



5TH CONSPIRACY

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THIS BOOK

WHAT IS 5TH CONSPIRACY?

Welcome to 5th Conspiracy (5C), a character-driven tabletop roleplaying game about gods, monsters, angels, and myths all competing for the most valuable resource in the world—your attention. Everything people believe in is real, *because* people believe in it. The more attention they're paid, the more powerful the ideas become. In 5th Conspiracy you'll play in a modern urban fantasy setting as an **ORATUM** (awr-AH-toom), one of these ideas come to life. The problem? You have to compete with ideas older than the written word for a limited amount of human veneration, all while preventing the mortal world from discovering the truth about you and the secret world.

WHY PLAY A TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING GAME?

Tabletop roleplaying games (TTRPGs) are unique compared to other kinds of games. They can use many of the same tools as board games; dice, maps, or figurines, but the outcome is wildly different. In Monopoly you're playing competitively, to beat your opponent. If you're playing a TTRPG correctly, the characters may be competing with each other but every player wins, because the outcome is an awesome story you all invented together.

TTRPGs are collaborative storytelling tools. Imagine your favorite TV series, movie, or novel. Now imagine that you get to be a writer, main actor, and director for that all at the same time. You can tell any story. You're not a passive observer or reader. You're not stuck with a predetermined list of choices like in a computer game. While you're playing a TTRPG anything, absolutely anything, can happen.

WHAT KIND OF STORIES DOES 5TH CONSPIRACY HELP YOU TELL?

5th Conspiracy was crafted to tell stories in the Contemporary or Urban Fantasy genre. These are stories set in the modern world, but just underneath the surface magic and monsters are waiting for you. Popular series that exemplify this genre are Harry Potter, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, The Dresden Files, True Blood, Underworld, American Gods, and many more.

The world of 5th Conspiracy is one where every supernatural thing you can imagine exists because people believe they do. Vampires stalk dark alleyways, wizards perform rituals in their secluded towers, and gods have temples built to themselves behind barely veiled art installations. The characters, tone, themes, and setting are up to you and your group. You might tell the dramatic story of student wizards focusing on the difficulties of growing up. Or you might tell the comedic story of what happens when a zombie, witch, werewolf, and vampire become roommates. The possibilities are endless, so what kind of story do you want to tell?



THE WORLD OF 5TH CONSPIRACY

THE CONSPIRACIES

Why were there so many vampire movies in the 2000s? Because the vampires took over Hollywood. This world doesn't make sense until you understand that it wasn't made for you and me. It was made for the oratum. The mechanism of their power are the Conspiracies, conglomerations of supernatural creatures that together form a shadowy illuminati that control the very machinery of the world. From politics, to media, to the police, everything serves the will of the oratum. Together the four Conspiracies form the Metikos, the governing body which enforces its magical laws, the most important of which is Section 7, the law of secrecy.

Kylem

Pