpses and clues, or have them discover mentions of these more powerful evils, even if you yourself don't really have a clear idea what they might be.

These are Evil Seeds. You plant them, and they grow into *evil*.

Don't overdo it; a single choral instability-induced vision can go a long ways with imaginative players. Let them build up the threat in their mind. That way, when you at last reveal that they've come face to face with this terrible enemy, you won't have to do much work. Their imaginations will have done much of it already.

But do include more than one. If they are always getting info about the same Evil Seed, then they will realize that this is inevitably where the campaign is leading, and they'll know that ultimately they will succeed against it. If there are multiple Evil Seeds, the uncertainty will get them wondering if maybe they've just made a terrible choice and will be totally outmatched.

Consequences

If your players are assuming that your mysteries aren't mysterious enough, and that your challenges are too straightforward, think more about consequences. This is always useful in a time travel game. If the Agents take out an enemy, who fills that power vacuum, and what are her goals? If they eliminate a parallel history, how do the fading inhabitants of that history feel about it? If they are sloppy about their incredibly high-tech weaponry, what happens if locals get their hands on that weaponry after it's left behind?

By working consequences into multiple games, and by letting the results of one game be referenced in later games, you're going to have players with a far greater buy-in to your

world. Callbacks to earlier adventures, repeating villains, and allies whose fortunes wax and wane based on the actions of the heroes helps reinforce the idea that what your players do actually *matters* in history.

Subvert Expectations

Think about what your players expect at the adventure's end, and twist it. Is the true villain the sneering industrialist or his mutated, super-genius ten-year-old son? Has history changed to accomplish something obvious, or is there a secret purpose that no one has seen coming? And of course, is there a way to get an albino hyper-intelligent gorilla into the story?

By occasionally subverting the expectations of your gaming group, you're going to keep them delightedly guessing. That's going to make them happy.

The Beat Down

A final tactic is to violate the rules and beat the snot out of your players, just once. No, wait; out of the characters, not the players. Have them get in over their heads and pay the price. They won't like it at the time, we guarantee. But from then on they'll be worrying, "Heck, maybe we've done it again..."

Where Is This Time Machine Going?

Related to the "awesome fatigue" we talked about above, your campaign can also suffer from a fundamental lack of direction if you're pulling in too many disparate elements and not making them fit into some kind of structure.

You know this is happening when you start to dread game night. When the thought of trying to pull one more story out of this incredible mess you've created just fills you with a dull sort of twitching horror. When you can't even keep track of who's who or what's what anymore, and you just sort of rush from one kooky revelation to another, never letting your heroes settle in and feel comfortable in a part of the world.

"Too Many Guns" is a problem for your players — they feel unable or un-inclined to engage with your game. "Where Is This Time Machine Going" is a problem for you — you can no longer figure out how to develop a coherent storyline out of all the elements you've dumped on the table.

The solution is painful but can be over quickly if you act decisively. Kill all your babies. Whatever stuff in the game you love the most, kill it. Kill that supporting character you think is so cool. Kill that sweet subplot with the agency director. You don't have to actually kill things in the game; just drop them. Make a resolution with yourself to just slide those things out of the way. Simplify.

Your players probably won't even notice, if you've been steadily inundating them with new stuff every session.

Pick a few things that your players are already clearly interested in and keep those. Develop them and use them as the basis for the rest of the campaign, and just forget about everything else. And if your players do ask about something you jettisoned, you can just bring it on back. And they will *never know*. Promise yourself you'll use all that other cool stuff in future campaigns. Or maybe for when you write that novel. Yeah, that novel...

PULP CAMPAIGN HOOKS

Must Love Cats

A sample pulp adventure in this book, *Queen of the Nile* (see p. 366), introduces an alternate timeline in which Cleopatra's Alexandrian Empire ends up ruling the Western world. In the adventure as written the heroes will restore the glory of Rome and keep the world as is, but what if the Alexandrians don't go down so easily?

Founded on Egyptian wealth and opulence and tolerance rather than Roman rigor and stoicism and racism, the Alexandrian world grows into a glittering, kaleidoscopic crazy quilt of cultures and peoples all mixed together. Unburdened by a Dark Ages or the repression of the Church, science and technology develop far faster in the Alexandrian timeline. Future Alexandrians seem like sorcerers, wielding technology that is dressed up in gold and gorgeous gemstones — Cleopatra's love of ostentation makes a permanent mark on Western culture in this timeline.

And cats.

The Alexandrians *love* cats, and by, say, the 23rd-century or so, they have superintelligent house cats equipped with magical technology. These are the true enemies to our time stream: an army of vicious, deadly, extremely cute serial killer time travelers that cannot be distinguished from perfectly ordinary house cats. They spy on our world, gathering intel about how our time warriors try to defend our existence, and perform carefully disguised assassinations whenever necessary.

If you use the *Queen of the Nile* adventure to kick off your campaign, that can nicely kick off the possibility of house cats as agents. Perhaps the Agents' next mystery proves impossible to solve... until the investigators realize that the cat must have done it! Once they realize that there are time traveling cats in play, no household pet will go un-interrogated. And of course, as the Alexandrians get more desperate to defend their timeline, the deadliness of their furry operatives will only increase.

Alternate histories are the pulp GM's best friends. You can pull anything out of an alternate history. You can even start using the same alternate histories over and over again, leaving the Agents to wonder why that particular timeline won't fade out. It makes total sense for heroes in a pulp campaign to jump from one timeline to another. If they learn that the Alexandrian Empire develops a whole teleportation system using giant Egyptian obelisks, maybe that will help them engineer a way to save their history from those ezeru bent on blockading the British Museum long enough to butcher the Royal Family!

The Highly Advanced Technological Artifact in the Stone

King Arthur and the legend of Excalibur, the sword that could not be broken, could cut through anything, and would only release itself into the hands of a king.

Legend? A primitive description of the first steel sword? Or an *intelligent energy weapon*?

Thor's hammer, Mjolnir. Just an over-embellished story about an angry carpenter? Or was it a swarm of *supersonic nano-machines*?

A far-future faction wishes to redirect history, to make their faction triumphant. Perhaps they want to ensure humanity reaches the stars. Or they want to eliminate their key rival. They know that time travel, while possible, is carefully policed. So instead of running around causing trouble and getting themselves caught, they find the origins of ancient myths and provide those heroes with highly advanced technology.

They plant intelligent items in history, and leave them to wait. To observe, gather data, report, and when the time is right, to *activate*. To destroy TimeWatch once and for all.

Excalibur. Mjolnir. Smoking Mirror. Kusanagi-no-Tsurugi. Jingu Bang. Dozens of them, waiting all around the world.

This campaign can begin quietly, or with a big bang. The **quiet** version has the Agents sent to investigate a small matter — a change observed in some of the earliest versions of the Arthur myth. In these versions, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *A History of the Kings of Britain*, Arthur is killed by his own sword, rather than falling to wounds suffered in battle with his son, Mordred. Researching this leads to the discovery that Arthur's receipt of Excalibur involved a renegade time traveler, and thence onwards to learn that such "infiltrations" lie behind many legends of supernatural weapons. The campaign thus becomes a race to uncover why these mysterious time travelers are doing this, realize that history is full of these items, and interfere somehow before the activation of the weapons destroys TimeWatch itself.

The **big bang** opening has TimeWatch agents in the early 21st century suddenly assaulted and killed by heroes erupting out of legend, wielding weapons of unearthly power. Your Agents are among the few that escape the immediate onslaught, and fight against modern versions of ancient myths in order to preserve TimeWatch.

Either way, you'll have plenty of pulpy action to fill your players with joy.

I Hate Those Guys

The default troublemakers for TimeWatch, like the nasty sophosaurs or the hideous ezeru, make for classic pulp enemies.

The key is to bring them into the light. A *Conspiracy* game can revolve around the search to prove what's really going on, a *Chronal Horror* game about the scuttling dread that maybe giant cockroaches are involved, but a *Pulp* game is going to get past that stuff and to the mighty mighty ass-whooping quickly. This is where alternate time streams can really shine.

In a "Those Guys" campaign, alternate histories turn into whole other worlds where the majority of your adventuring can take place. Certain points in history are places ("vortices") where the alternate time streams "line up" and unwary (or extra-savvy) time travelers can switch from one history to another. It's most fun if these vortices are one-way. That way, your Agents get yanked through to the alternate time stream and then have to struggle to find a way back.

You can have this happen early on in the campaign. Open with an adventure that pits the Agents against a group of sophosaurs,

leading them to discover a vortex and get inadvertently pulled through it. Now they're trapped in the world of intelligent dinosaurs, on the run and unable to get back to the primary time stream unless they can find another vortex.

There will of course be a cabal of locals who are interested in helping your heroes, and they will inevitably get drawn into local conflicts as they struggle to find a way home.

Of course, once they do find a way back to the human-dominated time stream we're all so fond of, they'll only be a few steps behind a philosoraptor army intent on wiping out the authors of their species' destruction.

This campaign plays out much like a more traditional fantasy adventure game, but the Agents can time travel; it's just that for most of the game they are time traveling within the alien time stream, looking for a vortex that will get them back to their own history.

You get less playing around with actual history in this sort of campaign, although the quest for vortices can suggest all sorts of possibilities. Vortices don't have to be permanent, which could explain something like the Bermuda Triangle. Was there a vortex there in the '40s and '50s, but it subsequently faded, explaining why there have been fewer disappearances there than previously? Any sort of strange episode in history could be explained by a vortex.

You could also play around with alien versions of our own history; a sophosauric Tang dynasty, for example, complete with a dinosaur An Lushan, would be a blast.

Weird technology, inhuman armies, and a desperate search for a way home: all elements of a great pulp tale!

REBELLION CAMPAIGN FRAME

If you could change time, why wouldn't you? If you could right wrongs, save lives, and ensure justice is done in the past, don't you have a responsibility to do it? With the right technology your dream of a better future can become a reality.

These are beliefs that are commonly held by the so-called rebellion. Their motivations vary, but they all refuse to accept the status quo and resent TimeWatch telling them how things should be. To them, there is no fate but what we make.

Running a campaign focusing on characters who want to change history instead of restore it can be extremely challenging and tremendously fun. Time travel allows characters to not only explore history but to shape it. The sense of accomplishment they feel once they achieve their goals can be great. This campaign frame explores what such a campaign entails and how to overcome any obstacles you might face.

MOTIVATIONS

Why does someone become a rebel?

The short answer is to make a difference, but that can mean different things to different people. A rebel has to want that change to happen so much that they risk their lives and reality itself to achieve it.



Betray TimeWatch and become a rebel, but never relax; loyal agents will be chasing you down.

So the question, then, is why do they want to make that change?

It could be for personal reasons. This is usually when there is some tragedy in the rebel's past or something that they regret. Their motivation is to change this event and improve their present, maybe even saving loved ones in the bargain. These rebels rarely have large schemes and may cease time traveling once they've achieved their goal. Reaching that point may be more complicated than they initially thought.

Other rebels can feel that the world could be improved with alterations made to history. This can be an ongoing project, as there are always ways in which things can be improved. Not all rebels will agree on what constitutes an improvement.

Some rebels want to change history simply because TimeWatch says that they can't. They could want to destabilize time to see what happens, or to wipe out TimeWatch altogether. In this case their goal is to change key moments, without any knowledge of how things will turn out.

Not all rebels originate from the prime timeline. Some time travelers come from divergent timelines and are shocked to find that their history isn't real. Some can even become stranded if TimeWatch eliminates the alteration that gave rise to their future history, driving them to try and recreate their

divergent future just so they can go home. Such rebels are therefore motivated to ensure that the prime timeline becomes more like their divergence. If the rebel has a record of their divergent timeline, they will have a way to identify what events must be altered to achieve their goal.

A character's motivation is the fuel of a campaign. As long as they still feel that desire they will keep going. Over the course of a series they will have opportunities to re-examine that motivation and even change it. Conflicting motivations are ripe for powerful emotional scenes.

CHANGES

This is the key element of a *Rebellion* game. What is it that a rebel wants to change?

It could be linked to their motivation or something from their past. It could be something they've been assigned by a superior, or something that an ally (or more powerful enemy) wants changed.

The bigger the change, the more likely that TimeWatch and other time travelers will notice. In this context the size of the change depends on how it will affect the rest of history. Assassinating historical figures or introducing anachronistic

technology will get far more notice than saving someone from dying in a fire in a small town.

Rebels could be satisfied using time travel to score minor victories. They change just enough to make things better without being noticed. Such rebels might never encounter a TimeWatch agent, but the overall path of history will stay largely the same.

Such changes need not be restricted to single individuals. The fortune of a whole community can be affected without the rest of the world being altered. If the community is isolated or far in the past before instantaneous communication, few will notice anything has shifted.

Rebels generally need to think bigger if they wish to make a change of real consequence, with lasting effects. These usually center on major historical events and figures. Even changing the footnotes of history can catch the attention of TimeWatch. Judging what will and will not draw attention is a matter of judgment and experience. Either a rebel doesn't care or they push their luck, deciding on just which side of caution they will err.

The nature of the rebel and their moral character can also dictate how they carry out those changes. Violence might be an easy answer, but not every time traveler is willing to hurt or kill others to get what they want. Is it still murder if your change saves more future people than you've hurt? Is it worth bringing about a preferable potential timeline if it means murdering innocents? The ethical quandaries get murky fairly quickly, and philosophical lines in the sand can even divide rebels who are ostensibly working together.

Self-imposed restrictions encourage creative thinking. Can they make a change using just persuasion, diplomacy, or trickery? While this is more of a challenge, it can be a rewarding way to complete a scenario, especially in a campaign with a lighter tone.

OPPOSITION

If rebels are attempting a change that is likely to get them noticed, they can expect to encounter TimeWatch agents from a future in which they have succeeded. These confrontations will be frequent and increasingly difficult to overcome.

To a rebel, TimeWatch can appear to be all knowing and omnipresent. What they might not know is that any TimeWatch agent they encounter may have spent a significant period of time investigating the problem before they ever find the rebels and show up to stop them.

You might imagine how such an adventure would play out for the TimeWatch agents. It can be useful for the GM to think about how the actions of the rebels would leave clues that can be investigated by TimeWatch. This can be when the rebels fail at a roll; they could make a mistake or leave a clue that allows a TimeWatch agent to either arrive at that moment or that puts TimeWatch on the rebels' trail.

For example, a failed Burglary test could mean that while the rebels were able to unlock the door, they damaged the lock in the process. TimeWatch later examined the door, noticed the damage, and traveled back to set an ambush for the rebels

inside. Effectively, this means that the GM might ambush the characters any time the players fail a significant test or leave noticeable clues... a state of affairs that doubtlessly might make the rebels appropriately paranoid.

If the rebels aren't taking any steps to cover their tracks, or they draw attention to themselves, then TimeWatch can find them by talking to witnesses, searching surveillance footage (possibly from hidden cameras that TimeWatch travels back to plant), or examining records.

This doesn't always mean there will be a direct attack any time the rebels slip up. If the clue doesn't positively identify them, then TimeWatch might just send one or two agents back to check for themselves. They won't want to prevent the action that created the clue, so will have to keep their distance as they verify the rebels' identity for themselves. This gives the rebels a chance to hide, disguise themselves, or otherwise go unnoticed.

It is also possible that by this stage in the investigation the TimeWatch agents have already suffered some choral instability and run out of pool points to use. Time travel is risky and they can't do it for every clue, so even if the rebels make a mistake it doesn't *necessarily* mean that they are about to be ambushed. Not that the players will know that.

If TimeWatch are able to find the rebels because of a mistake they've made, the rebels might be tempted to try and undo that mistake. If they were successfully able to defeat the TimeWatch agents or escape, there is little reason to do this other than to conceal their trail. If they notice a mistake before TimeWatch has, traveling back to fix it might save them from discovery. Removing a clue does slow TimeWatch's investigation, but without the confrontation with the rebels they will have expended fewer resources. This can mean that they are stronger when they encounter the rebels at a later (or earlier) point.

Of course, changing known facts triggers paradox. Once rebels know that their enemies have picked up their trail, anything they do to then preemptively remove that trail will trigger Paradox tests. If successful, TimeWatch might lose the scent; if not, the paradox doesn't stop the clue from rippling forwards through time.

There could be an occasion where one single clue was critical to TimeWatch picking up the rebel's trail. If that is removed then they would never find them. Should the rebels discover this then removing that clue could be crucial to escaping capture.

Victory must at least be a possibility in a *Rebellion* game, so while agents in a standard *TimeWatch* game can try to fix time several times, here they can only do so once. If the rebel is able to change time, then TimeWatch has failed and can now only try to minimize the damage.

This can allow rebels to concentrate on their goal. Each step closer to achieving their goal is a sign of progress, and TimeWatch can only directly work to rob them of that before the change is made.

Rebellion games shouldn't always be the rebels stalked by TimeWatch; if TimeWatch agents try to reverse rebel gains with their own unique plan, the rebels should have the opportunity to take the offensive and try and head off the surreptitious attack altogether.

COMPETITION

TimeWatch represents the primary force pushing against historical change, but there are other time traveling factions who want to make changes of their own. Some of these can be directly against the rebels' own interests, such as the Europeans' desire to wipe out humanity, but other time travelers could just want to make a change that will unfortunately conflict with the rebels' goals.

If the rebel has identified a particular point as being crucial to changing history, then other time travelers could have come to the same conclusion. This can cause several parties to converge on a particular event, each trying to change it to benefit themselves.

This event is usually described as a "Berlin scenario," where so many people try to assassinate Hitler in 1940s Berlin that TimeWatch has a permanent safe house and mission assignment bureau stationed there.

A Berlin scenario can lead to conflict, negotiation, or an alliance. The more parties present, the more complicated negotiation becomes. In addition, the presence of so many time travelers is bound to get the attention of TimeWatch.

If this happens during a mission the rebels will need to identify who the other party or parties are and what they are trying to achieve. While this can complicate matters, other time travelers can provide a smokescreen for the rebels' actions.

Should TimeWatch focus on the other time travelers, then the rebels will be able to make the change they want right under their very noses. Rather than leave this to chance, the rebels can frame the other time travelers or leave incriminating clues to alert TimeWatch to their actions.

The rebels could only learn about the actions of the other time travelers after the fact. This is when a change is made to history but not restored to how it originally was. If the rebels don't like this alteration (which could undo their own work) they'll be in a similar position to TimeWatch, forced to investigate how this change occurred and make sure things are restored to how they want it.

This works both ways, so the rebels could be in the process of making a change to history when another party becomes aware of their presence. These rival time travelers could attack them directly or act behind the scenes, making the rebels' lives more difficult.

SUCCESS

The adventure is not over when the rebels do successfully make a change. TimeWatch is lucky that they have a record of the original timeline, allowing them to navigate. Once rebels have made a change to history they have no such roadmap.

The change they've made might result in the outcome they were hoping for, but equally it might go wrong or create an even worse situation. Rebels have to deal with the repercussions they've caused. This doesn't necessarily mean undoing their hard work, but it's usually wise for them to get events under control.

There is also a larger consequence for an ongoing series or campaign. The more changes that are made, the less

recognizable the timeline will be as our history. While this can be fun for the rebels to explore, it also means there are fewer and fewer identifiable reference points for the GM to focus on and for players to use.

A way to mitigate this is by having the changes relate to specific parts of history, while leaving the rest of time untouched. So while rebels might reshape and rename Italy or manage to prevent dinosaurs becoming extinct, the rest of history plays out as before. The amount of other changes are usually directly related with how much fun you have thinking about alternate history when you GM.

This is even easier to do if you focus on changing events in the 21st century, ahead of our own real world. Give the rebels terrible events in our future to prevent, avert, or change. They can be responsible for making a brighter tomorrow, without ever confusing the actual past.

History can also be reshaped so that it is closer to the original timeline, without undoing the changes the rebels have made. This could be done by TimeWatch, other time travelers, or by the rebels themselves as they attempt to fix any problems they've caused.

This will create an internal history of time itself within your campaign. The rebels will recall the periods of the game where the 20th century was ravaged with numerous world wars until they got things under control, or how they created a new history where the Roman Empire now survived into the 19th century for several adventures until the ezeru managed to eliminate Julius Caesar from the timeline.

ADVENTURE FRAMEWORK

In most *TimeWatch* games the players initially take the role of reactive characters. They are presented with a threat or opportunity, and the adventure is built around how they respond. This allows you some control over who they meet, what they'll do, and where they must go.

A *Rebellion* campaign puts the characters in a more proactive role. They will be trying to change something in history, requiring you to react to them. You must devise the challenges they must pass in order to achieve their aim, add opponents, and (if they are successful) establish what the resulting effects of their actions will be to the flow of history.

This can put a lot of pressure on you, especially if you're not used to on-the-fly improvisation. Luckily there are ways to frame this proactive role in a more traditional adventure structure.

If the players have a definite plan of what part of history they wish to alter, they can advise you ahead of time so that you can research the period and work out any factors involved. This works particularly well if the changes they want to make won't have a big impact on history. Small, personal objectives are more easily achievable, there is less opposition to worry about, and you don't have to worry about completely rewriting the timeline each adventure.

Individual or small groups of time travelers that want to make big changes are easy prey for TimeWatch. The moment they start making noticeable changes, agents will be dispatched

to deal with them. With the resources and manpower available to TimeWatch, those on their own will soon be caught.

Far better for them to join one of the numerous rebellion organizations. The player characters might have to learn the hard way, allowing one of the rebellions to come to their rescue. They can then be recruited to the rebellion's cause.

Once a member of the rebellion, they can then be assigned missions to improve their standing. The rebels are still changing history, but you can prepare exactly what their targets are. If the player characters share the same motivations as their chosen organization, they'll want to complete the mission assigned to them.

The adventure itself, whether set by the rebels or assigned by an organization, is very similar to that of writing a normal *TimeWatch* scenario. You establish key points that will cause a change, but you allow the player characters to be the ones to actually make that alteration.

Sometimes there is a single event or person that the rebels need to influence. This is ideal if you want the adventure to center on a particular time and place. In other instances there are multiple factors that need to be changed before they have achieved their goal. This approach is more suited for adventures that will take rebels up and down the timeline.

The challenge can be increased by the actions of other time travelers, while the opposition presented by TimeWatch can be scaled in response to the rebels' actions. In this way, the players themselves will influence how easy or difficult they find it to achieve their goal.

REBELLION ORGANIZATIONS

There are several time travel organizations, but their numbers fluctuate as they are erased or created due to changes in time. TimeWatch can rid themselves of one group, only for another to pop into existence and remain even after the divergent timeline is removed.

Below you will find a selection of notable organizations with a variety of goals. Each is provided with an overview of the organization, how it is structured (including notable bases of operation), and some sample missions.

Player characters can join these groups or find themselves in opposition to them. If you are playing a standard *TimeWatch Patrol* campaign than every one of them can be a potential enemy.

Clockwork Chronal Entertainment

Overview

When they acquired time travel technology, the major media provider that would become Clockwork Chronal Entertainment already knew they had the key to creating films and television shows like no other.

Agents were sent to recruit the best writers, directors, and actors that history had ever known. Who wouldn't want to see an action film written by William Shakespeare, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, and starring Humphrey Bogart and

Charlton Heston? Orson Welles could finally bring *Don Quixote* to the screen.

Clockwork Chronal Entertainment could send news crews to cover the crucifixion of Christ or the Great Fire of London live! Chat shows could feature major historical figures, where members of the public could phone to put questions to the likes of Abraham Lincoln and Elvis Presley.

Film history could be tweaked to see what form classic movies would take if different actors were cast, or if an alternative decision had been made in editing.

Employees of Clockwork Chronal Entertainment get to rub shoulders with celebrities, as long as the celebrities are kept happy. This can be worth the risk of heading back into primitive time zones or covering dangerous historical events.

Ratings are more important to Clockwork Chronal Entertainment than preserving history.

Structure

In Clockwork Chronal Entertainment, you're only as good as your last project. Members constantly fight to become attached to films and television shows that are successful, just so that the members can secure promotions and work their way up the chain of command. End up on too many projects which make a loss, and you'll never work again.

This mentality ensures that employees of the company are willing to do whatever it takes to succeed. It also means that they aren't willing to take risks, so some projects must be privately funded to prove that they can command an audience.

There are many different departments within Clockwork Chronal Entertainment, but they all report to the accountants. Time travel is limited to those that need to film on location in different eras or for missions to "recruit" stars from the past.

Behind the scenes at the Clockwork Chronal Entertainment, the studio is a melting pot of history. Employees from multiple projects and many different time periods cross paths or gather at catering. Extinct animals are moved in cages by extremely nervous handlers while technicians struggle to get futuristic technology working in time for shooting.

The studio has extremely effective legal teams who ensure their ironclad nondisclosure contracts aren't breached. They take steps to protect their time travel technology and keep the government or outside agencies from interfering in their affairs.

Sample Missions

The Moon in Manhattan

The player characters are working on the film *One Small Step*, about the first men on the moon. It isn't practical to film on the moon so a studio set is created in New York, and Stanley Kubrick will direct. Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong have been acquired from 1970 and conditioned to believe that they really are on the moon.

A breach in security allows members of the public to take photos of the project. When these are released, the public believe that the Apollo 11 mission was faked, and the American public stops supporting the space race. To ensure that their film still has an audience, the Agents must improve security and stop those photos from seeing the light of day.

Movie History

Sometimes when a film crew goes back to record a historical event, it just isn't that interesting. Having already spent a lot of money on the project, something has to be done to punch it up and make it more exciting. Such is the case when the Agents accompany a film crew to film Columbus discovering North America.

At the director's request, the Agents are asked to find a way to redirect Columbus' ships to a more interesting portion of North America. There they should meet some of the local tribes, and maybe find themselves in conflict before working together against hostile local wildlife.

Can the Agents keep up with increasingly strange demands of the director without history coming apart at the seams?

As It Happens

It should have been a quiet film shoot in the picturesque 1920s Spanish countryside, with just a few actors from the 1980s and 2030s. So why is a documentary team from the future of Clockwork Chronal Entertainment interviewing the Agents about their role in a forthcoming tragedy that will make movie history?

If there's an incoming disaster, the Agents' careers are on the line. The Agents have to be on their guard and work out what is about to occur, since the documentary team refuses to tell them anything that could alter events, all so that they can capture authentic reactions.

Crosstime**Overview**

Not all TimeWatch agents maintain the surety that their choices to preserve history are the correct ones. Some come to believe that they would be better off improving history, making the world a better place and ensuring greater peace, prosperity, and happiness for humankind. They defect from TimeWatch with as much technology as they can carry, and they join Crosstime.

Structure

Crosstime keeps its secrets hidden in the places where TimeWatch can't easily track them down — the lost years between calendar changes, the 19th-century confusion of over 100 US railroad time zones, and the near-endless monotony of pre-dinosaur Earth. The group consists almost entirely of former TimeWatch agents and great thinkers from across history who have chosen to throw in their resources and intellect with Crosstime. TimeWatch is thought of as well meaning but dangerously naïve thugs, agents smart enough to fix history but without the vision to see the paradise that could truly exist if only they would allow it.

There are a surprising number of undercover Crosstime recruiters within TimeWatch's ranks as well. There they cautiously gather resources, identify recruitment prospects, and spy on ongoing missions to alert Crosstime of opportunities. Most Crosstime revolutionaries are experienced and seasoned field agents, thinkers, and philosophers who know how to kill for their cause. This makes them exceptionally dangerous.

While Crosstime steadfastly resists the ezeru, it's allied with several of the less isolationist clans of sophosaurs. Whether this is wise is still up for debate, but the raptors' psychic technology is allowing Crosstime to succeed where it would otherwise have failed, and that's making history a better place.

Sample Missions**Traitor in Our Midst**

It's suspected that a new Crosstime recruit is secretly a TimeWatch undercover spy. The player character Agents are assigned to take him on a mission to adjust history, and decide once and for all whether he can be trusted.

Supply Run

Crosstime needs technology, and there's no tech like TimeWatch tech. The Agents are assigned to break into a secret TimeWatch supply depot and clean it out. That's easier said than done, and how can they do so without turning it into a massive trap?

History Improvement

The Agents are ordered to inoculate native North and South American tribes to European diseases, thus changing the course of history. This easily noticed change is a distraction from a real Crosstime mission going on simultaneously. Can the Agents pull it off, and what are the real changes at stake?

Judgment Day**Overview**

There are those who escape justice, at least according to history. Judgment Day is determined to set the record straight. Recruiting from detectives, bounty hunters, and members of law enforcement, they use time travel to crack unsolved crimes.

They travel to different eras, sometimes going undercover within various police forces so that they have access to local resources and personnel. With their knowledge of the future and advanced technology they try to identify the guilty party. Once they have their target, they'll either ensure that there is enough evidence to insure their conviction or dispatch the suspect themselves.

TimeWatch opposes the vigilante organization, as they can unintentionally stop murderers from killing further victims. Leaving such people alive introduces additional random factors to history which can cause a divergence.

Structure

First and foremost, members of Judgment Day are officers of the law. In almost every case their time travel technology was confiscated from time travelers that crossed their path. Only a few members actually have their own time machine, instead relying on so-called dispatch officers to take them where they need to go.

Members are under no illusion that what they are doing is legal. Secrecy is paramount, right alongside loyalty to the badge. The day-to-day administration is done in back rooms, basements, and secluded public places.

Their organizational structure is similarly loose, with different groups acting in various locations and time periods connected only by friends and acquaintances. Information is shared and favors are done when it will help close a case.

New members are considered rookies, no matter how much experience they've had enforcing the law. Assigned an experienced partner they are guided through the process of using time travel to solve crimes and apprehend criminals.

Like any law enforcement agency, corruption is a problem. Even time traveling cops have been known to take a bribe or abuse their powers. To combat this they have their own version of internal affairs, officers who have the added advantage that they can go back and witness a cop's actions to see for themselves if they are corrupt.

Sentencing of the guilty (which is almost always execution) is an unpleasant affair and often reveals the uglier side of the organization. They can be dispatched cleanly or after a vigorous beating, depending entirely on their crimes and how high emotions are running amongst the executioners.

This is when members need to remind themselves that they aren't just gratifying their bloodlust or need for closure, but ensuring that they've altered history for the better. Judgment Day makes sure that bad people get what they deserve. If only traditional law enforcement could do the same.

Sample Missions

In the Walls

Building contractor Emil Frost was suspected of murdering his wife, but because the police couldn't find her body there wasn't enough evidence to convict him. Ten years after his death the remains of Mrs. Frost are found in a building he helped build, with DNA evidence that proves he was responsible for her death.

The player characters are sent to make sure that the prosecuting lawyers have the evidence they need to send Frost to jail. Failing that, they are to apprehend him for execution. This is more difficult than it seems because Emil's son Victor moved the body into the building after his father died. To secure a conviction, the player characters will need to find where the body is buried.

Too Close

Assigned to investigate the unsolved murder of Donna Sable, the player characters find that her father, Liam, another member of Judgment Day, is also investigating the case. This is a breach of the group's code of conduct, so they must get him to back off as sensitively as they can.

Donna died in a car accident, and it appears that someone had cut her brakes. The player characters' investigation reveals that the car was improperly repaired by Liam, and that she lost control when trying to escape her time traveling father who was tailing her vehicle.

If Liam finds out, he'll try to punish his past self for his failings.

Old West Justice

Sent back to 1869 to the small town of Red Stone, the player characters are assigned to capture the notorious Mad Dog Killer gang. They are due to slaughter 30 people in a bank

robbery gone wrong, including legendary law man Billy Bob Craston. In the original history, the gang escaped and was never captured.

Not only are the player characters to stop the criminals but they must try to recruit Billy Bob Craston to their cause. When they approach him is crucial, as Billy Bob was actually working with the gang (his death was a result of friendly fire), and he will betray Judgment Day to get their time travel technology.

Knights Temporal

Overview

For better or for worse, there's little that unites and divides humankind more than religious faith. In the name of faith, people perform acts of ineffable kindness and grace; they will donate every cent they own, risk their own life, and open their heart to strangers in order to live up to being the kind of person they aspire to be. The other side of the coin is religious fear and violence; people go to war, kill or shun unbelievers, and turn on neighbors who happen to hold different beliefs. Religion and faith are forces that control countries, politics, wars, and marriages.

Really, it should be no surprise that the Church laid claim to time travel as soon as they could do so.

Structure

The Knights Temporal was originally founded by the Vatican, but has since expanded its membership to invite members of other Christian churches. Its time traveling members have sworn to promote Christianity by any and all means possible. As such, they search through history for religious linchpins and act coherently and in force to change history in such a way that their God and Church are glorified. This is not to say that this makes them warmongers or evil; far from it, and many Knights Temporal are kind, gentle, and forward thinking. They are single-minded, however, and they are united by the belief that the world is a better place when their teachings are spread as far and wide as possible. When this must be accomplished by violence instead of diplomacy or clever historical manipulation, they hope to make such historical strikes as surgical as possible.

You'll find the Knights Temporal defending historical changes by others that promote Christianity; arranging that setbacks to Christianity are minimized or removed; providing the special effects needed for miracles in order to ensure sainthood to the most holy of historical figures; and cleaning house, removing corrupt or ungodly religious figures throughout history in order to make the Church and the world a better place. They wage holy wars against other religions (and other time travelers), creating messes that TimeWatch often helps resolve.

Sample Missions

Saints Alive

Three charismatic and well-organized Knights Temporal from the near future decide that the world will be a better place with better Church PR. They travel to every pope to teach him how to sway as many hearts and minds as possible, and they

literally create saints from wise and charismatic worshippers by supplying convincing special effects. Drunk on power from becoming the Vatican's dirty little secret for hundreds of years, and suffering from choral instability, the trinity of advisers decides to marshal the Church into its own holy army instead of leaving well enough alone as trusted counselors. The player characters are sent to stop them, and rescue them, before TimeWatch can get involved.

Schism

In the year 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne, King of the Franks, as Holy Roman emperor. This led to the Great Schism of 1054 that split medieval Christianity into two branches that still haven't fully healed today. How many more people might have been saved if this had never occurred? It's the players' job to find out — understanding that this will change the world, and someone will ultimately want to change it back.

Reinforcements From Yesterday

Vatican City is attacked, overrun, and destroyed by terrorists in the early 22nd century. It's up to the Knights Temporal to go back in time and train up a loyal, unswerving army of well-armed troops — and then lead them into a surprise defense of the Vatican at the best possible moment. Can time travel and military leadership save the day, in a world where the heart of the Church is destined to be overrun?

GM ADVICE: RELIGION AND THE REAL WORLD

Be sure that you understand your players' deeply held religious beliefs before using the Knights Temporal in a purely heroic or villainous role. Likewise, we advise against depicting any religion or people as purely good or purely evil. The real world is full of shades of grey, with complex and well-meaning leaders who do their best but remain fallible, and we suspect your game will be the most fun if you avoid easy stereotypes.

Restoration

Overview

Work for TimeWatch long enough, and sooner or later you'll come to the conclusion that TimeWatch isn't so much interested in protecting time as shaping it to its own designs. Consisting of former TimeWatch agents, Restoration is determined to uncover the original timeline and restore it.

It differs from Crosstime in this regard; while both rebel groups consist of former TimeWatch agents, Crosstime is trying to build a future utopia. Restoration is trying to return history to what it should have been before TimeWatch interfered.

To do this, Restoration looks for historical incidents in which TimeWatch seems to have engineered the events rather than just preserving them. This is highly dangerous, as this brings it to the attention of the very organization it is rebelling against.

Divergent timelines can be a valuable source of information. Supposedly created by changes to the prime timeline, research has shown that several different divergent timelines share a common past prior to the divergence that's not reflected in the current prime timeline. Restoration hopes that these common factors give a hint to what originally happened.

Restoring the original timeline is but one part of their mission. It also investigates TimeWatch itself. Who is really in charge, and what is their ultimate goal? Whose interests does it serve to preserve history in its current form?

Restoration knows at some point it will need to eliminate TimeWatch. It is even hoped that erasing the organization will undo the changes TimeWatch has made. This is a last resort, as TimeWatch's existence keeps enemies of humanity at bay, and removing it might in turn remove Restoration.

TimeWatch maintains that Restoration is simply a gathering of unstable rogue agents whose sanity has been compromised. It states that it has only ever acted in the best interest of the prime timeline, and it's delusional to think that there was anything existing before that.

But then again, that is what you'd expect it to say.

Structure

By necessity, Restoration has to be paranoid. It is all too aware of what TimeWatch is capable of. To protect the organization it keeps to a cell structure, so that no single cell or agent knows everyone within the organization.

Code names are preferred and disguises frequently used when meetings must take place. Encryption, dead drops, and cut-outs are typical of how members communicate with each other. They try to leave as little trace behind as possible.

Members of Restoration live in a world of shadows and ghosts, never knowing what is real. Mental illness is a common problem, along with chronic choral instability. Their fellow cell members can find it hard to anchor them, as the process is complicated without trust.

Agents who stick with it can find parallels in their work to art restoration. It can be slow, painstaking work, but gradually you see more of the big picture and reality itself becomes more real. Finally seeing the truth can be reward enough, no matter what the truth turns out to be. They hope.

Sample Missions

A Plague of Snakes

TimeWatch is detected in the city of Saint-Pierre on the island of Martinique in 1902. Mt. Pelée is due to erupt, heralded by a plague of snakes that will pass through the city to escape. Restoration is suspicious about why the agents are there.

Investigation reveals that the agents are placing equipment that will actually cause the volcano to erupt, killing 30,000 people. The TimeWatch agents claim that someone has altered history to prevent it erupting naturally, but if the player characters can stop them they'll have saved an entire city which will have major consequences to history.

The Will of TimeWatch

In the 22nd century a restored painting of Pope Urban II reveals a previously unseen adviser, one who resembles a known TimeWatch agent. The painting is dated to 1095, when Pope Urban II called for the First Crusade.

Restoration believes that TimeWatch influenced the pope, as the knowledge gained during the wars strengthened Western civilization. The player characters are sent to remove the influence of the TimeWatch agent, but he claims he is only there to prevent the pope from being assassinated before the Crusades begin.

Do the player characters take him at his word, or change a major part of Western history?

Memories

It is routine for TimeWatch to remove agents' memories, whether it be because they have been exposed to classified information or they've learned something about their future. Restoration wants to know what has been taken from them.

Restoration has made contact with a neurologist in Germany in the 23rd century who says he can restore what has been taken. When the characters meet them he demonstrates his technology, unlocking hidden memories which indicate a member of the group is a traitor. Can this be believed, or is this another TimeWatch trick?

Zero Hour

Overview

In the wake of several terrorist attacks across the 21st century, the US government established Zero Hour to allow a response team to be dispatched into the past to prevent similar attacks and other crises before they happen, or at the very least be able to respond almost instantly.

When such an event occurs a team of experts is quickly assembled, provided with all the information about the current crisis that has been gathered, and sent back to change history.

Zero Hour takes the view that it is saving lives and that the future is not set. TimeWatch disagrees and is increasingly frustrated that tragic, but necessary, events are being wiped from 21st century history. eeeIt also dreads the time when the Zero Hour machine is able to project travelers past its point of activation — technology that Zero Hour is currently striving to perfect.

GM ADVICE: MIX AND MATCH

Even if they aren't going head to head with TimeWatch, organizations like Zero Hour make excellent settings for the *Wild Times!* campaign frame detailed on p. 324. Similarly, any of these groups makes for a good antagonist in a *Patrol* game of *TimeWatch*. When you see a setting or group that inspires you, feel free to use it in whichever way looks like the most fun.

Structure

Falling under the United States Department of Homeland Security, the Zero Hour budget is constantly being scrutinized. Zero Hour is expected to get results, which is difficult to prove as every time it's successful it eliminate all traces of the crisis it averted. Zero Hour leadership has resorted to cautious compound interest accumulation, and careful stock market foreknowledge, in order to remain fully funded.

Working at Zero Hour consists of long periods of boredom, during which the time machine is maintained and data is sifted, and brief periods of absolute intense panic. Chosen time travelers are usually scrambled during the latter state, with rushed mission briefings and frantic attempts to coax undependable machinery to send the travelers into the past.

Within the time machine's geodesic dome the occupants are bombarded with chrono-particles by a metal arm that spins around the interior. The faster it spins, the further they are sent back, with a margin of error of 24 hours and several kilometers radius.

Each time the machine is powered up it creates a unique energy signature. When that charge is released those infused with the chrono-particles are flung backwards in time. As a result, they can only travel to when the machine was last activated, requiring Zero Hour to keep the machine constantly charged up and waiting for the next crisis.

Upon arrival they make contact with Zero Hour, which briefs them on the situation. The organization provides the dispatched team with as much support as it can, knowing that they only get one chance at altering time before they begin to suffer the effects of chrontal instability.

The younger incarnations of the Zero Hour team are monitored or removed from the area if it is likely they will come into contact with the time travelers. Once the time travelers catch up to their point of departure they evaporate (along with anything they brought back with them), their minds merging with those of their counterparts. The time travelers' memories overwrite those of the version that didn't travel back in time. Occasionally the second set of memories manifests as dreams.

Currently the main office is situated in Washington, DC, with access to an airfield used to quickly transport time travelers where they need to go. If funding is increased, other Zero Hour sites will be constructed in other states.

Sample Missions

Eagle One

An unexplained technical failure causes Air Force One to crash into a major city. Not only are many civilians dead, but so is the president. Provided with the raw data collected from the crash site, the Zero Hour Agents are sent back to avert the disaster.

They arrive just hours before the crash while the plane is still in flight. The time travelers must find out what went wrong and prevent it. This is complicated when the data from the crash site reveals someone on the plane is a traitor.

Wind of Change

A brutal hurricane batters New York, causing flooding, several buildings to collapse, and many innocent people to die. The Zero Hour Agents can't change the weather, but they have several tragedies they can prevent. With limited time and resources, what do they choose?

Time to Kill

The Zero Hour team is sent back three weeks to stop the "Destiny Killer." Each of his victims found themselves in isolated locations due to a twist of fate, yet their killer seemed to be expecting them. With a list of his next five victims, the team should have the advantage.

It soon transpires that the killer is a time traveler as well. With their data useless, how can the Zero Hour team catch someone who can move through time at will?

STRANDED CAMPAIGN FRAME

A *Stranded* campaign takes characters from one consistent time and strands them in an era that's markedly different. TV shows such as *Continuum* are one example of this, as are movies such as *Time After Time* (which features Jack the Ripper and H. G. Wells in modern-day Los Angeles). Even *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* would count as a *Stranded* campaign, as would Julian May's *Saga of Pleiocene Exile*.

"Right this way!" the portly man exclaimed. "Tired of this overly regulated society of safety and boredom? Looking for a little adventure in your life? Come to the Pliocene! You'll hunt and fish like the heroes of yore, socialize with the other men and women who've already ventured back 5.3 million years into a time that truly accepts them, and you'll build a life you want to live on your own terms. The cost is a mere 90% of your net worth, but really, we're the only people in the world who have time travel. If you want this like we think you do, you already know the price is ludicrously cheap." He smiled like a shark. "One way only. No refunds."

A *Stranded* campaign has little or no actual time travel after the initial jump, and usually focuses on using future technology to defeat enemies in past-tech locations. Use this campaign setting when your players want to explore high-tech heroes in a low-tech past (or vice versa) or as a time machine-free mini-arc in a longer ongoing campaign.

Stranded campaigns happen when easily acquired time travel is one-way only. The heroes are usually from the future and have been transported back into the past, or (less commonly) from the past and transported into a degenerate and complex future. These two approaches have very different themes and feels, but the concept of being marooned in a time that is not your own remains the same.

Stranded campaigns can also occur using parallel realities instead of time travel. Characters may accidentally slip from one world to a similar-but-horribly different one, and must find their way home or find a way to adjust.

The best *Stranded* campaigns are relatively gritty, focusing on surviving, acclimating, and then thriving in a possibly

hostile and unknown world. Ideally the player characters have a known enemy who opposes them in their new time. Not all player characters have to be time travelers; it's certainly possible to have some time travelers, and some locals who decide to assist them in their mission as allies.

A LONG WAY FROM HOME

Stranded games have relatively few rules changes from standard games, although their theme focuses on adjusting to a new time period instead of on using time travel as a tool.

Kick Back, Stay a While

Whether you can't or won't leave, a *Stranded* game assumes that you don't have easy access to a time machine. Settle in — you may be staying for a bit.

That means that setting up a base of local operations is a priority. You'll want a safe house to operate out of where your use of anachronistic technology won't be easily noticed. Unless you're deliberately setting yourself up to impersonate a witch or angel, or some other powerful entity that will scare away the superstitious, you're at risk to be burned at the stake or murdered in the night by people who want to steal or punish you for your power. Having a sanctuary lets you perform Tinkering repairs and set up a future-tech medical bay without drawing attention to yourself. You can still be at risk, especially if you carve a high profile, but a base might give you enough breathing room to learn about the locals.

If you don't intend to stay for long, dispense with the sanctuary but focus on the locals. Inserting yourself into the local power structure and picking the right side in an awkward political struggle may prevent an army from marching on you at an inconvenient time. It's traditional for time travelers to offer good advice and carefully controlled power to local rulers in order to assure their victory over more powerful enemies. Having friends in high places may be an advantage in your new era.

Get a Clue

Investigation may still be important in a *Stranded* game — how did you arrive here? Who or what is stopping you from returning home? If you're chasing someone, how do you find and stop them? — but it's not always the main focus. Your GM should build adventures accordingly.

The type of investigation is typically quite different than in a standard *TimeWatch* game. Whether someone has murdered the local lord's son, you're tracking down faint signs of another time traveler in the area, or you're investigating a conspiracy to have you framed for theft and burned to death, you'll be using high-tech tools to solve traditional crimes. What you then do with the criminals you catch then depends on how much political clout you've acquired. No one wants to capture an imperial assassin, kill him in the alleys of ancient Rome, and then stand trial for murder yourself because you can't produce a confession from the living criminal.

Time Travel Won't Solve Problems

The nature of being stranded in another time means that you'll likely lack easy access to future-tech that you didn't bring with you. Using time travel to explain Preparedness or Investigative spends isn't allowed, making Investigative spends generally less powerful and requiring a more traditional approach to problem-solving. If you can explain your desired spend without involving immediate time travel, the GM is likely to allow it.

That also means no quick escapes during a riot, and you'll be chasing enemies on foot or in vehicles instead of in time machines.

Trapped in a burning building, someone with access to time travel might spend 1 point of Architecture and declare that next week they'll travel back in time and add a fire door into the building's original blueprints. In a Stranded game without easy access to time travel, the same character might spend 1 point of Architecture to know which route gets them out of the burning building safely and without delay.

A Fish out of Water

You may not speak the local language fluently, and without 1 or more rating points in Anthropology you're unlikely to know all local customs. You'll lack local identification, local allies, and any kind of a power base. You'll lack resources; you have only what's on you and what you can gather or build in the new era. Expect GMs to make this a theme, particularly in early games before you establish yourself in the new time. The decisions and allies you make in early games will help inform how quickly you adapt to the new era.

For instance, perhaps you're from the 1970s and find yourself in a corporate megacity of 2250. Your lack of identity records will make moving around the city almost impossible unless you take to the electrical and sewer conduits to avoid the ubiquitous surveillance. Finding a local ally may buy you some time — and some food.

Changing the Future

Your presence in a new time is likely to change history from that point forwards. Whether you hope to change history as much as possible in order to draw attention to yourself, or you try to keep a low profile and minimize possible paradox, expect that your actions will create ripples that carry forward.

Those changes may create paradox that changes your present, but it won't rewrite the past you remember having.

Elsa is carrying a Colt revolver from 2181 when she is stranded in the 1830s. She accidentally shoots and kills Samuel Colt in a drunken bar fight. This creates paradox, so she makes a D4/LA Paradox test. If she succeeds, every Colt revolver vanishes from history except for the one she's holding. If she fails, her revolver now vanishes as well. Samuel Colt is still dead, though, and Elsa remembers her Colt pistol that killed him.

External Enemies

Stranded games often work best when the GM sets one or (preferably) more hostile organizations against you. These may be groups and individuals from other times, from local law enforcement, or from local criminal or paramilitary organizations. Trying to accomplish your goals and return home, all while being hunted by federal men in black and by a local criminal kingpin who wants your future knowledge for her own use, makes for an exciting adventure.

Multiple sets of enemies help keep a series from devolving into the "that enemy again?" mindset, where you kill yet another minion from the same enemy you've faced for games. This pacing also helps keep tension tight, and allows the GM to have different enemies attack just when you're focused on an unrelated problem. Sometimes, time travel can be inconvenient.

It's also possible to be plagued with enemies that you haven't made yet. In a world with time travel, you may anger a powerful foe years in the future. That foe then decides to use time travel to send enemies to kill you now, possibly catching you completely off guard. Expect a variety of interesting foes as a result.

No Backup

One thing about being stranded: if you fail, there's no large organization that can pull your fat out of the fryer. Expect to be self-reliant. That might mean gathering or acquiring resources of your own in order to accomplish your goals, and it definitely means taking just enough caution that you don't get trapped in no-escape situations.

Good time travelers make their own backup, using future knowledge to gather wealth and then buying military or political backup to help them out in a pinch. Even blackmail is possible to help you out of a tough and dangerous situation, assuming you spend a History point to remember a damning fact to use as leverage.

Gilligan's Island Syndrome

When your entire series is based around the concept that the characters are trying to reach home, there's the risk that nothing matters and no plan to return home can ever succeed. After all, if it does, doesn't that end the series?

Character actions that advance themselves towards this goal should be encouraged, and it's a triumph when the characters do succeed in returning to their time of origin. Of course, that's when they find out how their actions in the past have changed the time they came from...

In addition, a *Stranded* series shouldn't rely on returning home as the sole goal. Other complications — finding other time travelers, recovering stolen technology, building personal power, achieving a specific historical change — should demand equal time for the players' attention. A one-note campaign never sounds as good as one with shifting and unexpected turns.

Unwanted Visitors

It's possible that the player characters may never time travel at all, or at least not initially. In this type of scenario, all the characters originate in the same era, and that era is attacked or threatened by creatures from the past or future.

New York City is overrun by rampaging dinosaurs out of a time rift, and it's up to a group of six strangers on your subway car to save the day! You're the only ones who can get close enough to the rift to find out what's happening. Are you brave enough to act on the information you receive?

A killer cyborg from the future comes back in time to kill the one who is destined to oppose its kind, before the child has matured. Player characters include the child, mother, and a less advanced cyborg from the future that is programmed to protect the destined one. It's up to them to stop the invader before all the future is changed.

This type of scenario seldom gives the main characters immediate access to time travel technology, because part of the fun is interacting in your home time with creatures from the past or future. Access to a time machine may end up being essential to defeating the enemy, but that's traditionally a perk that the characters have to earn, steal, or invent in order to succeed.

GAME HOOKS

- ▶ You are wanted criminals fleeing to the past, attempting to escape a future that is prepared to execute you. Future law enforcement has followed you to the past in an attempt to apprehend you. Alternatively, you are law enforcement chasing criminals into the past or future.
- ▶ You are civilians who stumble into a future world where everyone is tracked, tagged, and categorized. Your lack of identification marks you as a criminal, and you're forced to flee into the city's underbelly until you can find your way home.
- ▶ The first time traveler has made a change that turns Earth into a radioactive wasteland. With changes rippling around the earth, the people near a top-secret time lab (including the janitor and receptionist) are hustled through a time portal to try and restore history.
- ▶ Your trip through a static time gate into the age of dinosaurs reveals that Earth was actually colonized by aliens... aliens who want you for your knowledge and your DNA.
- ▶ You've gotten to the future the hard way — skipping over intervening time in some sort of stasis. Like Rip Van Winkle, Khan Noonien Singh, or Philip J. Fry, you've slept away the intervening years and now need to make your way through a world you barely know. If you like your fast space travel accompanied by time dilation, you might even be an astronaut who's returned to Earth long after you departed it.

TIME-CRIME CAMPAIGN FRAME

CRIMINALS, CAPERS, AND HEISTS

The crew sat in their favorite booth at 21. Anne sipped her Sazerac with one arm slung over the back of the bench. Henry flipped through the Journal and chuckled darkly at the date. October 24, 1929. The last few years were a good time to be a grifter. The next few definitely wouldn't be.

A shadow fell over the table. Henry looked up to see a tall man in a black suit and dark glasses looming.

"How's business?" The man's voice had a strange metallic quality to it.

Henry gestured at the paper. "Don't ask me for stock tips." The man showed no reaction to the code phrase, but he pulled up a chair and sat.

"Here is the job and the offer." He pulled a folder from inside his jacket. It was emblazoned with the symbol of the United States Air Force and stamped at the bottom in blue. "Is it acceptable?"

Henry flipped open the folder, saw the score, and whistled long and low. He nodded, still staring at the folder. The man stood, smoothed his jacket, and left.

"What's the job?" Anne asked, mirroring Henry's interest.

Henry turned the folder toward her. "7 July, '47. We're going to steal the Roswell crash."

While TimeWatch agents tangle with existential threats and would-be conquerors, there are many time travelers who fall beneath their notice. Grifters, thieves, and swindlers use their knowledge of the future to steal the treasures of the past.

How do you play time-criminals? And what does a *Time-Crime* campaign look like? Let's take a look at the tech, abilities, and methods you need to walk away with the **score**.

TIME TRAVEL TECH

The autochron used by TimeWatch agents is among the most sophisticated time travel devices ever invented. Time-criminals rarely have access to such equipment. A TimeWatch agent that went rogue with a working autochron would laugh at the things time-criminals have to do in pursuit of the score.

The early 27th century is the golden age of illicit time travel technology. The most common "time machine" in use by time-criminals hails from this era: the black box. Appropriately named, the device is a smooth, matte black case one meter by 30 centimeters by 30 centimeters.

There are no obvious features on the device itself. Instead, it connects wirelessly to a nearby computer and offers a simple interface. The transport field has a radius of only a few meters, so a group must stand close together, preferably with everyone touching the device.

The black box has a few limitations when compared to the autochron. First, the box moves through time but not through space. Passengers arrive in the same physical location they left

from, just in another time. Time-criminals should take care that the destination time is secure.

Second, the black box will not function if it is observed by a non-time traveler who is not in contact with the device. It has something to do with quantum mechanics, but the gist is that natives of the current time short the whole thing out, unless they are within the field of effect.

Finally, it takes time for the black box to warm up. Specifically, it takes between two and five minutes for the device to lock onto a set of temporal coordinates and establish the transport field. If it's possible to calculate the exact warm-up period, no time-criminal has ever bothered; most likely, doing the math would take longer than just crossing your fingers and poking the button multiple times in the hopes it triggers the device more quickly.

Some time-crews install the black box in a vehicle. This has the benefit of providing transportation in space on either side of the time-jump. With proper engineering a metal-framed vehicle can also extend the temporal field, allowing for a greater amount of material to be transported. For a truly large score, however, the black box may be attached to a metal frame or cage. Anything within the cage will be transported, as will the cage itself.

In an emergency, the black box can be set to a random destination. This eliminates the “observer effect” and produces a transport field immediately, but the time-criminals have no control over where or when they end up. The random setting even displaces the travelers in space. This “feature” is only used to evade pursuers in a time chase. (Time-criminals use the normal time chase rules.) The black box has an unfortunate tendency to burn out after several such uncontrolled jaunts.

ABILITIES & CRIME

Time-criminal characters have the same abilities in the same proportions as their TimeWatch Agent counterparts. Some abilities are more useful to time-criminals than others, and players may want to focus on them.

Retroactive Legwork

Where a traditional criminal may spend months working out the logistics of a major job, a time-criminal has the benefit of going back after a job and giving their past self a hand. This is called retroactive legwork or “backlegging.” During a job, a player can spend Investigative ability points to gain benefits that represent their character’s future self altering the past or providing clandestine help in the present. If the criminal isn’t careful, backlegging can trigger paradox and chonal instability just like any time travel.

Investigative Abilities

Architecture: For when you need to know entrances, exits, and other features of a building. You can even backleg design features into the building by traveling to its construction and altering the plans.



They never did find out who stole da Vinci's "Medusa Shield."

Authority: Criminals understand better than most how people respond to authority figures. In most cases, you don't have to prove you are in command as long as you look and sound the part. This can work in a time-criminal's favor.

Charm: While this ability is most useful to confidence artists, any criminal wants to have a few friends in the right places. With a Charm spend, you can backleg in a romantic weekend with the security guard you just met.

Forgery: “How can the *Mona Lisa* have been a fake all along?” This ability is critical to avoiding paradoxes. You can steal a famous object that historically was never stolen as long as you leave an identical copy in its place. This ability can also help determine if a historical artifact is genuine.

Hacking: Obviously, this ability can be crucial if the score is computer data. In any time period after the introduction of computers, backlegging can justify the most outrageous tricks of action movie hacking by programming exploits into the earliest versions of the target's operating system.

High Society: Since the wealthy and sophisticated often own the most desirable scores, knowing how to move among them and influence them is important. If you can provide convincing evidence that you are the long-lost heir of the score's previous owner, even better.

History: Time-criminals use History to gather background information on important marks and their scores. In the

absence of reliable testing, a 1-point spend of the appropriate History ability will give you a reasonable guess as to the legitimacy of an artifact.

Reassurance: Along with Charm, this is the primary ability of con artists. Sometimes you just have to convince the mark that it's okay to do what they want to do deep down anyway.

Science!: Anyone with Science! can perform quantum dating to determine if a historical artifact is genuine (something that can be done a bit more traditionally with the Forgery ability). Science! spends can stabilize volatile materials for a rushed transport, rig up holographic images to confuse guards, or help work around high-tech alarm systems.

Streetwise: It takes a criminal to really know one. With a Streetwise spend, you can call on an entire organized gang for help. Who knows? Maybe you were one of its founders.

Spying: If you can get eyes (or cameras) onto the target location, you can map out patterns in patrols, locate blind spots in security coverage, and determine the best routes in and out. Spying spends can tap into the mark's private communications or jam them completely.

Timecraft: Like Science! or Forgery, Timecraft can be used to verify the authenticity of an artifact that has been transported through time. In a pinch, a Timecraft spend can overcome some of the limitations of the black box device.

General Abilities

Athletics: Whether dangling from wires or pirouetting through laser grids in a slinky catsuit, sophisticated crime takes a fair amount of athletic prowess. And of course, never underestimate the ability to outrun pursuers.

Burglary: It's in the name. Time-criminals are always lifting security badges, cracking safes blindfolded, and pocketing the score.

Disguise: Criminals rely on disguises for two reasons. First, you can get into more places if you look like you belong there. Second, it's harder to catch you if the witnesses are giving someone else's description.

Preparedness: For more on how time-criminals use this ability, see *Caches* on p. 312.

Scuffling and Shooting: If you are falling back on violence, the job has probably already failed, but you'll still want to be able to fight your way back to the black box.

Unobtrusiveness: Going unnoticed is essential on the job, as is being able to spot guards or hidden security features. Time-criminals do not have the benefit of impersonator mesh, so having a decent rating in this ability may be a higher priority for them than for a TimeWatch Agent.

Vehicles: The getaway driver is a classic component of many crews. For inspiration, watch the beginning of *The Transporter*. In a *Time-Crime* crew, of course, you will be responsible for flipping the black box to random and dodging TimeWatch agents in the inevitable time chase.

5 GREAT CRIMINALS (WHO YOU MIGHT BE)

1. Gaumata, magus who ruled the Achaemenid Empire by impersonating Prince Bardiya (killed by his nobles, Nisa, Persia, 522 BCE)
2. The False Dmitriy, tsar of Russia while impersonating the son of Ivan the Terrible (killed in coup, Moscow, Russia, 1606)
3. Henry Every, most profitable pirate in history (disappeared, possibly in Ireland, 1696)
4. The Comte de Saint-Germain, alleged immortal, alchemist, and courtier (died, Altona, Schleswig, 1784)
5. Dan "D. B." Cooper, plane hijacker (disappeared, northwest United States, 1971)

RUNNING A TIME-CRIME GAME

There are two fundamental types of crime — the **con** and the **heist**. Every crime will contain at least two, if not all three, of the following key factors.

- ▶ **The score** is the thing the criminals want: an artifact, the deed to a building, or the formula for a new drug.
- ▶ **The mark** has the score, and getting it from him won't be easy.
- ▶ That may be because it's secured in **the box**, which is a bank vault, an encrypted server, or an island mansion surrounded by gunboats.

In a con, the criminals trick the mark into giving them the score. The box is often irrelevant, as the mark has easy access. In a heist, the criminals break into the box and escape with the score, possibly without the mark appearing at all.

When designing a *Time-Crime* scenario, give some thought to an interesting score, but it's the mark or the box that make up the body of the adventure.

10 THINGS TO STEAL

1. Final panels of the Bayeux Tapestry (likely embroidered in England around 1077, first recorded in inventory of Bayeux Cathedral, France, 1476)
2. Leonardo da Vinci's lost manuscripts, sold or stolen upon the death of his pupil Francesco Melzi (Vaprio d'Adda, Italy, 1570)
3. The contents of the Oak Island Money Pit (Nova Scotia, Canada, before 1795)
4. The letters of George and Martha Washington, destroyed by Martha following his death (Virginia, United States, December 1799)
5. Lost volumes and pages of the diaries of Lewis Carroll, removed by his family after his death (Oxford, England, January 1898+)
6. Irish Crown Jewels, stolen from Dublin Castle (Dublin, Ireland, June 1907)

7. The seven lost Imperial Fabergé eggs, vanished from the Kremlin armory vault (Moscow, Russia, 1922+)
8. *The Just Judges*, painting by either Jan or Hubert van Eyck, stolen (Ghent, Belgium, April 1934)
9. The wealth of Dutch Schultz, buried by Schultz before his death (Upstate New York, United States, October 1935)
10. The Amber Room, destroyed in Allied bombing (Königsberg, Germany, August 1944)

CONS

The focus of a **con** should be on the **mark**. An interesting mark has something they need so strongly that they will overlook the holes in the crew's con, or they fear something that time-criminals can leverage against them. The mark's needs or fears, combined with their background and social status, determines which Interpersonal abilities work best against them.

The Hook: At the start of a con, the crew first has to hook the mark. They must uncover what the mark needs or fears through future research — using the appropriate History or another ability such as Military Tactics or Science! if the mark is a known historical figure in a particular field — or Interpersonal abilities.

The Approach: Once they know what buttons to press, they must approach the mark. Unless the mark is already under incredible pressure, it is best to make them think that the plot of the con is their own idea. The crew may present themselves as experts in the kind of problem the mark is facing. Preferably, they should seem unwilling to get involved. This forces the mark to convince the crew, committing them more deeply to the con.

The Stall: Once the mark is hooked, the crew must stall. The stall is designed to ratchet up the pressure on the mark, blinding them to the con and driving them toward its conclusion. The crew presents new information and fake threats that focus the mark's attention on the con. Investigative abilities like Forgery, Hacking, and Intimidation along with General abilities like Burglary, Disguise, and Tinkering let the crew set up situations that drive the mark to the breaking point. Then it's time for the sting.

The Sting: In the sting, the crew forces the mark to take rash action. Whereas the hook may have taken weeks, and the stall days, the sting should conclude in hours — even minutes. The action should appear to solve the mark's problems by leaving the score exposed or even giving it to the crew, at least temporarily. Of course, once they have the score, the crew blows, leaving the mark empty handed and probably in a lot more trouble than at the start.

HEISTS

The focus of a **heist** is the **box**. The box is the security around the score, including locks, guards, and alarms. The heist progresses in stages, each step bringing the crew closer to the score.

First, they must learn how to physically get to the box. This means breaking the **house**, the location around the

box. Unless the house's sole purpose is to contain the box, it will have a weakness related to its everyday function. Banks have normal business hours in which customers come and go. Labs have to allow researchers and staff to enter without interminable checkpoints and delays. Remote outposts have to get supplies shipped in on a regular basis. The crew may use any number of Investigative abilities to uncover the house's weaknesses, including Architecture, Military Tactics, Hacking, Spying, and Interpersonal abilities like Authority and Bureaucracy.

Once the crew knows how to break the house, they must reach the box and open it. In any house worth the name, access to the box will be restricted. One may need a special access card, key, or biometric signature to enter, or the box may only be accessible at certain times. Getting to the box may require creating fake IDs with Forgery, cracking a vault door with a Burglary test, or kidnapping someone with authorization and forcing them to open the box for you with Intimidation.

Even if the crew can get into the box, the job can be ruined if someone sees them do it. The crew should learn as much as they can about the house's surveillance. Guards, cameras, and other forms of detection can all trigger alarms and dramatically increased security. Streetwise or Spying gives a time-criminal a good sense of these things, while Military Tactics, Hacking, or Authority may all reveal ways around them. Of course, the best solution is not to be seen or recognized, so Disguise and Unobtrusiveness are key.

You've avoided attention and opened the box. The last step is to remove the score and get out. Most boxes won't make this step easy. An artifact is stored behind bulletproof glass, the data is definitely encrypted, and any box may be rigged to contain or kill intruders. This is the phase where a time-criminal faces the most action and earns their reputation.

GETTING OUT

After a successful crime, the crew must make its escape. You would think this would be easy, since it has a time machine. Not so much; the nature of the black box means the crew must still make its way back to its safe house or to an isolated place of safety, often with the mark or the authorities hot on the trail.

This may involve an actual chase, with a contest of Vehicles as the crew makes a mad getaway in a stolen car. More likely, the crew will try to trick its pursuers by laying a false trail. In many ways, this will resemble a standard *TimeWatch* adventure in reverse. The time-criminals use their Investigative abilities to create clues leading away from the crime. Forgery or Hacking generates misleading communications, Notice hides tantalizing evidence almost but not quite out of view, and Science! whips up chemical traces that lead canny investigators to an abandoned factory on the other side of town. All of this misdirection gives the crew enough time to disappear not just to another city, but to another time.

The challenge ramps up when the crew runs across a pursuer with their own time-machine. A *TimeWatch* agent makes a

formidable antagonist. They are conversant in many of the techniques of time-criminals, they can spot the results of anachronistic research, and they can follow a crew anywhere they go in the time stream. Shaking such an investigator will require creativity, Preparedness, and perhaps some frantic backlegging to throw up obstacles in the crew's wake. And if everything else goes wrong, switch the black box to random and lead your pursuer on a merry time chase, smashing your way through history.

WHAT IS A CORE CLUE IN TIME-CRIME?

As in a normal *TimeWatch* game, a core clue lets the character progress through the adventure by pointing them at another scene. A *Time-Crime* adventure leads inevitably toward the score, so the core clues should tell the time-criminals how to get to it. This may be information about the security features of the box or weaknesses in the mark that leave him open to a con.

Most core clues in a *Time-Crime* scenario should point the crew toward the next thing they need to do, rather than the next place they can go for more information. In a con, this is based on the mark's reaction to the hook or the stall. In a heist, each clue breaks down another layer of security until they reach the box.

KEEPING SCORE

Every crime has a score, but for time-criminals, the job is not about material gain. There are many easier and more legitimate ways to get rich with a time machine. Score is prestige and reputation. At the end of the day, it's not about what you have, but what you took and how.

In a *Time-Crime* campaign, the crew has a collective trait known as Rep that represents its successful jobs and the reputation that accompanies it. Your crew starts with 0 Rep. You gain Rep by completing jobs and delivering the goods.

Goods	Rep Increase
An item valuable to the client but with no real historical significance (the Bible that saved her ancestor's life at Antietam); a minor con	2
A minor historical item (Abraham Lincoln's hat from Ford's Theatre); a major con	3
An artifact that had a major impact on history (Special Order 191); a con that rewrites history	4
Collected the score without paradox (i.e., the goods are not known to have been stolen, but you covered up the theft with a replica)	+1
Beat another crew to the score	+1

You spend it in two ways:

- ▶ in addition to or in place of personal Preparedness (particularly to trigger caches, see below)
- or
- ▶ in place of Interpersonal abilities when dealing with other time-criminals

Rep does not refresh between jobs. The only way to replace spent Rep is to earn it back with another job.

The GM may keep track of the total Rep the crew has earned. This should color its reputation with other time-criminals. The members of a crew with a low lifetime Rep are nobodies. Ones with high Rep are big names on the time-crime scene.

CACHES

Because of the limitations of the black box, time-criminals cannot just pop out to another time and buy a useful gadget like a *TimeWatch* agent. This limits the use of the Preparedness ability as it is presented in the main rules. Time-criminals are clever, though. They plan ahead for just about everything, even stashing equipment throughout the time stream in case they need it.

To access such a cache, make a Preparedness test against Difficulty 6. You can spend Rep on this test as well. If you succeed, you locate the cache and it is still intact. The cache may not be particularly close, and it may be guarded, watched, or have an inconvenient building on top of it, if the GM thinks you need a little excitement getting to the gear.

Every player can spend 1 Preparedness point (or 1 Rep point) to define and claim a piece of gear that is in the cache. A cache can include one vehicle. The equipment may not be in the best condition; at the GM's discretion, a roll of 1 on the die when using any of the equipment from a cache may indicate a malfunction due to age. A day spent repairing gear with the right abilities will eliminate this chance.

We'd be remiss if we didn't draw attention to the timelock capsule (see p. 140). GMs may wish to incorporate this into a mark's vault, a safe house, or a black box.

RIVALS AND ENEMIES

Time-criminals go up against more than just the mark. There is law enforcement (including *TimeWatch*), local and chrontal organized crime, local and time traveling rival criminals, and past marks who seek revenge. Here's one example.

The Ursarch, Time-Bear Crime Boss

Altani leveled her PaciFist at the man under the scarred wooden table. His expression remained calm. "I don't know which version of history you remember, Princess," the man said, "but I don't work for TimeWatch anymore."

"That's the problem," Altani said. "I hope you plan to resist arrest."

The calm face split into a grin. "You have no idea."

GM ADVICE: URSINE INTERVENTION

If you prefer your *Time-Crime* villains a little less fantastical, just use the same Adversary powers for Ursarch but change his species to human. His unique abilities can easily be technological in nature or due to a past as a chronally unstable chimera.

A shadow spread across the table, and a hot breath blew down Altani's neck. She heard the clack of heavy claws on the floor, and she had the sinking feeling that she was about to meet her quarry's new employer.

The time-bear known as Ursarch is unique, even among his own incredible species. Other time-bears are usually content to lair in one epoch, feasting on whatever time travelers they stumble across. Ursarch is more ambitious. He dreams of an empire, carved out of time itself, where he rules from the shadows.

The Ursarch considers himself an apex predator. His prey, however, are not animals or even human beings. No, he stalks history itself, in the form of its greatest and most noteworthy treasures. He controls a criminal syndicate, the Five Claws, that spans millennia. His underlings serve out of fear, because those who don't have their very pasts consumed.

Appearance

Ursarch appears to be a normal, albeit large, North American brown bear. He does not demean himself with human fashion. There is a cold intelligence in his eyes. Anyone meeting his gaze knows he is assessing them as a jeweler looking at a gem — or a gourmand at a fine caviar.

Time-bears are defined by their natural ability to travel through time. They require no technology to do so. A time-bear simply stands still for a moment; the process takes the bear's entire turn, but it cannot be interrupted.

Ursarch's Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 18

Offense: Scuffling 15 (3-3-3); Damage Modifier +2 (carefully sharpened claws)

Abilities: Tempus 19

Special Abilities: Branching Point (cost 4), Clock Out (cost 2), Destabilize (cost 4 — special), Extra Action (cost 2), Flashback (cost 5), Lightning Speed (cost 2), Mastermind

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2, Stealth Modifier -1

Special: Ursarch can activate a destabilizing aura that causes chronal instability in anyone within a yard or two. This particularly affects anyone the bear attacks or who attacks the bear with a melee weapon up to the size of a sword. The aura triggers a D4/L4 Paradox test.

The time-bear's aura has an additional effect of rejuvenating the bear. For every 4 Chronal Stability lost to the aura's effect (including points spent on the die roll), the time-bear refreshes

1 point of either Health or Tempus.

Ursarch has unusual control over the effect of chronal instability on his victims. If a being is Subsumed due to this Loss of Chronal Stability, Ursarch can decide the nature of the historical revision. Whatever other changes he makes, Ursarch always instills an unwavering loyalty to himself in his victims. This conditioning remains even when the victim's Chronal Stability is restored.

The Five Claws

Cells of the Ursarch's organization have existed since at least the time of Augustus Caesar, and they will continue to exist long after humankind has expanded to the stars, but there are a few major loci of Five Claws activity: 19th-Century London, 21st-Century Hong Kong, and the Ursarch's lair in 24th-Century Mumbai.

When not engaged in the Ursarch's business, Five Claws cells blend into the local criminal underworld, doubling as member of local gangs or syndicates such as the Chicago Outfit or the Triads. If they need to communicate with their distant master, a cell member places a coded message in a newspaper or other public record. The Ursarch responds by dead drop or by sending one of the Twelve to direct the cell's activities.

The goal of earlier groups of Five Claws is usually not to steal the score, but to watch it and occasionally to exert pressure on the score's owners to move or sell it. Over the course of centuries, the Ursarch carefully orchestrates the history of an item and positions the score so that one of the Twelve can eventually retrieve it, once it has gained enough historical value.

Some of the Ursarch's most prized scores are not objects but people. Many of history's unexplained disappearances are actually kidnappings by the Five Claws. These individuals are taken to Mumbai and put on display in suspended animation in the Ursarch's private gallery.

The Twelve

The Twelve are highly competent time travelers, many of them former TimeWatch agents, that ran afoul of the Five Claws and drew the attention of the Ursarch himself. The time-bear tracked each member of the Twelve through time and caught them, feasted on their histories, and spat them back out as his unswerving lieutenants.

One of the Twelve is sent in to retrieve a score after the Five Claws have completed a successful campaign to enrich its history. They are equipped with autofire blasters, but they usually rely on their hologram armor to disguise themselves as a local. The Ursarch does not trust the Twelve with autochron-level time travel on most missions, instead giving them a version of the black box. For critical jobs, however, add Clock Out to the operative's stats.

Twelve Operative Stats

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 12

Offense: Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +2 (autofire blaster)

Abilities: Tempus 10

Special Abilities: Disguise (cost 1), Universal Attack (cost 1 per target)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2, Stealth Modifier +1

In Your Campaign

The Ursarch doesn't need independent operators. His local cells keep their eyes on his scores, and the Twelve are more than capable of retrieving them. The Ursarch will not hire a crew of time-criminals. In most cases, the crew's jobs will not intersect with the Five Claws, but when they do, the crew may feel the full weight of the Ursarch's organization.

The Five Claws serve as a rival group that can pop up and act against the crew in any time period. Their surveillance of the score makes the crew's job harder, as the local cell may tip off the mark or the authorities to keep them from stealing it ahead of their schedule.

If the crew makes off with a score that was marked for the Ursarch, one of the Twelve is sent to investigate. As a fellow time-criminal, the Twelve Operative may put feelers out into the community and eventually clue into the crew's reputation. This is where their accumulated Rep can work against them.

A campaign featuring the Five Claws begins with a few unrelated jobs to get the players into a rhythm. Then they move on a marked score. The job is plagued by unexplained complications — the mark is tipped off to the con, the police anticipate the crew's next move, or the house is paradoxically restructured to thwart their heist. Being super-competent time-criminals, the crew prevails despite these obstacles.

On a later job, they encounter one of the Twelve. He has tracked them down through a criminal contact or by following clues from the previous job. If this score was also marked, he may try to steal it first. Or he may just be there to send a message that the Ursarch is displeased.

Eventually, they steal one marked score too many, and the Ursarch puts his paw down. The Twelve attack the crew physically as well as temporally — time-criminals keep their identities closely guarded because their past is their greatest weakness. If the crew sticks together, it can weather the attacks.

Ultimately, they have a showdown with the Ursarch himself. The time-bear would prefer this to be a physical confrontation, but the crew may get dirty and go after his past as well. The risk of chronal instability should be high, the action furious — a winner-take-all battle for the greatest treasures in history!

TIME WAR CAMPAIGN FRAME

When aliens or time travelers force interdimensional war into our world, history inextricably changes forever and humanity's only job is to survive. No stealth mission or secrecy here; massive quantities of alien or interdimensional enemies set up a beachhead in a particular time and place (perhaps 1938 New Jersey, 1940s Germany, or a much earlier time) and what remains of TimeWatch must send the Agents on a desperate series of missions to raise an army and slowly make the aliens vulnerable to chronal warfare. The history of the world is at stake, TimeWatch has been crippled, and only the Agents and their allies can save history. No pressure.



Not every potential future is a happy one.

RULES CHANGES

Only a few rules changes apply during a time war.

- ▶ The Difficulty of any Preparedness test that would require time travel rises by +2, usually from 4 to 6, since Agents must avoid their enemy when acquiring resources. The GM may choose to further raise or lower Difficulties, depending on the rarity and inaccessibility of the item being acquired.
- ▶ TimeWatch's Citadel likely becomes unavailable, either destroyed or blocked in time. If so, MEM-tags cease working and Agents are unable to retreat to the Citadel for supplies, advice, or assistance. TimeWatch's safe houses still exist.

SECRECY IS BEHIND US

The *Time War* campaign frame tosses aside the concept that you're going to be able to easily set history back to normal. In a time war, the fundamental assault that shifts history has so many root causes that it's impossible to stop with a single mission. A whole series might be spent trying to thwart the invasion and set history back on the correct track.

A hitherto unknown alien species from a parallel time stream allies with Napoleon's army to invade and conquer our timeline. They slowly infiltrate our world in the tens or hundreds of thousands over the course

of decades, using time travel carefully to ensure their own power and security, then they choose an armed conflict to openly reveal themselves and launch their war. No subtlety here; when they reveal themselves they appear in force, and they rely on public terror instead of secrecy to accomplish their goals. Suddenly the aliens are everywhere, Napoleon rules humanity as a puppet king, people all across the globe have fallen under alien rule, futuristic technology transforms the world, and TimeWatch's Citadel is suddenly impossible for Agents to reach. True history will never be the same again.

In a time war, the invaders are winning (or have won) both the battle *and* the war. Into this breach comes TimeWatch. Desperate and harried Agents are forced to investigate how the invaders learned of our world, how they planned their attack strategy and their victories, and how they infiltrated and coerced society. One by one, the Agents secretly and carefully pull the underpinnings and supports out from beneath the aliens' pillars of success. The Agents become chronal guerillas, staying on the move and working tirelessly to return the world to what it once was — or, if that's not possible, to buy back its revenge. Secrecy becomes paramount, because when Agents are identified by the invaders their ancestors are quickly killed by chronal assassins, triggering a Paradox test that could erase any Agent from reality. This technique of eliminating rebellious leaders fractures the river of time up into small rivulets of alternate reality, making the war even more difficult for TimeWatch to win.

DESPERATE UNDERDOGS

A *Time War* series allows characters most of the same technology as a typical *TimeWatch* game, but the game's theme is different. Rather than acting as a nearly omniscient police force and a stabilizing influence on the time stream, during a time war TimeWatch struggles desperately to recover after being crippled early on during a first strike. The Citadel is unreachable for unknown reasons, there's no reliable central leadership, remaining agents are underfunded and short on both allies and resources, and any purported member of the organization may have already been secretly subverted by the enemy. TimeWatch needs tacticians and leaders, and they'll look to the player characters to provide them.

Once the time war launches and their organization crumples from underneath them, the already autonomous TimeWatch Agents are forced into the role of either leaders or a daring suicide squad. Their allies are erased from history one by one, and old completed missions are undone and then negated entirely as the river of time writhes and twists to find its new path. This requires the highly trained and qualified Agents to make some difficult decisions. Do the remaining Agents act as the center of a resistance, attracting other rogue agents to them and organizing support within traditional enemies of humanity? Do they become spymasters, gathering and correlating intelligence about their foe? Do they make multiple secret missions to dismantle the enemy step by step? Different strategies produce different results, but it's up to the players how to proceed.

Success in any of these roles isn't guaranteed. In order to truly overthrow their enemies, the Agents will need a combination of army raising, intelligence gathering, and desperate sabotage. The old veil of secrecy is forgotten, and instead of trying to protect humanity from the knowledge of time travel, they're just trying to stop humanity from being erased.

ORCHESTRATING THE INVASION

There's two simple ways of beginning a *Time War* series: in medias res, with the invasion already in place and the Agents clearly overmatched and clinging to survival; or prior to the invasion, using bait-and-switch tactics to run a game or two of standard *Patrol*-frame *TimeWatch* before the series veers precipitously off into a time war. We generally recommend the latter, but either can be fun.

In Medias Res

This is the *Star Wars Episode IV* method: in that classic movie it's quickly evident that the Empire has already taken over, that Princess Leia is part of a secret rebellion, and that for as far as the Empire is concerned it's all over but for the cleanup. A *Time War* series can proceed similarly, where the first game is structured to show the Agents that their side has already lost. It's a challenging scene to present because a game is not a movie; any starting encounter that shows the enemy's strength might be one that you expect the Agents to lose, and that's discouraging to new players. When you start in medias res you want a game that reflects the relative hopelessness of TimeWatch's fractured remnants, that shows the strength of their enemy without necessarily crushing the player characters, and that the players can use to find both affection for their employers and utter, bitter hatred for their foes.

One method for achieving this is to start by showing the destruction of people and locations that are important to the player characters, and perhaps even to the players themselves. Like *Star Wars'* teenaged moisture farmer gazing upon the disintegrated bodies of his uncle and aunt, it's possible to show uncaring cruelty and strength without ever putting a player character directly in harm's way... yet.

If you're running this style of game, be prepared to have a fragmentary TimeWatch organization established and ready to introduce to the players. Kind and friendly allies, resources, interesting backup assistance when the Agents need it most, and a place of refuge can go a long way to helping engender loyalty. If the Agents can be briefed with a minimum of exposition, they can head back out into the field for a seemingly simple mission and you won't need to grind the first game to a halt with an overabundance of explanation. Better to let the players see your world firsthand, even when it's falling apart around them.

Bait and Switch

In a bait-and-switch opening, *Patrol*-style play proceeds normally for a game session or two. Players learn the routine

and flow of a traditional TimeWatch mission: they'll note chronal inconsistencies, investigate problems, work their way back to the root cause, and solve the mystery before the antagonists ever have a chance to put their plan into effect.

If you're leading up to the time war in this way, you can foreshadow the invasion. Unknown enemy spies, random bits of strange tech, and compromised humans acting oddly all give the players subtle clues without alerting them to the invasion before it launches.

They'll likely be mid-mission on their second or third mission when the time war begins, when all of TimeWatch is caught unawares by a sudden successful invasion. Their current mission is rendered inconsequential or irrelevant as all of history changes out from underneath them. Traveling to find out why, they encounter the overwhelming military, political, and tactical force that launched the war. It's now up to the Agents to survive, gather survivors, learn what happened, then slowly put together a strategy for learning more and defeating it piece by piece.

It may be wise to discuss this campaign frame with players ahead of time, especially if they were expecting "Bill and Ted"-style lighthearted chronal hijinks. Time wars turn a traditionally one-mission-per-session game into a continuing war drama. Stakes are high and rewards are slim; acquiring vital information may be difficult and costly.

Each game session in the series is typically devoted to achieving a single and a secondary goal. The goals may be defensive (stop an exemplary TimeWatch analyst from being erased from reality, so that she survives to help provide leadership and collate new intelligence on the war effort), offensive (sabotage the source of the enemy's best weaponry, helping ensure that fewer people die during the initial invasion and swelling refugee ranks), military (use Anthropology and Military tactics to recruit, train, and arm a new army of fanatical followers), or informational (kidnap someone who knows secrets about the enemy's planning and invasion strategy, giving the TimeWatch refugees intelligence needed to launch a devastating counterattack that will kill an enemy general before the initial attack ever occurs). Any given mission is one small battle in the course of the war.

SURVIVING THE AFTERMATH

After a successful invasion, the enemy typically takes steps to make sure that the invasion stays successful and that all significant resistance is crushed. That isn't difficult for non-time traveling resistance, such as local and normal freedom fighters; the ability of the enemy to acquire almost unlimited resources from across time means that it usually isn't difficult to overwhelm traditional troops with pure force of arms, especially when time travel lets them make surgical strikes to efficiently remove resistance.

Not all invaders have an advantage against time traveling resistance. There is typically a chain of command in the enemy army, and individual Mook soldiers don't necessarily have the technology or authority to follow their enemies across time. Instead, they will typically note the time and location, and inform their superiors, and an elite group of specialists might

be sent back to follow the trail and track down the resistance. Those specialists show up immediately (or whenever you want them to), however, because they aren't limited by time. The only rule is that they can't make you replay combat rounds of a fight that has already concluded; see below for details why.

In order to survive in the aftermath of an invasion, Agents must keep a low profile until they understand the new rules of the war. Blunt, unplanned attacks are usually dismantled by the invaders' specialists before they ever occur. Weakening and planning for this retribution will help the TimeWatch Agents survive and thrive, and perhaps even gain vital intelligence. It may mean accruing paradox later, but that's a small price to pay for not lethally exposing themselves to the enemy's full forces early in the war. No resistance soldier will gain the invaders' attention like one who can time travel.

FIELD INTELLIGENCE

Information is power, and learning true information is often the best possible tactic in a war. Any idiot can attack a supply line or one of many seeming antecedents to the war; a clever Agent understands how their enemy fits together, who runs it and why, what their goals are, and where weaknesses lie. They can then use this information, combined with knowledge of the weaknesses of the commander's command style, to start dismantling their successes.

For instance, perhaps the enemy commander fancies herself a master planner, and she wishes to remove her main enemies from the battlefield before the war even begins. She spends a decade or more having her quietest, most careful spies gathering the names and personal history and true identity of every TimeWatch agent she can identify. Then, 30 seconds before the planned invasion, she has her spies kill each of those agents in their infancy.

The result? Because someone did their research, some of the most capable foes vanish from reality seconds before the invasion launches.

Knowledge matters. That's true for TimeWatch Agents as well. They may be able to systematically pick off their most dangerous enemies at a younger age, assuming they can identify their history. Cleverness and creativity matter during a time war, and the victor may well prove to be the person best able to think outside of the box. Agents should investigate, learn and collate facts, then use those to their best advantage. As the GM, don't consistently try to thwart great player tactics when they solve problems imaginatively; their good planning deserves success, even if it's success they'll have to fight for.

GM TACTICS

That said, your job is to remind the players that their Agents are up against a foe at least as canny as they are, and with far more resources. The enemy may be limited in some way — pride and overconfidence, a specific and limited form of time travel, poor internal communication, a noticeable quirk that once identified is obvious — but they outnumber the Agents and have many advantages.

Before the enemy's invasion date, there will be few if any enemy who aren't secret spies. After the enemy's invasion date and stretching into the future, the enemy will be everywhere and everywhen and humanity may be in chains. This may affect the era and location that the player characters set up their temporary headquarters.

The enemy needs to exercise caution once they have successfully invaded. From their perspective they've won, so any time traveling they do to a date prior to that invasion has the small potential to undo that victory. They thus tend to deal with any enemies hiding in the past through specially trained strike teams or through targeted tactics, instead of (for instance) throwing ten thousand troops back in time to surround a choral linchpin that the TimeWatch Agents want to adjust.

Manageable Time Combat

Having an enemy with nearly unlimited time traveling resources means that you're going to be tempted to interfere with ongoing battles any time the enemy begins to lose. Don't, or do so only with extreme caution. The reason that you as the GM never replay a fight that the player characters just won is severalfold:

- ▶ It's not fair to either the players or their characters.
- ▶ It's nearly impossible to run.
- ▶ It's infuriating and trains the players that they can never win, so they shouldn't try.
- ▶ You really don't want the players doing this to you, either.
- ▶ Paradox affects the enemy just as it does the TimeWatch Agents; once the enemy learns that an event has taken place, they'll generally get one chance at most to change that event's outcome before paradox becomes excessive. That stops the enemy from repeatedly replaying the same battle until they win (or until your annoyed players walk out on you). That sort of thing may be fun in a different campaign frame (as the movies *Groundhog Day* and *Edge of Tomorrow* show), but not necessarily in time war.

As a result, remember that Agents and their enemies can use time travel to affect a fight only starting at the point where you or the player decides that the change kicks in. Anything else would create excessive paradox (see p. 93) and isn't allowed.

Not allowed: *"Those Mooks just shot down Mace? I'm using my Preparedness and Flashback Booster to set a land mine that kills them before they ever enter this room. And I'm going to duplicate myself to be outside the room in case the land mine fails. Can we replay these last three rounds?"*

Allowed: *"Those Mooks just shot down Mace? That's just what it looks like, sure, but we faked it. I have Flashback, so I'm spending a Streetwise point to create an ally. It turns out that both those guys secretly work for us after I bribed them, and Mace is fine; he's just wearing a fake vest with special effects blood squibs! Next round, can all three of them turn on the enemy leader with a bonus because the guy doesn't expect any betrayal?"*

Note the difference in that example. You can't use time travel to blatantly rewrite known facts in a fight, or retroactively add people into past combat rounds where there were none before; you can and should use time travel to completely reframe what is currently happening. The latter is fair, rewards creativity, and doesn't require you to replay past combats or combat rounds.

ENEMY RESOURCES

As GM, you have access to time traveling enemies — and a lot of them! Consider when, and in what form, you want to bring those enemies into play. Nonhuman enemies may not act exactly as the enemies described here do, so adjust plans and expectations accordingly.

If non-time traveling troops realize the Agents are present in a location, they will probably report this fact to their superior, who may or may not tell them to attack. If the player characters have become infamous, more likely the commander will follow orders, order his subordinates out of the area, and send a message up the chain of command for an elite team. It may take weeks or months before the request gets granted (based on the amount of damage the TimeWatch Agents intend to do during their raid), but if it is, the elite team will time travel back to research the situation, set traps, and deal with the assault before it even starts. You know — what TimeWatch Agents usually do to *their* enemies.

In game terms, this means that you can launch an elite counter-TimeWatch team against your Agents whenever the heck you want, and especially at any time just before you think they are likely to be detected. You can launch such a team *before* they are detected, making it the Agents' responsibility to deliberately get detected so as to avoid paradox. You should time an enemy attack, and that enemy's clever and stealthy traps if any, for whenever and wherever makes the best dramatic sense. This is wholly up to you, and you should reward player cleverness with a less lethal combat; if the Agents have taken extreme measures for stealth and are bound to strike a decisive and noticeable blow against the enemy, you might have such a team arrive but be far less organized and prepared than normal, since they don't know exactly when and how the Agents succeeded.

It's up to you whether to sic Mooks, elite Opponents, or named Adversaries against the Agents. Mooks and supporting characters are deadly in numbers but drop quickly; Opponents can be resilient, especially when accompanied by Mook shock troops. Pick numbers of enemies based on the level of challenge you wish to portray, using enemies in waves so that you can better gauge the correct amount of foes to give a challenge without ensuring a total party kill.

Players will probably respond to an ambush with unforeseen creativity. Embrace their tactics by saying "yes, and..." instead of rejecting them by saying "no." In a world with time travel, Agents may very well choose to encounter their enemy, fade back, time travel a day or two in either direction, and then strike against their target when the enemy is unawares. Allow players the space and opportunity to improvise, and have the enemies react as appropriate.

That doesn't mean that clever antagonists take the Agents'

assault lying down. Far from it. Once the choral and physical location of the Agents is known or guessed at, there are several ways in which the enemy may respond. Named commanders may respond in different ways, with more cautious commanders taking less risky approaches than commanders who believe in winning at all costs. Luckily, this latter style of commander can sometimes be goaded into a carefully placed trap by the judicious spending of a point of Taunt.

Enemies may engage with TimeWatch Agents in several ways:

Woeful Underestimation

If the TimeWatch Agents are underestimated or are an unknown quantity, the enemy's response will usually be light or inappropriately easy against the Agents' level of skill.

Capture, Don't Kill

If the enemy has an accurate understanding of the Agents' capabilities, response will be significant. Remember that enemy troops may be sent in with the command to stun and capture the Agents, instead of killing them.

Treading on the Side of Caution

If the encounter happens during a time critical to the invasion's success, the enemy will use the best and most appropriate troops that it can spare, always remaining cognizant that they don't wish to disrupt their own success through some misadventure.

Surgical Strike

If the Agents are somewhere that remains a historical linchpin, or in a place where the enemy is cautious of causing ripples in the river of time, a response will be far more precise and surgical. Named Opponents will be sent in, along with a small handful of Mooks to act as porters and messengers.

Massive Assault

If there is little risk of disturbing the success of the invasion (e.g., if the field of engagement is somewhere like the Miocene epoch when little can be done that affects humanity, or if the engagement takes place in the future after the invasion and the location has no foreseeable involvement with the invasion's success), the enemy might hit the Agents hard, with multiple squads of Mooks, tactical maneuvering, anti-time travel countermeasures and specialist teams of counterterrorists troops who are trained to take out TimeWatch. In this sort of engagement, Military Tactics will typically warn Agents that they are overmatched, and their priority quickly becomes fleeing to fight again another day — or immediately in a different time.

PLAYER TACTICS

Hey, players: unorthodox and unexpected tactics are what wins wars. This requires thinking a step beyond normal plans; if you're facing an enemy as cunning at time travel as you are, you need to anticipate their response to your actions. That means deciding on a tactic, considering that you may be successful, calculating how the enemy will respond when you are successful, and being immediately prepared for that response. You'll use paradox as an ally instead of as an enemy: once you establish something good and useful that's happened, your enemy can't change that without acquiring paradox of their own, and you won't accrue any choral instability for changing it back to what it should be.

Your team determines that assassinating a particularly treasonous human bureaucrat will hinder the alien invasion when it arrives three months hence. Before you decide to put your plan into action, you consider how, if you had to stop yourselves, you would go about preventing this assassination. Your group concludes that you'd put a counter-sniper on a different rooftop, overlooking the rooftop that you plan to use to snipe the bureaucrat. That second rooftop is the one you then trap. The instant you start to put your plan into action the nebulous future where you succeed snaps into reality, and as expected your enemy sends a strike team back to stop you. If you've anticipated their tactics correctly, you'll destroy the enemy's assassination squad before they even begin to stop you... and then you'll take out the bureaucrat yourself, and hopefully change the future. Make sure he's dead; it'd be a pity if the enemy put him in a bulletproof vest and you didn't think to check.

Think of it as chess, anticipating your enemy's actions and then taking steps to make sure those actions fail. You lure your enemy out of hiding by laying traps, lying in wait, and weakening their forces one step at a time.

Learning from an informant that the enemy has assigned a choral assassin to eliminate your team's leader as a newborn baby, you realize that they haven't yet succeeded — after all, the team leader is still alive and not chronally unstable! The assassin must be missing vital information. You decide that they probably don't know your team leader's true identity or history, which has always been kept secret. Your group picks a random person's identity (easily established by spending a History point), and you leak the rumor that this other person grows up to be your team leader; perhaps you spend 1 point of Falsehood Detection to make the lie particularly believable.

First, however, you make sure that you've staked out the hospital where this other person is born, arranging unspecified troops and defenses as backup (via Preparedness and Flashback) for when the assassin makes his move. Once he does he's exposed himself, and it's up to you to capture and interrogate him, thus removing a key lieutenant in your enemy's hierarchy and gaining information intelligence in the process. You just hope the baby survives, and that the assassin didn't have backup. Hopefully, saving the future is worth the risk.

Remember that excessive planning can be boring, wasted time unless you already know how your enemy plans to proceed.

Since *TimeWatch* allows you to create tactical advantages with Preparedness and Investigative spends, you may have the most fun by intelligently springing a trap without overplanning.

Weakening the Enemy

There are many ways to slowly dismantle your enemy, some more effective than others. Here are a handful.

Gain Key Information: Learning names, identities, motivations, locations, and battle plans lets you counterattack and gain the upper hand in a conflict.

Weaken the Invasion: Identify and remove key individuals, logistics, communication systems, and weaponry. Doing so will gradually make the enemy less capable and competent.

Weaken the Enemy's Morale: Striking fear into an enemy's forces can demoralize them, allowing your Intimidation spends to penalize combat abilities for groups of enemy combatants instead of just for one or two individuals.

Eliminate Key Leaders and Individuals: When recognizable individuals make a notable contribution to the invasion, stopping them before the invasion ever occurs will remove their contribution from the fight. Their replacement may be worse or may even be more effective, but eliminating your enemies one by one is a sure (if slow) way to destabilize and weaken your enemy. Just be aware that the enemy will be ready for this tactic, and so may have defenses in place to prevent it.

Eliminate Troops: If a key battle is won by troops, using time travel to reroute, delay, or destroy them prior to that battle can tip the odds of success.

Weaken Enemy Infrastructure (food, supplies, communication, information networks, etc.): It's said that an army travels on its stomach. For aliens, they may travel on multiple stomachs. Using sabotage and stealth to disrupt enemy infrastructure can kill or weaken troops before key battles. Similarly, discovering where enemy weapons are manufactured and eliminating that munitions plant just prior to a battle may give *TimeWatch* Agents a tactical advantage.

Strengthen Allies: It's completely feasible for *TimeWatch* Agents to gather and train their own armies from troops plucked out of time. Making such soldiers stronger through training and weaponry (possibly through one or more Military Tactics spends) and then inserting them into key battles can change the enemy's strategy and success rate.

Build Hope and Morale: Using Authority and Reassurance spends to fire up troops with high morale can give combat bonuses to potentially thousands of soldiers — and a simple +1 to Shooting and Scuffling tests can make a *huge* difference in a massive battle.

POSSIBLE ENEMIES

When fighting a time war, who makes the best villains? Ideally you want clever strategy, time travel, brutal tactics (giving players an enemy they love to hate), and some unknown or unexpected alien or technological powers. Options include:

Humans: A military, ideological, or religious organization from the future has decided to come back and remake the world in its own image. Its spies are indistinguishable from humanity because they *are* human.

Alternate Reality TimeWatch: Who's to say that every parallel reality's *TimeWatch* has humanity's best interests in mind? Perhaps the chronal time cops from a different reality decide to colonize our own. See p. 240 for examples.

A Dystopian Megacorporation: Similar to the Company on p. 282, a vast and controlling corporate entity may decide to plunder our world for resources.

Metallic Overlords: An incomprehensibly intelligent AI may control robot and cyborg soldiers set on destroying meaty, fleshy inhabitants of Earth.

Ezeru: The shape-shifting beetle swarms from the far and radioactive future might decide to take their fate into their own hands, and bring about Armageddon nice and early by irradiating the entire Earth at once.

Sophosaurs: While the sophosaur mentality isn't necessarily well suited for a vast and coordinated time war, a charismatic and powerful alpha leader could unite the tribes and bring such an assault about. Any time war led by sophosaurs likely features rips in the fabric of space and time that allow dinosaurs to rampage unchecked across modern Earth.

Aliens of Your Own Creation: Want an enemy not detailed in this rulebook? Create your own, or adapt one from a popular book series or TV show.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CITADEL?

In order to emphasize the theme of guerilla soldiers behind enemy lines, it's useful to eliminate all contact with *TimeWatch*'s headquarters the Citadel. The Citadel is located just before the beginning of time, in the quantum anomaly that precedes the Big Bang. You have several choices for temporarily or permanently eliminating headquarters.

- ▶ The enemy managed to raise paradox levels inside the Citadel sufficiently, and the Big Bang occurred. *TimeWatch* headquarters is forevermore destroyed, along with everyone inside the Citadel when it went, and only the backup bases and safe houses remain available.
- ▶ The enemy has shifted the Citadel into its own pocket dimension of time, and they don't realize that time has vastly slowed down for them. A crucial mission during the time war might be investigating and freeing the Citadel from its time bubble.
- ▶ The enemy has put up some sort of interdiction field near the beginning of the universe that prevents time travel. This keeps the Citadel completely isolated from the rest of history, even though everyone in the facility is safe.

- ▶ The enemy has inserted spies and saboteurs into the Citadel, and a civil war is taking place that has caused the facility to isolate itself temporarily.

VICTORY

Total victory is by no means certain. The Agents may win small victories across multiple game series, may defeat the enemy in the present but leave the knowledge and results of the invasion in place, or with exhaustive work may actually manage to erase the invasion entirely from historical knowledge. If the former, they'll be acclaimed as heroes; if the latter, no one may know the truth except for themselves and the bitter enemies who somehow survived.

Either way, that's a good time to bring the series or even the campaign to a close on a triumphant and memorable note. Pacing is important, and a time war should be terrifying, dramatic, and exciting while it lasts. If it starts to slip into a grind, make sure that Agents have the opportunity for dramatic sacrifice and significant but risky contributions to hurry the war along. There are worse things in the world than becoming a martyr for your cause, especially when doing so helps save the world you remember and love.

EXPANDING BEYOND THE INVASION

This chapter is written with the assumption that an enemy makes a physical assault on our world, using time travel to cheat normal restrictions and succeed. That doesn't need to necessarily be the case. Perhaps TimeWatch is assaulting another parallel reality and puts the Agents in charge; perhaps the assault is all social and cultural (suggesting the sophosaurs) and human culture gets vastly changed in a way that turns humanity into willing slaves. It's possible that the invasion has nothing to do with time travel and is purely alien in origin, with space ships raining down fire onto human cities while TimeWatch tries to prevent it from ever occurring.

Find a scenario that seems incredibly fun to you, make sure you have enough rat-bastardly ideas to maintain it for a few game sessions, and run with that. Passion and excitement matter; if a game plot excites you and you can sell it to your players as something new to try, you're making the right choice.

TOURIST CAMPAIGN FRAME

"We could see remarkable things, Emma." She nodded at her new friend, standing across from her in the old corroded metal sphere. "I can take you to the birth of the universe, or to its death, or anywhere in between. The galaxy is full of life, and wonder, and joy! And death and horror, of course. That's what I try to fix."

"And if I don't come?" her friend asked, chewing on her lower lip.

The woman shrugged. "Normality. You'll go back to your life and your job, you'll have a family, and in a few years you'll almost have convinced yourself that this never happened. Almost. But you'll dream." She threw a lever and the sphere began to shimmer. "What's

it going to be, then? Is it worth the risk?"

They locked eyes, time seemed to slow, and her friend grinned. "What do you think?"

"All right, then," said the woman, suddenly smiling. "We're off."

Standard *TimeWatch* focuses on Earth's history, both past and future. Want a bigger playground to play in? A *Tourist*-style game focuses on characters traveling in time *and* space, visiting the past and the future of other planets as they travel throughout the universe. If you love the idea of science fiction and time travel but historical coincidences and alternate history aren't your style, this is a great option. You'll find more exploration and less detective work here. When you add murderous and mysterious aliens, inhuman threats, and the wonders of alien planets into the mix, you get farther away from historical research and more into the realm of traditional science fiction. Expect fewer facts, more sci-fi, and no one correcting your history when you tell them the bipedal tree of the planet Zubenelgenubi-D never developed death beams — at least, not in true history!

Tourist campaigns often start with normal people on Earth gaining access to a time machine, and TimeWatch may be an Adversary to the player characters if it appears at all. Use this campaign setting when your players care less about solving alternate history dilemmas than they do about exploring mysteries across time and space.

RULES CHANGES IN TOURIST-STYLE PLAY

- ▶ Characters are either pilots (with prior knowledge of time travel, and possible control of the group's time machine) or passengers. Passengers do not start with 1 default point of Timecraft, but gain an extra Investigative build point that they can assign to any other Investigative ability. Passengers can add to their Timecraft rating with build points after the first adventure.
- ▶ The GM may choose to limit the availability of super-science devices (typically gained with Preparedness or a Science! spend) for characters who have not yet had access to a planet or historical era where such a device might exist.
- ▶ All characters must have at least one secret (see below).
- ▶ Paradox is more dangerous; the potential Loss from any Paradox test (other than Travel tests) is +2 higher than normal, or more if the GM so chooses. A standard D4/L4 Paradox test for changing known events, for instance, becomes a minimum of D4/L6 instead.
- ▶ The default equipment list is only a translator and a shared time machine; weapons, armor, and other devices are not standard unless the GM says otherwise. All other equipment (other than signature equipment acquired with build points; see p. 108) must be found or acquired with Preparedness.
- ▶ It's not mandatory, but after the first game session characters are encouraged to have a signature item that defines them: a particular high-tech device, a robotic pet, a unique weapon, and the like. Purchasing their first such item with build points costs each character only 1 build point instead of 2.



Before there was TimeWatch, time tourism was a HUGE industry.

ALL ABOARD THE TIME BUS

Individual time travel devices such as autochrons don't exist in a *Tourist* game, or at least never make their way into the hands of the characters. *Tourist* campaigns feature one time machine that everyone shares. This is an important feature: the time machine will be where they make their home, socialize, rest, and recuperate. The time machine may be unique or intelligent with a personality of its own, although that's not required. Either way, like *Serenity* on *Firefly* or the TARDIS on the BBC's *Doctor Who*, the communal time machine should be plot-relevant enough in games that over time it becomes an extra supporting character in its own right. The time machine represents both safety and adventure, and is usually the only means of escape from a given time and place. The communal time machine is a refuge, a sanctuary, an emergency exit, a plot hook, and a home.

As such, a communal time machine should be large enough that a group of people can live comfortably in it, small enough that they need to share each other's space and interact, and subtle enough in appearance that it doesn't immediately raise alarm klaxons when it lands on an alien planet. Typically, time travel isn't instantaneous; the time machine travels through space and time at the speed of plot, taking minutes to days to reach a new destination, giving characters enough time to dramatically talk and plan before they arrive.

The time machine may be occasionally and temporarily removed from play through a plot device, and time machines

in most *Tourist* games aren't often used for multiple quick hops (possibly due to recharging fuel cells or increasing paradox levels). You're encouraged to decide on completely arbitrary limits on the frequency of time travel with such a device. Just be consistent; requiring an hour-long recharge period on one trip usually means that the machine will always need an hour-long recharge period, barring desperate expenditure of *Timecraft* and *Science!* points to try and get it started earlier. Your goal here is to create a time machine that matches the thematic feel of the type of game play you want to encourage.

Non-autochron time machines are listed on p. 115, although this list is far from exhaustive. A few additional options for time machine concepts include:

- ▶ The time machine is the size of a tour bus, and was in fact stolen from a chrontal tour company during a tour... and they want it back.
- ▶ The time machine is multi-dimensional, with the interior stable and non-moving while only the doorway rips through time and space to appear on a new world.
- ▶ Roughly the size of a jetliner, the time machine acts as a spaceship, appearing in orbit around a planet and requiring inhabitants to take a shuttle or a teleportation beam down to the planet's surface.
- ▶ Better strap in! Roughly the size of a bus and cushioned from impact, the time machine appears a hundred meters

above a surface and plummets downwards. It's far from subtle, and not recommended for entering space stations. When it departs, it simply vanishes, reappearing over the surface of its next destination.

- ▶ The time machine is a near-infinite interconnected series of rooms (or caves) and corridors, each room existing on a different planet in a different time. In order to reach a destination, you just need the map that shows you where to go.
- ▶ Impersonator mesh is built into a bulky time machine's exterior, making it difficult for casual observers to notice it.

There are lots of other options, including many from popular culture. Pick one you like, either by yourself or in conjunction with the players, and run with it.

One bit of advice: whether through futuristic security or GM machination, the time machine should seldom if ever be put at risk. You want the tourists heading out to sightsee and explore, not clustering around the time machine to keep it safe, so a pact with the players (and not their characters) that they'll rarely need to worry about its safety will help reassure any player tempted to stay back and boringly act as guard.

BRAINS OVER BRAWN

A traditional cornerstone of *Tourist* campaigns is that threats and alien menaces aren't necessarily best defeated by violence. Trickery, intimidation, understanding, problem-solving, sabotage, and cleverly outwitting the enemy may be a far better solution than picking up a weapon and shooting someone in the tentacle-hole.

TimeWatch's Preparedness rules and Investigative spends help reinforce this tactic. With the *Flashback* ability, a player can maneuver a villain into a trap without the GM understanding the danger until the last second. It may not be a guaranteed success, but if it is, it'll be a victory that your players talk about for weeks to come.

As a result, *Tourist* GMs are encouraged to design complex villains with concrete motivations and backgrounds, even villains that aren't combatants themselves. It may be that they can be defeated or neutralized with violence, but that shouldn't be the only solution. Talking an antagonist into submission by finding out their needs and solving their problems, or by tricking them into making a terrible mistake, is a sure-fire way to defeat a foe — and hey, when that doesn't work, you can always have physical force as a backup.

One additional benefit of foes not willing to fight to the death is that they can reappear in later games, thus becoming the sort of reoccurring enemy that players love to hate.

Elly is playing a Tourist character known only as The Auditor, a female time traveler assigned to investigate and correct history when chronal balances seem out of whack. She and her associates from Earth visit a 33rd-century human spaceship that's infested with a parasitic alien sentience. There's no way to physically defeat the alien intelligence without killing everyone on board, something true history already says didn't happen, so she and her companions are forced to investigate, learn what the parasites seek, and solve the problem creatively — all before the infected spaceship lands at its destination.

The Auditor and her companions learn that one parasite is the alpha and is empowering all the lesser spawn; if that alpha is destroyed or separated from the group, the beta parasites die with no harm to their hosts. Using roleplaying to figure out which human astronaut hosts the alpha parasite, they lure it onto an escape pod. The pod jettisons, the rest of the crew reverts to normal, and they can decide as a group what to do with the isolated alpha parasite.

PILOTS AND PASSENGERS

In a *Tourist* game, it's rare for everyone to be an experienced time traveler. More commonly just one or two characters are time travelers or possess a time machine, and the other characters are normal people plucked out of their normal lives in exchange for adventure. They may be tourists on a choral tour, a regular person who runs into the time traveler at a supermarket and gets accidentally involved, government agents and scientists, lucky historians, exiled prisoners, or talented and wealthy individuals who paid for the unique experience of time traveling. The passengers can come from all kinds of times or planets; they may not be pilots, but each passenger should have their own unique background, and aren't limited to being human. Use the customization rules on p. 147 to tweak characters as desired.

That doesn't mean that the passengers are less powerful or capable than the pilots, however; it just means that their capabilities are different. Instead of a default point of *Timecraft* when creating their character, passengers gain a bonus Investigative point but are not permitted to initially put any points into *Timecraft*. This differentiates them from the pilots, who know about time travel and how it works.

Note that "passenger" doesn't denote a position in the game of any less importance than the pilots. They may be called passengers in these rules, but in truth they're full partners in the adventure.

PARADOX

Casual paradox is seen less often in a *Tourist* game than in a *Patrol*-style game. To mechanically encourage this, Losses from failed Paradox tests are increased by +2 from normal. Raising the stakes encourages players to avoid paradox and to spend more points of Chronal Stability when making Paradox tests; characters doubling back in time to aid themselves in a fight will happen more rarely.

The Auditor and her companions decide to change reported history by saving the life of someone known to have died. Contradicting known facts creates a paradox. She and her companion make a paradox test of Difficulty 4 / Loss 6. Failing that sort of test more than once or twice in an adventure could have grave consequences, so they resolve to be more careful.

Luckily, paradox is less common in *Tourist* adventures because fewer adventures are based on time travel or historical change. A tourist may conceivably go through an entire adventure and save the day without once needing to make a Paradox test.

Travel tests when traveling or teleporting with the time machine remain at D4/L2, and as with *Patrol*-style *TimeWatch*, can be avoided by paying a Stitch.

A COMMON THREAD OF SECRETS

While most passengers of a *Tourist* group have something in common, even if it's that they were saved by the pilots, everyone also has at least one secret that other passengers and pilots don't know. Secrets won't always surface during adventures, but when they do, they provide exciting B-plots to balance the A-plot of the adventure's main mystery. These secrets should inspire conflict, adventure, and interesting play, and should be designed to be gradually revealed over the course of one or more adventures. You should privately approve each player's secret, and should encourage players to expand and develop their secret if you feel it wouldn't make a good subplot in an adventure.

A secret that needs further development: "I stole something as a child," or "I had another job before I was a tour guide."

A good secret: "I constantly fight the urge to steal. I know it's wrong, but sometimes I open up my bag and find something there that isn't mine, and I never remember taking it," or "I'm not actually a tour guide. I am a government-trained assassin. I'm with this group to kill another member, but we departed before my superiors could tell me who that was. I don't know if I'll obey the order or not when it comes through."

Players should make their secret about their own character, and not about another player's character, unless you give permission to do otherwise. Being inconvenienced by their secret during play, or letting hints of it out to other characters, often earns them one or more Stitches from you as a thank you for making the game more fun for everyone.

ALIEN PLANETS EVERYWHERE

Jettison the temptation to pick an obscure historical occurrence in Earth's history, and instead pick a brand new planet with its own unique problem. Alien planets mean alien threats: changing climate, political power struggles, internecine warfare, unstoppable armies, nefarious businesses, and difficult-to-understand customs. The new setting provides an opportunity for incredible landscapes, unnatural threats, and devious foes, without needing to worry about the ripple effect's on Earth's own history. Alien planets allow more self-contained threats; unless you decide that the threat or the antagonist somehow reaches Earth, a one-shot *Tourist* adventure has few continuity consequences when the tourists get back home.

Changing history generally only occurs when other time travelers are involved. Without that, alien threats typically are linked to a single planet or location. When they do spread, they spread in space and influence (such as an alien warlord taking over more planets, or a pernicious cult overtaking a society), instead of spreading across time using time travel.

One thing is certain: the universe is a stunning and awe-inspiring place. *Tourist*-style play may focus on that sense of wonder and awe, showing the players a panoply of incredible locations that no one else from Earth has ever seen. Occasionally showcase exactly how amazingly wondrous the universe can be by bringing characters to spots that have no danger and no immediate mystery, but which bring the characters nothing but joy. That makes subsequent danger and mystery that much more vivid, because it will occur in a location that the characters care about.

EARTH GETS THREATENED — A LOT

For all that the universe is unimaginably vast, with over 40 billion Earth-sized planets in the Milky Way galaxy alone (and over a hundred billion galaxies in the observable universe), alien and time travel threats sure do seem to pick on Earth quite a bit. Why?

That's a question you're going to want to answer for yourself, but the most likely reason is that Earth leads the way in the development of time travel. This has raised its prominence across the galaxy. Rumor gets about; if you want to muck around with time, someone from Earth may show up to interfere, so deal with them first. Alternatively, Earth may be under the protection of alien time travelers, and that makes them important for reasons that other cultures have yet to discover — but people want what is being denied to them, and that means Earth.

On TV shows, Earth gets threatened a lot because it's much less expensive to film on Earth. In games, Earth gets threatened a lot because it's lots of fun to play an RPG centered in a place you know and love. That means that you'll want to look for excuses to set adventures on Earth: subtle alien invasions, old enemies chasing down the pilots, and complex conspiracies. Focus on small-scale threats that are horrible in an area small and controlled enough that the tourists can correct them without the rest of the world ever learning the truth. Find an adventure hook that excites you and forge forward, varying Earth-based plot arcs with alien- and time-based adventures.

THE ROLE OF TIME TRAVEL

Adventures can occur in space (past, contemporary, or future), Earth (past, contemporary, or future), or any alien planet you can imagine (past, contemporary, or future). Paradox is stricter in this setting, so showing up, realizing there's a problem, and traveling back 20 years to head the problem off will typically trigger a Paradox test (since the tourists will be invalidating events they already know to be true). That encourages players to try and fix events in the same era that they arrive in.

Luckily, the nature of time machines in the *Tourist* frame is that they're less accurate than an autochron. The time machine usually arrives at or near the time when the tourists are most needed, so you can drop them wherever you wish in the conundrum. If you want them to time travel to fix things, let them enter late; if you prefer they experience and deal with the mystery directly, have them enter a bit early. Just remember

that there are mechanical encouragements to reducing the amount of time travel in this setting. If you prefer your time travel unhindered and freewheeling, as in the *Patrol* frame, ignore the rule above about stricter Paradox tests.

EMPATHY IN THE FACE OF THE UNKNOWN

Tourist-style play isn't usually about stranded adventurers shooting down hordes of alien monstrosities. It's about understanding why those monstrosities are upset, finding the person who made them that way through their despicable actions, and forcing them to change — thus allowing the alien monstrosities to go back to their normal, peaceful life and leave innocents unharmed.

That means that empathy becomes just as important a skill as a steady hand and a big gun. Sleuthing may require that the tourists put themselves in the position of their foes, just so they can understand what their foes may want to achieve. As a GM, use this technique when building adventures and mysteries. Actions have ripples as they affect others; you can build mysteries where someone takes an action, it affects others, those others act, and the tourists enter at a point when it seems like the others' actions are unreasonable or erratic. It's only after talking to people and unraveling the mystery that the truth comes out.

On a highly fertile farm planet, a bio-farm supervisor makes the controversial decision to use a powerful chemical weed killer to increase their crop yield even higher than it already is. What he doesn't realize is that the plants share a sentience, and they view this as tantamount to poison and murder. The plants begin to attack by colonizing the farmers, and the alien insects that fertilize the plants start to assault the farm. It's at this point that the tourists arrive. They find a farm under attack, with deadly insects swarming and humans gradually infested by plant monsters that grow out of their nose, mouth, and eyes. It takes empathy and investigation to track the problem back to its root cause, the pesticides and weed killers, and make peace with the local plant life.

That said, *Tourist*-style antagonists often take the form of implacable, numerous hordes led by a particularly evil and charismatic leader. The many soldiers are often treated as Mooks, and so are dangerous but relatively easy to destroy. The tourists may defeat the leader's plot without ever encountering anyone more important than a sublieutenant. This brings the group to the despicable leader's attention, however, and that's seldom a good thing when you're facing villains with endless resources and implacable hatred.

SAMPLE TOURIST GROUPS

There are multiple ways to form a tourist group. Here is a handful.

- ▶ Looking to work off his karmic debt, a con man steals a time machine, breaks his friends out of a nigh-unbeatable prison, and goes on the run across time and the universe. The prison sends specialist bounty hunters after them.
- ▶ A beneficent alien is fascinated by Earth, and regularly recruits a rotating crew of humans onto her time machine for company as she explores the past, the future, and the galaxy.
- ▶ 1950s humankind discovers time travel. Two scientists and a handful of government specialists set out to explore, only to find that they have trouble returning.
- ▶ A 25th-century starship pilot hooks alien technology up to his ship, only to discover it's a time machine. He and his passengers begin to tour the galaxy, never realizing that every time jump wakes up the progenitors who invented the technology in the first place.
- ▶ A paid time tour specializes in bringing tourists to famous places and times in Earth's history. When the tour guide accidentally perishes, the tourists decide to seize the opportunity to see the universe themselves.
- ▶ Astronauts encounter an alien species that abducts them through time and space. Their escape gains them a time machine, and the universe opens up for their exploration.

WILD TIMES! CAMPAIGN FRAME

What happens at the dawn of time travel, before TimeWatch is founded or in a universe where TimeWatch doesn't exist?

Captain Darren "Flash" Edwards checked the coolant fittings on his pressure suit for the thousandth time. He settled again into the acceleration couch and looked left and right at his team: Lieutenant Derby Mason, the cool hepcat comms officer; Doctor Jean "Harlow" Harlass, plucked from a postdoc at MIT to serve as Flash's science officer; and Anna May Wong, Hollywood actress with an eidetic memory and vast knowledge of history serving as the team's special consultant. The craziest team he'd ever seen, assembled for the craziest plan he'd ever heard of, facing the craziest damn thing he'd ever had in front of his own eyes.

It twisted and flared and shimmered, turning his mind inside out. Now blinding, now cloaked in a suffocating darkness, The Anomaly laughed at everything American science had learned.

"Systems nominal. Engaging first power increment in ten... Nine..."

Flash snorted. "First power increment" meant "first atomic bomb going off right overhead."

First. Atomic Bomb. Overhead.

He glanced involuntarily at the bunker roof. Dr. Harlass had assured them all that this far below the Nevada desert there was no danger, but hell, atomic bombs? Multiple atomic bombs?

"Four... Three..."

The first bomb went off. All the bombs went off. And as crazy as things had been up to then, Flash hadn't seen anything yet.

A DIFFERENT VERSION OF HISTORY

If your characters are not TimeWatch Agents, be sure to consider what they might or might not know about time travel and what sort of gear they might or might not have access to. TimeWatch does its best to make sure its agents are well prepared for the fight to maintain history, but characters without access to TimeWatch's resources will have to charge forward into ignorance.

There are broadly four ways to vary a *TimeWatch* game from the default concept.

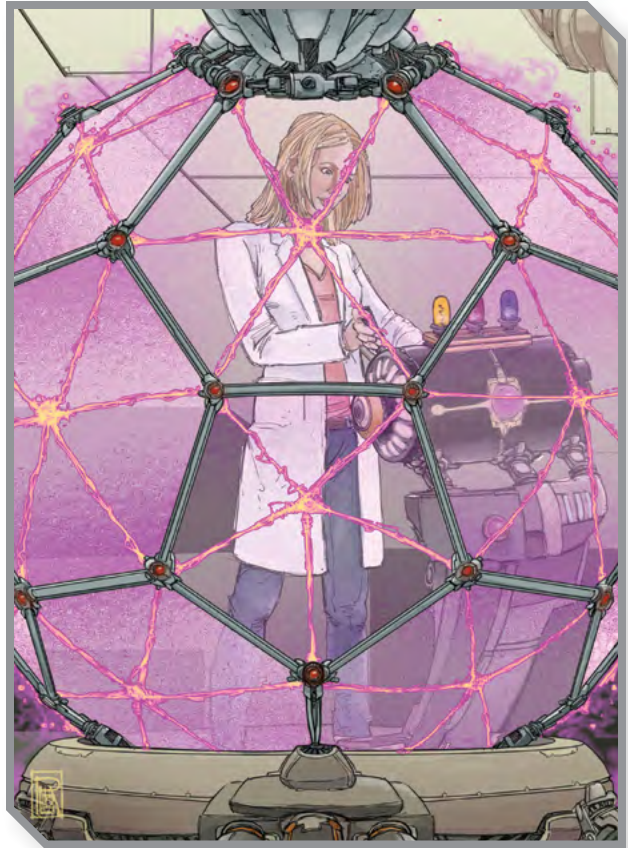
How Recently Was Time Travel Invented?

Default *TimeWatch* establishes that time travel is well understood. All Agents start with 1 point of Timecraft, and much of the mystery and awe has eroded from clocking in and out of history. Time travel is a known and established fact, and Agents are reaping the benefits of all the pioneers who have come before.

But what if they *are* the pioneers? If time travel is brand new and no one (or almost no one) has experimented with it before, the characters become daring explorers without a safety net. There's no one to pull their fat out of the fire when things get tough, and instead of fixing other travelers' mistakes they're forging out into the infinite unknown to see what's out there. If errant history has to be repaired, it's probably the characters themselves who accidentally broke it.

How Time Travel Works

Next, there is the nature of time travel itself. Default *TimeWatch* assumes that there are straightforward machines that allow the operator to go back and forth in time. Time machines are effectively plot devices that help the characters get from one place to another as they track down the mystery. A simple variation changes these machines in one way or another, either in form and function or in importance. A magical ring that jumps the wearer back and forth is functionally the same, but you could have implements less powerful than an autochron. You could manage time travel via General abilities of some kind, and call it magic. You could have time portals that open up and then vanish, or physical locations that zap people from one time to another. The time machine could have its own personality, wants, and desires, effectively becoming a supporting character in the game. And of course, in default *TimeWatch* the time travel is reasonably reliable, so that Agents can be largely sure they'll end up where and when they intend, and don't have to worry too much about keeping their autochrons properly maintained. If these things aren't all true, if Agents always have to scramble to figure out where they are



The first time machines were no autochrons, that's for certain.

and if travel requires specific, hard-to-find fuel, time travel is a very different proposition.

How the Heroes Travel

Third, you can consider the nature of how your characters relate to the power of time travel. In default *TimeWatch*, the Agents own and manage the ability to travel through time. But here they might have to deal with another entity that actually provides the power, and who could pull it away from the characters at any time. The characters could have acquired the power illicitly, and be in danger of having it taken away. They could just be victims of time-shifting powers. They could stumble into time travel without understanding it, discovering a bizarre or mysterious locale or phenomenon that sends them off through the time stream. They could use advanced mathematics and vastly obscure equations, such as Dr. Eugene Ray's Time Cube theories advanced in 1997. They could even have invented it themselves, in which case the time machine is likely immovable, bulky, and regularly malfunctioning.

Time travel technology in a game where you expect the characters to mostly stay put should be massively bulky, technologically mystifying, utterly mysterious, caused by natural forces that could change at any time, existing in another era entirely, or prone to self-destruction. A good standby that avoids technology entirely is a temporary rift in time and space,

one that slides people into a new time without ever allowing them to understand exactly how and why. Primitive time travel is typically dangerous, mysterious, and notoriously inaccurate.

If you want characters to easily move between eras, the technology might become slightly more stable, reliable, or understandable — but usually not too advanced. In the same way that telephone booth-shaped time machines aren't particularly portable once they arrive in a new era, a little inconvenience goes hand in hand with traditional time travel stories. Time machines should be able to be hidden, stolen, and then stolen back over the course of an adventure.

The Big Problem

Finally, consider what problems your characters will be asked to solve in the game. Default *TimeWatch* is about keeping history in accord with a canonical source of “proper” history. But your campaign could revolve around the struggle to control the power to travel through time itself. Characters could be trapped in some sort of time-based confusion and need to escape somehow. They may travel to right some wrong or to fix mistakes that others or they themselves have made, or they may just be trying to get home.

WILD TIMES! RULES

These sorts of campaigns will require some changes to the typical *TimeWatch* rules, especially with regards to character creation.

Character Options

Your GM determines what time periods are possible for your characters.

Your characters do not have any default knowledge of Timecraft. You can use your build points to buy the ability as normal later.

Unless the GM agrees, your characters cannot start with History (Future).

Consider building your characters with 5 build points kept in reserve that can be used as needed during the adventures.

Languages

In some cases, your GM may wish to incorporate a Languages ability:

Languages (Academic)

For each rating point in Languages, you are verbally fluent and literate in a number of languages other than your native tongue:

Languages Rating	Additional Languages
1	+2 (3 total)
2	+3 (6 total)
3+	+4 (10 total)

So for instance, Languages 2 gives you five languages besides your native one (+2 for Languages 1, and then +3 more for Languages 2); at Languages 4, you can speak and read thirteen other languages! Languages known can be specified as you need them, not at the start of the game; sure, your grasp of Akkadian from ancient Babylonian may not be perfect, but you can make yourself understood if you've left at least one Languages slot free when you find yourself in ancient Babylonia.

Equipment

Remember that without the facilities of *TimeWatch*, you'll have less fancy equipment than standard agents. You'll be limited in most cases to traditional weapons and armor for your time period, you won't have a universal translator, nor will you have a useful tether to tell you what's supposed to be true. You'll be on your own!

Also, note that while regular *TimeWatch* allows for quite a bit of creative time travel use for Investigative or Preparedness spends, without access to unlimited time travel such uses may have their Difficulty Numbers raised or be disallowed by your GM.

Time Travel Effects

Chronal Stability Losses may be higher than the default, and may even be mandatory and automatic when time traveling (as older, less carefully built time machines are less stable and safe). The GM should consider upping these costs, with Travel tests automatically inflicting 2 points of Chronal Stability Loss or rising to Difficulty 4 / Loss 4.

Paradox and accidental history changes are a core part of most time travel stories, so when the *TimeWatch* agency is not involved, Chronal Stability Loss in these situations is higher. Alternatively, the GM could use Paradox tests to determine whether or not the future changes significantly. This can be a way to manage chaos if things don't quite go the way your group expects.

ALTERNATE TIMEWATCH CAMPAIGNS

Let's break down some combinations of all these possibilities with a few sample *TimeWatch* alternate campaigns. This is far from exhaustive.

Circles of Stone

Magic exists. Your fellow antiquarian book dealers didn't believe you at first, but the ancient tome that you unexpectedly found in your shop's back shelves has taught you methods to manipulate reality — to conjure technology and objects from the future or past (albeit with some strain to your sanity), to manipulate those around you, and to understand historical secrets you couldn't possibly know in any other way. You're even convinced that with enough other knowledgeable and learned assistants, you can use Stonehenge to travel through *time itself*.

Let's just hope you don't go insane in the process.

In this variant, time travel can only occur in one location.

Magic and dark sorcery substitute for technology, so that the sort of things you'd achieve in a normal *TimeWatch* game through technology or Investigative ability spends are instead described as being the result of ritualistic spells. Of course, it's just a question of what exactly is whispering these secrets into the antiquarian booksellers' ears, and what price they may have to pay for power...

Mission Hook: That magical book belongs to a powerful sorcerer who both wants it back and has no hesitation about killing any who also uncover its secrets. The characters find that their past is disappearing around them as the sorcerer destroys their personal history. They must head back in time to save themselves, or fade out of existence entirely.

Corporate Scouts

The “work week” takes on a whole new meaning when your Monday morning involves traveling back to the Devonian period to start massive forest fires and thus increase the company's petroleum deposits, and you have lunch hanging around outside Ford's Theatre just to make sure no one interferes with Mr. Booth on his way in. The afternoon is billed to MegaDimension Pictures, who are looking for the perfect location for their Roman epic — say Northern Italy in 120 BCE!

Your heroes aren't crusaders or saviors of humanity; they're temporal mercenaries making a buck in a high-risk trade. *TimeWatch* isn't a noble organization devoted to preserving history, but rather a for-profit operation looking to exploit history. You have most of the same resources as a standard *TimeWatch* game, but instead of saving the world, you're getting paid.

Mission Hook: You're escorting another “Pleistocene Safari,” guiding high rollers to hunt woolly mammoths and saber-toothed tigers, when what at first appears an accidental shooting kills one of your clients. It turns out that a rival “temporal services” corporation is trying to discredit you, and the only way to restore your reputation is to either find the culprits, or use your time machine to rearrange things more positively. Remember, investigative action is non-billable time!

The First TimeWatch

“Before” the *TimeWatch* Citadel was created, *TimeWatch* had far fewer resources and was composed mostly of like-minded adventurers who banded together to try and preserve *their* version of history. This is where alternate futures can get more powerful, where rival agencies can really bring the big clout. One player character may be the inventor of time travel, or all the player characters may have arrived at this ability by working together. Whatever, they are in charge of the technology, and have all signed up to rearrange history.

One way to kick off a story like this is at the dawn of time travel, a crisis moment in history.

Mission Hook: Alternate universes are competing to dominate the time stream, causing strange phenomena: unseasonal weather, massive extinctions, tectonic activity,

bizarre behavior... Your heroes are scientists and engineers building a time machine when a strange creature suddenly materializes in your lab. It speaks of a “Citadel” outside of time, but before it can explain any further, it dies and a small army of time traveling hostiles attack. Sophosaurs and ezeru and other, more bizarre enemies begin an all-out assault on “our” history, and only control of this Citadel can possibly save humanity!

The Right Stuff Again

In the early 1960s, NASA experiments with relativity uncovered bizarre, terrifying possibilities. A secret organization known only by its code name, Second Chamber, was created inside the Department of Defense. At their facility in Nevada, Second Chamber uses nuclear blasts to create temporal anomalies, and experiments with ways of maintaining and directing these. Of course these tests must be conducted in secrecy beyond even what was enforced on the nuclear weapons development programs themselves. Should the Russians get wind of what Second Chamber is developing, all history could be revised!

Heroic Americans (who are definitely not Russian spies) are carefully recruited from various services, universities, and industries and brought into Second Chamber to test out the very first human-suitable time travel devices. The device is immense, built into caverns beneath the Nevada desert, and only massive nuclear explosions will provide the necessary energy. Packed into bulky space suits, the crew sits at the controls and sets off.

This game uses a less-effective time machine, called the Chronomatic Station, that resembles a sort of big sectional sofa with enough seating for your heroes. It's covered with controls and readouts, like the bridge of a cool spaceship without the spaceship. At the rear of the station a number of thick tubes and cables emerge, only to warp around some invisible corner back to Mission Control in 1962 Nevada. Making time jumps requires communication with Mission Control, and necessitates wearing pressure suits to survive the hellish conditions of time travel. They help protect chrononauts from the atomic bombs going off in Nevada, too. Of course, should those communication cables be cut, your heroes will have to scrounge their own staggering energy releases in order to operate the Chronomatic Station and get home...

A *Right Stuff Again* campaign varies from default *TimeWatch* in three ways: time travel is more difficult, it's poorly understood, and your Agents' mission is to make sure this technology does not fall into enemy hands. Of course, if the dastardly Reds are working on their own Vremya Transport, they may be lying in wait!

Mission Hook: In 1961 the Russians detonate “Tsar Bomba,” the largest explosive device in human history. The American strategic advantage of the postwar years is lost, possibly forever. In 1962, the first Chronomatic Station mission sends the heroes back to London in 1941 to prevent the leak of the MAUD Committee documents to the Soviet Union. These documents were prepared by British scientists and first described a feasible design for an atomic bomb. The top-secret

document was intercepted and described to Moscow within a day of its completion, which helped convince Lavrenti Beria, head of the NKVD, that an atomic bomb program was not just a trick to distract the Soviets from the catastrophic Nazi invasion they were currently reeling from.

Your heroes will have to navigate 1941 London, find Anatoli Gorski, and prevent him from sending the confirmation of the MAUD document, thus buying the US many years' head start in their nuclear program.

Find Gorski, and somehow prevent him from either learning about the MAUD committee, or from communicating his knowledge back to his NKVD masters! And look out for time traveling Reds!

Variant: The Righter Stuff

In the early 2000s, a young billionaire couple who made their fortune with startling new power technology begins recruiting for a top-secret project from among the roughest neighborhoods in the most dangerous third-world countries. They have discovered the secret to time travel and plan to use it to wipe out threats to their emerging businesses, to seize natural resources before they're found, and other unfair sorts of things.

Their employees, however, are smarter than first imagined. Your heroes are these adventurous characters from around the globe, brought together for the promise of money and risk, but who will swiftly come to realize that they are considered expendable!

This sort of campaign works similar to the previous idea, with control of the machine belonging to another, but directed by you. However, in something like this the problem for your characters is to wrest control of the time machine away from the cruel and selfish billionaires and perhaps establish an all-new global agency for time travel protection.

Mission Hook: In 1869, the brand-new Dominion of Canada — at that point a mere fraction the size it is today — acquired the enormous tract of land then owned by the Hudson's Bay Company at the cut-rate price of £300,000, in a document called the Deed of Surrender. This happened as a result of desperate negotiations by British, Canadian, and HBC officials, all worrying about how best to counteract US expansion in North America.

The Red River Rebellion in 1867 nearly overturned these negotiations, and there have long been rumors that an American offer of \$10,000,000 was rejected due to threats from the British government. With the hindsight of time travel, buying one-third of North America for \$10,000,000 seems like a steal. Can your team give your employers the chance to win the biggest real estate deal in history? Or will you side with Louis Riel and his Métis crusaders, and kick over the whole negotiating table?

The Stars Are Right

The sample adventure *Queen of the Nile* (see p. 366) includes a supporting character who travels through time via some unspecified “magical” means and who compels others to his cause. This can be the basis for another sort of *TimeWatch* campaign: where your heroes aren't recruited to time travel but instead are brought in against their will. This can go in all sorts of ways, but they all depend on a nefarious villain or agency who has selected your characters from throughout history for some purpose.

A god-queen of ancient Babylon, or a shaman in Machu Picchu, or just a poor woodsman who was too close to the Tunguska event in 1908 and discovered secrets that were never meant to be known; any of these possibilities could work for non-technological time travel. Look for extraordinary events in history, or just controversial ones, and imagine how that might have been the consequence of a time travel event. Aliens are great for this: perhaps when they kidnap humans and leave them with “missing time” they've actually sent them on a wild time traveling mission and then wiped their memories.

Whatever lies behind the plot, this sort of setup allows for a broader range of characters. Since your scheming villain has access to time travel, they may have nabbed victims from any point in history, so you have pretty much the whole gamut to select from. Your heroes don't know why they were selected, but at first at any rate they find themselves required to follow orders. The first few missions they may simply go along with things, but sooner or later they'll want to get ahold of the time travel controls.

Exactly how time travel works in these sorts of stories can vary greatly, of course, from magic to science to space aliens. Part of the mission of the heroes in this story is to uncover the purpose behind their sudden time traveling enlistment, and then turn the tables on the presumably nefarious goings-on here.

Mission Hook: The city of Uruk was founded, say the legends, around the great temple of Inanna, which stood there before even the first king of Uruk was proclaimed. Uruk thrived because the goddess had stolen the tablets of knowledge from the god Enki. This ancient tale recalls an ancient power struggle, and a desperate queen who discovered she could call upon heavenly “angels” when her rituals were properly performed. In fact, she has created portals through time to draw hapless individuals to serve her. Your heroes.

You will have to steal these tablets from the god who rules neighboring Eridu. But what are these gods and goddesses? And what exactly are these tablets that include all the knowledge necessary for civilization? Trapped in ancient Sumeria, your heroes are expendable pawns, but your only hope to get home is to convince Inanna to conduct her time traveling rituals on your behalf. How will you convince an insane god-queen to help you?

The White Hole

The “black widow pulsar,” B1957+20, is one of the most massive stellar objects that can be observed (you can look it up). Moving through the galaxy at a staggering million kilometers per hour, and spewing antimatter as it hurtles along, this object distorts space and time all around it. Close to a massive stellar object like this, time warps and distorts and goes the wrong way. Obviously humanity wants a closer look.

Daigo Fukuru, the first expedition to B1957+20, is no longer mentioned but in hushed rumors, stories of an empty vessel returning but moments after it was launched, interiors rusted shut and no sign of the thirty-person crew. Perhaps your characters have been asked to explore the abandoned vessel itself, to try and discover the fate of its crew, and to try and understand what happened in the few seconds it was gone. Or perhaps they are mounting a new expedition to B1957+20, in the hopes of finding their answers in the madness of space around the bizarre object.

Time travel in a story like this is less under anyone’s control. But you may discover ways in which you can move back and forth in time, and if that doesn’t *drive you mad*, you may discover the secret of *Daigo Fukuru*.

Mission Hook: After years of preparation, the tremendous research vessel *Daigo Fukuru* set off on its rendezvous with B1957+20. Traveling at a reasonable proportion of the speed of light, *Daigo Fukuru* was expected to return years from now, with its crew in suspended animation for most of that time. But an anomaly occurred, and *Daigo Fukuru* suddenly seemed to teleport across a vast distance in space, and rather than traveling away, it was returning at high speed towards its launch site. There have been no responses to any communication, and unless something is done the ship will hurtle past the station and on into the darkness of space. Your team has to get aboard and discover the truth of what happened.



CHAPTER NINE:

HISTORICAL MISCELLANY

If you never get enough of history's awesome little details, or if you're looking for inspiration, this section provides ideas and clues to inspire you in developing thrilling *TimeWatch* adventures of your own. Read it over, browse the Internet, and find the moment in history where you'd change everything.

We've tried to provide a sampling of notable or interesting figures from across history. Many of these are not the most famous individuals, or even the most important. Hopefully there are a few names in here you've never come across before, that spark your own research and inspiration.

All dates are Common Era unless noted otherwise.

NORTH AMERICA

MARY HARVEY (C. 1700-?)

After Mary Harvey and her husband, Thomas, were transported to the province of Carolina in 1725 to serve time for robbery, arson, and extortion, they escaped and took to a life of minor piracy aboard the *Raphael* (named after the avenging archangel). Rumored to be the piratical mastermind but released from jail in 1726 after her husband escaped capture, Mary was an athletic shaggy-haired brunette with a number of scars and a "bawdy loose nature." She disappeared in 1727; if *TimeWatch* tried to recruit her, it isn't unreasonable to assume that she betrayed her team and is still running loose with a spare autochron. (Google "women in piracy" for more wonderful examples.)

TECUMSEH (1768-1813)

Leader of the Shawnee who pulled together a confederacy of native nations, Tecumseh helped the British hold off the United States in the War of 1812. His untimely death at the

Battle of the Thames put an end to that confederacy and made it impossible for the British to insist on the recognition of native nations between the United States and Upper Canada.

THEODOSIA BURR ALSTON (1783-1813)

Lost at sea off the Carolina coast at age 29, possibly to piratical wreckers, the daughter of Aaron Burr was considered one of the best educated women in America.

SACAGAWEA (1788-1812)

Best known as the woman who led the Lewis and Clark Expedition across North America, Sacagawea was an accomplished diplomat and courageous explorer without whom the expedition might have failed.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT (1858-1919)

Theodore Roosevelt became president after the assassination of William McKinley, and then turned against the Republican Party leadership in championing policies of trust-busting and preserving national parks. Had he not helped overturn the corporate monopolies, the United States might have been as ripe for proletarian revolt as Russia at the turn of the century.

IDA B. WELLS (1862-1931)

A journalist who documented the horrific atrocities of white supremacists in America, Wells devoted much of her life to exposing the racism of the American South. She advocated for armed resistance, though she stopped short of organizing an actual uprising.

LESTER B. PEARSON (1897–1972)

Prime minister of Canada for much of the '60s, Pearson brought about a peaceful resolution to the Suez Crisis of 1957 by proposing a joint United Nations peacekeeping force. This effort won him a Nobel Peace Prize for “saving the world” and introduced the idea of international peacekeeping that the United Nations continues with to this day.

MARILYN MONROE (1926–1962)

The greatest sex symbol in Hollywood’s history, Monroe was involved with influential men from all parts of American life: athletes, writers, and presidents. She called John F. Kennedy just before her death, which was called a “probable suicide.” Lee Strasberg, the great acting teacher, said she had been second only to Marlon Brando amongst his students.

SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICA**FRANCISCO PIZARRO (C. 1471–1541)**

Greedy for Peru’s fabled riches and envious of his distant cousin Hernán Cortés’ success in Mexico, Pizarro left Panama City and conquered the Inca Empire. His expeditions of 1524 and 1526 both failed due to scant supplies, bad weather, and hostile natives, but his expedition of 1528 alerted him to the wealth of northern Peru. Forced to appeal directly to the King of Spain for a license to proceed, Pizarro captured the Incan emperor Atahualpa in 1532. Despite the ransom of a room full of gold, Pizarro betrayed the emperor and had him executed. Conquering Cuzco and all of Peru soon followed. Pizarro was assassinated by the son of a personal enemy in 1541.

BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS (1484–1566)

Born in Spain and an early colonist to the West Indies, Las Casas soon actively opposed the subjugation and enslavement of indigenous Native Americans. This set the Dominican friar apart in an era when Europeans considered the local populace to be sub-human. Las Casas spent five decades proselytizing against slavery and arguing for pro-Indian policies throughout Central America. He agitated for universal human rights at a time when most people considered the idea unthinkable.

LA MALINCHE (1496–1529)

To say that La Malinche’s modern reputation is conflicted is an understatement. One of 20 female slaves given to Spanish conquistadores after a victorious battle, she became the advisor, interpreter, and mistress to Hernán Cortés. Her diplomatic prowess has led some historians to consider her key to Spain’s conquering of Mexico; while her loyalty to Cortés was absolute, she is also remembered as the very definition of treachery to her native people.

SIMÓN BOLÍVAR (1783–1830)

Hailed as the liberator of South America, Bolívar is often compared to George Washington for his role in establishing Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela as independent of Spanish rule. Bolívar’s revolutionary forces were well served by his keen political instincts and skill in military tactics.

ANTONIO LÓPEZ DE SANTA ANNA (1794–1876)

“The Napoleon of the West” is considered an ardent Mexican nationalist and general who served a whopping 11 non-consecutive terms as president over 22 years. He’s also considered to be a failure, as during his reign Mexico lost more than half of its territory. Fun fact: the charismatic leader’s leg was blown off during the Pastry War of 1838 (really!) and buried with full military honors; after Santa Anna’s prosthetic cork leg was captured eight years later during the Mexican-American War, it ended up on display in Springfield, Illinois.

AUGUSTO PINOCHET (1915–2006)

Need a dictator? In power between 1974 (thanks to a US-backed coup) and 1990, Pinochet ruled Chile with both fear and the proverbial iron fist. Under his watch tens of thousands of people were tortured and imprisoned, and thousands of people disappeared, presumed murdered. When it comes to human rights, it’s safe to say that Bartolomé de Las Casas wouldn’t have been a fan.

FIDEL CASTRO (1926–FOREVER, APPARENTLY)

A Communist revolutionary turned charismatic and hard-working politician, Castro has been annoying American leaders since the 1950s. His role in world politics is hard to understate, especially when you consider that the closest the world has gotten to a full nuclear exchange (as far as we know) happened on his watch during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

EUROPE**ARISTOTLE (384–322 BCE)**

One of the greatest philosophers and most influential writers in Western history, Aristotle’s ideas (for better or worse) guided Western thinking for nearly two thousand years. He tutored Alexander the Great (more on him later), wrote hundreds of books, invented logic, and established the groundwork for physics, geology, biology, metaphysics, and pretty much everything else. He had strong opinions on drama, too.

ALEXANDER III (THE GREAT) (356–323 BCE)

Plutarch says of this fellow: He was of a fair color, as they say, and his fairness passed into ruddiness on his breast particularly, and in his face. Moreover, that a very pleasant odor exhaled from his skin and that there was a fragrance about his mouth and all his flesh, so that his garments were filled with it. The temperament of his body was a very warm and fiery one. His neck was bent slightly to the left, and his eyes had a melting glance. Although Alexander was unyielding and resisted being compelled by his father, he was easily led by reasoning into the path of duty. He was by nature a lover of learning and a lover of reading, with an eager yearning for philosophy. His self-restraint showed itself in the fact that, although he was impetuous and violent in other matters, the pleasures of the body had little hold upon him, and he indulged in them with great moderation, though he was prone to drink, due to the heat of his body.

So there's that.

BOUDICA (C. 10–60)

A British queen who led a massive revolt against the Romans, one that nearly caused Emperor Nero to withdraw all Roman forces from Britain. But defeated in her final battle (the Battle of Watling Street), she and the revolt collapsed.

JANI BEG (C. 1320–1357)

Ruler of the Golden Horde, whose assassination contributed to the collapse of the Mongol Empire, Beg is also remembered as the man who might have caused the Black Death.

JOHANNES GUTENBERG (1398–1468)

Inventor of the Western moveable type press, Gutenberg only created his world-changing machine because a previous venture involving mirror manufacturing failed. Makes you think.

CAPTAIN JAMES COOK (1728–1779)

He may have been stabbed to death by Hawaiian islanders in 1779 after trying to kidnap and ransom their king, but the British explorer and navigator's global circumnavigation and trips around the Pacific Ocean provided a wealth of information about geography, mapping techniques, botany, and the indigenous people of the lands he reached. Cook was an outstanding hero and explorer in an age of discovery, and he left behind a legacy of scientific and cartographic research for others to expand upon. Rumors that Cook was actually recruited into TimeWatch instead of dying remain unsubstantiated.

ADA LOVELACE (1815–1852)

One of the greatest mathematical minds of all time, Lovelace famously wrote the first computer program — more than a century before the first computer was built. Sadly, her associate Charles Babbage was never able to assemble sufficient funds to build the Analytical Engine for which she devised her programs.

OTTO SKORZENY (1908–1975)

Hitler's favorite Nazi commando, SS-Obersturmbannführer (lieutenant colonel) Skorzeny had a reputation as a swashbuckling man of action — and even had the dueling scar on his face to prove it. He famously rescued Mussolini from an Italian fortress by infiltrating by glider, and reputedly had an affair with Eva Perón while acting as her bodyguard in Argentina after the war. Skorzeny is the epitome of a good TimeWatch adversary: deadly, resourceful, fascinating, amoral, unscrupulous, and very good at his job.

AFRICA

HATSHEPSUT (1508–1458 BCE)

One of the greatest pharaohs of Egypt, this woman ruled that nation for over twenty years, overseeing expansion, trade, and the building of some of the greatest temples in Egyptian history. (Pro tip: Egyptian history is full of awesome.)

TARIQ IBN ZIYAD (DIED 720 CE)

The conqueror of Iberia, a great Muslim general, known as the man who found the (subsequently lost) golden table of Solomon. (Pro pro tip: Muslim history is full of awesome, too, and often ignored by most Western historians.)

IBN BATTUTA (1304–1369)

One of the greatest explorers of all time, Ibn Battuta traveled through Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and even China. His writings of his travel were famous throughout the Muslim world.

YAA ASANTEWAA (1840–1912)

An Asante queen who led the last, ultimately unsuccessful war against British colonialism: The War of the Golden Stool.

RABIH AZ-ZUBAYR (1842–1900)

A Sudanese warlord who nearly fought the French to a standstill in Central Africa.

HAILE SELASSIE I (1892–1975)

Emperor of Ethiopia, descendant of Solomon, messiah to the Rastafarians, Haile Selassie lost his nation to an Italian invasion in the 1930s when virtually all first-world nations refused to support him. But Ethiopia's independence was restored during the Second World War, and Selassie went on to rule until deposed in a 1974 coup.

NELSON MANDELA (1918–2013)

South Africa civil rights activist and politician, Mandela spent 27 years in prison and then became president of his country after the end of apartheid.

MIRIAM MAKEBA (1932–2008)

Singer and activist, barred from her native South Africa for much of her life, Makeba contributed immeasurably to global understanding of the situation in her homeland.

MIDDLE EAST**CYRUS THE GREAT (576–530 BCE)**

Founder of the immense Achaemenid Empire, which stretched from China to Libya, and was the greatest empire in the ancient world. In the process he freed the Jews from their captivity in Babylon and let them re-establish themselves in Israel, which turned out to be a pretty big deal.

EMPEROR MAURICE OF BYZANTIUM (539–602)

An effective ruler whose murder shattered the peace he'd forged with Persia, thus paving the way for the Muslim conquests of Persia and later Byzantium itself.

FATIMA BINT MUHAMMAD (605–632)

Youngest daughter of the Prophet, Fatima was the only child of his to produce her own offspring, so all descendants of Muhammad are hers. After her father's death, Fatima was central to the conflict that gave rise to the split between Shia and Sunni.

MUHAMMAD IBN SAUD (c. 1720–1765)

Founder of the Saud dynasty that still rules Saudi Arabia today, founder of the First Saudi State that set the foundations for the modern state (the Third Saudi State), ibn Saud sought to purify Islam of what he saw as dangerous modern influences.

ZAHIR SHAH (1914–2007)

The last king of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah modernized his nation, providing universal suffrage and promoting the rights of women. He was deposed in a bloodless coup, introducing years of instability in the nation that culminated in the Soviet intervention a decade later.

EAST ASIA**QIN SHI HUANG (260–210 BCE)**

The first emperor of China, the man who pulled the country together out of a dozen warring states. That terracotta army you hear so much about was his.

WU ZETIAN (624–705)

The only woman to ever rule Imperial China in her own name, Wu Zetian was a scandal for millennia, although she presided over one of the greatest flowerings of Chinese culture.

YUE FEI (1103–1142)

A storied military leader who was on the verge of expelling the Mongols before they ever established themselves in China, Yue Fei was called back on the verge of his final assault and executed by a fearful emperor, ensuring Kublai Khan's victory.

MUSASHIBŌ BENKEI (1155–1189)

A Japanese warrior monk who has since ascended into folklore, Benkei was said to be a man of surpassing strength, height, and loyalty. He served as warrior and outlaw; whether he was actually a demon or ogre remains a little less certain.

TOMOE GOZEN (1157–1247)

A late twelfth-century female samurai warrior, she was said to have been a remarkable archer, sword fighter, and equestrian who was sent to battles as first captain. If you think to yourself "my game needs more female samurai beheading her defeated enemies," she's your solution.

ADMIRAL YI SUN-SIN (1545–1598)

Arguably the greatest naval commander in history, this Korean commander remained undefeated against numerically superior (sometimes vastly so) Japanese fleets. Completely aside from the whole "military genius" thing, he also invented the turtle ship, the world's first armored battleship, which combined both technological and psychological warfare innovations — including a dragon-head fog-of-war dispenser.

TAKUAN SÔHÔ (1573–1645)

A deeply influential monk and philosopher, known to swordsmen and politicians all across the nascent Tokugawa Japan. Had a huge influence on the thought and culture of Japan.

CHING SHIH (1775–1884)

The greatest, most successful pirate of all time was this Chinese woman who ruled a fleet of hundreds of warships and basically ran the South China Sea like her personal domain. At one point her fleet held over 1,500 ships and 80,000 sailors. She retired and lived like a queen in Hong Kong on her ill-gotten wealth.

SOUTH & SOUTH EAST ASIA**KAUTILYA (350–275 BCE)**

A great philosopher and minister who steered the rise of the Maurya Empire, first to unite India.

ASHOKA MAURYA (304–232 BCE)

Grandson of the first Maurya Emperor (Kautilya's protégé), Ashoka is the guy who basically conquered all of India.

**TÖREGENE KHATUN
(EARLY 1200S-MID 1200S)**

Töregene was the second wife to Ögedei Khan, son of Genghis Khan and Mongol warlord. When Ögedei died, canny Töregene became the great khatun and regent of the Mongol empire for five years (1241–1246) until her eldest son was elected khan. She deftly balanced the rival political powers within her empire while expanding its borders.

KUTULUN (1260–1306)

The wrestling woman of Mongol fame, who was *almost* made khan by her father, and might have almost held the Mongol Empire together.

AKBAR I (1542–1605)

Another “guy who conquered India,” Akbar turned the Mughal Empire into a pluralistic and vital center of world culture.

MAI BHAGO (LATE 1600S-EARLY 1700S)

A fierce woman who led the charge preserving Guru Gobind Singh Ji, and possibly kept the Sikh nation alive. The British Indian Army was, by the way, 20% Sikh by the outbreak of World War I.

**WOOLLARAWARRE BENNELONG
(C. 1764–1813)**

An Aboriginal man who served as ambassador, interpreter, and diplomat between the indigenous population and the European immigrants to Australia, Bennelong was an advisor to the governor of New South Wales.

**QUEEN RANAVALONA I “THE CRUEL”
(1778–1861)**

Strong and brutal queen of Madagascar, Ranavalona I held an isolationist stance that managed to force British and French imperial interests out of her country and keep Christian missionaries at bay until decades after her death. That said, she managed to reduce the population of her country from 5 million to 2.5 million subjects in a mere six years; her sobriquet was likely well deserved.

MAHATMA GANDHI (1869–1948)

Look, you know who Mahatma Gandhi is.

**SAMPLE CHARACTERS AND
SUPPORTING CHARACTERS**

Head over to Pelgrane Press' TimeWatch Resources page on the website for unique and historical *TimeWatch* characters, from future and past, filled out and ready to run.

THE ANTI-HISTORY

Below is a long list of crazy ideas about ways in which history might be changed, that could turn into full-blown adventures. Read and be inspired!

If some of the names or places don't ring a bell for you, look them up! Lots of very interesting stuff in here.

- ▶ Germany doesn't declare war on US in 1941, delaying US entry into the war. Alternatively, the Japanese do not attack Pearl Harbor.
- ▶ The US Constitutional Convention fails, proving that republics cannot work on a large scale.
- ▶ Churchill dies in NYC in 1931 in a taxi accident (which almost happened), and England falls in WW2.
- ▶ The AIDS virus is tweaked to become more communicable.
- ▶ Socrates dies (where he almost did) at the battle of Delium in 424 BCE, and never becomes responsible for so much intellectual development. The West remains a backwater throughout history.
- ▶ Stanislav Petrov passes on the nuclear launch warning in 1983. This would have been bad.
- ▶ The Apostle Paul dies in his shipwreck, and Christianity never becomes a world religion.
- ▶ Turks win the Battle of Lepanto and dominate the Mediterranean.
- ▶ Darwin never goes on the *Beagle* and doesn't codify evolution. Religion dominates all views of science and history.
- ▶ Trofim Lysenko is dismissed by the USSR, and they have effective agricultural techniques and compete better with the West.
- ▶ Copernicus becomes a bishop and never publishes his work on the solar system.
- ▶ The Marshal Plan after WWII is blocked so that Europe continues the retributive cycle of warfare.
- ▶ Shakespeare never writes his plays, or they are destroyed.
- ▶ Ezeru first frame Lee Harvey Oswald as a pawn of the Russians, thus setting the US up for war after JFK's assassination, then go back and cancel Prohibition — assuring that he never becomes president in the first place (since the Kennedy fortune was reputedly built by bootlegging).
- ▶ Edison wins the power war against Tesla, and the world uses DC current. Battery technology is vastly improved.
- ▶ TimeWatch has been cloning vital historical figures, replacing them every time a well-meaning time traveler assassinates the real one. Unfortunately, the cloning facility is penetrated, and several iterations of cloned Genghis Khan (or another warlord) escape out into the time stream.
- ▶ The British win the Revolutionary War, Victoria inherits an empire that includes all of North America, and the sun never does set on it.
- ▶ The South wins the Civil War, and an alliance of slave states including Brazil and China join with America in future conflicts.
- ▶ Penicillin is never discovered; human population remains beneath a billion by 2000 CE.
- ▶ Europeans are wiped out by disease (or Mongols); Native Americans and Asians rule North America.
- ▶ A time traveler has become a world-famous superhero.
- ▶ TimeWatch's efforts cause temporal rifts to randomly open all the time.
- ▶ The other side wins the war (WWII, WWI, American Revolution, Russian Revolution, etc.).
- ▶ Neanderthals are the dominant hominids. *Homo sapiens* died out.
- ▶ George Washington takes the crown. USA and most of the world are run by monarchies.
- ▶ Napoleon defeats Russia in 1812.
- ▶ The Roman Empire did not collapse, and continues to dominate the world for millennia.
- ▶ Rome is conquered during the Punic Wars, leading to Greek civilization flourishing.
- ▶ Islam conquers Medieval Europe (the Caliphate).
- ▶ The Aztecs beat back Cortés and the Spanish.
- ▶ Alexander dies at the Granicus river, and his conquest of Persia dies with him.
- ▶ Alexander lives, settles his conquered lands, and ushers in a world of pure reason and enlightenment.
- ▶ Mob bosses rule America.
- ▶ Humans never discovered agriculture. A small population lives from hunting and gathering.
- ▶ The Yellowstone supervolcano goes off and wipes out North America (harming the rest of the world too).
- ▶ The last Ice Age doesn't end. Earth is becoming a snowball.
- ▶ Time travelers accidentally spread a horrible plague throughout every era they travel to.
- ▶ Black Death never comes to Europe or triggers industrial revolution.
- ▶ A larger asteroid hits the newly forming Earth, creating two roughly equal planetoids orbiting each other as they circle the sun. There are 80-meter tides, and life develops independently on each planetoid.
- ▶ Russia reaches the moon first, but America follows closely behind. Each builds a base on the moon, and the space race extends into the solar system and beyond beginning in the 1960s.
- ▶ The Chinese do not develop gunpowder. There are no firearms in the world.
- ▶ The Chinese use gunpowder for weapons and take over Eurasia in the Middle Ages.
- ▶ Asoka lives to an old age and creates a culture of peace and learning unrivaled in the ancient world. Alexander travels to South Asia to learn, not to conquer.
- ▶ The Koreans are not stopped by tsunamis, and they invade Japan before it becomes a nation of its own.

- ▶ The Hikei/Taira win the war over the Genji/Minamoto, and samurai culture dies an early death never to reappear.
- ▶ The Han dynasty does not go into decline in the early 3rd century. The bureaucracy develops a means of continuity and efficiency that allows them to methodically absorb all of Eurasia.
- ▶ Simón Bolívar succeeds in creating the United States of South America.
- ▶ China establishes a permanent navy and turns its attention east and colonizes North America in the 13th century.
- ▶ Darius succeeds in conquering Greece and Europe.
- ▶ Shamanism becomes a major world “religion” with followers equal to Christianity and Islam.
- ▶ Bantu kingdoms unite all of Southern and Central Africa, creating another major world power.
- ▶ The Mongols continue advancing into Europe when Ögedei, the Khan of Khans, dies in 1241, before the Europeans have a chance to defend themselves, and sweep across the continent, destroying the medieval world.



CHAPTER TEN: TIME SEEDS

Below are inspirational ideas or “seeds” about ways in which history might be changed and require some TimeWatch fixing.

Each seed starts with a **Hook**, to give you an idea what it’s all about, and then walks you through the **True History**, the history TimeWatch needs to maintain. Then comes the **Alternate History**, the history that has been changed somehow, with the impacts of that change. In some cases the agent responsible for the change is specifically called out; in some cases this is left for you to decide. **The Mission** section outlines how TimeWatch Agents will get involved, and give some idea as to the course of the adventure. Finally, a set of **Research** references give you a starting point to look up details.

ANTISOCIAL DARWINISM

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: Instead of waiting until the end of his life, Charles Darwin publishes *The Origin of Species* in 1839, sparking off the idea of eugenics half a century earlier, and thus China ends up ruling most of Africa.

True History: Although Charles Darwin had conceptualized the basic mechanism of natural selection as early as 1838, he did not publish *On the Origin of Species* until 1859. Only when Alfred Russel Wallace duplicated much of Darwin’s research and reasoning, threatening to beat Darwin to the punch, did Darwin shift into high gear on his “big book.”

Its publication electrified Darwin’s cousin, Francis Galton, who published a letter in the 1880s proposing that enforced emigration of Chinese to Africa would result in the eventual extinction of native Africans, who Galton judged as deeply inferior. The letter sparked no action.

Alternate History: Darwin’s grandfather Erasmus Darwin emigrates to America in 1749 after his tract *Zoonomia* arouses fierce condemnation in Britain, and thus his grandson Charles grows up in a “hustling” America and publishes his theory much earlier. Both it and Galton’s “Africa for the Chinese” letter are published prior to the First Opium War and the subsequent Taiping Rebellion.

The leader of the Taiping, Hong Xiuquan, begins to study with an American missionary. He hears of Galton’s idea, and



Stuck in an alternate history? When in doubt, Research.

instead of conquering China, he inspires his followers to establish a new Heavenly Kingdom in Africa.

By 1900 the world is dramatically different from today. The Qing dynasty, not having faced the disastrous Taiping Rebellion, remains strong and has modernized more quickly, becoming a full partner in global affairs as it attempts to manage and influence the breakaway Taiping Africa state. China attended the Berlin Conference. When World War I erupted it truly consumed the globe in catastrophe, ending in nuclear destruction as accelerated competition produces the bomb decades earlier.

The Mission: Agents are sent to discover why Shanghai was destroyed in an atomic explosion in the 1930s. They will have to negotiate their way through a war-torn world to discover that the Taipings simply left China instead of causing the deaths of 70 million Chinese. They will then try to relax Charles Darwin so he doesn't publish his great work until much later.

It's possible that a futuristic Chinese time traveler was the person who convinced Erasmus Darwin to emigrate to America in 1749. If so, preventing that conversation should set the world back to rights... assuming that Chinese commandos from the future aren't now established in that time period, guarding Erasmus so that he won't be influenced by any other time travelers.

Research: "Taiping Rebellion", "Francis Galton", "Charles Darwin"

ASSYRIA TRIUMPHANT

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: In 853 BCE in northern Syria, at the Orontes River, the Assyrians somehow win the Battle of Qarqar. The victory of King Shalmaneser III over an alliance of 11 kings ends up changing the course of empires and destroying advances such as the alphabet and monotheism.

True History: The Assyrian empire specialized in total warfare. Defeated cities were leveled, and defeated nations were ethnically cleansed and resettled with Assyrian colonists. With its iron-wielding armies and metal-shod chariots invincible in the field, Assyria dominated every land to its north, east, and south. King Shalmaneser III turned west in 857 BCE to conquer Syria. King Ben-hadad II of Syria called together allies from Asia Minor, Israel, and Phoenicia to stop the Assyrians at the crossing of the Orontes River at Qarqar. The resulting battle had a larger number of combatants than any previous engagement in recorded history, and is where the Arabs first enter the historical record.

Alternate History: Time travelers interfere in a way that allows the Assyrians to triumph at the Battle of Qarqar. By sowing dissension in the anti-Assyrian alliance of 11 different kings, and by providing King Shalmaneser III's troops with anachronistic weapons such as poison gas, Greek fire, and death rays, the Assyrians defeat some 60,000 soldiers and go on to conquer Syria easily. Assyria establishes permanent colonies on the Mediterranean and vastly strengthens the empire. Consequences of this might include Shalmaneser taking revenge on his opponents, utterly destroying Israel and Phoenicia and incidentally aborting the invention of the alphabet; and Assyria sacking Jerusalem and destroying the Kingdom of Judah (as it would destroy Israel in our history), incidentally ending Judaism and monotheism. Its flank secure, Assyria moves into Asia Minor, reaching the weak Greek city-states just in time to eradicate the beginnings of science, democracy, and coined money.

The Mission: History begins to unravel as massive cultural advances disappear, creating a more barbaric and almost unrecognizable modern world full of polytheist cultures that

populate the Middle East and portions of Europe. With both Judaism and Christianity removed, Agents are sent back to Jerusalem in 1 CE to get their bearings and work their way backwards until they find the original problem. The mission climax comes at the Battle of Qarqar, where Agents must subvert and sabotage the meddlers' attempts to help Assyria win.

Research: "Battle of Qarqar", "Assyria (Neo-Assyrian Empire)"

AUKISI KONGO!

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: A great central African power arises in the 17th century, limiting the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the partition of Africa, and the subsequent history of everything.

True History: The Kingdom of Kongo was the largest, most powerful state in West Africa during the 15th to 17th centuries. Converted to Christianity in 1485, Aukisi Kongo ("Holy Kongo") grew rich on trade in gold, ivory, and slaves captured in its expansionistic wars. However, Kongo refused to allow Portuguese slavers to operate in its dominions, causing friction between the kingdom and the Portuguese colony of Angola to its south. In 1624, King Pedro II of Kongo allied with the Dutch to finally drive the Portuguese out of West Africa, but the king died before the attack could take place, and his successor proved less eager to get rid of the Portuguese. Later efforts foundered as the Portuguese had become too well established. Kongo finally invaded Angola on its own in 1665, but was roundly defeated and plunged into a civil war that left the coast clear for European colonization.

Alternate History: Pedro is kept alive in 1624 by interfering, nationalistic Congolese time travelers who hope to improve African prominence with modern medicine. The Kingdom of Kongo participates in that year's attack on Angola, and the Portuguese are driven from Africa, taking with them the most profitable form of the slave trade.

The Kongo remain equal partners in the development of West Africa, sending delegations to Europe and continuing to expand their own territory. By the 19th century they are only one of several African nations able to stand as equal partners with European nations, and resist the efforts to colonize and conquer. With the discovery of oil and other strategic mineral reserves, Kongo becomes a major player on the world scene.

The Berlin Conference of 1884, the "partition of Africa," never happens, and the frantic escalation of power that leads to the First World War is muted. European powers never acquire the dominance of our timeline and instead become the battleground for the 20th-century conflicts between Africa and North America, both of whom see themselves as the true inheritors of the Enlightenment, the paragons of modernity.

These battles eventually culminate in a destructive world war in which atomic weapons destroy most of Europe.

The Mission: When nuclear destruction is detected in Europe in the 1950s, Agents are dispatched to understand what's happened. They find African armies squaring off against Americans on a war-ravaged Europe. Their investigations lead

to the rise of the Kongo and the survival of King Pedro.

They will have to make sure the king dies, or at least fails to participate in the 1624 attack on Angola, in order to keep the horrors of the slave trade alive. Or maybe they won't, leading to other important ethical (and bureaucratic) questions that TimeWatch will want answered.

Research: “Kingdom of Kongo”, “Berlin Conference”, “Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade”

AXIS INDIA

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: Sikh victory over the British in 1845 leads to a dramatically different global arrangement and outcome to World War II.

True History: In the 1840s, the East India Company fought a war against the Sikh rulers of the Punjab, whose defeat put an end to the largest, most effective military power in Northern India. This paved the way for the unification of India under British rule.

But this war was nearly lost by the British at a town called Ferozeshah. Only the failure of a Sikh general named Tej Singh turned possible British annihilation into victory. Singh arrived late to the battle and instead of immediately overwhelming the British with his superior forces, withdrew and allowed the British to regroup and entrench. It is rumored that Tej Singh was turned by British agents to surrender the battle, and thus leave his nation prostrate before the foreign invaders.

Alternate History: Tej Singh is not tempted to betray his country (or is perhaps replaced by a shape-shifting antagonist), and he attacks on the second day of the battle of Ferozeshah instead of holding back and allowing the British time to regroup and defend their positions. The British units are wiped out, and the resulting momentum raises up similar efforts across the country. India, instead of being the crown jewel of the British Empire, becomes a costly and bloody hellhole that cripples Britain, leaving her unable to manage other assets competently.

After the First World War Britain is even less able to oversee her possessions and India falls into chaos, beset with guerilla forces and anti-British violence. Britain is unable to prosecute the Second World War effectively, and surrenders to the Germans, giving up Egypt and Iraq to fascist forces.

India, although differently configured than in our history, emerges as a post-WWII power and major trade partner for the US. They enter into a major war with China, which escalates into a full-blown nuclear holocaust.

The Mission: Agents are sent to discover why nuclear war happened on such a scale at the end of the 20th century. They find a world run by fascists, where the Nazis never lost and the great battles are being fought in Asia rather than Europe. They must discover that the battle of Ferozeshah turned out differently, and find a way to restore that outcome.

Research: “Ferozeshah”, “Punjab,” “First Anglo-Sikh War”

BATTLE OF KADESH

Time Seed by Douglas Haxton

Hook: Egypt and the Hittite Empire clash in a massive battle that ends with a decisive Egyptian victory, giving Ramesses II great leverage in conquering the ancient world.

True History: The Battle of Kadesh is the largest known battle fought in the Near East in the second millennium BCE, and it's the first battle that modern history has a detailed account of. The Hittite King Muwatallis led a force of 37,000 infantry and 2,500 chariots into Syria, establishing itself near Kadesh. Ramesses II marched northward with 18,000 infantry and 2,000 chariots. Ramesses learned of a Hittite ambush just a little bit too late, losing most of his Ra unit and sending his camp into chaos. The actual battle turned out to be indecisive; both sides declared victory, withdrew, and entered a generation of tense standoff. This battle resulted in the Egyptians and Hittites sharing control of Syria-Palestine, and in keeping Assyria and other Mesopotamian countries out of the area.

Alternate History: A minor bit of time traveler interference assures that Ramesses learns about the ambush from two captured spies earlier than he did in true history; perhaps the spies were captured a day earlier, or perhaps the torture is more effective. Regardless, Ramesses does not go into the battle tricked into thinking that the Hittites are camped kilometers away from their true position. Instead of splitting his troops, three of his four units maneuver while the fourth unit distracts Hittite spies, and the larger Hittite army is crushed. It doesn't hurt that Ramesses II gets superb military tactical advice that day from a local of Kadesh, a man that Ramesses immediately had elevated to be a constant military adviser.

With the Hittite king captured, Ramesses uses the leverage to conquer or ally with the leading Mesopotamian powers such as Assyria and Babylonia. He conquers northwards into the Hittite Empire, aided by his new and brilliant military adviser. Egyptian influence grows, and Ramesses' armies slowly conquer a great deal of the ancient world. The military training and traditions passed down from this army and adviser influence Egypt for generations to come, allowing them to resist Nubian, Assyrian, and Persian attacks on their country for the next 500 years.

The Mission: The Egyptian-Hittite peace treaty — the earliest written international peace treaty known — vanishes from existence, and a TimeWatch visit to 1259 BCE reveals that there was no need for the treaty, because the Egyptians had thoroughly defeated the Hittites. The real question here is the military adviser. Perhaps he is a contemporary or future military general with a brilliant tactical sense who decided to try and change history; perhaps he is a socially awkward gamer who gained access to a time machine and decided that real troops were more fun than miniatures on a table. Regardless, he'll have taken steps to keep himself protected from ambush.

Research: “Battle of Kadesh”, “1270s BC”, “Egyptian-Hittite peace treaty”

CARTHAGE TRIUMPHANT

Time Seed by Ciaran Conliffe

Hook: In order to engineer a future where megacorporations hold sway, illegal corporate time travelers trigger the 165 CE Antonine Plague three hundred years early. It sweeps through the Roman military and causes Carthage to win the Second Punic War instead.

True History: The Antonine Plague of 165–180 CE was a smallpox or measles pandemic brought back to the Roman Empire by troops returning from the Near East, first appearing during the Roman siege of Seleucia in the winter of 165–166. Total deaths are estimated at 5 million, and it ravaged and greatly weakened the Roman armies.

Also relevant, Hannibal and his Carthaginian army fought the Romans for 16 years during the Second Punic War (218–201 BCE), running rampant across Italy but lacking the reinforcements and siege engines needed to defeat and destroy Rome.

Alternate History: The Roman Republic was a huge influence on the emerging USA; their ideals of democracy helped to lay the foundation of the state. The Carthaginian Empire was more capitalistic in outlook, with their highly oligarchic society. When a late 22nd-century megacorporation decides to use access to time travel technology and engineer a controlled “paradise” where the nation is fully controlled by cyberpunk megacorps, the corporation’s historians and social engineers agree that using Carthage instead of Rome could set the standard for later governments to emulate. The solution? Make sure that Carthage wins the Punic Wars.

They decide that the most efficient means for doing so is to weaken Rome at a time when Hannibal can take best advantage of the weakness. Fully immunized corporate scientists and their bodyguards swing into Antonine Rome, take samples of the plague, and then time travel back to 217 BCE. Infecting Rome and the Roman armies is child’s play; after that, it’s just a matter of waiting for the sickness to spread and for Hannibal to take advantage of the opportunity. A surreptitious role as one of his advisers helps make sure that occurs, particularly when the scientists make sure that Hannibal and his troops are properly inoculated.

The city of Rome is conquered by 215 BCE, rebuilt and repopulated by Carthaginians whose culture spreads throughout their growing empire. The greater focus on mercantile oligarchies results in the growth of concentrated power within North America when the US is founded, and by the mid-21st century the world has changed to one of cyberpunk, corporate dystopia. Riding high in this new world, effectively controlling the North American continent, is the megacorp who put the initial plan into action.

The Mission: Agents are informed that world culture has been swept away, and are sent to New Phoenecia (stretching hundreds of kilometers along the United States’ Eastern seaboard) in order to investigate what happened. This dystopia leads them to understand that Rome fell early, and they can work their way back from there. This is a dangerous mission; corporate enforcers with chronal technology have trillions invested in making sure their plan doesn’t go awry.

Research: “Punic Wars”, “Fall of Carthage”, “Hannibal”, “Antonine Plague”

CHRISTOPHER WHO?

Time Seed by Kim Grønbeek

Hook: Viking society survives in America, leading to very different outcomes for Native Americans and Western European explorers.

True History: Norse colonization reached North America as early as the 10th-century CE. Settlements in Greenland lasted as long as 500 years, but the small colonies on continental North America never became permanent. Additional expeditions may have arrived to collect timber, but that was the extent of it. The initial expedition to North America was led by Leif Eiriksson, whose father Erik the Red was injured in a riding accident and forced to stay behind in Greenland. It’s possible that had Eiriksson been supported by his father, the colonies might have prospered.

Alternate History: Nationalistic Danish time travelers from the 23rd century decide to take history into their own hands. A series of trips into the past puts them in touch with Erik the Red and his children. Posing as a merchant named Bjarni Herjólfsson, a time traveler informs the family of the existence of North America and counsels that traveling south along the coast leads to more hospitable climes. They are doubtful, to say the least, but Leif follows the route that “Bjarni” gives him and arrives in Newfoundland in 1001. He is joined by his father Erik; another time traveler’s warning about not riding horses near wet rocks lets him avoid injury and lead the expedition.

Heading south from Newfoundland, Erik and his family decide that these new lands are worthy of being settled. They send quiet word to their friends and families back in Iceland, who further pass word east to the Scandinavian mainland. By 1020 colonists are founding settlements up and down the Eastern seaboard of North America. Their contact with the natives (called Skraelings) is generally hostile, but European diseases carried by the Norse end up weakening the natives long enough for the emigrating Norse to become established. Over the following four centuries the Norse spread south and west, intermarrying with or conquering Skraeling populations and engaging in brisk trade from Newfoundland to the Carolinas.

During this time the North American Norse colonists lose touch with Greenland, Iceland, and Europe. They believe the original sagas to be myths, a belief encouraged by the Danish time travelers (now considered to be the Norse gods incarnate) who reappear regularly to teach, cajole, and counsel. Aided by the Danish time travelers, the cleverest Norse children are trained in engineering techniques and modern science. The result is a warlike, steampunk society that is poised to crush Western European settlers when they arrive centuries later, in 1492.

The arrival of Western European explorers shows the American Norse that their legends of an ancestral homeland are far from a myth, and that the foreign warriors are weak.

Norse technology and skill in battle is superior now to other contemporary technology, and — like the reavers of the past — they decide to bring war to Western Europe and reclaim their ancestral home in the name of their old gods.

The Mission: TimeWatch is alerted when early 16th-century reports start coming in of technologically advanced Vikings invading Iceland, Britain, France, and Spain. Agents are dispatched to western Spain in the year 1502, where they witness the carnage firsthand. Whether investigating the foreigners' myths or working their own way backwards through history, the Agents must then determine the root cause and stop the Danish time travelers who set Erik and Leif on their new path.

Research: "Norse colonization of the Americas"

DEAD MAN'S HAND

Time Seed by Kyle Hickok

Hook: In arresting a chrontal fugitive during the 21st century, Agents accidentally save the life of Wild Bill Hickok back in 1876.

True History: On August 2, 1876, 39-year-old gunfighter and gambler Wild Bill Hickok was playing poker in Nuttal & Mann's saloon in Deadwood, Dakota Territory, when he was shot in the head from behind and killed by Jack "Crooked Nose Jack" McCall. Hickok normally sat with his back to the wall, but another player named Charles Rich had gotten there first and twice declined to change seats.

Alternate History: Charles Rich is no ordinary gambler, nor is that his real name. Chuck Bellican is the least appreciated kind of time tourist, a 22nd-century actor and compulsive gambler who used his trust fund to buy a black market time machine. He time travels to famous historical gambling events, then bets on games where he already knows the outcome. This becomes problematic when he gets greedy, and his string of successes displaces the people who actually should have won.

TimeWatch becomes aware of him when a British man named Mick Gibbs wagers 30 pence on a 2001 parlay bet, wagering that he would correctly pick 15 consecutive football victories at odds of 1,666,666 to 1. Gibbs won and took home £500,000. Bellican time travels in and joins in on the action, wagering £10 on the same bet. Agents are sent to pick him up.

What the Agents don't realize is that without interference, six months hence Bellican would be disguised as Charles Rich in a Deadwood saloon when Hickok walks in the door. Once he's arrested or killed by TimeWatch Agents, or if Bellican successfully flees from the arrest attempt, Hickok survives and history changes. He strikes it rich in the South Dakota gold fields, making his fortune and eventually becoming governor of South Dakota when it becomes a state in 1889.

Agents have several choices. Fake Hickok's death and recruit him as a TimeWatch agent? Impersonate Charles Rich themselves? Let Bellican go? True history evidence suggests the former; when Hickok's corpse was disinterred in 1879, his flesh had reportedly absorbed calcium carbonate from the nearby soil and petrified, possibly a sign of an artificial corpse.

The Mission: Originally dispatched to arrest Bellican before he can place the winning parlay bet in 2001, the Agents find him to be a charming, entertaining sociopath with remarkable abilities of mimicry and Disguise. It isn't until after Bellican is arrested that they feel a wave of paradox sweep over them. Research or History (Contemporary) reveals that Hickok wasn't shot down, and it's up to the Agents to put this together.

TimeWatch won't object to leaving Hickok alive, faking his death, and recruiting him to the service. If so, the Agents will need a plan for doing so that won't trigger additional paradox.

Research: "Wild Bill Hickok", "biggest gambling jackpots in history", "biggest winning sports picks in history"

DINOSAUR'S ENVOY

Time Seed by Jonathan M. Thompson

Hook: Time travelers stumble onto an alternate time stream where dinosaurs rule the world from within fantastic domed cities. They aren't aware of sophosaurs, however, and Agents are sent to rescue the stranded time travelers before they get devoured — and to rescue them in a diplomatic manner that doesn't trigger an invasion.

True History: The Chicxulub extinction event resulted from a 10-kilometer-wide asteroid or comet striking Earth, releasing a billion times more energy than the A-bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Mass extinction followed. The only survivors among the dinosaurs were the birds, and the extinction gave early mammals a chance to evolve and thrive.

Alternate History: The killer asteroid misses, and the dinosaurs thrive. Mammals (such as they are) make for delicious food sources, and higher mammals never evolve. The dinosaurs grow in intelligence over millions of years and eventually develop tools, technology, and higher thinking; with heated domes to survive ice ages and remarkable nonhuman technology, the dinosaurs in this alternate time stream grow to be masters of their world and eventually of space itself.

And then, the *very* lost time tourists from our time stream show up. Stumbling into the dinosaur's world and embarrassing themselves in a hundred different ways, they make the mistake of revealing the existence of our own world, as well as the fact that dinosaurs are long extinct in our own. The saurians hunt down and devour most of the humans; finding them delicious, and having overeaten most of the fun-to-hunt prey in their own time, the dinosaurs vow to use their technology to hunt down humans in other timelines and punish them for their "otherness." One tourist manages to escape and bring back the story to our world in the mid-20th century, at which point he is locked up for being insane.

The Mission: The Agents are sent to question the poor beleaguered time tourist in his 1950s asylum. If his story carries weight, the Agents are instructed to steal back his time machine (currently claimed by the government), use his coordinates to find the alternate timeline, then go serve as diplomats and emissaries of the human race. Their job? Befriend the dinosaurs and prevent the murder of the other

time tourists. Most importantly, however, the Agents are to make sure that these dinosaurs don't learn of and befriend the sophosaurs — or vice versa. Such an alliance could spell doom for humanity. A shame, then, that sophosaur spies are hot on their heels...

Research: “Dinotopia”, perhaps; this is pure imaginary alt-history and negotiation, with no modern history to interfere

EMPIRE OF THE MOUSE

Time Seed by Christopher Noble

Hook: In 1954, Walt Disney stumbles through an actual time portal when building Disneyland's Tomorrowland and lands in 1599 Holland. He insinuates himself into the power structure and becomes the head of the Dutch East India Company, renaming it something a little bit more personal.

True History: Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC), named the United East Indian Company and referred to as the Dutch East India Company by the British, was chartered in 1602 with a 21-year monopoly on Dutch spice trading. The first multinational corporation in the world and the first company to issue stock, it had immense power. The company could (and did) found colonies, raise armies, build forts, wage war, mint currency, negotiate treaties, and imprison and execute prisoners. In the 17th and 18th centuries almost 5000 ships moved more than 2.5 million tons of Asian trade goods, and the company employed almost a million Europeans. The Dutch East India Company largely displaced the Portuguese from the spice trade, and was responsible for mapping most of Australia's coast.

The VOC went bankrupt and was disbanded in 1800. Its territories became the Dutch East Indies, and then the Republic of Indonesia in the 20th century. For two centuries, however, they arguably maintained the most important and influential trading company in the world.

Alternate History: A sloppy group of time tourists leave their time tunnel open when investigating the early Disneyland, and one late night in 1954, a curious and insomniac Walt Disney stumbles through the tunnel while thinking he is inspecting a new exhibit. Disney is trapped in 1599 Holland, unable to return, and it doesn't take him long to realize that he has become the living embodiment of Tomorrowland. There are almost four centuries of history between himself and his home, and it is unlikely that there will be any way to return. Clearly, the solution is to make the best of it — and if that means making such a big splash that people in the future notice and come back to rescue him, all the better. Walt gives serious thought to not changing history at all, and firmly rejects the idea. He is a businessperson and an entertainer, a promoter who could entrance an audience. He is a man who can change the world. If he can't do so in the 20th century, then he is going to do so in the 17th century, and damn the consequences.

Disney spends a few years learning Dutch and establishing himself as a man of means and capabilities within Dutch society; his general knowledge of 20th century of science and technology, while far from exhaustive, is enough to get him noticed by the right people in industry and royalty. His

ability to entertain and amuse with animation make him a favorite of 16-year-old Frederick Henry of Orange-Nassau, stadtholder of Holland, and his reputation and political power quickly spread.

Disney himself engineers the formation of the Dutch East India Company, and handpicks the Heeren XVII (Lords Seventeen) who run it. He names it differently, however; insisting the name be English, he names it the Dutch India Spice and Near Eastern Yachting Corporation. Every single ship — every one of the 1500 trading ships that plies the East Indies' waters for the next two centuries — sports a particularly memorable cartoon-mouse-head-shaped figurehead, and the ships are crewed with company soldiers whose military uniforms follow the same theme.

Disney and his trading corporation remake the world. The accidental time traveler's historical and geographical knowledge help the corporation be even more profitable than it would have been regardless. Disney takes this money and develops motion picture technology in the early 1600s, advancing science along with animation.

By the time Disney dies in 1620, he has established leadership that helps the DISNEY Corporation colonize and trade with vast swathes of the world. He is buried in Rotterdam in a huge tomb overlooking the harbor. His vast wealth pays for a huge mouse-shaped stone colossus to stand above the harbor, forever gazing with carved cartoon eyes at an ocean overrun with the trading yachts of an unending spice empire.

Hundreds of years hence, research funds started by Disney's bequests uncover technology that lead to the first time travel.

The Mission: The Agents are assigned to prevent a time travel-assisted 1839 assassination attempt against James Brooke, the White Rajah of Sarawak, that is to be attempted while Brooke helps crush a rebellion against the sultan of Brunei. It's during that altercation, in the middle of a sea battle, that history ripples around the Agents and the ships change. Brooke's own boat is suddenly sporting a carved wooden figurehead of a certain cartoon mouse. The Agents will undoubtedly decide to investigate why.

Unfortunately, that initial time tunnel was left open by a group of time tourists who were doing their own historical mission within Disneyland, something involving setting the stage for the audio-animatronic birds of the 1963 Enchanted Tiki Room exhibition, and those time travelers will react with force if anyone tries to shut it down prematurely; doing so would strand the tourists in the mid-20th century. The Agents will need to uncover Disney's new empire, talk to him in order to trace back what happened, and prevent him from blundering into the past, all while dealing with the time tourists and *their* secret mission at Disneyland.

Research: “Dutch East India Company”, “Walt Disney”, “James Brooke”

GOOD INTENTIONS

Time Seed by Jon Davidson

Hook: The Plague of Justinian was bubonic plague that killed 25 million people in the Byzantine Empire in 541–542 CE. Complications arise when social activists from the future come back to stop it.

True History: Occurring 600 years before the Black Death devastated Europe, the plague outbreak in Constantinople is believed to have originated in China and was transmitted from infected rats on grain boats arriving from Egypt. The epidemic began in the port of Pelusium, near Suez in Egypt. At its peak, the plague reportedly killed 5-10,000 people a day in Constantinople, and killed 25% of humans in the eastern Mediterranean.

Alternate History: Heaven's Respite is a group of early 22nd-century college students with high-minded ambitions, little forethought, and access to a one-way rogue time machine. The ten students decide that it is their destiny to save millions upon millions of people by eliminating one of the first great plagues. Their plan is to inoculate as many people around the docks of Constantinople as possible, slowing the plague from spreading quickly. If possible they intend to burn the ship itself, killing the rats before they reach shore. With only a one-way trip possible, they see themselves as martyrs doing a great and humane work.

Arriving a year and a half early, they establish themselves and learn the language. The inoculation program goes smoothly. They didn't health screen their own people, however, and two of the team accidentally transmit syphilis to locals. The disease spreads quickly near the docks, and incapacitated dock workers result in slowdowns when unloading cargo boats. This works in Heaven's Respite's favor, as this makes it easier for them to eliminate the plague before it spreads. Several of the ten-person team fall to violence or disease, but seven of them live out their lives knowing that they saved millions.

The lack of plague ripples forwards through time; Emperor Justinian's wars against the Vandals are fully funded by taxes, the reunification of the Western and Eastern Roman Empires lasts beyond the assault of the Lombards, and the Anglo-Saxon conquest of England falters. Eventually, the larger population of the Byzantine Empire allows them to conquer the Turks in 1453.

The Mission: Higher-than-expected Byzantine populations set off TimeWatch's atmospheric alarms, and the Agents are dispatched to 10th-century Constantinople to find out why. History (Ancient) or Medical Expertise indicates that the Plague of Justinian never occurred. It isn't difficult to deal with the inoculations, but the syphilis will also have to be addressed in order to ensure that the grain ship is unloaded on time.

If the Agents meet the students years after they arrived, they will need to be careful not to kill them when their initial arrival is intercepted. This may be difficult; expecting trouble, the students arrived in Pelusium armed, and not all are prone to talk first before resorting to violence.

Research: "Plague of Justinian", "Byzantine Emperor"

HAPSBURG JETS!

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: The great philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein invents jet aircraft prior to World War I, changing the rest of the 20th century. A non-Nazi Germany leads the world into space by 2000.

True History: In 1904, the Romanian engineer Henri Coandă entered the Technische Hochschule in Charlottenburg, Berlin, where he became interested in aeronautical engineering. After graduating in 1906, he moved on to aeronautical institutes in Belgium (where he met the Italian aircraft designer Caproni) and in Paris, where in 1910 he built either a working prototype or an actual whole-body jet engine for a monoplane aircraft. Meanwhile, the heir to the second-largest fortune in Austria-Hungary, Ludwig Wittgenstein, enrolled at the Technische Hochschule in 1906 and was also bitten by the aeronautical bug. After graduating in 1908, he entered university in Manchester, where he designed (and in 1911 patented) an aircraft propeller driven by small jets. Wittgenstein gave away his fortune, went on to revolutionize philosophy, and never returned to aeronautical engineering.

Alternate History: Wittgenstein and Coandă are introduced to each other in 1906, and by working together develop working jet aircraft by 1914. This gives the Central Powers such a tremendous advantage that WWI is scarcely even a contest. Without the debilitating effects of the war, the Spanish influenza doesn't even rear its head.

Austria-Hungarian aeronautics run about 20 years ahead of our timeline, and Germany never suffers the terrible deprivations that lead to the National Socialist takeover (Adolf Hitler enjoys a modest career as a happy painter). Germans land on the moon in 1960, and world travel is easy and cheap by that time — which causes devastation as the Spanish flu finally does emerge, and spreads with terrifying rapidity.

A depopulated globe struggles into the 21st century amid chaos and turmoil.

The Mission: World population levels drop dramatically in the early 2000s, and Agents are dispatched to learn which of the likely suspects (AIDS, Ebola, zombie serum) are responsible, only to discover the Spanish flu is the culprit. Investigation will reveal the German global dominance, and thus to the curious "chance" meeting between two brilliant minds that never should have happened.

It turns out that a well-meaning but narcissistic engineering student took a time travel tour through a somewhat shady company, broke free of his group, and arranged for Wittgenstein and Coandă to meet, just so he could get a selfie of himself in front of his two favorite engineers. Through such small acts do hundreds of millions die.

Research: "1918 Flu Epidemic", "Wittgenstein", "Henri Coanda"

THE HERO ENGINE

Time Seed by Hanna Järvinen

Hook: A plague reduces the Greek slave population, causing Hero's aeolipile (steam engine) to catch on quickly. The industrial revolution occurs in ancient Greece during the first-century CE, boosting Greek military and intellectual development and changing the world dramatically.

True History: Hero of Alexandria (c. 10–c. 70 CE) was a Greek mathematician and engineer who lived in Roman Egypt. He is considered one of the greatest inventors in antiquity, and his work on automated devices might be the first formal research into cybernetics.

His aeolipile is the first recorded steam engine, created almost two thousand years prior to the industrial revolution. At the time it was relegated to the status of “temple wonder,” and was never harnessed for industrial use; why should it be, when the Greeks had so many slaves to do tasks for them? The majority of Athenian citizens had at least one slave, and slaves were the backbone of Greek agriculture, mining, and workshops.

Alternate History: Plague roars across ancient Greece and Rome during the 1st century, affecting laborers and the poor most keenly. A full half of all Greek slaves die in the plague, leaving those who survive short-handed to try and manage their empire without the help they have come to depend upon. Where does the plague come from? It could be deliberately set by a chronal terrorist who wishes to shape Greek society, or it could simply be a foolish accident. In the early days of time travel, tourists are sloppy and not every time traveler is inoculated and disease free.

Whatever the reason, the lack of slaves mean that Hero of Alexandria's labor-saving inventions are immediately recognized to have magnificent potential. The Hero engine is turned into a device that aids any number of tasks that were previously accomplished by brute force; manufacturing and agriculture particularly benefit. A generation later, Greece has steam-powered engines of war, including a weapon that can spew steam into the face of enemies and a steam-powered siege engine. While the industrial revolution that follows is slowed by a lack of advanced metallurgy, Greek culture — with a focus on intellectual, cultural, and philosophical sophistication — spreads across the ancient world. Christianity is swallowed up and subsumed by the new popularity of the Greek gods (and due to the decline of Roman culture and influence), and ancient steampunk technology actually comes into existence.

The Mission: Roman-influenced architecture suddenly turns to Greek, Christianity disappears, cybernetics thrive, and humanity reaches the stars a thousand years before they should have; looks like something shifted. It won't take Agents long to identify Hero's engine as a prime candidate for change, but determining what caused the plague may be more challenging. Unfortunately, future cybernetic Greek soldiers who have mastered time travel may have a few things to say about any attempt to erase them from future history.

Research: “Hero of Alexandria”, “aeolipile”, “Greek slavery”

HOW NOT TO FALL OUT A WINDOW

Time Seed by Liam DiNapoli

Hook: A brutal 14th-century political assassination goes awry due to a technological anachronism, changing the course of Italian history.

True History: Joanna I (1328–1382) claimed the crowns of Jerusalem and Sicily and was queen of Naples from age 15 to her death at age 54. Her grandfather King Robert bypassed his nephews and declared her to be his successor, arranging her marriage to her cousin Andrew of Hungary. At the time they were married, Joanna was 5 and Andrew was 6. Andrew was designated Duke of Calabria, but Robert took steps to make sure that he would never rule, even in the event of Joanna's death.

Political power struggles broke out almost immediately with betrayals, maneuvering, bribes, and murders. (Be sure to look these up on the Internet; they're great fun to read, especially if you're a fan of shows like *Game of Thrones*.) While Joanna was crowned queen of Naples upon reaching majority in 1344, she opposed her husband's coronation and Andrew was excluded from the government.

But, emboldened by a ring his mother gave him that was supposed to protect him from death by blade or poison, Andrew agitated for true power. He made himself exceptionally unpopular amongst nobles when he freed the notorious Pipini brothers, imprisoned by King Robert for treason, murder, pillage, and rape. His mother managed to convince the pope that Andrew should be given greater power, and the nobles' hostility increased. A year after Joanna's coronation, on a hunting trip in Aversa, Andrew was set upon at night, strangled, and thrown out a window with a cord tied to his genitals. The ring did not appear to help much.

Joanna expressed a widow's dismay in public, but may have had a hand in her husband's murder, and this suspicion continued to taint and complicate her reign. Her following three marriages carried through a life of war, invasion, and political shenanigans — if you can call something “shenanigans” that leaves you assassinated, smothered between two feather mattresses.

Alternate History: The ring given to Andrew by his mother isn't just a handsome ring with a false fairy tale attached. Instead, it is a powerful protective technological anachronism left behind by a chronal anthropologist who really should have known better. Able to protect the body from piercing weapons and instantly denature poison, the ring also puts Andrew's body in a state of suspended animation unmistakable from death — not that that helps the indignity of the window-dangling.

Revived the next day while his body was taken away, Andrew understands that his miraculous resurrection could only be credited to God. He leverages this story and quickly becomes the most talked-about man in both Italy and Hungary. He is too politically important to publicly denounce, and those who do are decried as heretics. The pope declares Andrew's miracle to be a sign of God, suggests that he is a living saint, and crowns Andrew as a full king alongside Joanna. He and his

wife, reconciled and determined to rule together, extend their power throughout Italy.

They unify all of Italy in the late 14th century, leading to a great stability that profoundly changes European history. The Western Schism never divides the Catholic Church, and thus no Reformation occurs. The Catholic Church continues to unite Europe, keeping it internally focused, so that the great conquering expeditions never happen, and by the 20th century the world looks completely different than today, with power distributed across the continents.

The Mission: Agents are informed that the expected double election of Popes Urban VI and Clement VII has not happened, and they are sent to meet with a choral anthropologist in 1378 Naples who can explain what is happening. This researcher turns out to unknowingly be the same person who lost their protective ring 50 years prior (leaving it with Andrew's mother, Elizabeth of Poland), setting the event in motion. In order to uncover the mystery, the Agents will need to observe Andrew's attempted assassination, determine the origin of the ring, and work back to where it came from.

Research: "Joanna I of Naples", "Andrew Duke of Calabria", "Western Schism", "Elizabeth of Poland"

JAPAN STAYS OPEN

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: A Japan that never isolates itself instead creates an Asian power center that is able to match European power by the 1800s, turning Russia into the world's battleground in the 20th century.

True History: Until the imposition of the *sakoku* ("chained nation") policy in the 1630s, Japan was on its way to becoming a major "gunpowder" empire much like contemporary powers such as Sweden and France. Individual Japanese daimyo had more guns in their retinues than existed in the whole English army, and Japanese three-masted ships raided and traded all over the western Pacific. But such dangerous weapons, and outside sources of wealth, threatened to destabilize the Tokugawa shogunate. So the shoguns banned guns and closed Japan to outside trade except for a dribble through (Tokugawa-owned) Nagasaki. This isolation lasted for over 200 years.

One of the key influences on *sakoku* was the Shimabara Rebellion in 1637, spurred by the draconian taxation demands of Matsukura Shigemasa and his son, Katsuie. Matsukura Shigemasa died in 1630, assassinated in a hot spring. His son carried on with his draconian policies, and the rebellion erupted seven years later. As many of the rebelling peasants were Christians, the violence was considered to be religious in nature, and the Japanese rulers became determined to prevent foreign influences from poisoning their country.

Alternate History: Matsukura Shigemasa's death was supposed to have been a warning to his son, but the message never got through. If some time travelers interfere and make sure Katsuie understands that he needs to change his father's policies, the rebellion doesn't happen and the Tokugawa Shogunate doesn't isolate Japan.

An open Japan engages in diplomacy, warfare, and trade with other Asian powers, and over the subsequent 200 years the nations of Japan, Korea, China, the Philippines, and the Southeast Asian countries all drive each other to speed development and expand their global influence. Against their combined efforts the European nations are unable to maintain their global dominance.

The heartland of Asia, the Russian steppes, becomes the main arena of global conflict. Vast mechanized armies sweep across the continent in the early 20th century, as the conflict for oil becomes acute early on. Terrible devastation is unleashed as the world becomes engulfed in battle after battle. Mechanical battle machines styled in the Japanese aesthetic are common; if you want a world in which steampunk-style mechs tramp across the steppes by the mid-20th century, you could do worse.

The Mission: With many world cities in ruins by the year 2000, Agents must discover what caused the terrible war. Their investigation will lead to Tokugawa Japan, and the bitter choice that the suffering of the Shimabara peasants means a more peaceful world.

Research: "Sakoku", "Shimabara"

LA BELLE AMERIQUE

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: An America founded by the French provides for a notably different world.

True History: The French navigator and explorer Samuel de Champlain, searching for a hospitable site for a winter colony in 1606, sailed into what are now the Massachusetts harbors of Boston, Plymouth, and Chatham. The harbors were excellent, but skirmishes with the local Nauset people turned Champlain's ships back north. The French emphasis on transient fur-trading colonies over settlements, and the lure of Cartier's previous exploration of the St. Lawrence River, led Champlain to eventually found Quebec (1608) as the capital of New France.

Alternate History: For some reason (insert time traveling mischief-makers here), the Nauset people and the French get along, and Champlain stays in Massachusetts. Proven in our timeline to excel at relations with North American natives, Champlain builds thriving colonies and a New France that stretches from the St. Lawrence to Chesapeake Bay.

The English settlers are restricted to Virginia, and are eventually overwhelmed in later Anglo-French wars. With the great resources of America at his disposal, King Louis XIV is able to win the War of Spanish Succession and cement the Bourbon dynasty's control of Europe.

The French Revolution is never able to happen, and the world continues to be dominated by absolute monarchies.

The Mission: When the Declaration of Independence disappears, Agents sent to fix the issue find themselves in a strange French version of the modern world. They will have to go back into the very early days of American colonization and somehow scare Champlain out of Boston.

One possible reason for the change is a very embarrassed

chrono-anthropologist who has embedded herself in Champlain's expedition. Relying on her proven ability to stay unnoticed while she documents history, she's surprised when Champlain realizes that she can communicate with the Nauset, and her extremely reluctant diplomacy changes history. By the time she realizes what she's done, she's hoping to stay under the radar so that she isn't then fired from her job — a poor decision that lets the time change propagate forward.

Research: “Samuel Champlain”, “War of Spanish Succession”, “New France”

MAGICIAN'S GAMBIT

Time Seed by Michael Damecour

Hook: Thrown back in time by squabbling, competitive time travelers, a street magician ends up as the figure the English rally behind during the Hundred Years' War. His presence is enough to change the outcome of the conflict and have the English win the war over the French.

True History: The Hundred Years' War lasted from 1337 to 1453 between the English House of Plantagenet and the French House of Valois. When five generations of kings from two rival dynasties battle over who gets to rule the largest kingdom in Europe, all at the height of the age of chivalry, you know it's a notable war. These conflicts replaced feudal armies with professional troops, introduced new weapons and tactics, gave rise to British and French nationalism, reduced the influence of heavy cavalry, and led to standing armies — not to mention famines, plagues (France alone lost half its population during the war), and civil wars.

With Joan of Arc's appearance in 1429, the French spirit revived and the war began to go against the English. The Battle of Castillon (1453) was the last major battle in the war, more or less sealing a French victory and resulting in English people who owned property in France losing their possessions and holdings.

Alternate History: Somewhat echoing the plot of the movie *Trading Places*, an aristocratic married couple in 23rd-century France get into an argument about Joan of Arc and the Hundred Years' War. She maintains that if England had the morale-building equivalent of Joan, they'd have won the war instead; her wife instead maintains that that's ridiculous, and that adding a spiritual leader with no tactical skill to England would make no difference whatsoever in the conflict. They decide to test their theory. Buying time travel from an illicit time merchant, they go back to 20th-century London to find a con artist and street magician. They then fling him back into 1431 with a simple instruction: “If you make sure the English win this war, we'll rescue you.”

The magician is less than pleased.

Regardless, he's superb at street magic and public speaking. Using sleight of hand and other common tricks of the present, the magician ends up as a figure the English rally behind during the last few decades of the war. An entire nation rallies around him and the vision of divine mandate he promotes, and the rise in morale is enough to tip the outcome of the war over to the English from the French. This ripples forward to create a

super-powered nation of a unified France and England, one that vastly influences world politics for centuries to come.

In the future, the aristocrat pays off her wife with a single franc, and they abandon the magician in the past. They like this new history better, anyways.

The Mission: TimeWatch learns of a strong unified England and France when the Great War never develops into a global conflict. Research indicates that there's a new, iconic “handpicked by God” English analog to Joan of Arc that shouldn't be there; they may be surprised by his charming and sympathetic nature, however, or by the reason he first showed up in 15th-century England. TimeWatch can't simply kill or arrest the French aristocrats who started this, either, as they are both historically significant in the future; the Agents will need to find some other way to end the interference.

Research: “Hundred Years' War”, “Joan of Arc”

MUSCOVY DEFEATED

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: One of humanity's most important efforts was the exploration of space. The discoveries and inventions that came out of this great adventure advanced the human condition on all fronts. When it turns out that the Apollo landing never happens, TimeWatch Agents sent to discover why are entwined in Mongolian politics (again).

True History: Following the Mongol invasion of Russia in 1237–1240, every Russian state (except Novgorod) became a tributary of the Mongols' Golden Horde Khanate. Muscovy, a favored satellite, played the Mongols' divide-and-conquer policies well, becoming the most powerful Russian state over the next century. The Mongol general Mamai, needing to punish this over-proud vassal and resist his own rival Tokhtamish of the White Horde, decided to invade Russia alongside allies from Lithuania and the Russian state of Ryazan. Prince Dmitri of Muscovy (grand prince since 1363), builder of the Kremlin fortress in Moscow, forged a coalition of the other Russian states and successfully stopped the Mongols at Kulikovo Field on the east side of the Don River. Key to Dmitri's survival was a knight named Mikhail Brenok, who wore Dmitri's identifiable armor in the battle, drawing Mongol archery and keeping Dmitri alive at the expense of Brenok's life. Although Tokhtamish burned Moscow in 1382, he reconfirmed Dmitri as Grand Prince. When the city arose again Muscovy regained its primacy, and Mongol invincibility was no more.

This paved the way for Russian unification, the excesses of the Tsarist regime, and the eventual rise of Bolshevism, whose competition with American capitalism led to the “space race” of the mid-20th century.

Alternate History: The brave Mikhail Brenok is murdered just before the battle, and there is no one to wear Grand Prince Dmitri's armor. Dmitri is killed in the battle and the Khanate of the Golden Horde rules unchallenged across the steppes for centuries thereafter. When it eventually collapses in the 18th century, it produces a patchwork of fiefdoms and petty nations that cannot support a revolution on the scale

of the Bolsheviks, and Communism never appears a serious threat to the capitalist nations.

Russia, in this timeline, has only existed since the end of the Second World War, when Nazi invasion required a unified resistance, and is still beset by internal conflicts. Refugees flooding into Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe have destabilized all those regions, leaving America comfortably astride the world.

Without the threat of Communist domination, the American space effort never gets off the ground, and humanity never reaches the moon.

The Mission: Beginning in 1958 America to investigate the state of the space program, the Agents discover the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (the predecessor to NASA) even more anemic than it should be — nothing more than a think tank that occasionally provides much-derided “guidance” on possible extra-planetary efforts. NASA is supposed to be created on July 29, but without the “Sputnik Event” of the previous year, there is no perceived need.

Discovery that the USSR does not exist will lead the Agents into the past, and eventually they will find that the Battle of Kulikovo did not go as expected. Preserving Dmitri’s life in the battle will be necessary — as will defeating whoever it was that had Mikhail murdered.

Research: “Battle of Kulikovo”, “Golden Horde”, “National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics”

NO GEORGE WASHINGTON

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: Without its great general and first president, George Washington, the nascent United States remains a puppet state of Britain.

True History: George Washington has been described as the “indispensable man” for American independence. Even if another general could have won the war against Britain, no other man could have simultaneously resisted the temptation to dictatorship and held the infant republic together under an untested constitution.

But he very nearly followed a completely different life path. In 1746 he hoped to join the Royal Navy, a dream that was dashed when his mother refused to sign his warrant to make him a midshipman.

Meanwhile, Charles Lee had expected to find himself made commander in chief of the Revolutionary forces in America. He had abandoned a prominent military position in Britain and felt entitled to the position, but was generally considered to be slovenly in appearance and coarse in language. He was resentful of Washington receiving the position instead of himself. This rose to a head after the Battle of Monmouth, a battle in which Lee earned a court martial for retreating in violation of Washington’s orders.

Alternate History: Washington’s mother *does* sign the warrant, and George Washington has a well-regarded career in the Royal Navy as a loyal servant to His Majesty.

Thirty years later command of the Revolutionary forces

falls to the cowardly Charles Lee, who is easily suborned by British agents, and the Revolution dies in its earliest stages.

King George takes no further chances and only intensifies the subjugation of the colonies, which compels the desperate Americans to make deals with all of Britain’s enemies. North America becomes a ferocious battleground in which mutually suspicious puppet states skirmish and war constantly.

Native Americans are able to play the European powers against each other, and their confederacies grow into powerful nation-states in their own right. Eventually North America becomes a patchwork of tiny states and republics.

The Mission: Hollywood evaporates along with an enormous chunk of world cinema as California (never mind Los Angeles) simply never happens. Agents must untangle the mess of a balkanized North America and come face-to-face with a cheerful George Washington in order to convince him of his true destiny... or just make it happen to him anyway.

The villain here is likely Charles Lee, approached by a power-mad time traveler (perhaps in the role of the devil, giving rise to popular “be careful what you wish for” legends) who offers to change history for Lee so that Washington never becomes commander in chief.

Research: “George Washington”, “Charles Lee”

NO MAGNA CARTA

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: A weird, but subtle, shift in Shakespeare’s work reveals a much larger scheme.

True History: In 1214, at a town called Bouvines in northern France, King Philip II of France issued a stern defeat to a host of enemies, including King John of England. Weakened by this failure and in dire need of revenue, John faced an insurrection of barons upon his return. They forced him to sign a charter guaranteeing certain baronial and freemen’s rights in 1215, among them due process of law and speedy trial. Papal patronage allowed John to ignore the charter, and the rebellion continued.

John died suddenly during the insurrection, and the new child-king Henry III confirmed the original *magna carta libertatum* (“great charter of liberties”) in 1217 and periodically thereafter during his reign — usually when he needed to raise taxes. In 1297, Edward I reissued Magna Carta as a royal statute under his seal, embedding it in English law and thus eventually in American (and other) legal tradition.

Alternate History: During the battle at Bouvines, Philip was knocked from his horse in the early part of the fighting, but rallied and led his forces to victory.

But if time traveling assassins, intent on sabotaging the development of European democracy, kill Philip while he’s down, the battle goes very differently. This results in a triumph for John, who is strengthened by his valuable overseas possessions and returns home to stamp out the insurrection.

The Magna Carta is never developed, much less signed, and Britain remains a Catholic nation and an absolute monarchy until the 20th century. Europe remains mired in low-tech

autocracy and becomes a global backwater.

The Mission: TimeWatch is alerted when the works of William Shakespeare change subtly. His play *Henry VIII* now describes the king receiving his desired divorce from Catherine of Aragon, rather than being forced to defy papal authority. The Agents are dispatched to investigate Shakespeare, but it will take careful deduction to realize that England is still solidly Catholic, and that something much earlier has happened.

Research: “The Battle of Bouvines”, “Henry VIII”, “Magna Carta”

ROME FALLS EARLY

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: A pagan Europe conquers the world in the name of Wodan, because the Roman Republic collapsed before the empire got off the ground.

True History: After the death of the competent but cruel dictator Sulla in 78 BCE, everything continued to get worse for Rome. The general Sertorius led a rebellion in Hispania (80–72 BCE) that established Hispania as an independent province with its own senate. The Cilician pirates, who had strangled Mediterranean trade for a century, accelerated their depredations all along the Italian coasts and even held Julius Caesar for ransom. Spartacus’ slave revolt (73–71 BCE) unleashed an impossibly dangerous army in the heart of Italia itself. Rome itself roiled with faction wars, purges, and treason culminating in the conspiracy of Catiline (65 BCE) to overthrow the republic itself.

Despite all this, the efforts of Pompey, Julius Caesar, and Augustus Caesar pulled the Roman nation together and founded the great empire that would go on to spread Christianity and culture across Europe.

Alternate History: Time travelers intent on destroying Rome strike at a number of places in the time stream. They have Julius Caesar murdered by Cilician pirates in 75 BCE instead of ransomed, removing his genius from Rome’s arsenal. Three years later, in 72, they arrange for Sertorius to escape assassination so that he can arrange an alliance between Rome’s enemies, and then convince Spartacus to sack the city of Rome itself rather than head into the hills. These disasters combine to completely collapse the Roman nation.

European history develops in a completely different direction. The Gauls are able to resist Germanic incursions, and Christianity, neither persecuted nor supported by a massive empire, never attracts more than a few followers. The European states develop into pagan cultures, retaining their traditional beliefs through the centuries.

The Mission: Every image of Christ suddenly turns into an old one-eyed man with a couple of crows. TimeWatch knows what that means, and there’s no time to lose! Agents are dispatched to the early days of Christianity, where they find the Roman Empire has ceased to exist. With active and multiple time traveling opponents running about, the



Time seeds can be anywhere; for instance, there’s one particular street in Rhodes that never stops attracting chaos...

Agents will have their hands full trying to restore affairs in the Mediterranean.

For an enemy organization, consider one of the alternative groups on p. 240. It’s possible the enemy detests Rome — or is instead trying to promote the worship of Odin and the Norse pantheon, and destroying Rome with surgical strikes is the fastest way to do so.

Research: “Apostolic Age”, “Sertorius”, “Spartacus”, “Cilician Pirates”

SAVING BOTTICELLI

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: The infamous book burnings known as “The Bonfire of the Vanities” in 1490s Florence helpfully destroyed the only copy of the *Nekronomikon* and thus saved humanity from destruction by the Old Ones.

True History: The radical Dominican preacher Girolamo Savonarola gained control of the Florentine government in 1495 after the expulsion of the Medicis by the French invaders under Charles VIII. He celebrated this victory with a “Bonfire of the Vanities” (repeated in 1496 and 1497) in which the citizens of Florence burned sinful or pagan art, books, music, and other antiquities. Among his enthusiastic converts was the

artist Sandro Botticelli, who burned an unknown number of his own paintings. Eventually, the pope ordered Savonarola excommunicated, arrested, hanged, and burned.

Alternate History: Art-stealing time travelers snatch away Botticelli's lost masterpieces, but in the process they interfere with the burning of the Byzantine copy of the *Nekronomikon*. This foul text is thereby found by papal investigators, who attempt to use it with all-too-predictable results, and humanity is enslaved upon the arrival of Yog-Sothoth. If you want to introduce Lovecraftian horror into your *TimeWatch* game, this is a nice historical way to do so.

The Mission: Well, the world has ended. Again. *TimeWatch* is able to pinpoint the moment of destruction at 1495 Florence, and Agents must figure out what's happening, foil a gang of dedicated temporal thieves, and manage to *not* call upon the Great Old Ones.

If you want to introduce the Agents to a world where humans are terrified sheep and the Great Old Ones hold sway (similar to Neil Gaiman's short story "A Study in Emerald"), the Agents can arrive after 1495 and explore before working their way backwards. This might also introduce the reality of time travel to the minions of a Lovecraftian menace, allowing such monstrosities to continually plague the Agents for the rest of the series.

Research: "The Bonfire of the Vanities", "Botticelli", "Savonarola", "Nekronomicon"

SCIENCE FOR THE SONG

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: Scientific revolution triggers Song industrial revolution, leading to the total defeat of Jurchen, Mongols, and Japanese in 13th century and the extension of Chinese imperial culture and economy around the world by the 14th century.

True History: Under the Song dynasty (960–1279) China entered a new golden age of trade, technological invention, and scholarly inquiry. With gunpowder, hydraulics, and mechanized textile production, the Song were possibly on the verge of a full-blown industrial revolution five hundred years before the West. But despite the presence in the Song court of brilliant polymaths like Shen Kuo and Su Song, and the need for technological progress in the face of barbarian invasion, the Song's intellectual development never turned into a full-blown, self-sustaining scientific revolution. And in 1279, Kublai Khan's Mongol invasion put a permanent end to the Song glory. The incurious and isolationist regimes of the Ming and Manchu that followed never lived up to the promise of their forefathers, and the great Chinese flowering was smothered before it had truly begun.

Alternate History: Chinese nationalists, certain that the Mongol invasion of 1279 demolished China's hopes for world domination, travel to the Mongol courts in the wake of Genghis Khan's death and intensify the civil war, making it impossible for his grandson Kublai to conquer China.

The Song dynasty never unifies China, but the multitude of post-Song states in competition creates a dynamic, thriving

intellectual environment, and a scientific revolution by the mid-1300s. The Chinese have steam power and industrial manufacture before Europe, and the two great centers of world power meet in North America, which becomes the battlefield of the new First World War in the late 18th century.

The United States is consumed in fire before it ever appears.

Clearly, this is a fun time hook for GMs who love steampunk culture. The colonization of North America by the Chinese from the west, and by the European powers from the east, can be as detailed as checking in near San Francisco bay every hundred years, or as simple as finding and reading a historical account.

The Mission: Agents are sent to the chaos of a Boston besieged by Chinese mechanized cavalry to discover why the Declaration of Independence is not being written. They must trace the changes back to the Song dynasty, which was supposed to have been conquered by the Mongols, and then to the court of Genghis Khan himself. Meanwhile, the Chinese time travelers beset them at every opportunity, delighted by the outcome of their meddling.

Research: "Song Dynasty", "Shen Kuo", "Su Song", "Kublai Khan"

THE SHARK ARM CASE

Time Seed by Andrew Raphael

Hook: Paradox begins erupting at Australian crime scenes across the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries: impossible time-holes, choral echoes of events and people that never happened, futuristic technology falling into more primitive hands. It turns out there's a two-bit criminal with a time machine pulling unimaginative jobs... but he's supposed to be dead, he doesn't know it, and the paradox is ripping apart the places he visits.

True History: On April 25, 1935, a 3.5-meter tiger shark was caught off the coast of Sydney, Australia. It was kept alive and put on display; within the week, to the horror and thrill of onlookers, it became ill and vomited up the left forearm of a man bearing a distinctive tattoo.

Fingerprints taken from the hand identified the victim as the 45-year-old former boxer, police informer, and small-time crook James (Jim) Smith, born in England in 1890. His wife, Gladys, identified the tattoo, and examination revealed that the arm had been severed with a knife. A murder examination followed.

The case remains unsolved. The trial against forger and accused murderer Patrick Brady fell apart when the most important witness, Reginald Holmes, turned up murdered. Brady's lawyer argued that an arm "did not constitute a body" and that Jim Smith could still be out there walking around minus an arm. Brady was found not guilty and acquitted.

Alternate History: Jim Smith is still out there walking around, but he's sporting both arms, and it's messing up the time stream. This case became legendary in Australian history, and it's no surprise that a time tourist wanted to come back in time and find out what truly happened. Unfortunately, Jim Smith noticed the observer, didn't

like being spied upon, took the young man by surprise, and punched him into unconsciousness. Smith took the time tourist's time machine, left the fellow in the Sydney hospital, and took off to explore history.

The problem is that no one remembered to tell the tiger shark. Due to a paradoxical glitch, Smith shifts into true time instead of his alternate history where he was never murdered, cut up, and thrown into the bay. His presence at robbery scenes and local haunts triggers environmental paradox that attracts TimeWatch. Jim may just want to drink, beat people up, and make illicit cash — but he's destroying small bits of reality just by existing.

The Mission: Agents are dispatched to a location where reality is turning itself inside out. While they won't know why initially, the presence of the same burly tattooed man at each location (despite intervening decades) will quickly clue them into the problem. Smith won't want to be captured, and he definitely won't like the obvious solution of being murdered and fed to sharks. It's up to the Agents to convince him to just sacrifice one arm to placate history, or to find another solution that stops Neanderthals from attacking local saloons every time the thug decides to have a pint. The Agents may even want to rescue the stranded time tourist, bring the real murderer to justice, and in the process, find out who killed the star witness.

Research: "Shark Arm Case"

SINO-SOVIET WAR

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: Suppression of a single secret document in 1969 leads to global thermonuclear annihilation.

True History: Both the Soviets and Mao had internal political reasons to escalate their ongoing ideological conflict. In 1969, a series of mutual provocations and border clashes in Xinjiang and on Zhenbao Island in Manchuria led the Soviet leadership to consider a nuclear attack on China, and even to approach the US for approval or assistance.

President Nixon received guidance from a variety of sources, but one memorandum from a group of State Department officials convinced him that friendship with China was the best path forward. The Soviets, denied any hint of US support, declined to escalate the conflict.

Alternate History: The State Department memorandum is suppressed, and Nixon relies on more hawkish advisers such as William Hyland, who felt that a conflict between the USSR and China would be no big deal. The US remains coy about its likely reaction to USSR escalation, one thing leads to another, and then the missiles start to fly.

1970 is a bad year.

The Mission: This is a straightforward "save the world" scenario, requiring Agents to track their way through Nixon-era politics and international maneuvering. The most likely antagonist here is the ezeru, who can only benefit from massive nuclear war. A small conspiracy of ezeru in the State Department can suppress the document easily.

Research: "Sino-Soviet War", "Zhenbao", "William Hyland"

SOME DAY MY PRINCE WILL COME

Time Seed by Vyv Baker

Hook: Famous missing British princes reappear as adults, demanding the kingdom they were cheated out of — and equipped with anachronistic technology that will help them claim it.

True History: The "Princes in the Tower," 12-year-old Edward V of England and 9-year-old Richard of Shrewsbury, Duke of York, disappeared from the Tower of London in 1483. It's widely assumed that they were murdered at the command of their uncle Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who then took the throne for himself. Richard became Richard III and perished in 1485, at age 32, when he was defeated at Bosworth Field in the last decisive battle of the Wars of the Roses. Just recently in 2012, archaeologists found Richard III's bones under a parking lot in Leicester, England.

With the princes missing, and their claim on the throne declared invalid by Parliament, Richard III became the last king of the House of York. He was succeeded by Henry VII, first monarch of the House of Tudor.

Alternate History: The princes aren't killed. An elderly 24th-century amateur historian, Anglophile, and aficionado of fairy tales decides that his single and independent goddaughters deserve their own fairy-tale princes for husbands. The goddaughters would certainly disagree, but they are never consulted on the idea.

The elderly historian uses his university's time machine and goes back in time, kidnaps the two princes (or rescues them, if you look at it from his point of view), and drops both boys off with his younger self back in the 24th century. His younger self raises the two boys for nine years without knowing who they are, although a letter written and delivered by his older self finally explains the situation. If you think that's confusing, feel bad for the meddling elderly historian; the paradox from giving himself two adopted sons he'd never previously raised drives him slowly insane.

The elderly historian might have hoped for fairy-tale princes. Instead, he ends up with two traumatized and spoiled brats, entitled boys who lean towards solving problems with their fists instead of with words, and who then expect their adopted father's university position to get them out of trouble.

Technology locks away the boys' memories of their childhoods until Edward turns 21 and Richard turns 18. The elderly historian assumes that both boys will immediately marry his goddaughters, but the goddaughters want nothing to do with this plan. Neither do the young princes, who swear to each other that they'll recover the throne and kingdom that was rightfully theirs. They gather weaponry and technology, steal a university time machine, and head back to reclaim the throne of England. The historian and his two daughters immediately go after them, accidentally creating paradox in the time stream themselves as they hunt for their missing princes. They are further followed by university security who know that the school will face massive fines for the time-crimes already committed, and government officials determined to track down *everyone* and revoke their time machines.

The princes disagree whether to kill their uncle Richard before their younger selves are ever put in danger, whether to travel to 1491 and seize the crown from Henry VII, or whether to try something else. They decide to go to 1483 and tell Parliament that God has aged them in order to protect England from perfidy and treason. Thanks to a simple hologram generator they brought with them, this actually works (the angelic glow is a nice touch), and Edward takes the throne and has his uncle executed. They proceed to rewrite history, dodging or imprisoning the time travelers attempting to stop them.

The Mission: When Shakespeare's famous play *Richard III* becomes instead *The Princes of Heaven*, Agents are dispatched to the Globe Theatre to find out what has happened. They soon discover that history was changed by imposters claiming to be the lost princes. Traveling back to solve the problem uncovers the truth, and the princes have little interest in allowing the true timeline to be restored — since the true timeline results in their deaths! Meanwhile, everyone from the slightly deranged middle-aged historian, the insane elderly historian, both goddaughters, campus security, and government enforcers track each other across the late 15th century. It's a comedy of errors that the Agents must untangle to set history to rights.

While one possible solution is stopping the historian and letting the young princes be killed in 1483, the Agents might also head to the 25th-century and convince the princes not to try and retake their empire.

Research: "Princes in the Tower", "Richard III of England"

THE STRONG MAN OF EUROPE

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: A sultan avoids poisoning and leads the Ottoman Empire to a conquest of Rome and Italy in 1481, dealing Christianity and European power a fatal blow.

True History: The Ottoman dynasty of Turkish rulers went from minor warlords to Islamic superpower status in 150 years, taking Constantinople in 1453 and ending the Roman Empire once and for all. With efficient administration, the unstoppable (and self-funding) Janissary armies, and modern ships and artillery, the Ottoman Turks were poised to cripple the squabbling states of Western European Christendom and roll over their Persian rivals for Muslim supremacy; Ottoman navies pressed toward India and Italy simultaneously.

But internal squabbles and succession battles undermined their success. In 1481, as he was traveling to Italy in order to support the recent Ottoman conquests there, Mehmed the Conqueror died of poison. The resulting struggles amongst his sons for the throne consumed the Ottomans and enabled Christendom to throw them back.

Alternate History: If Mehmed does *not* die of poison in 1481, he leads his relief force to Otranto at the heel of Italy, and then proceeds northwards to conquer Rome just as he had done to Constantinople thirty years previously.

The pope is forced to relocate, ending up in France while the Ottomans continue to press against Europe both on the

east, conquering Hungary and Vienna, and from the south via both Italy and Spain (which remains a Muslim nation). No Reformation ever happens, as Christianity is in a struggle for its life with Islam, hanging on only in the northern part of Europe.

A Pan-Mediterranean culture develops as Islam becomes the dominant religion all throughout the area, and it is Islamic rather than Christian explorers who discover the New World.

The Mission: Agents must discover how Rome collapsed in 1483, and trace the issue back to the survival of Mehmed. His poisoning was never officially solved, so they may have to get creative in order to murder the most well-protected man in the world.

One possibility (depending on how much you want to upset the applecart of history) is that in true history Mehmed was never poisoned, and it's the Agents who actually administer the poison in order to somehow stop the world from later ending in paradox. Another possibility is that the assassin was never born due to a time traveler's actions (or even the Agents' own actions!) in the past, and so they'll need to find a poisoner to take his or her place.

Research: "Mehmed the Conqueror", "Otranto"

TECUMSEH STAMPS HIS FOOT

Time Seed by Kenneth Hite

Hook: A fatal accident changes the course of US and Native relationships, leading to the foundation of a lasting Indian Confederation.

True History: Taking advantage of a religious revival led by his brother Tenskwatawa "the Prophet," the Shawnee chief Tecumseh built an alliance of Amerind nations in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Kentucky, and Alabama. A confrontation with Indiana governor William Harrison in 1810 ended in frustration and indecision and Tecumseh continued to seek a peaceful resolution.

In 1811, trying to convince the Creek leader Big Warrior to join him, Tecumseh said, "I will stamp my foot in Detroit and shake down every house" in the Creek country. Big Warrior didn't follow Tecumseh, but other "Red Stick" Creeks did. William Harrison, while Tecumseh was away, attacked Tenskwatawa's settlement "Prophetstown" on the Tippecanoe River and broke Tecumseh's Confederacy before its leader could stamp his foot.

Alternate History: During the 1810 confrontation, a gun goes off and William Harrison is killed. A melee ensues and the entire American leadership of the area is wiped out. With this unexpected victory, Tecumseh gains immediate support, and his aggressive nature leads to an ongoing, successful campaign.

The expansion of America is drastically limited by Tecumseh's alliance (supported by British interests), and the emerging American nation is unable to keep negotiating land treaties with Indian nations. More and more natives flock to Tecumseh's banner, more and more European powers get in on the act, and North America becomes a disorganized crazy

quilt of minor nations all constantly warring with one another.

Mission: Investigating the sudden appearance of mid-20th-century Shawnee literature and art across Europe, Agents discover that North America looks notably different than it should. It doesn't take long to pin the change down to Harrison's death in 1810.

The question, of course, is who killed William Harrison? Native sympathizers? Or radical communists attracted to Tecumseh's doctrine of universal ownership? Perhaps it's even the accidental discharge of a time traveling tourist's firearm that sets off everyone else. One possible culprit are the sophosaurs, whose quest to destroy human culture might start by wiping out European-influenced North American culture with a single gunshot.

Research: "Tecumseh", "William Harrison"

THE WALLS CAME TUMBLING DOWN

Time Seed by Jerry Prochazka

Hook: The deadly 1755 Great Lisbon Earthquake shattered Portuguese fortresses and dramatically dampened the country's 18th-century colonial ambitions. Future Portuguese seismologists with seismic dampening equipment change the course of world history when they travel back in time and prevent the quake from occurring.

True History: On All Saints Day (Saturday, November 1, 1755), 9:40 a.m. local time, a magnitude 8.5–9.0 earthquake struck Lisbon, Portugal. Almost the entire city was destroyed; with fires and a tsunami, between 10,000 and 100,000 people were killed. The earthquake shattered coastal fortresses in the Algarve, increased political tension, and sabotaged Portuguese colonial ambitions for the second half of the 18th century.

Alternate History: Drunk and sitting around a card table playing poker, four Portuguese seismologists get on the topic of the Great Lisbon Earthquake. "Do you know what we could have become?" one of them slurs into his drink. "We lost so much. We lost our *future*." "My sister has access to a time machine," one of the other seismologists say quietly. And that is that.

Arriving in the past in 1750, loaded down with seismic dampeners and sealed dive suits to reach the underwater epicenter, the four friends take years to get the dampeners in place 200 km southwest from Lisbon. It is worth their trouble. When the earthquake does occur, the tremor is perhaps a magnitude 1.5, barely noticeable, and the friends realize they've saved tens of thousands of lives who will never know or appreciate it. Then they head home to the 23rd century... and find out the hard way that their time machine no longer functions.

Trapped in 18th-century Portugal, tempers run high and the group separates. Now two of them are actively encouraging Portuguese colonial expansion, making sure the country seizes the opportunity it doesn't even know it has. The other two live in Lisbon, doing their best to subtly advertise their nature as outsiders, hoping that other time travelers will notice and rescue them.

The Mission: TimeWatch notices a problem after Brazil doesn't declare independence in 1821, and sends Agents to investigate. They learn that in this timeline the Portuguese royal family never flees to Brazil in 1807, as Portugal is rich and proud enough to withstand French troops during the Napoleonic Peninsular War. Further research indicates that Brazil is larger than normal, and that Portugal is richer because there was no gold disruption following the now nonexistent earthquake. Investigation in Lisbon may lead to the seismologists, as might an investigation of the quake's epicenter underwater.

The two most activist seismologists do eventually find their way home if TimeWatch never intervenes; should the earthquake occur and the alternate reality collapse, the two seismologists will gather a collection of goons and return to the past in order and try to save their new timeline.

Research: "1755 Lisbon earthquake", "Portuguese Empire", "Independence of Brazil"

A WHOLESALE FORM OF SLAUGHTER

Time Seed by Matt Bridgeman-Rivett

Hook: An assassination society targets current or future world leaders, politicians, inventors, industrialists, and leaders... whomever its clients pick. The assassins pick key moments in history when great disasters occur, and use the wholesale death to hide their one murder.

True History: The Great Fire of London occurred on the 2nd and 3rd of September 1666, and consumed over 13,000 houses. It was a bad few years; the fire arrived at the tail end of the Great Plague of London, a bubonic outbreak that killed an estimated 100,000 people, a quarter of London's population. Many records of who died in the plague were consumed by the fire.

Alternate History: When you want to kill a single person and not get caught, don't assassinate one person. People are bound to notice. Instead, cause a natural disaster and kill hundreds, thousands, or even millions of people... and just make sure your one victim is part of the human wreckage. Their death is blamed on the disaster, and no one is the wiser.

The 24th-century Internment Society has single agents — salespeople, really — scattered throughout known history in year-long periods before great tragedies. They quietly gather business, exchanging favors, secrets, and property for ensuring an individual's death. They may die by disease, violence, or happenstance, and whole family lines may be removed in order to assure another family's social ascendance, but it always occurs untraceably. For example, the Great Fire of London was designed to hide the deaths of hundreds of people who the Great Plague had been genetically engineered to slay — while clearing out unwanted buildings on property now owned by the Internment Society.

The Mission: Agents are made aware of a problem when individuals and family lines begin vanishing across the centuries. History (Contemporary) reveals the now nonexistent

life paths of family members; Research shows that the family was snuffed out in one natural disaster or another. Whether Iceland's 18th-century Mist Hardships, the influenza epidemic of 1918 that killed 16 million people, or the Great Fire of London, whole families have been removed to the benefit of other families. Traveling back to the incident will allow Agents with Medical Expertise to learn that plagues have been genetically tampered with.

One name comes up multiple times when researching; in diaries and calling cards, at least one member of each wiped-out family was visited by a person calling themselves Lottie DeVic. This alias is a running joke for members of the Internment Society, used as a password to recognize one another, and was adapted as an acronym from the Low Orbit Transgenic Infection Engine's Delivery Device that the society uses to brew tailored plagues. Should the Agents actually meet and question one of the Internment Society's embedded assassins, they can find records leading them to the location of the satellite-based plague cannon. They may not be permitted to stop the Great Plague or the Great Fire, but they can make sure it doesn't kill people who were truly supposed to have survived.

Tracing the Internment Society back to its 24th-century offices is challenging; a secretive and decentralized organization with many agents spread across many time periods can be a difficult problem to solve. This allows the society to reappear in multiple missions, letting the Agents slowly unravel the conspiracy as they inch closer to the truth.

Research: "Mist Hardships", "Great Plague of London", "Great Fire of London", "1918 influenza", "List of natural disasters by death toll"

A WINTER CARCASS

Time Seed by Timothy Hidalgo

Hook: An alien body is discovered in 1876, triggering a fascist America and leading to Axis victory in 1946.

True History: One of the worst train crashes in American history occurred on December 29, 1876, when a train bridge over the Ashtabula River gorge failed during a severe Ohio snowstorm and 92 people died.

Unrelated but relevant, Former Civil War General James Garfield was an Ohio state representative when this happened. He won the presidential nomination and became President Garfield five years later in 1881, but was assassinated 200 days into his presidency. President Garfield spent his short presidency advocating to rebuild the south. He appointed African Americans to federal jobs (the first to do so) and pushed for public education at a time when 60% of people in the South were illiterate.

Just after the 1876 train wreck the bridge inspector was found dead (a possible suicide). Five years later in 1881, the same year President Garfield took office, the owner of the Pacific Express railroad committed suicide as well.

Alternate History: It isn't well known, but aliens abduct or murder humans all the time. The smart ones make sure they never get caught. For example, the ezeru only prey upon

humans who are about to die in circumstances that would normally destroy their bodies.

On December 29, 1876, ezeru shift onto the train and begin stunning, kidnapping, and devouring humans. All but one of the ezeru time travel away with their victims by the time the bridge falls; the one remaining alien is caught in the crash and plummets with the train down into the gorge. In the accident's aftermath, the engineer from the lead engine staggers down the bank and stumbles into this "monster" crawling away from the fiery wreckage. He pulls out a pistol and shoots it, the authorities recover the body, and it becomes an 1876 Roswell-like incident complete with alien autopsy and cover up.

GM ADVICE: SWAP THE MONSTER

Don't like the ezeru? It's simple to substitute any style of time traveling aliens you like, from traditional greys to sophosaurs to shape-shifting reptilians.

The true course of events is turned aside by the discovery of a nonhuman body. The government has proof that aliens exist!

Representative James Garfield now plays a lead role in recovering the alien, and is present during the autopsy. Everyone is understandably terrified. The bridge inspector is shot to keep him quiet. The train engineer is sent to an asylum to keep him out of the public. James Garfield goes on to win the presidency and immediately forms a new secret federal agency (the "Ash Unit") to combat the alien threat to America. His would-be assassin, Charles J. Guiteau, is shot down by Ash Unit agents on July 2, 1881 before he can assassinate the president.

President Garfield's presidency ushers in an era of extreme federal paranoia as he prepares for a phantom alien invasion... an invasion that seems less phantom when other shape-shifting ezeru are apprehended. There is no chance for social reform, and the United States becomes a dictatorship ruled by the National Federalists, a secretive government driven by terror of shape-shifting enemies.

When the Great War breaks out in Europe in 1914, the American National Federalists use the opportunity to conquer Mexico and Central America. This turns European public sentiment against the opportunistic US, and reflected American resentment paints most European powers as weak and hostile. At the outbreak of the Second World War, the insular and paranoid United States joins the Axis powers and by 1946 succeeds in bringing about the end of the free world. Nuclear weapons are not required, and the entire world is controlled by three nations: Germany, Japan, and the United States. The National Federalists are the only political party in the unified North and South America, their bold symbol of a three-legged swastika of red, white, and blue displayed everywhere.

GM ADVICE: CIRCLING BACK

So, why did the one ezeru not shift away? Perhaps it was distracted or delayed — or perhaps it was ordered not to and deliberately set these events in motion, anticipating that a fascist world is one more prone to using nuclear weapons once they're developed.

Interestingly, a completely different TimeWatch team sent back to stop the ezeru might have triggered the alternate timeline in the first place by preventing the ezeru drone from escaping. If so, it's up to the GM whether that team is grateful to the player characters for covering up their mistake, or resentful for having made the error in the first place.

The Mission: TimeWatch atmospheric sensors indicate that nuclear bombs were not dropped on Japan in August of 1945. The Agents are sent to investigate why. They discover a very different political landscape, and trace the differences in US politics back to President Garfield. From there they hear hints of aliens and secret police, and may be able to question an Ash Unit agent or the hospitalized train engineer. The mission's climax comes when the Agents board the doomed train, eliminating the ezeru before the chain of events is ever set into motion.

Research: "Ashtabula River Railroad Disaster", "James Garfield assassination"

YEAR WITHOUT A SUMMER

Time Seed by Brett Ritter

Hook: The weather that summer was gorgeous, not miserable and cold, and so *Frankenstein* is never written by Mary Shelley. This leads to a future where technology is used with more abandon and less concern about how tech affects humans, ending in a world where robotic AI runs rampant. So why was the weather different? An 1815 volcanic eruption never occurs, and the "year without a summer" never comes to pass.

True History: In 1815, Mount Tambora in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) erupted in one of the largest volcanic explosions in recorded history. The eruption caused climate abnormalities that triggered major food shortages across the Northern Hemisphere. This led to widespread famine across the world, flooding, and typhus epidemics, brown and red snows across Hungary and Italy, spectacular sunsets (evidenced in the paintings of J. M. W. Turner), the possible invention of the velocipede, the eventual founding of the Mormon Church, and the writing of *Frankenstein* during a "wet, ungenial summer" in Lake Geneva.

All in all a miserable summer, if an incredibly important one.

Alternate History: Mount Tambora doesn't erupt, and the summer of 1816 turns out to be a fine and beautiful one. In Geneva where Mary Godwin, John William Polidori, Percy Shelley, and Lord Byron spend the summer at the Villa Diodati, they are so busy picnicking, boating, and spending time outside that they never begin telling each other ghost stories. *Frankenstein* is never written, nor is Polidori's *The Vampyre* (the precursor to *Dracula*).

The effects of this are subtle. In addition to the short-term changes of the good weather, such as far less famine, the popularized lesson of humankind attempting to play God with artificial life never seeps into popular consciousness. Over the following decades and centuries, technology is used by humanity more readily and with less concern for consequences. This peaks in the late 21st century when an artificial intelligence achieves sentience, boosts itself to levels far above humanity, and proceeds to create cybernetic units designed to sterilize the earth of non-robotic life.

TimeWatch classifies this as "bad."

Why no eruption? A group of scientists, engineers, and operatives from a multi-chronal corporation (i.e., one that exploits resources from multiple timelines) is running a massive power plant that taps into the power of the magmatic engine of the volcano, preventing any eruption in the process.

The Mission: Cybernetic Armageddon is enough to catch TimeWatch's attention, and luckily it happens before time travel is widely available. While other Agents control some of the fallout from human extinction, the Agents are assigned to uncover the root cause. They're sent to early 21st-century California, and told to slide forwards or backwards until they uncover what happened.

Even in California, however, technological experimentation is greater than it would be in true history. Human cloning is common, humans are more accepting of cyborg body parts for better physical performance (leading to new cybered sports leagues), and there are significantly fewer texts and white papers on medical and technological ethics. The Research or Trivia abilities indicate that *Frankenstein* was never written, a story whose absence could explain the gradual ethical change.

Visiting the quartet in Geneva, it turns out to be beautiful summer with the group enjoying a collection of outdoor activities during their time there. This conflicts with original history, as the Year Without a Summer should be in full swing. Why didn't it occur?

Meanwhile, the Agents are attacked by a group of time traveling human operatives who are familiar with the Agents, even though the Agents have never encountered them before. These operatives come from a timeline where the Agents will destroy the power plant operation and the volcano; they hope to stop this from happening, thus saving the lives of their co-workers at the Tambora power plant.

From Geneva, it's a simple step to Mount Tambora and the corporation operatives there. If approached, the operatives are friendly, open, and positive, well liked by their local hirelings that operate as low-level mechanics. They will, of course, resort to violence (something they're quite well

trained at) if the Agents suggest destroying their operation as well as their personnel.

The Agents have several difficult choices: blow the plant, killing everyone there (except, hopefully, the enemy team that has already hunted them) and causing the worldwide devastation needed for their timeline, or find some other solution and deal with the fact that they've made the reality of themselves and everyone in their timeline less likely. Clever teams will likely try to find some middle ground, perhaps blowing the plant but rescuing local workers into another place/time. Encourage any solution that reinforces players caring about the effects of their actions.

Research: "Year Without a Summer", "Mount Tambora", "Mary Shelley"





CHAPTER ELEVEN:

TIMEWATCH

ADVENTURES

This section provides you with three fully detailed adventures for your TimeWatch team.

The *TimeWatch* adventures presented here start with an **Overview** just to set you up to understand the story, and then there's a bunch of **Background** with details on the bad guys' **Plot**, the **Supporting Characters** you need to know, a quick **Timeline** (or two) to help you keep track of what happens when, and some **Research Terms** for you to investigate further. Then there's the **Mission** itself, with a **Briefing** to kick things off, a quick **Likely Adventure Path** to give you a sense of how this will probably play out, and then a list of **Scenes** that the Agents will likely go through in the adventure.

RECRUITING CALL

A *Patrol* adventure for TimeWatch

Sometimes, embracing paradox is the only way to bring about your future. In this adventure the Agents set out to recruit one of TimeWatch's greatest agents only to find out the hard way that not everyone wants her alive. In order to successfully recruit their new agent the characters need to stop the same enemy from several different eras, all attacking time in different ways.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

July 2, 1937, marks the date that aviator **Amelia Earhart** and her navigator **Fred Noonan** safely crash land on the island of Nikumaroro (also known as Gardner Island), a coral atoll with a central lagoon in the western Pacific Ocean. There they survive for several months before succumbing to exposure. Their bodies have never been found.

In this mission the Agents are sent to recruit Earhart before her death. They soon learn that Earhart is destined to

be a particularly successful and effective TimeWatch agent, one who delivers significant setbacks to the plans of a time traveling Nazi named Oskar Toht. He tries to destroy Earhart's recruitment in several ways at different points in his life, and it's up to the Agents to ensure a successful recruitment.

Once all threats are dealt with, paradox settles down and Earhart can officially be recruited to TimeWatch.

Background

The Agents encounter Oskar Todt in the reverse order from the way he's lived his life, and the reverse order from the way this adventure is written. Todt was a young soldier in Nazi Germany when a strange Messerschmitt crashed during an Allied bombing raid. Todt was first to the scene and managed to salvage futuristic equipment from the plane. He spent several years researching the burned and melted gear, finally recognizing it as a time travel device in 1945. Brilliant! This would help reverse Germany's flagging fortunes in the war effort. Todt tested it, then traveled back in time to sabotage key Allied strategies...

... and was thwarted by Amelia Earhart, TimeWatch agent.

Two other times he attempted choral sabotage, and was thwarted by Earhart and her team both times, barely escaping with his life. He decided on a different approach. He was still young, handsome and strong; he went back in time to romance Earhart's mother (Scene Four). They met, fell in love, had a daughter named Greta (and *not* Amelia), and Todt trained Greta to be a world-class Nazi time agent. Then suddenly it all vanished; Amelia's allies destroyed his romance, his wife had married a different man, and his daughter tragically faded out of existence. Todt was left middle-aged, with memories of a loving wife and daughter who never existed.

Fine. He led a team back to Nikumaroro Island to kill Earhart as she staggered ashore (Scene Three). A well-chosen sniper rifle and the job was done, and the pilot would never become

a TimeWatch agent. He returned to Germany to wreak choral havoc for his homeland. Then suddenly his life changed, and whatever fate the Agents hidden on Nikumaroro had in mind for him — imprisonment, banishment, something worse — snapped into place. After losing his family, it also snapped his mind.

It's an angry, insane, elderly Todt who comes after the younger Agents in a plane (Scene One). He told himself they would be there; he knows he will be, too, because he recognizes his plane as the one he found as a youth all those decades ago. He'll die here, but maybe he'll take those bastards out with him. If he does, they'll never be able to stop his younger self from courting the woman who once became his wife. It's worth the risk. It will always be worth the risk. He loves his country, but he loved his daughter Greta more.

Time to fly.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

This adventure uses the seven iconic player characters for *TimeWatch*. The adventure runs smoothly with as few as three characters; if you have fewer than seven players, give the players their choice of Agents and just remove the ones no one chose. If your players would rather use their own characters, that's just as easy and just as much fun.

Iconic characters available on the Pelgrane Press website include:

Kelfala: a 23rd-century West African starship captain focused on philosophy and speed.

Mace Hunter: A mustachioed 19th-century African explorer and big game hunter.

Altani: Genghis Khan's daughter, a 12th-century warrior princess.

Uurk: A brilliant Neanderthal with an extremely limited vocabulary, capable of surges of brilliant eloquence. He hits things very, very hard.

Vidh: A cyborg assassin disguised as a human, she is trying to reconcile her past as a killing machine.

Dr. Leah Breen: Definitely not literally a mad scientist, Dr. Breen claims to be one of the inventors of time travel. She may lack a bit of empathy, even if she has TimeWatch's best interests in mind.

Skegg: A psychic velociraptor from an alternate timeline when the meteor never struck Earth, Skegg tries to survive in a world full of humans.

DETAILED PLOT

Amelia Earhart has the potential to be one of TimeWatch's best agents of all time. That means that as soon as actions are taken by the player characters to recruit her, her many possible futures as an agent snap into reality — and it turns out that she sure knows how to make enemies. One of these enemies has decided that it is preferable to risk paradox and eliminate Amelia before she ever gets started as an agent. The Adversary might only exist *in potentiâ*, but that's still enough to let him come back and stop Amelia before she starts.

- ▶ An **elderly Nazi time traveler** named **Oskar Todt** tries to use a souped-up Messerschmitt to shoot down the Agents over war-torn Germany; he is likely killed in the dogfight, his plane crashing into the darkness. He knows and hates the Agents, but they have never encountered him before.
- ▶ The Agents are assigned the mission of recruiting **Amelia Earhart**.
- ▶ **Time traveling Nazis** led by a middle-aged **Oskar Todt** successfully assassinate Amelia on the island before the Agents ever arrive; the Agents arrive to find her corpse instead. They must fall back in time, stop the Nazi assassins, and save Amelia's and her navigator Fred's lives. The Agents met an elderly Todt in Scene One.
- ▶ A **young Oskar Todt** makes sure Amelia was never born. Amelia suddenly begins to fade from reality due to choral instability, and she can no longer remember her parents. As a young officer in Hitler's elite occult division, Todt has gone back in time to discredit her father and romance her mother before Amelia was ever conceived. To fully save Amelia, the Agents must go stop this threat as well — although they can't kill Todt's younger self without risking further paradox. Worse, **Greta Todt**, the deadly future daughter of Todt and Amelia's mother, comes back in time to fight for her life.



Amelia Earhart is going to make an amazing TimeWatch agent...

► **Optional encounter: enemy recruiters.** If there's time in the slot, **Rebels** try to be diplomatic after going back in time and befriending Amelia in her tomboy youth. These nonviolent rebels and refugees from TimeWatch try to talk Amelia into working for them instead. **This roleplaying encounter is optional**, and should be used as a (probable) noncombat encounter at your own discretion.

The challenge here is that Amelia is no shrinking violet. Any attempt on her life makes her furious and determined, and she won't accept being left behind on missions.

Once Amelia's past is stable and she is no longer rife with potential paradox, she can officially be recruited into TimeWatch and the game concludes.

GAME SETUP

This adventure uses standard *TimeWatch* rules. Don't feel you need to explain everything at start of play; it's much faster and more useful to explain rules as you go along. The exceptions? Walk through the character sheet, describing gear and the difference between Investigative and General abilities. Describe how Preparedness works in *TimeWatch* (the "Bill and Ted" method). Describe the importance of Stitches, and mention Boosters. The *How to Play TimeWatch* sheet may help as a handout.

You will need poker chips or another token to represent Stitches, and an item to mark who goes next in initiative.

SCENE ONE: A NEW OLD ENEMY

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-Out: Briefing

"Nein!" The elderly man's voice crackles out of your plane's radio speaker. "You have ruined my life for the last time. You have destroyed everything I stand for and brought about ruin to my fatherland. But now, finally I gain vengeance. Now you die!" You hear the sound of a generator, and blue-white lasers sear through the bulkhead and cut your pilot almost in half.

You have no idea who the elderly German is.

It's after midnight in the year 1942, and you're in a British plane somewhere over Nazi Germany, ordered by TimeWatch headquarters to join the flight as "military observers." This must be why. What do you do?

The Agents are in a British Bristol Blenheim light bomber (room for two crew and six passengers, but it was just the now-dead pilot and the player characters on board). They must fly the plane and defend themselves against an insane Nazi pilot with a massive, unknown grudge.

The enemy pilot is an elderly Oberst (or Colonel) **Oskar Todt**, who they will meet younger versions of two more times during this adventure. Todt's Messerschmitt 109 seemed to appear magically in the darkness behind their own plane (because it did, clocking in through time in order to ambush

the Agents). Todt's plane is more maneuverable and has deadlier future weapons, but its maneuverability deteriorates sharply at high speeds.

Elderly Oberst Oskar Todt, Nazi Time Traveler

Defense: Hit Threshold 4 (5 while inside Messerschmitt), Armor 2 (while inside plane only), Health 5

Offense: Scuffling 3 (2-1), Shooting 12 (2-2-2); Damage Modifier +0 (skull-headed walking stick), +1 (Luger pistol)

Abilities: Tempus 12

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Extra Attack (cost 2), Oracle (cost 1), Technology (cost 2)

Misc: Stealth Modifier +3 (until noticed)

Description: Elderly Todt is a dying, cancerous, bitter, angry ex-soldier who is determined to turn what little remains of his life into an instrument of vengeance against the Agents who have thwarted him so many times throughout his life. From Todt's perspective, the player character Agents have given him scars, taken away his wife and daughter, and ruined his triumphant assassination attempt against Earhart. From the player characters' point of view, of course, they've never heard of the guy before.

Messerschmitt 109 (Souped-Up German Fighter Plane)

Defense: Hit Threshold 4; grants +1 Hit Threshold to anyone inside; Armor 2; Health 20

Offense: Shooting as per gunner; Damage Modifier +3 (Messerschmitt-mounted beam weapon)

Bristol Blenheim (British bomber)

Defense: Hit Threshold 4; grants +1 Hit Threshold to anyone inside; Armor 2; Health 30

Offense: Shooting as per gunner; Damage Modifier +2 (machine guns)

Action!

Start by asking each player to describe their character. Hand them a Stitch once they finish.

Then describe the dead pilot, wind whipping through the hole in the fuselage, the sound of the engines, and the steep dive the bomber is starting. Ask what the characters do. With luck, someone chooses to shove the dead pilot out of the way and wrestle the plane under control.

Play this scene out like a fight, starting initiative with Kelfala. The Blenheim is sturdy and has a machine gun and bombs; the Messerschmitt is more fragile and has a deadly beam weapon. This should feel like the desperate beginning of a war movie, at least until sci-fi technology makes an appearance.

Clues and Benefits

- ▶ **Vehicles 8+:** The Blenheim's top speed is 430 kph, far slower than the Messerschmitt's top speed of 610 kph. The Messerschmitt's maneuverability deteriorates near top speed.
- ▶ **Science!:** A **Science!** spend can temporarily boost the Blenheim's speed, armor, maneuverability, or weaponry.
- ▶ **Military Tactics:** Oberst Todt is clearly a skilled pilot, using flying techniques developed after WWII. His accent is German, if slightly crazed, and oddly has some Kansas mixed in.
- ▶ **Military Tactics:** Shooting through his canopy forces Todt to slow his plane and increases the Difficulties of his Shooting and Vehicles actions by 2.
- ▶ **Paradox Prevention:** The chronal energy the Messerschmitt is emitting indicates that it is from a future, potential reality and not from true history.
- ▶ **Timecraft:** The Messerschmitt is probably equipped with a time travel device in addition to its high-tech beam weapons
- ▶ **Timecraft:** The Messerschmitt is projecting a mild interdiction field that would make teleportation directly on board or time travel while within eight kilometers of the Messerschmitt difficult. Such travel requires a Difficulty 6 **Chronal Stability** test. If failed, no additional points are lost but the autochron does not function. Any character who spends a **Timecraft** point can automatically counter this interdiction effect.
- ▶ **Preparedness 8:** Remind the player that they can use **Preparedness** and *Flashback* to do things like have already modified their plane, have special technology on board, and the like.
- ▶ **History (Contemporary):** According to standard history, Nazi Germany doesn't actually have any time travelers.

Think of this scene as the start of an action movie. Have it progress quickly, lasting no more than a half an hour. This scene concludes when the Agents' bomber goes down (and they hopefully escape) or when Todt's fighter explodes or crashes. He has rigged his plane's engine and fuel tank to his own heartbeat; if he dies, one round later his plane explodes. This imminent auto-destruct is incredibly clear to anyone on board the plane when Todt is killed. He's likely to die without revealing why he hates people who don't even know him, but if Interpersonal abilities are used to coax clues out of him (particularly **Taunt**) he mentions that the Agents took away everything he loved, and released his greatest nemesis upon him and all of Nazi Germany's time-corps. He doesn't explain further.

SCENE TWO: BRIEFING

Scene Type: Intro

Lead-In: A New Old Enemy

Lead-Out: Amelia's Assassins

As soon as Scene One ends, the Agents' tethers warble, calling them back to the Citadel for a fast briefing. As usual when time traveling, every Agent must make a Travel test (roll a d6; roll 1–3, lose 2 points of Chronal Stability.)

In the shining and futuristic Citadel, a haven located in the quantum singularity that precedes the Big Bang, their briefing officer **Hypatia** (a Greek mathematician and astronomer in 4th-century Egypt) gives them their mission. They are to recruit 40-year-old aviator Amelia Earhart from the island she crashed on, shortly before her death in late September 1937 (almost three months after she crashed on July 2, 1937). It is up to the group whether they recruit her navigator Fred Noonan; they are told to use their best judgment. The island of Nikumaroro is not otherwise inhabited, so they shouldn't necessarily worry about disguises during this recruitment process, but they're encouraged to approach her in whatever way they think best.

If you prefer, substitute Hypatia with a briefing officer of your own invention. There's no problem with doing so; just make sure the briefing comes from someone trustworthy.

Hypatia gives the group a **paradoxometer**, and tells them not to bring Earhart back to the Citadel as a formal recruit until it reads zero; they may need to train her or solve some potential paradoxes to reach that level. The paradoxometer samples the amount of paradox currently swirling around a person, usually coming from future events that survival may change. Really, the purpose of this device is to give the players a sense of progress as they deal with enemies, and to show when Amelia is safe to become a formal recruit.

No other gearing up process is necessary, as that's what Preparedness handles. As soon as the group is ready, they can depart. Players should feel free to look up Amelia Earhart and Nikumaroro on Wikipedia, using their phones, if they so wish.

SCENE THREE: AMELIA'S ASSASSINS

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction

Lead-In: Briefing

Lead-Out: So Much for Father's Day

Time traveling requires a Travel test from every character, or players can spend one Stitch to bypass the Travel test.

Arriving on the island of Nikumaroro in September 1937, the Agents find both Amelia and Fred dead. It's difficult to tell because several months have passed and both seabirds and insects have picked at the corpses, but some clues can be detected:

Clues and Benefits

- ▶ **Shooting 8+ or Military Tactics:** Both were shot with a high-powered sniper rifle at Long range. They likely never



...assuming that Nazi assassins let her live that long.

suspected the shot was coming. They were killed after staggering ashore from the plane crash in the lagoon.

- ▶ **Notice:** The assassin took the time to remove the bullets afterwards.
- ▶ **Forgery:** Some signs of survival (such as glass bottles used to boil water) exist on the island, but they have been fabricated.
- ▶ **Outdoor Survival:** The tree where the sniper waited had four other individuals waiting as well. A cigarette stub can be found: Sturm-Zigaretten (Storm or Assault Cigarettes), a Nazi brand.
- ▶ **Spying:** A character with **Spying** can declare that next week they will go back in time to set up a hidden camera in the past. They need to make two Travel tests or spend a **Spying** point, but they can get holographic evidence of what happened. Five Nazi soldiers — including a middle-aged Oskar Todt — arrive on the island via a time traveling 1960s seaplane (not a Messerschmitt.) They camouflage the plane and hide, waiting for Earhart and Noonan to arrive. They tell jokes, sweat, and smoke while they wait. Once the explorers crash land, Oskar Todt uses a sniper rifle to put a single bullet in each, killing them instantly. His assistants then run out, plant forged evidence, remove the bullets, and return to their plane. The plane then takes off and disappears in a purple flash.

The Agents have several options for saving Amelia's and

Fred's lives. The most likely solution is to time travel back to before the Nazis arrive and ambush *them*, then let the aviators arrive safely.

Middle-Aged Oberst Oskar Todt, Nazi Time Traveler

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 14

Offense: Scuffling 8 (2-2-2), Shooting 12 (3-3-3); Damage Modifier +1 (skull-headed sword cane), +1 (Luger pistol), +2 (sniper rifle)

Abilities: Tempus 12

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Extra Attack (cost 2), Oracle (cost 1)

Misc: Stealth Modifier +3 (until noticed)

Time Traveling Nazi Soldier

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 3

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +0 (combat knife), +1 (pistol), grenades

Abilities: Tempus 8, Vehicles 3

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Description: Six trained soldiers, ready to defend their Oberst with their lives.

Potential Paradox

- ▶ Killing Todt, instead of letting him go, means that he dies in middle age even though the group has already fought him as an old man. Everyone must make a Difficulty 4 / Loss 4 Paradox test.
- ▶ Because the group knows that someone succeeded in killing Amelia and Fred, saving their lives creates (very worthwhile) paradox. Everyone must make a Difficulty 4 / Loss 4 Paradox test when the two are saved.
- ▶ If any clues are left for future generations to find, such as the wreckage of the Nazi seaplane, history may be changed — everyone must make a Difficulty 4 / Loss 4 Paradox test. Luckily, this is easily avoidable.

This scene ends once Todt has somehow been dealt with (exiled, killed, allowed to escape) and Amelia and Fred are seen to have lived instead. The paradoxometer drops by roughly 50% when scanning Amelia.

SCENE FOUR: SO MUCH FOR FATHER'S DAY

Scene Type: Core / Antagonist Reaction

Lead-In: Amelia's Assassins

Lead-Outs: Old Friends, Conclusion

Once she's no longer dead, Agents can approach Amelia immediately (when she and Fred depart their wrecked plane) or several months in the future (shortly before she is due to perish from exposure). Either is acceptable.

Amelia Earhart

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 6

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier -1 (fists)

Abilities: Athletics 8, Chronal Stability 6 (soon to be -3), Vehicles 15

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Note that despite being a supporting character, Amelia has Chronal Stability instead of Tempus.

Fred Noonan

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 1

Offense: Scuffling +3, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier -1 (fists)

Abilities: Tempus 10

The approach to recruit Amelia Earhart may be more difficult than expected. Not due to any hesitation on Amelia's part, mind you; she's confused but fascinated, and the idea of time travelers is something she quickly takes to. If approached shortly before her death, she's particularly exuberant about the idea of rescue. She insists that if she comes, her navigator Fred must come as well. Amelia is fiercely loyal and does not willingly abandon him. She may be talked into leaving Fred behind only if someone spends a **Reassurance** point and offers to come right back for him.

The difficulty comes when Amelia suffers a massive attack of chronal instability; although she survives it (as GM you don't need to roll, but her Chronal Stability drops to -3), she is left faded and shaken, plagued with future memories of her death and disappearance. If an Agent spends at least 2 points of **Reality Anchor** on her, her Chronal Stability rises to 1 and she starts to feel like herself again. She cannot rise higher than 1 Chronal Stability until this paradox is resolved.

Amelia suddenly realizes that she has no idea who her family is. She can't remember her youth or her parents, or even the town where she grew up. **Timecraft** (core clue) indicates that this is common behavior for an agent whose parents were somehow prevented (by death or circumstance) from having children, so that the agent was never born. Amelia barely survived the resulting paradox wave, and hangs on to existence by the proverbial skin of her teeth.

Clues and Benefits

Amelia's Early History

Amelia Mary Earhart was born July 24, 1897, in Atchison, Kansas, in the home of her maternal grandfather Alfred Otis. Her parents were Amelia "Amy" Otis Earhart (1869-1962) and Samuel "Edwin" Stanton Earhart (1867-1930). Her father was a failed lawyer with a drinking problem that would eventually progress into true alcoholism. They married in 1895 in Atchison after several years of courtship.

Young Todt's Master Plan

In order to stop Amelia from being born, a youthful Oskar Todt (who has recently found the exploded, burned wreckage of a Messerschmitt and reverse engineered the time drive in it) arrives in Kansas in 1892. He sets himself up as a successful German immigrant, befriends Amy's father, Alfred, and successfully romances Amy Otis before she ever meets Edwin Earhart. He decides that he can kill Edwin if the need arises, but it never does; Todt encourages his drinking instead, launching him into alcoholism earlier than usual and making sure he is never attractive to Amy Otis.

What Has Changed

In order to prevent Amy from marrying the wrong man, the Agents and Amelia must use **Research** (core clue) to find out what happened in this changed world to Amelia's family. They learn:

- ▶ a German immigrant and entrepreneur named Oskar Todt moved to Atchison, Kansas, in 1892
- ▶ Todt meets Amy Otis in 1893
- ▶ they marry in 1895
- ▶ they have a daughter they name **Greta** in July, 1897

Depending on the year in which they're doing this research, Agents may also discover that Oskar and Greta disappear in 1912. This is when Oskar tells Greta that he is secretly a time traveler and begins training her as a warrior and adventurer for the Fatherland.

It is up to the Agents as to how they stop Oskar and make sure that Edwin and Amy meet and fall in love on schedule. Draw on your knowledge of such classics as *Back to the Future*, handwaving as much of this as needed. You may want to have the players describe a movie montage, narrating one scene each where they restore the relationship. They may choose to discredit Oskar, reduce Edwin's drinking, or befriend Amy.

The reason middle-aged and elderly Todt detests the Agents, of course, is that they ruined his life by destroying his marriage to Amy. He has made sacrifices for his country and his ideals, but it made him bitter. Here in the late 19th century, Todt has no idea yet who the Agents are.

If the Agents kill Oskar they once again face paradox, this time with a Paradox test of Difficulty 6 / Loss 6 (because they've now met him twice before at older ages). They can kidnap, exile, or otherwise run him off in order to succeed. Oskar has a local gang of toughs, six drinking buddies who come to his aid if he is threatened. More importantly, Oskar's time traveling daughter, Greta, arrives from the parallel history to protect her potential father. Greta is a true threat, an alternate-future Amelia Earhart indoctrinated in Nazi propaganda and armed to the teeth.

Young Oberst Oskar Todt, Nazi Time Traveler

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 14

Offense: Scuffling 8 (2-2-2), Shooting 12 (3-3-3); Damage Modifier +1 (weighted walking stick), +1 (pistol)

Abilities: Tempus 12; Charm 2

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Extra Attack (cost 2), Oracle (cost 1), Technology (cost 2)

Misc: Stealth Modifier +3 (until noticed)

Enthusiastic Thugs

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 3 (Mook)

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +0; Damage Modifier -1 (fist), +0 or Stun 4 (brass knuckles), +1 (pistol)

Abilities: Athletics 6, Vehicles 3

Greta Todt, Alt-History Nazi Time Commando

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 15

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +3; Damage Modifier +0 (combat knife), +1 plus disintegration (Colt-Luger beam pistol)

Abilities: Tempus 18, Vehicles 12; Spying 1

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Help Yourself (cost 5), Technology (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Greta Todt resembles an Aryan Amelia Earhart. She is exquisitely competent and creative, girded for the battle of her life and ready to defend both her father and existence. Attempting to avoid paradox, she tries to fight the Agents without making her young father and mother aware of her existence.

Once Greta is defeated, Oskar is dealt with, and Amelia's parents both meet and show mutual interest, Amelia's Chronal Stability is returned to full and the paradoxometer drops to either 25% or 0% (depending on how much time is left in the playing slot). If you are ready to end, the Agents are successful and Amelia can officially be recruited. If you want another 20 minutes of play, proceed to Scene Five.

SCENE FIVE (OPTIONAL): OLD FRIENDS

Scene Type: Alternate

Lead-In: So Much for Father's Day

Lead-Out: Conclusion

Wherever the Agents and Amelia are when her parents' affection is back in place, a charming and friendly woman named **Jenabu Boro** strolls up. She is West African in descent (from Sierra Leone, like Kelfala) and accompanied by a slight, friendly South American man named **Alfredo Salazar**. Neither is armed. Amelia embraces Jenabu like a sister. It's clear to all Agents that Jenabu and Alfredo are not from this time period;

anyone with **Bureaucracy** recognizes them as fugitives from TimeWatch, former agents who are believed to have defected after sabotaging a mission that would have required them to instigate a historical genocide.

Jenabu Boro, Time Rebel

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 8

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier -1 (fists)

Abilities: Tempus 12; Reassurance 2

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Flashback (cost 5), Technology (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Alfredo Salazar, Time Rebel

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 1, Health 8

Offense: Scuffling +1, Shooting +1; Damage Modifier -1 (fists)

Abilities: Tempus 12; Charm 1

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Technology (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Amelia explains that she and Jenabu are like sisters, old and dear friends who have spent years together sharing confidences. This doesn't match any history the characters know. When the Agents object, Alfredo and Jenabu exchange a glance and suddenly two player characters (your choice) realize that they also are old friends with Alfredo and Jenabu, from their own youth before they joined TimeWatch.

What has occurred, of course, is that a few days from now both Jenabu and Alfredo go back in time to make dear friends with two player characters as they are growing up, thus ensuring that both rebels are trusted friends. Jenabu has already done this with Amelia. The two try to explain that they are in a group that wants to change time for the better, not enforce the horrors that history has inflicted on humanity. She makes an impassioned case for Amelia to join their group instead, to fight for what's right instead of what is "supposed" to happen. The Agents can make a counterargument, or attack Alfredo and Jenabu. Neither will fight to hurt any Agents, but instead try to escape with regrets — hoping to show by their actions that theirs is the superior moral and ethical choice.

SCENE SIX: CONCLUSION

Scene Type: Conclusion

Lead-Ins: So Much for Father's Day, Old Friends

Once Amelia makes up her mind as to which group to join (and hopefully it's TimeWatch), the paradoxometer drops to zero. Success! She thanks the Agents for their help and kindness in saving her, and officially joins the team.

Congratulations!

QUEEN OF THE NILE

By Corey Reid

The New Testament has disappeared, and along with it the entire time stream is becoming unstable. Whatever happened, it needs to be stopped.

OVERVIEW

TimeWatch Agents are dispatched to investigate who's interfering with the birth of Christ, only to discover the destruction of Christianity is just a side-effect of what's actually happening: a Gaulish druid, seeking to reverse the collapse of his nation, discovered he could go back in time and rescue his king. That led, obviously, to mammoths, rocket launchers, and superintelligent talking cats.

The Agents will have to find the moment when this druid started interfering and try to put things right. In their way is the greatest queen in history, an entire alternate history fighting for survival, and as we mentioned, a bunch of stampeding mammoths.

BACKGROUND

The Plot

Everything started in 36 BCE, when a nationalistic young druid named Divinorix discovered that if he meditated amongst the standing stones of Carnac, he could watch the stars shift. He found he was able to drift back in time and send his spirit soaring over the world. He saw the destruction of his nation's grand history when Caesar executed its king. Furious at the unfairness of it all and dreaming of a world ruled by the mighty Gauls, he sought back along Caesar's timeline and found a moment when the great general was alone and vulnerable: Alexandria in 48 BCE.

Caesar arrived there pursuing his rival, Pompey, only to discover that the young King Ptolemy had killed the Roman renegade. In our history, Ptolemy loses his nerve to Caesar and shortly thereafter his throne to his more ambitious and intelligent sister, Cleopatra. But Divinorix's time traveling spirit is able to enter into the mind of Ptolemy's adviser and he convinces the king to murder Caesar then and there.

He then leaves Alexandria and rushes to Rome to free Vercingetorix and restore his nation. All would have been perfect, had it not been for that darn Cleopatra. Freed of Roman oppression, her armies then rage across the world, and they conquer the Gauls instead.

Divinorix's first gambit, murdering Caesar, worked so well that he was confident more time travel would help defeat the Alexandrians. Although he struggled to find a solution (perhaps his rapidly deteriorating sanity had a part to play in that), he did attract the attention of Madame Percival, who appeared in guise of a witch and offered to supply the Gauls with mighty weapons.

But guns of limited ammunition, as terrifying to their users as to their targets, prove of little value. Divinorix presses



In some realities, Cleopatra's reign was long and glorious.

Percival for something grand, something his soldiers can use. She unwisely reaches back into the great past and brings forth a stampede of huge prehistoric beasts. It's impressive, but sadly for her their furious passage destroys her time machine.

A titanic war then erupts across Europe. The mammoths provide a great advantage, but Cleopatra's armies are led by canny generals, and the fighting goes on and on.

But as the Gauls learn how to properly manage their terrifying cavalry, they slowly force the Alexandrines back. Through Greece and Asia Minor and down through Syria, they drive towards the heart of Cleopatra's empire, the great city of Alexandria. Madame Percival delights in the bloodshed and dreams of getting her hands on the great treasures of Cleopatra.

Cleopatra the Great is at this point nearly 70 years old and has been empress longer than most of her subjects have been alive. She also has a very curious adviser, one that few of her court even know about: Bastipuss, a sleek, attractive, fastidious black cat that has come from the future to advise the elderly queen against the machinations of Madame Percival.

But even Bastipuss' cleverness is insufficient to resist the mammoth-mounted Gauls (some still equipped with futuristic weapons), and now after 10 years of war against the tremendous beasts, Cleopatra faces the collapse of her mighty Empire. Alexandrine forces withdraw slowly southwards, driven ever further back by the Gauls.

On their way to Egypt, Divinorix's army razes Bethlehem, killing virtually everyone in the city and crushing it to rubble. Bad timing, that.

And about a week later, the Gauls will have advanced to the walls of Alexandria, and the final battle for the fate of the Western world will be joined.

Supporting Characters:

Fictional

These are people entirely made up for the purposes of this adventure.

Divinorix is about 50 years old in 7 BCE (so he is about 20 in 36 BCE when he performs his time travel ritual) and now leads the Gaulish nation. His time traveling has not been kind to his sanity, and he is prone to violent outbursts, reveling in destruction and bloodshed. He is fanatically devoted to the idea of Gaulish supremacy and will do anything in his power to prevent the collapse of his beloved people.

Divinorix

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 4

Offense: Scuffling +1; Damage Modifier -1 (fists)

Abilities: Tempus 6

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2); Magic (cost 2)

Madame Percival is a time traveling mercenary who has inadvertently stranded herself here. She is a short, rotund woman of disheveled appearance who delights in both historical treasures and great quantities of chaos. She cackles and sneers like a crazy lady, but she is very sharp. All she really wants right now is another time machine so she can get out of this situation.

Madame Percival

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 6

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +2; Damage Modifier +2 (beam pistol)

Abilities: Tempus 10

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2); Magic (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2

Bastipuss is a fastidious talking cat from a future descended from the Alexandrian empire. He has certainly come to enjoy life in a wealthy empire that worships cats. He is very fond of Queen Cleopatra and is one of her most trusted (though secret) advisers. His personal affection for her, however, is nothing compared to his determination to protect what he believes is the "proper" future, in which Alexandria, not Rome, forms the foundation of Western culture.

His powers enable him to time travel and to knock out electronic devices, and he is crafty enough to use time travel to prepare surprises for anyone who tries to interfere in his plans. But he has no effective means of attacking and so always works through indirection.

Bastipuss

Defense: Hit Threshold 5, Health 3

Offense: None (although his claws could probably take out a commoner)

Abilities: Tempus 15

Special Abilities: Clock Out (cost 2), Electronic Interference (cost 2), Flashback (cost 5), Oracle (cost 1), Teleport (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2, Stealth Modifier +3

Factual

These are "real" people, as in you can look them up in Wikipedia if you want more details.

Cleopatra is brilliant, well educated, and determined to see her beloved kingdom anchor an empire of tolerance and glory. She is not driven by ideas of racial purity or fanatical fervor; she is pragmatic and compassionate and totally convinced that she is a god and thus can do whatever she wants. Until the arrival of Divinorix's stupendous beasts, nothing had ever troubled this belief.

Vercingetorix is a Gaulish general who is not much more than a MacGuffin in this story. In the Divinorix-adjusted history, he unites the Gauls, defeats the Romans, and dies a hero, leaving Divinorix in charge.

Julius Caesar is, in 48 BCE, an experienced leader and politician in his 50s. He is a legendary womanizer, ruthless and courageous and very very suspicious of everyone around him. If he gets to meet Cleopatra, he's going to like her a lot.

Timeline

Here's a quick timeline of what's happened — first the actual history, and then what the Agents discover when they arrive. Remember that BCE dates go down, not up. That can be confusing.

Actual History

52 BCE: Julius Caesar defeats the Gauls at Alesia, takes Vercingetorix prisoner.

48 BCE: Julius Caesar pursues his rival Pompey to Egypt (ruled by Ptolemy) and meets Cleopatra (Ptolemy's sister).

47 BCE: Cleopatra and Caesar defeat Ptolemy, and she becomes queen of Egypt.

46 BCE: Julius Caesar returns to Rome and holds a triumph in which he executes Vercingetorix.

44 BCE: Julius Caesar is murdered in Rome; Cleopatra becomes involved with Marcus Antonius and the struggle for control of Rome.

30 BCE: Cleopatra dies (suicide? murder?) after being defeated by Octavian (later Augustus Caesar), who then founds the Roman Empire.

Divinorix's Adjusted History:

48 BCE: Julius Caesar is killed in Egypt by King Ptolemy, on the suggestion of the time traveling druid Divinorix. Cleopatra never meets Caesar.

47 BCE: Divinorix frees Vercingetorix from Rome. Meanwhile, Cleopatra has defeated her brother Ptolemy and is now queen of Egypt. Deprived of its greatest generals, Rome falls into disarray. Marcus Antonius goes to Egypt and becomes

Cleopatra's king. They set up Alexandria as a successor to Rome and set about conquering the Mediterranean. Antonius dies before this is completed, and Cleopatra rules as lone empress.

36 BCE: Divinorix performs his time traveling and then wakes up in a Gaulish-dominated northern Europe.

26 BCE: The Gauls are struggling once again, this time against an even wealthier and better-organized foe: the Alexandrians. Divinorix fools with his time traveling and attracts the attention of Madame Percival. Sensing opportunities for wealth and power, she supports the Gauls with weapons from the future.

15 BCE: Divinorix convinces Percival to bring out some mammoths, which she does, but destroys her time machine in the process. Vercingetorix having passed away in the meantime, Divinorix leads the Gaulish army to victory after victory.

10 BCE: Bastipuss arrives from the Alexandrian future to advise Cleopatra and help her find a way to hold off the Gauls.

7 BCE: The Gaulish army plows through Judea on its way to Alexandria. TimeWatch Agents arrive.

Research Terms

“Cleopatra”, “Vercingetorix”, “Julius Caesar”, “Alexandria”, “Druids”, “Ptolemaic Egypt”, “Alesia”, “Carnac”

THE MISSION

Briefing

The New Testament's disappearance is evidence of an enormous temporal adjustment. Someone has interfered with human history in a huge way. Many have tried, but the rise of major religions is a difficult thing to mess with. And the subsequent winking-out of nearly all of known Western culture only reinforces the idea that whatever happened, it's huge.

Of course the Nativity is a well-visited moment in the past, and there have been other issues dealt with by TimeWatch at the birth of the founder of Christianity. The assumption at TimeWatch Citadel is that this is another attempt to destroy Christianity and that the answers will be found in Bethlehem in 7 BCE. The Agents are prepared and dispatched to find out what adjustments were made at this time.

They expect to find an overcrowded inn and a stable out back with some funny guests hanging around, a few sheep, the usual crowd. Instead, they find nothing but smoldering ruins. The little town of Bethlehem has been thoroughly destroyed. Whoever sought to wipe out Christianity, they didn't take any chances. If there is a star hanging above this stable, it has been rendered invisible by the immense clouds of smoke filling the sky as the world burns.

Likely Adventure Path

The Agents arrive in Bethlehem and discover it recently destroyed by a massive Gaulish army mounted on mammoths.

They save a talking house cat from death at the hands of some superstitious Gaulish soldiers, and it introduces itself as Bastipuss, chief adviser to Cleopatra, empress of Alexandria.

The Agents go with Bastipuss to meet his legendary mistress and discover an alternate history in which Alexandria rules the world, not Rome. They learn that the invading Gauls at the doorstep of Alexandria have only recently acquired these mammoths and go in search of the source of this obvious temporal mix-up.

Amongst the Gauls they discover a rogue time traveler, Madame Percival, stranded by the destruction of her time machine (stampeded by mammoths). She will be keen to get her hands on another time machine and at the same time may warn them that Cleopatra and Bastipuss are not exactly their friends.

They will learn that Bastipuss is from the Alexandrian timeline and is seeking to preserve that. They will have to get past both him and Percival in order to restore their own timeline (where Rome rules, and Cleopatra suffers an ignominious death). They may have to kidnap the younger Cleopatra and sneak her past guards and assassins both in order to get her in front of Julius Caesar.

Scenes

Battle in Bethlehem

Scene Type: Core

Lead-In: Briefing

Lead-Outs: The Rendezvous, The Empire That Never Was: Cleopatra's Alexandria

This is the opening scene. The Agents have arrived in Bethlehem, expecting to find some interference going on with the Nativity. “Some interference” turns out to be “Bethlehem's been recently destroyed by a rampaging army.” The city is a smoldering ruin, with bodies everywhere, not a soul left alive, it seems. This was not just some battle; this was not just your run-of-the-mill sacking of an enemy town. Buildings have been crushed as if by giants, blown to smithereens. Craters pit the streets. Bodies lie piled where they fell: women, children, elderly. No soldiers. No defenders. The city looks like a WWII ruin rather than something from the classical period.

Before anyone can settle into a serious investigation of these troubling ruins, a small black house cat comes tearing down what's left of the street. It stops a few yards in front of them and says quite clearly, “We have to get out of here, *now!*”

Any further discussion has to be put on hold as with a deafening trumpet blast, a nearby ruin explodes, bricks and smoldering planks flying, and through the wall comes a gigantic beast, all tusks and fur and massiveness. Atop the enormous creature ride tall, pale-skinned men dressed in Roman armor but with long, wild hair and shouting in Gaulish. They see the cat and one of them raises a shoulder-mounted rocket launcher.

“Kill the beast!” his fellows cry.

He fires; the mammoth charges. The fight is on.

Gaulish Soldiers (6)

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 3

Offense: Scuffling +2, Shooting +0; Damage Modifier +1 (sword), RPG: annihilation (Point-Blank), 2d6 + 9 (Close); see *Explosion Damage* on p. 100 for details

Abilities: Athletics 6

Woolly Mammoth

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Armor 2, Health 40

Offense: Scuffling +2; Damage Modifier +6 (crush), +4 (tusks), +3 (trunk — 2 Point-Blank targets with one attack)

Abilities: Athletics 16, Tempus 10

Special Abilities: Strength (cost 0); the trunk attack can target more than one creature at once — roll a separate test for each target

Misc: Stealth Modifier -4

The RPG has only one rocket, and the soldiers fire it at the cat, much less worried about these strangely dressed civilians than a talking cat.

The talking cat is of course Bastipuss. He's nimble and has a pretty good force field for defense, so he stays clear of the Agents until the rocket goes off. Most likely helpful players suffer a Near hit rather than Close.

Once it's fired, five of the soldiers jump down from the mammoth and think to mop up the rest with their swords, while the sixth remains up top to guide the mammoth if required. They are here to kill the Agents, but should the battle go against them they attempt to flee.

Once the soldiers are dealt with, the Agents can begin trying to put together what's happening. It can be figured out pretty easily that a massive Gaulish army recently ripped through here, as impossible as that seems. From coins, building design, or other evidence scattered about, it may be possible to determine that Bethlehem and all of Judea appear to be part of an Alexandrine Empire ruled by Empress Cleopatra, rather than Augustus Caesar of Rome. And there's the mammoth and the rocket launcher.

The soldiers were instructed to remain here and kill anyone who appeared. When Bastipuss saw them, he at first thought they might be the Agents and, somewhat desperate, spoke to them. Bad idea. The soldiers' instructions came from Madame Percival, who awaits their report on the outskirts of the ruined town. If the Agents kill all the soldiers, they can find a note from Madame Percival, written in Gaulish.

Core Clues

A massive Gaulish army destroyed virtually all of Judea about a week ago on its way to besieging Alexandria. (**History (Ancient), Military Tactics, Intimidation, Charm**)

Rocket launchers and mammoths don't belong here. (**History (Ancient), History (Contemporary), Paradox Prevention**)

This here cat is talking. (No ability required)

Extra Clues

The anachronistic weapons and mounts are from a Gaulish leader named Madame Percival, who is waiting at the rendezvous for these soldiers to report. (**Intimidation, Notice**)

Cleopatra appears to be in charge, but she ought to be long dead by this time. (**History (Ancient), Paradox**

Prevention, Trivia)

The soldiers don't know there's anything strange about mammoth-riding, but they are pretty excited about the crazy weapons Madame Percival has found for them.

Assuming the heroes make friends with the talking cat, Bastipuss tells the party that the problem is that the Gaulish army has anachronistic weapons (including, obviously mammoths), and that if they will come with him to meet with Queen Cleopatra, she will help them understand what's going on.

So the most likely outcome is the Agents go with the talking cat to meet Cleopatra, but they may also go to the rendezvous if they got the tip-off about Madame Percival. Bastipuss may come with them if they spend a **Charm** or similar ability point, otherwise he assures them of a warm reception should they choose to visit Alexandria.

The Rendezvous

Scene Type: Core

Lead-In: Battle in Bethlehem

Lead-Outs: Who's in Charge?, The Empire That Never Was: Cleopatra's Alexandria

If the Agents decide to confront the mysterious Madame Percival, they find her waiting a safe distance from the intended battle. She recognizes the Agents unless they are disguised, for this version of Madame Percival has already met them — that's why she sent a bunch of soldiers with a rocket launcher to kill them before they could cause any trouble!

It is almost certain at this point that Madame Percival has already met the Agents, or at least knows who they are. She wants them killed immediately and directs her bodyguards (another batch of Gaulish soldiers) to do so. These soldiers don't have an RPG, but they do have a couple of submachine guns. And axes and swords and stuff.

But Madame Percival has little faith in even her faithful minions, and she always has a way out.

In this case, it's a futuristic one-way matter transporter that she can use to have herself zapped from anywhere back to the transporter's other "end" (currently with Divinorix in the Gaulish army). She presses the button on a little jury-rigged control box, and glowing fans open up around her and whoosh! She disappears.

She makes with the disappearing as soon as it becomes clear her soldiers are outmatched.

Core Clues

Madame Percival is a time traveler. (**Notice, Timecraft**)

Extra Clues

Madame Percival is supplying a huge Gaulish army with anachronistic weapons. (**Authority, Charm, Intimidation, Taunt**)

The mammoths were brought forth in Carnac, eight years ago, in 15 BCE (**Authority, Charm, Intimidation, Taunt**)

Possible Clue

Should Madame Percival escape, a **Timecraft** or **Science!** spend in the vicinity of her disappearance reveals her destination — outside Alexandria.

If Bastipuss is here he again encourages the Agents to come meet with his famous queen, explaining that she has a vast library (maybe you heard of it) and much knowledge about what's going on. Alternatively, they may follow Percival to the Gaulish army, or realize they need to go to Carnac in 15 BCE.

Who's in Charge?

Scene Type: Core

Lead-In: The Rendezvous

Lead-Outs: The Empire That Never Was: Cleopatra's Alexandria, Amongst the Menhirs, The Defense of Cleopatra's Needle

At the heart of the Gaulish army is its famous druid general, Divinorix, and his close adviser, the scheming time traveler Madame Percival. They are having a whale of a time conquering the world with mammoths and rocket launchers, and nobody's going to tell them to stop. They're now encamped in front of the eastern approach to Alexandria, preventing any land traffic in or out.

Their vast army is organized around its enormous riding beasts. Each mammoth is surrounded a dozen men forming the squad that supports the animal. These men gather food and tend to the beast, and in battle or on the march, they ride its broad woolly back, fire their weapons, and guide the animal's movements.

Each squad also has a few anachronistic weapons: WWII bazookas, AK-47s, miniguns, Napoleonic cannons, neural disruptors, etc. No two squads have the same weaponry. All this stuff has been provided by Madame Percival. In many cases, the weapons are low on ammunition, and at this point the army is saving up for the big assault on Alexandria.

The Gauls are secure in their formidableness, and security is light. **Unobtrusiveness** makes it easy to walk through the disorganized camp, or **Authority** or **Disguise** might accomplish the same sort of thing. Closer to the command central, the tents get bigger, the armor shinier, and the guards less sloppy.

Divinorix and Madame Percival have installed themselves in a temple overlooking the Canopic Gate of Alexandria. Here they prepare for their army's assault on Alexandria and live in spectacular splendor. Divinorix is unconcerned about any potential threats, convinced that Gaul's historic ascension is at hand, but Madame Percival knows the Agents are around and will likely be trouble. She has prepared Divinorix for their arrival with a force to hold them prisoner.

Core Clues

The mammoths appeared in Carnac eight years ago, in 15 BCE. (**Charm, High Society, Taunt**)

Madame Percival tells them that if they want to know more about all the anachronistic stuff they should go trouble Cleopatra. (**Charm, High Society, Authority** — a point of **Falsehood Detection** here reveals she's not exactly being honest with them)

Extra Clues

Most of these weapons look very low on ammunition. (**Military Tactics, Notice**)

Empress Cleopatra (who should be dead) has ruled the Alexandrine Empire for forty years now. (**Charm, High Society**) The Gauls were originally united forty years ago upon the escape and return of King Vercingetorix. (This should never have happened because Vercingetorix should have died a prisoner in Rome in 46 BCE.) (**Charm, High Society**)

Divinorix arranged the death of Julius Caesar prior to the execution of Vercingetorix, thus saving the Gaulish king. (**Taunt**)

The anachronistic stuff *really* came from Madame Percival's efforts. (**Intimidation, Taunt**)

Divinorix is unlikely to tell anyone that he engineered the escape of Vercingetorix by traveling back in time and killing Julius Caesar. This is his great secret, that only Madame Percival knows. Thus, only an extra spend on **Taunt** can reveal this clue at this point.

Madame Percival is very keen to steal one of the Agents' autochrons. Their command tent is surrounded by crack troops who await her command.

If they only get the core clues out of this scene, they have to choose between going to Carnac or Alexandria. If they successfully saw through Madame Percival's bluff about the source of the gear, they should realize the secret lies at Carnac.

The Empire That Never Was: Cleopatra's Alexandria

Scene Type: Core

Lead-Ins: Battle in Bethlehem, The Rendezvous, Who's in Charge?

Lead-Outs: The Defense of Cleopatra's Needle, Amongst the Menhirs

The Agents are invited to visit Cleopatra by Bastipuss. Should they take him up on that invitation, they see one of the great marvels of non-history.

Alexandria in this 7 BCE is the greatest city on Earth, a glorious testament to the wealth and stability of its empire. The city Cleopatra inherited decades ago has been expanded and made ever more wondrous. The Lighthouse of Alexandria, known as the Pharos, one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, has been improved upon, casting its beckoning light far out across the waters, and the paved streets of this city glitter with sculptures, temples, and glorious architecture on all sides. Most of which glorifies the seemingly eternal god-queen who has ruled this city and much of the known world for longer than most of her subjects have been alive.

Time in Alexandria is a chance to dazzle the Agents with the glories of Cleopatra's reign. Her empire stretches across Parthia to what is now modern-day India, and her famous libraries fill hall after hall alongside the grandeur of her palace. Cleopatra has assembled the greatest thinkers and writers of the West here and some of those from the East as well. If restoring the time stream gives your players a sense of loss at having to destroy what Cleopatra has spent her life building, so much the better.

Cleopatra's palace is of course the grandest and most glorious of all structures here. The elderly queen is still a hard-working monarch, but she lives in unimaginable luxury, surrounded by thousands of fanatically loyal soldiers.

Not just anyone can get to see Cleopatra, of course. But it just so happens that while the army of Divinorix gathers outside her gates, she is holding a public event to boost morale — a thrilling chariot race!

Cleopatra at this time is in her sixties, a small, delicately built, clear-eyed woman who has seen it all. She has murdered virtually every relative she ever had, including some of her own children (they probably had it coming, the scamps), raised and led armies, built cities and roads, and ruled the lives of millions of people over Asia, Africa, and Europe.

She also has a talking cat, our friend Bastipuss. Bastipuss is an uplifted house cat from the 2300s in a timeline where the Alexandrian Empire ruled much of the world for centuries. He is very fond of his famous queen (she's even more famous in his timeline, of course), and is determined to keep her empire from destruction at the hands of Madame Percival and her pesky mammoths.

Note that Bastipuss will not realize automatically that the Agents are attempting to restore a *different* timeline than his — he thinks the Alexandrian Empire is the correct timeline, and is trying to stop Madame Percival. Once he discovers that the Agents are attempting to restore some *crazy Roman* Empire, he becomes their enemy.

Agents can get information by chatting with Cleopatra and perhaps her court, or by enlisting her glorious library and all the mighty thinkers assembled there. Winning the chariot race would sure impress her.

Core Clues

The Gauls acquired these mammoths eight years ago, in Northern Gaul. (**Research, High Society**)

Extra Clues

Vercingetorix escaped Rome and died in battle in Gaul, fifteen years ago. (This should never have happened because Vercingetorix should have died a prisoner in Rome in 46 BCE.) (**Bureaucracy, Research**)

Cleopatra never met Julius Caesar because her little brother Ptolemy XIII murdered him in 48 BCE. (**Charm, Bureaucracy, High Society, Research**)

Alert Agents who get the extra clue referring to Caesar may realize that this represents the earliest moment of time disruption. But it is not a moment Cleopatra regards with any importance; in her memory, 48 BCE is the year her younger brother pissed off Rome by killing a couple of its generals, and then the Romans turned on each other and never recovered. The name Julius Caesar is known to her, as the Roman who first conquered the Gauls, but beyond that, he is little regarded.

Remember: What actually happened (in our time stream) is that Caesar arrived in Alexandria in 48 BCE, pursuing his rival Pompey. He was greeted by King Ptolemy XIII (Cleopatra's younger brother, bitter rival, and, uh, husband) who offered as a gift the severed head of Pompey. Instead of gratitude, Caesar flew into a rage at the thought of a non-Roman killing a Roman in such a disgraceful fashion. Things got a little tense, but it all really went downhill for poor Ptolemy when Cleopatra, whom he had thus far kept away from the Roman visitor, managed to sneak into the palace (some say she had herself rolled up in a carpet) and chatted up Caesar. They

got together and killed Ptolemy, and Cleopatra was queen of Egypt and shortly thereafter bore Caesar his only son. All of this was what led up to the polarization of the Roman Republic and Caesar's murder, resulting in the formation of the Roman Empire.

The Defense of Cleopatra's Needle

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction / Alternate

Lead-Ins: The Empire That Never Was: Cleopatra's Alexandria, Who's in Charge?

Lead-Out: Save Caesar

At some point Divinorix and Madame Percival give the order to attack, and Cleopatra's beloved city falls under assault by mammoths, rocket launchers, and a whole host of weapons from every imaginable time period. They focus their attack on a great symbol of Cleopatra's enduring rule: a stele, a huge stone "needle" she raised forty years ago when she first conquered the city.

Of course this should happen while the Agents are in Alexandria talking with Cleopatra and Bastipuss. The Gauls run out of most of their futuristic weapons shortly after breaching the walls, but the battle should be spectacular and explosive. Giant statues toppling into the streets, great temples erupting in flames, crowds running screaming in all directions — do not stint on the special effects.

The primary battle takes place upon the great Canopic Way, the massive avenue that bisects Alexandria from east to west. Mammoths come charging down from the gate and are met by the Alexandrian forces at the huge stele celebrating the forty years of their beloved queen's rule.

Whether the Agents are among the Gauls (who wouldn't want to ride a mammoth into battle?) or the Alexandrines (defending Cleopatra) or just scrambling, trying to survive, what's most important is that at this point they see the stele and understand what it signifies: that Cleopatra never met Julius Caesar.

Alternate Core Clue

Cleopatra conquered the city in 47 BCE, *after* Julius Caesar was murdered by her brother. This is the earliest time-manipulation the Agents have yet come across. (**Trivia, Anthropology, History (Ancient)**)

Extra Clues

The Gauls are out of ammunition. (**Military Tactics, Science**)

Amongst the Menhirs

Scene Type: Core

Lead-Ins: Who's in Charge?, The Empire That Never Was: Cleopatra's Alexandria

Lead-Out: Murder Most Unfair

Upon discovering that the mammoths appeared in Gaul eight years ago (in 15 BCE), the Agents will no doubt wish to observe how this happened. At Carnac in Brittany, they can find the standing stones — five rows of towering menhirs carved with mystical runes, stretching for kilometers across rocky plains overlooking the ocean.

Should the Agents find a way to arrive here at the moment the mammoths emerge, they find the rows of menhirs lined

with robed figures chanting, desperate prisoners chained to every one of the thousands of stones. At one end of the long rows stands Madame Percival's time machine: a sort of tall, delicate wirework structure that gives off a pale blue glow — that glow reaches out to the stones and seems to direct the energy somehow. Stars wheel and shift overhead, and knives flash and with a massive sacrifice of blood; the weave of time is pulled apart and the earth shudders. And keeps shuddering, quaking beneath the sudden rush of thundering feet as between the rows appear, as if out of dark mists, immense woolly beasts, enraged and furious as they charge into a world that had long forgotten them.

And trample that delicate wirework structure into so much twisted pipe-cleaner mash. Madame Percival is notably not impressed.

Core Clues

Investigation of the stones reveals that they were used in a similar fashion twenty years before, in 36 BCE. (**Timecraft**)

Extra Clues

Divinorix can tell them that step one in rescuing Vercingetorix was killing Julius Caesar. (**Charm, Reassurance**)

Stopping this ritual accomplishes nothing, other than further adjusting the alternate timeline. The Gauls are crushed by the advancing Alexandrines and Cleopatra's empire rules unchallenged for centuries, ushering in a shining age of progress and tolerance. The good guys win, basically, but the time stream is not restored. Christianity still never happens, and the world is still out of balance. They also attract the attention of Madame Percival, who was really enjoying stomping around with mammoths and rocket launchers.

The Agents must discover that the current ritual was not the first, and pursue Divinorix's initial foray into time travel.

Murder Most Unfair

Scene Type: Core

Lead-Ins: Amongst the Menhirs

Lead-Out: Saving Caesar

If the Agents have figured out that Divinorix made an earlier time travel, they have to go back in time to 36 BCE in Carnac to witness what happened.

They find the menhirs almost completely empty, isolated rows of stone on a dark hillside. Only Divinorix himself stands amongst the ancient stones, praying for a solution to the collapse of his once-mighty people. He cuts himself, spraying blood across a great stone, and collapses.

Moments later he awakes, laughing delightedly. In that moment of unconsciousness, Divinorix's spirit traveled back to 48 BCE, to possess the body of Ptolemy's adviser Pothinus. He convinced Ptolemy to kill Julius Caesar and then rushed to Rome and freed Vercingetorix.

This is certainly a place where Madame Percival would show up to protect this version of history.

Core Clues

Divinorix traveled back to 48 BCE to kill Julius Caesar (**Timecraft, Charm**)

Extra Clues

This is the only clue that matters now.

Save Caesar

Scene Type: Time Repair / Antagonist Reaction

Lead-Ins: Murder Most Unfair, The Defense of Cleopatra's Needle

Lead-Out: Reward for a Queen

Bastipuss realizes that the Agents are not trying to restore *his* timeline, and he scoots back to 48 BCE to try and interfere in things.

If he can keep Cleopatra from meeting Julius Caesar, his timeline wins. Without that fateful meeting and all that follows, the Roman Empire never arises. So even stopping Divinorix back in Carnac won't restore history. That darn cat.

Alexandria in 48 BCE is nowhere near as impressive as it is at the height of Cleopatra's noncanonical reign, but it's still a hell of a city, and it's still being besieged, this time by Cleopatra herself. The army of the 20-year-old princess is camped exactly where Divinorix and Madame Percival were (will be), and she is debating how to blow down the gates and kick her annoying little brother's butt. And then a lovely black cat shows up and tells her exactly what she should do.

If nobody interferes, Cleopatra's assault on Alexandria results in Caesar's death at Ptolemy's panicky hands anyway and Bastipuss wins.

In order for history to be restored, Cleopatra needs to be gotten into the palace in Alexandria in time to meet Julius Caesar before Divinorix/Pothinus convinces Ptolemy to kill the Roman general. Should the Agents interfere with his efforts, Bastipuss finds other ways to stop things. He alerts the palace guards, hisses menacingly at cat-worshipping Egyptians, but he refrains from revealing his abilities to anyone other than the Agents (or Cleopatra) for as long as possible. He is also not a killer and will not under any circumstances resort to lethal force against the Agents.

The Agents can try to convince the princess to work with them, or maybe they can kidnap her, stuff her into a rolled-up carpet, and drag her into the palace (it worked in Plutarch's version).

Should the Agents succeed, Bastipuss sadly accepts the much less glorious timeline that results, and he fades away.

Reward for a Queen

Scene Type: Conclusion

Lead-In: Save Caesar

So Bastipuss accepts a dimmer, grimmer history, but he sure wishes his queen got a better deal than being forced to commit suicide after the destruction of all her dreams. Forty-year-old Cleopatra, betrayed by Marcus Antonius and imprisoned by Augustus Caesar, experienced and clever, speaking a dozen languages and familiar with half the world, makes for a great TimeWatch agent, thus solving one of the great locked-room mysteries of all history — how *did* Cleopatra smuggle poison into her prison? Well, of course, she didn't. She and Bastipuss were taken to the TimeWatch Citadel, where they fight temporal crime with the best of them.

THE ONCE AND FUTURE PHOTOBOMBER

By Heather Albano

A time traveling art thief accidentally causes his wife to never be born. After trying and failing to undo the problem, he uses the stolen art to attract TimeWatch's attention, in the hope that they will figure out how to restore her. This is a small-scale, intimate adventure. It's not the universe at stake, but the lives and loves of a couple of people.

OVERVIEW

TimeWatch has noticed that a 1998 art studio is selling copies of paintings that famously went missing in heists both previously and centuries later — each altered to include the face of a dark-eyed, salt-and-pepper-haired man. The Agents discover the copies to be the work of **Arthur Kim**, who is deliberately photobombing these paintings in order to get TimeWatch's attention.

Arthur used time travel to collect for himself paintings that famously went missing in a couple of unsolved heists — but something went awry, and when he came home from the expedition his beloved wife, **Maliha**, was gone. Not as in “stepped out for a moment,” or even as in “ran off with the fencing instructor,” but as in “never existed ever.” Whoops!

Frantic, he recklessly traveled back through time to visit the heists and figure out what happened, but rather than reverse the tragedy he only managed to reduce his chronal stability and wreck his time machine. Now, stuck as a gallery owner in 1990s Maine, he is willing to surrender and confess to his crimes if only TimeWatch will help him restore his wife.

The mission is straightforward as far as it goes: find the change that erased Maliha from the time stream, and reverse it. However, it turns out to be more complicated. Maliha's ancestor was killed because of Arthur's interference in a heist, but simply preventing her death won't bring Maliha back to life. While the Agents struggle with that, they will find a kid named **Tony** who's determined to “rescue” his personal hero, Arthur, and keep TimeWatch from grabbing him. Finally, once restored, Maliha turns out to be not so much a loving wife as a formidable career criminal with plenty of backup plans for getting away.

BACKGROUND

The Plot

Arthur Kim and his wife Maliha came up with a very clever idea for time travel: to show up at the scene of famous unsolved art heists — as the heist is in progress. Using advanced technology common to their time of origin (the year 2507) the idea was to accost the thieves as they finish, and acquire for themselves the famous never-recovered art the thieves have just stolen.

It was a foolproof scheme. The thieves had already done the hard work. Because the crimes were never solved, they were not changing history, so they figured there'd be little

risk of attracting TimeWatch's attention. And they certainly weren't too worried about local law enforcement — what were the thieves gonna do, call the cops?

But tragedy struck. During the second of the two heists (one in 2231 and one in 1990), Arthur unknowingly caused the death of one of the thieves — the getaway driver, **Aleisha Washington** — by causing the getaway car to crash. He got home with his haul of stolen art, and Maliha was gone. Aleisha was her great-great-great-whatever-grandmother.

Arthur, once he realized what had happened, rushed back in time to the first heist: on an asteroid in the year 2231, and found nothing but a strange young man demanding Arthur pay attention to him. He decided to go back to 1988, a few years previous to the second heist, to give himself more time to find out what might have happened, but either due to his loss of chronal stability, or just a fault in the time machine, he accidentally jumped to 1992 — two years *after* the heist, and far too late to change the outcome.

Worse yet, his time machine failed on this effort, and now Arthur was trapped, knowing he'd erased his beloved wife from existence, but with no way to fix it.

But he did have a bunch of paintings. He'd never unloaded his haul from the two heists, and so he hit on the idea of photobombing the anachronistic paintings to see if that would attract the attention of time travelers who might help him.

Arthur wants TimeWatch to restore his wife. He says he's willing to go to jail to save Maliha, and that is true, but he's also counting on his younger self thinking fast (as usual) and putting himself first (as usual) and thereby escaping to rejoin his restored wife and enjoy their art in the restored timeline. Arthur wants to have his cake and eat it too.

One of the times Arthur tried to stop his younger self, twelve-year-old Tony Kiprotich caught a glimpse of the two (or possibly three) of him, understood that time travel was possible, and within seven years (because he's a hotshot mechanical genius) figured out how to build his own time machine. Now he trails around the space-time continuum after Arthur, not wanting the art, mostly wanting Arthur's approval and for him to maybe sign a T-shirt or something. (Think of Tony as a cross between young Tony Stark and the more extreme kind of cosplayer fan trailing around a con after their idol. He should start as comic relief, but end with pathos leaking through.)

Supporting Characters:

Arthur Kim — quick thinker; arrogant enough to believe he can overcome fate even with his older self taking increasingly desperate measures to prevent him; self-absorbed enough not to understand what Tony wants from him. Excellent artist. Self-aware enough to admit to the Agents, when explaining that his younger self won't listen to him, “I'm kind of an asshole.”

Arthur Kim

Defense: Hit Threshold 3, Health 5

Offense: Scuffling 6 (1□ 2□ 1-2), Shooting 8 (1-2-1-2-2); Damage Modifier -2 (fist)

Abilities: Tempus 5

Maliha Kim — an excellent shot and an expert in time machines. She honestly cares about the art; it is possible to rattle her by destroying one of her treasures. What she doesn't care so much about is her husband.

She has a number of time travel devices she keeps at the ready, including a temporal grenade that triggers a D4/L4 Chronal Stability test to anyone within Near range when it goes off, and a nasty-looking raygun that not only causes damage but reduces a target's Athletics by 2 with every successful hit. She's got a short-range travel device as well so she can occasionally double up and assist herself.

Maliha Kim

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 5

Offense: Scuffling 9 (1□2□1□2-3), Shooting 10 (1-1-2-2-3-3); Damage Modifier +2 plus paralysis (Gendite 47 Para-ray), temporal grenade

Abilities: Tempus 10

Special Abilities: Destabilize (cost 4 — temporal grenade), Help Yourself (cost 5)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +2

Aleisha Washington — tough exterior; thick skin grown out of necessity; needs to learn to value herself enough to not stay in relationships where she is mistreated; high Vehicles and Tinkering ratings.

Tony Kiprotich — lonely insecure rich kid genius who imprinted on Arthur like a baby bird.

His time machine is sort of like a “chopper” with flames and the sort of stuff a nineteen year old thinks is cool. There's a gun mounted on it that can occasionally fling a target through time.

Tony Kiprotich

Defense: Hit Threshold 4, Health 4

Offense: Scuffling 6 (1□2□1-2), Shooting 8 (1-1-2-2-2); Damage Modifier +1 plus Exile (raygun)

Abilities: Tempus 8

Special Abilities: Exile (cost 2 — raygun), Extra Action (cost 2)

Misc: Alertness Modifier +1

Timeline

From Arthur's point of view:

2507: He and Maliha scheme to use time travel to acquire great works of art.

2231: Arthur goes to the Googlezon Asteroid Five Art Collection and interrupts the theft of several paintings.

1990: Arthur goes to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and interrupts another theft.

2507: Arthur comes home and discovers Maliha has been erased.

2231: Arthur goes again to the Googlezon heist and encounters Tony but doesn't see anything that could have caused his wife to disappear.

1992: Arthur mistakenly travels to 1992, and his time machine breaks down. He spends years creating and selling his photobombed images, hoping someone will contact him.

Research

“Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum 1990 robbery”, “Ogunquit tourism” (the GM should feel free to replace “Ogunquit” with whatever vacation spot they prefer), “Boston Combat Zone”

THE MISSION

Briefing

Briefing Officer Thomas Wu is middle-aged, balding, invariably dressed in a suit and tie, and always seems to be fighting off an imminent headache. He presents himself as a Phil Coulson type — the long-suffering handler who has to ride herd on the extraordinary but unpredictable field agents — but the careful observer recognizes this as an act. Wu's eyes are both diamond-sharp and ice cold. He cares very little for the human cost of the missions he coordinates, whether said cost is inflicted on his agents or on anyone else, and he is completely willing to manipulate his people for the greater good. He's Mycroft Holmes pretending to be Phil Coulson, because observation has shown him that people respond better to that mask.

He shows the team images of six paintings. Agents with **History (Contemporary)** should be able to identify *The Storm on the Sea of Galilee*, *Chez Tortoni*, and *The Concert*, stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in 1990. Agents with **History (Future)** should be able to identify *Roadrage*, *Rising Waters*, and *Three Men in a Suborbital Skimmer to Say Nothing of the Dog* stolen from the Googlezon Asteroid Five Art Collection in 2231. Agents with **Notice** spot that when the images are compared side by side with the originals, each has a face altered to look like the same dark-eyed, salt-and-pepper-haired man. It's subtle, such that the owners of these copies wouldn't be likely to notice, but becomes more obvious the more copies you see side-by-side with their originals.

“So there are copies of paintings, subtly photobombed, owned legally, by people who bought them knowing they were copies of famous art — so what?” Wu says rhetorically, then answering his own question: “So what is that these copies were purchased in Ogunquit, Maine, in 1998. And while it is possible that the person making subtly photobombed copies might have seen the first three at the ISG Museum before the 1990 robbery, odds are good he did not also make it to the asteroid unless he's a time traveler. Which makes it our business. I need the team to go to 1998 and figure out what he's up to.”

Likely Adventure Path

The Agents learn from Arthur in 1998 that he has inadvertently eliminated his wife, and head to the heist at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, but even if they prevent Aleisha's death there, they cause her to continue to lead a life of crime and never have

a child. It was the near-death experience in the “original” heist that caused her to have a family, and so they have to somehow reproduce that, all the while dealing with the fanatical interest of Tony, who will eventually lead them to a final battle with Maliha.

Remember they’ll need to keep Aleisha alive, but cause her to experience the change of heart that leads to Maliha’s birth. They’ll also need to realize that Maliha is actually behind Arthur’s choral difficulties, and is not to be trusted.

Scenes

The Art Gallery, 1998, Ogunquit, Maine

Scene Type: Core

Lead-In: Briefing

Lead-Out: The Isabella Stewart Gardner Heist, 1990

Either the Agents wander aimlessly through Ogunquit galleries, or they pick a particular buyer who purchased a copy and follow them (requires **Research**). If the former, they wander until an Agent with **Notice** or **History** notices one of the ISG paintings, photobombed, hanging in a window.

Either way, the Agents go in to discover that the photobombed image is clearly of that guy, right there, who runs the place. Once they reveal who they are, he begs the Agents to find out what might have happened that took away his wife. He’s willing to confess to his crimes, and serve whatever punishment might be necessary, if they’ll just restore her. If they go for a spend on any of the abilities listed below, they can convince Arthur to paint them a likeness of Maliha.

Core Clue

Maliha was gone when he came home, after the two heists. (No abilities needed; Arthur just tells them this)

His time machine failed after he arrived in 1992. (**Reassurance**)

Extra Clues

Maliha’s appearance. (**Authority, Charm, Intimidation, Reassurance**)

Maliha is an expert on time travel. (**Reassurance**)

Note that under no circumstances will Arthur reveal where or when he is from, or where his time machine might be. His cooperation in all this is dependent on his wife being safe from punishment. That said, enterprising Agents may find ways to track this down. Stay tuned!

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Heist, 1990

Scene Type: Core

Lead-In: The Art Gallery, 1998, Ogunquit, Maine

Lead-Outs: Investigate Aleisha, Investigate the Other Robbers

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum was robbed in the early morning hours of March 18, by two men disguised as police officers. They walked up to a side entrance, demanded entry by claiming to have heard about a disturbance in the courtyard, and were buzzed in. Once inside, they tricked the main security guard into stepping away from the museum’s only alarm button, handcuffed and gagged him, and handcuffed and gagged the museum’s second security guard

when he arrived. They spent the next 80 minutes stealing art and were about to load it into a waiting car.

That’s what *was* happening when Arthur Kim appeared. Upon his appearance, the driver of the car, Aleisha Washington, hit the gas and peeled out. The car roared out onto the Fenway, struck a street light and plunged into the pond opposite. Aleisha was thrown against the windshield and killed instantly.

Unaware of the young woman’s death, Arthur calmly loaded the art into his machine and disappeared. Arthur kept himself focused and just took care of business, disabling the thieves and winking out of existence with the paintings.

Police investigations did tie the death of Aleisha (a known criminal) to the robbery that took place, but never found any evidence as to what had actually happened. The two surviving thieves escaped after Arthur disappeared.

Core Clue

Aleisha Washington died because of Arthur’s appearance. (**Streetwise, Spying**)

Extra Clues

Aleisha Washington is nervous even before Arthur shows up, ready to peel out. (**Streetwise**)

If they have the painting of Maliha, they realize that Aleisha kind of looks like Maliha. (**Notice**)

Here’s the thing, though: had Arthur *not* shown up, Aleisha’s nervous recklessness would have endangered her and the robbery anyway. What happened in the now-lost version of the robbery before Arthur tampered was that there *was* a crash, but she kept going, and the robbery was successful.

But that near-death experience was what gave Aleisha the impetus to turn her life around, leading to her marry a decent guy and becoming Maliha’s ancestor. Without that particular experience, simply keeping her alive won’t restore Maliha.

Investigate Aleisha

Scene Type: Core

Lead-In: The Isabella Stewart Gardner Heist, 1990

Lead-Outs: Investigate the Other Robbers, Set Up Aleisha and the Doctor

Having determined that Aleisha is of interest, the Agents must find out more about her. This might go a number of ways — they might seek to meet with her prior to her death, or simply review records of her life. Either way they discover that she never had any children, and that she is a reckless, long-term criminal. But if they have the picture of Maliha, they certainly see that she’s a dead ringer for Arthur’s wife. But Aleisha has no siblings.

Core Clues

Aleisha Washington had no children prior to her death. (**Authority, Bureaucracy, Research**)

Aleisha Washington is a career criminal with many traffic violations and accidents. (**Authority, Bureaucracy, Research**)

Extra Clues

Aleisha had never before worked with the gang that is suspected of pulling off the ISG heist. (**Streetwise, Bureaucracy, Research**)

A doctor was questioned as part of the heist investigation. (**Bureaucracy, Research**)

At this point they may realize that something must have happened to Aleisha *after* the robbery to change her life's direction, and they may surmise it has something to do with a traffic accident, or possibly with this new crew she was working with.

Should they decide to track down the doctor, they notice (if they have the painting of Maliha) that he, too, kind of looks like Arthur's wife (alternate core).

Investigate the Other Robbers

Scene Type: Core

Lead-Ins: The Isabella Stewart Gardner Heist, 1990; Investigate Aleisha

Lead-Out: Set Up Aleisha and the Doctor

It's possible the Agents think to look into Aleisha's confederates. They might go through police records (they've seen the two men, and could pick them out of mug shots), or track the individuals down on their own (doing so is tough but not impossible for TimeWatch Agents, although these thieves are not the sort of people who are likely to sit around and answer questions from authoritarian types).

Core Clues

Aleisha had never before worked with this crew. (**Charm, Streetwise, Research**)

The team had a trusted doctor on standby in case of accidents. (**Charm, Streetwise**)

Extra Clues

The doctor is actually a good guy, uncomfortable with crime and *really* good looking. (**Charm**)

Should the Agents track down this doctor, they can (if they have the painting of Maliha) notice that he, too, kind of looks like Arthur's wife. Also, he seems like a really great guy who doesn't want to be mixed up with criminals.

Note that there's no scene with the doctor as meeting him only confirms existing clues: that he and Aleisha together are Maliha's ancestors.

At this point they should be thinking, somehow Aleisha needs to meet the doctor.

Set Up Aleisha and the Doctor

Scene Type: Time Repair

Lead-Ins: Investigate the Other Robbers, Investigate Aleisha

Lead-Out: Tony Rescues Arthur

Okay, so these two need to get together in order for Maliha to exist. The Agents can fool around with all sorts of ways to make this work, but in general, Aleisha must have a near-death experience, and be treated by the doctor, in order to produce Maliha's ancestor.

While they're trying to make that happen is a great time for Tony to show up and rescue Arthur.

The Asteroid Heist, 2231

Scene Type: Core

Lead-In: Briefing

Lead-Out: Tony Rescues Arthur

This is the first heist Arthur pulled off, and it's likely the Agents come here to see if there's any suggestion of time stream damage here.

The Googlezon Asteroid Five Art Collection is an office gallery set off from the main Googlezon offices on this bit of spinning rock in the asteroid belt. It is of course a zero-gravity environment, so characters without experience in such a world need to make **Athletics** tests with a Difficulty Number of 3 in order to perform basic actions such as moving from place to place. Target Hit Thresholds, should combat occur, increase by one for any characters who are not familiar with zero-gravity environments.

The gallery is a spherical chamber with two entrances on opposite sides, about fifty meters across. Paintings dot the curving walls, and assorted sculptural objects (some that articulate and move of their own accord) float about the space, kept from bumping into each other, the walls, and unsuspecting patrons by subtle repulsion fields. It is sufficiently crowded with such objects that it is impossible to behold the entire space from any one point.

The day before the heist, Twelve-Year-Old Tony ran away from home, hid in the gallery, and was not discovered (because he managed to both elude his household's robots and disable the gallery security, which are nontrivial accomplishments, noticeable to Agents with **Science!**, **Hacking**, or **Spying**). That night, the heist happens, with a wide-eyed kid witnessing it. Twelve-Year-Old Tony sees Young Arthur pop into existence to relieve the thieves of their stuff, then a second version of the same man appear and watch the proceedings carefully. He grasps that time travel is possible and heads home, his young life forever changed.

Tony researches what he saw, and realizes that Arthur was a time traveler who was interrupting an art theft in order to claim the work for himself. Delighted with the stranger's chutzpah, he sets about attempting to duplicate the effort, but while he's able to build a time machine, he can't seem to manage the derring-do necessary to pull off these outrageous heists.

So years later, at the ripe old age of nineteen, Tony returns to the scene of the Googlezon heist, determined to join up with his hero.

He harasses the second Arthur (observing the first Arthur's heist), but of course Arthur has no idea who this kid is and just wants to get away. Arthur triggers his time machine and disappears, leaving behind a disappointed Tony.

Core Clues

Arthur's heist has no impact on the time stream here. (**Timecraft, History (Future)**)

The kid watching is also the kid trying to talk to Arthur. (**Notice**)

Extra Clues

The second Arthur's time machine is malfunctioning as he departs. (**Timecraft, Science!**)

Tony is a child genius. (**Notice, Hacking**)

The Agents may decide they need to find out more about this kid, suspecting he has a role to play in Maliha's disappearance. He doesn't, but Tony can certainly impact future (and past) events.

Most importantly, if Tony sees the Agents he immediately recognizes them as also being time travelers and attempts to follow them to get to his hero, Arthur. If they attempt to interfere with Arthur (either one) at this point, Tony swoops in and “rescues” him.

Tony Rescues Arthur

Scene Type: Antagonist Reaction / Time Chase

Lead-Outs: Arthur and Maliha’s House, Saturn, 2507; Kiprotich Household, 2231 or 2238 (or both)

At some point, the Agents may decide to take Arthur into custody or otherwise use their authority against him. This is a great time for Tony to show up with his homemade time machine and swoop in to “rescue” his hero.

It’s best if this happens *after* Aleisha has been manipulated back into producing Maliha’s ancestor.

Tony is well prepared for this moment, as he is sure this will win him Arthur’s approval at last. The Agents should be well challenged by this chase, and once he realizes he’s got his hands on a working time machine again, Arthur will want to get back home and see if Maliha’s been restored, so this chase can readily end up at the Kim household.

Some ideas for the chase:

- ▶ Wok racing
- ▶ Luge
- ▶ Snowmobiles
- ▶ Yaks, in Central Asia
- ▶ Camels, in the desert
- ▶ WWII fighter pilots

Kiprotich Household, 2231 or 2238 (or both)

Scene Type: Alternate

Lead-In: Tony Rescues Arthur

Lead-Out: Arthur and Maliha’s House, Saturn, 2507

Tony’s mother is a high-ranking executive at Googlezon, spending half of her time at the main office back on Earth and half of her time on Asteroid Five, where her husband is Googlezon district manager. As part of his compensation, Tony’s father gets living space: a three-story mansion, futuristic and squeaky clean, and anonymously furnished, mostly in white. It doesn’t actually smell like bleach; it just looks like it should. It is inhabited by Tony’s mother (ten days out of twenty), Tony’s father (in the few hours a day he isn’t at work), Tony, and a fleet of robots who see to the humans’ needs. Tony has every luxury a robot can provide, including an entire half floor to use as a workshop.

Tony’s hunger for parental approval and human connection should make perfect sense in this context. He has devoted years to not only building a time machine, but figuring out who that mysterious man was. Once he has a working time machine, he spends some time tracking Arthur down, but instead of confronting the thief at his home, he heads to the scene of the Googlezon heist and attempts to impress Arthur with his knowledge.

Agents may be able to determine Arthur’s home from Tony’s copious notes, though he hasn’t made it easy for them.

Core Clues

Tony is obsessed with Arthur. (**Taunt, Charm, Notice, Spying**)

Extra Clues

Arthur is from the Saturn Refurbishment, 2507. (**Intimidation, Notice, Research**)

Arthur’s Time Machine

Scene Type: Alternate

Once he arrived in 1992, Arthur found his time machine would no longer function. He was no expert in this technology (that was Maliha), and so he did his best to disassemble and hide the machine.

But should the Agents think to track it down, and find it, they discover it was deliberately set to only work *four* times. The initial heist plan required three jumps: one to the Googlezon, one to the ISG Museum, and one back home, so the machine was set to fail upon its first use after returning the loot.

Which is certainly very curious.

Clues

The time machine was rigged by someone who knew what they were doing. (**Timecraft, Science!**)

Arthur and Maliha’s House, Saturn, 2507

Scene Type: Conclusion

Lead-Ins: Tony Rescues Arthur; Kiprotich Household, 2231 or 2238 (or both)

Once uncovered by the agents, Arthur and Maliha’s mansion is revealed to be luxurious: on the top of a cliff overlooking a turquoise ocean and white sand beach. It is large and airy, with soft sea breezes billowing through white curtains, the rooms bathed in golden light that perfectly sets off the absolutely gorgeous art about the house.

All of this is an illusion, as the house is in fact on Saturn, in a super-high-tech scenario called the Saturn Refurbishment, in which wildly advanced technology was used to create Earth-like environments on distant planets.

The Agents arrive here either via a time chase following Tony, or by learning Arthur’s home place and time from the young man. If Maliha has not yet been restored, then the house appears to be a tastefully decorated bachelor pad. If she has, then she is eagerly awaiting Arthur’s return, having no idea that she was temporarily erased from existence.

Her plan is to take the treasure from Arthur and then send him on another “quick errand,” which will of course strand him in time when the machine stops working. When faced with a team of TimeWatch agents, she immediately fights to defend herself and escape.

This is a climactic final battle (Scuffling, Shooting, booby traps). Maliha is an excellent shot and a cool strategist, but she cares more about the art than Arthur so it should be possible to rattle her by threatening to destroy one of her treasures. On the other hand, she will happily use Arthur as a hostage to allow herself to escape. Tony will switch sides confusedly, seeking to help Arthur as best he can.

Core Clues

This Maliha lady is trouble.

QUICK REFERENCE CHEAT SHEETS

INVESTIGATIVE BUILD POINTS (P. 23)

The number of points each player spends on Investigative abilities varies according to the number of regularly attending players, according to the following table.

# of players	Investigative Build Points
1–2	23
3	20
4	18
5+	16

TimeWatch thoroughly trains agents in basic chronal theory and proper time travel procedures. Every TimeWatch Agent gains Timecraft 1 for free.

GENERAL BUILD POINTS (P. 26)

Each player gets **50 points** to spend on General abilities, regardless of group size. You start the game with an additional 6 free points each in Health and Chronal Stability.

Although there is no set cap on abilities, the second highest rating must be at least half that of the highest rating.

THE TRAVEL TEST (P. 64)

Every instance of time travel requires a **Travel test**, a simple Difficulty 4 / Loss 2 Paradox test described on p. 91. Effectively, roll a d6; roll 1–3, and lose 2 points of Chronal Stability. Paying a Stitch per trip bypasses the need for a Travel test.

WHAT STITCHES DO (P. 65)

- ▶ Refresh a General ability pool by 2 points
- ▶ Simplify time travel (pay a Stitch, ignore the Travel test)
- ▶ Teamwork (pay 2 Stitches, give someone else +1 on a die roll if you can explain how you're helping)
- ▶ Boost your damage by 1 point
- ▶ Reduce damage done to you by 1 point

REFRESHING YOUR POOL POINTS (P. 67)

- ▶ Spend a Stitch at any time to refresh 2 points from one pool
- ▶ After resting 24 hours, fully refresh Athletics, Scuffling, Shooting, and Vehicles
- ▶ After the end of a mission (and not before), refresh all Investigative points, all Health and all Chronal Stability (barring points that have been permanently lost)
- ▶ Heal 2 Health per day unless Seriously Wounded; see p. 87.

SIMPLE TEST DIFFICULTY (P. 70)

Difficulty	Example
3 — Easy	Sneaking past a sleeping guard
4 — Normal	Sneaking past an awake guard
5 — Hard	Sneaking past an awake, alert guard
6 — Very Hard	Sneaking past an awake, alert guard with a guard dog
8 — Exceptionally Difficult	Infiltrating an integrated high-tech security system that includes guards, laser tripwires, infrared cameras, floor sensors, and video surveillance

SIMPLE CHASE RULES (P. 73)

Simple chases use the Full Contest rules; characters roll Athletics or Vehicles tests, and any character who fails a roll is out of the chase. If a quarry fails, pursuers catch up with him and he typically must surrender or fight. If a pursuer fails, he may not continue the chase. The chase ends when all pursuers have dropped out of the chase, or when all quarries have been caught up with.

During a simple chase, attempting any non-chase action (such as Shooting, trying to hide with Unobtrusiveness, and so on) raises the Difficulty for both that non-chase action *and* the chase action by +2. The GM adjudicates any unusual actions you try.

ADVANCED CHASE RULES (P. 74)

Lead Tracker

Quarry is...	Point-Blank	Close	Near	Long	Very Long
To the Pursuer					

COMBAT RANGE (P. 78)

- ▶ Point-Blank (adjacent)
- ▶ Close (same room)
- ▶ Near (within 30 or 40 meters)
- ▶ Long (within 100 meters)
- ▶ Very Long (within 500 meters)

SURPRISE (P. 79)

When surprised, you suffer a +2 increase to all General ability Difficulties for any immediately subsequent action. In a fight, these penalties pertain only to the first round of combat.

Avoid being surprised with a successful Unobtrusiveness test to notice the hidden ambush. The basic Difficulty is 4, adjusted by the foe's Stealth Modifier. The +3 bonus from impersonator mesh never applies on this test. You surprise antagonists by sneaking up on them with a successful Unobtrusiveness test. The basic Difficulty is 4, adjusted by the foe's Alertness Modifier (see p. 72). The +3 bonus from impersonator mesh can apply to this roll, so long as you have not drawn any attention to yourself and your foe has not noticed you at all.

WEAPON DAMAGE (P. 82)

Weapon Type (see p. 117)	Damage Modifier
Fist, kick	-1
Improvised weapon, club, knife, inactive autochron	0
Heavy club, sword, crossbow, firearm (including automatic weapons)	+1
Heavy assault rifle, beam weapon	+2
PaciFist or neural disruptor	Stun test (usually Stun 5)

INJURIES (P. 87)

Health: 0 to -5 HURT	Health: -6 to -11 SERIOUSLY WOUNDED	Health: -12 or lower DEAD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Immediately make a Consciousness roll to stay conscious ▶ Can't spend Investigative points until above 0 Health ▶ Difficulties of all General ability tests increase by 1 until above 0 Health ▶ Can be healed normally by the Medic ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Immediately make another Consciousness roll to stay conscious ▶ Lose an additional Health point every half hour until stabilized ▶ Can't spend Investigative points until above 0 Health ▶ Difficulties of all General ability tests increase by 2 until above 0 Health ▶ Can't be healed normally by the Medic ability ▶ Must recuperate in a medical facility to regain Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Barring time machine-related intervention by your allies (or a particularly timely use of the <i>Flashback</i> ability by an ally with high Preparedness), mourn your late Agent's heroic death

PARADOX TESTS (P. 89)

Trigger	Difficulty/Loss	Paradox Prevention Spend Required?
No Paradox: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You successfully restore history back to its true path, ending the mission ▶ Any time travel (“the Travel test”) 	None (no test required) D4/L2	No No
Lesser Paradox: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You learn, experience, or cause something that violates a known fact ▶ You significantly change the future, perhaps by revealing future history to someone or by leaving a futuristic device behind in time ▶ You kill someone consequential, but not essential, to history ▶ You are hit by a choral destabilizer (whether weapon or effect) ▶ Your future self leaves you a vague or mostly useless clue about a future event 	D4/L4	No
Paradox: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Your future self leaves you a specific message or important clue about a future event ▶ You overlap yourself in a scene and aid yourself, changing history, although your past self never becomes aware of the fact (such as secretly sniping a foe from a nearby rooftop or unlocking your own prison door) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Every additional overlap adds +2 to the Difficulty and +2 to the Loss 	D4/L4 – P	Yes (if you choose not to spend a Paradox Prevention point, you can’t aid yourself in this way)
Greater Paradox: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You overlap yourself in a scene and directly offer yourself aid (such as arriving to heal your own unconscious body, or your future self joining in an ongoing fight to double your firepower) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Every additional overlap adds +2 to the Difficulty and +2 to the Loss) 	D4/L6 – P	Yes (if you choose not to spend a Paradox Prevention point, you can’t aid yourself in this way)
Severe Paradox: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You close off a time loop and remove the reason you time traveled in the first place, with the unfortunate result that two paradoxical versions of you exist simultaneously (see p. 44) ▶ You kill someone essential to history ▶ You change events in a way that fundamentally changes a future you know to have occurred, perhaps branching correct history onto an alternate history timeline ▶ You are caught in the choral field of a broken autochron ▶ Your direct ancestors within the past 3 generations are killed in a way that ensures you will never be born (Loss decreases by 1 for every generation prior to that; a change more than 250 years before your birth does not trigger a test) 	D6/L6 or higher	No

EXPLOSIVES DAMAGE (P. 100)

If you are within a bomb's **annihilation range**, report back to TimeWatch for your replacement character.

If you are within a device's **damage range** (but outside its annihilation range) when it explodes, you take two dice of damage, plus a modifier equal to three times its class.

If you are outside of its annihilation or damage range but within its **debris range**, make an Athletics test with the explosion's class times three as the Difficulty. If you fail, you take a die of damage, plus a modifier equal to its class.

Class	Examples	Annihilation Range	Damage Range	Debris Range
1	pen grenade, pipe bomb, black powder explosive, micro-grenade	—	Point-Blank (2d6 + 3 dmg)	Close (Difficulty 3 Athletics test or 1d6 + 1 dmg)
2	grenade, stick of TNT, concussive projector, weaponized mini-drone	—	Point-Blank (2d6 + 6 dmg)	Close (Difficulty 6 Athletics test or 1d6 + 2 dmg)
3	nitroglycerine, RPG rocket, brick of C4, land mine, mortar shell, suicide vest, cinematic gas tank, satellite death ray	Point-Blank (Dead)	Close (2d6 + 9 dmg)	Near (Difficulty 9 Athletics test or 1d6 + 3 dmg)
4	truck bomb, AP shell, gas main	Close (Dead)	Near (2d6 + 12 dmg)	Long (Difficulty 12 Athletics test or 1d6 + 4 dmg)
5	HE shell, hellfire missile, gravity bomb, exploding black powder magazine	Near (Dead)	Long (2d6 + 15 dmg)	240 m (Difficulty 15 Athletics test or 1d6 + 5 dmg)
6	suitcase nuke, exploding spaceship	Long (Dead. So, so dead)	3 km (2d6 + 18 dmg)	4 km (Difficulty 18 Athletics test or 1d6 + 6 dmg)

STANDARD ISSUE TIMEWATCH GEAR (P. 109)

- ▶ Autochron (your time machine)
- ▶ Impersonator Mesh
- ▶ Medkit
- ▶ MEM-Tags
- ▶ PaciFist Neural Disruptor (usable with both Scuffling and Shooting)
- ▶ Tether
- ▶ TimeWatch Uniform
- ▶ Translator

ANTAGONIST SPECIAL ABILITIES (P. 152)

Special abilities are powered by Tempus.

Ability	Cost	Effect
Armor	0 or 3	Reduces damage
Awareness	0	Raises the Difficulty of player character Unobtrusiveness tests to hide
Blink	2 + 1/round	Flash in and out of combat
Branching Point	4	Pick one of two possible paths for yourself or another
Chronal Drain	2	Drain Reality Anchor points on a hit
Clock Out	2	Time travel
Cybernetics	2	Trigger a robotic effect
Destabilize	2 or 4	Trigger D4/L4 Paradox test
Disguise	1	Look like a different person
Distortion	2 or 3	Increase Hit Threshold
Electronic Interference	2	Render electronics useless
Embrace Instability	0	Gain Tempus every time Agents make Paradox tests
Exile	2	Fling target through time
Extra Action	2	Gain a 2 nd action in a combat round
Flashback	5	Have a preprepared plan, as per the Preparedness Booster
Flight	0 or 2	Levitate or fly
Fluid	0 or 3	Effectively immune to most physical attacks
Help Yourself	5	An older, healthy version arrives to help in combat
Hivemind	0 or 2	Link brains to share information and lower a foe's Hit Threshold
Immaterial	0 or 2	Out of phase with reality
Impersonation	2	Perfectly impersonate another creature
Infection	0	Spread disease
Interdiction	0 or 2	Briefly restrict time travel

Ability	Cost	Effect
Invisibility	3	Increases Hit Threshold and Stealth Modifier
Lightning Speed	2	Move quickly
Mastermind	0	Genius planner and tactician
Mental Attack	Variable	Chronal Stability test to avoid mind control or possession
Mutation	2	Trigger a mutation-related effect
Oracle	1	Predict upcoming future events
Psychic	2	Trigger a psychic effect
Regenerate	0 or 2	Regenerate Health damage
Resist Stun	0	Stun test Difficulties are lowered by 2
Restabilize	Variable	Refreshes another creature's Tempus
Seize Initiative	2	Jump into combat initiative at any point
Shape-Shift	2	Reshape body into a nonhumanoid form
Spider Climb	0 or 1	Walk on walls and ceilings
Stealth	0	Raises the Difficulty of player character Unobtrusiveness tests to notice you hiding
Stony	0	Made of stone and resistant to many attacks
Strength	0 or more	Incredibly strong
Stun	0	Attacks can stun, usually at Stun 5
Summoning	3	Summon Mooks as backup
Technology	2	Use super-science to produce technology
Teleport	2	Move instantly from one location to another
Unfeeling	0	Never become Hurt, and make all Consciousness rolls and Stun tests
Universal Attack	1 or 2 per target	Instantly attack everyone you wish to within range
Venom	2	Attack also delivers poison

HOW TO PLAY TIMEWATCH: A CHEAT SHEET FOR NEW PLAYERS

History may be fairly robust, but apply the right pressure at the right time and everything changes. You travel through time to stop other time travelers from messing up the true timeline. **You're incredibly competent**, you've got a time machine and high-tech gear that hides itself, and you hail from anywhere in the whole of recorded history. You're an agent of TimeWatch.

Doing Stuff

General abilities are how you get stuff done. Sneaking, fighting, running... all these are done with **General abilities**. If you have a General ability rating of 8 or higher, you're extremely talented at that activity (and may get access to cool bonus stuff when using it). If you don't have any rating at all in a General ability, you stink at it and won't generally succeed. A 0 Vehicles, for instance, lets you drive to the store and back but you'd fail at any task difficult enough to require a die roll. An 8 Vehicles would make you a stunt driver. Similarly, a 0 Scuffle means you're no good at hand-to-hand combat, but an 8 or higher Scuffle would make you an expert martial artist.

It's traumatic for your dice bag, but in *TimeWatch* you'll **only need one die: a d6**. Roll it. **Your target Difficulty Number is usually 4**; if you roll a 4 or higher with a General ability like Athletics, you probably succeed.

Obviously, that would mean you only succeed half the time. **You raise these odds by spending points from your General ability pools** and adding them to your d6 roll. Want to shoot someone? Spend 2 points from your Shooting pool, add it to your d6, and you usually only fail if you roll a 1. Spend 3 points, and you're guaranteed to hit. When your pool drops to 0, you're stuck just rolling a d6 until you can refresh your pool.

You refresh your General ability pools by spending

Stitches, *TimeWatch's* action point. The GM and other players will hand them to you for being awesome, so **remember to be awesome**. While you can also use them for a few other things, Stitches can be turned in at any time to **refresh one pool by two points**. When you start running low, turn in some Stitches.

Learning Stuff

Ignore your General abilities for a second and look over at your Investigative abilities. These are broken into three sections to make things easier to find — Academic, Interpersonal and Technical knowledge — but they all work pretty much the same way. **If you have 1 or more points in any of these, you're an expert at it**. This matters because during the game, all you need to do is **tell the GM that you're using an appropriate ability and you'll automatically get a clue** if there is one. Yes, automatically, no roll required. The fun here is in what you do with that information, not how you get it.

So let's say you're searching old birth records for clues. The GM may ask, "Do you have any rating points in Research?" If you say yes, she'll tell you everything you can find out. No roll is ever required.

You can **spend these points to get cool in-game advantages**. Take the Interpersonal ability Charm, for instance, and pretend for a second that you have a rating of 2 or 3 in it. You meet the evil mastermind's handsome assistant. Tell the GM you're using Charm to flirt with the supporting character, and the assistant will let slip important clues. Tell the GM you're spending 1 or more Charm points to get cool stuff while you're flirting, and the assistant may fall in love with you. Spend 2 points, and the assistant may double-cross his boss out of love for you.

Just remember, spending a point from an Investigative ability doesn't stop you from knowing that topic. It just limits how many times in a game you can ask for special cool stuff.

And really? That's all you need to know before starting play.

See also alphabetical lists of General abilities (p. 46), Interpersonal abilities (p. 36) and Drives (p.29), as well as individual index entries for these categories. *Gear and Weapons*

(p. 390), *Antagonists, Adversaries and Mooks* (p. 389) and *Historical Figures* (p. 389) have their own indices.

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TIMEWATCH

A GAME OF TIME TRAVEL ACTION AND INVESTIGATION
BY KEVIN KULP

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"Well, that doesn't look right," you say as you stand in the abandoned ruins of medieval Paris, with a hundred thousand rotted skulls piled up in a mountain before you.

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*You are agents of **TimeWatch**, defending the timestream from the depredations of radioactive cockroaches, psychic velociraptors, and human meddlers. Go back in time to help yourself in a fight, thwart your foes by targeting their ancestors, or check out a scroll from the Library of Alexandria. Just watch out for paradoxes that may erase you from existence... or worse. If you've ever dreamed of going on world-changing adventures from the age of the dinosaurs to the end of the universe, this game is for you!*

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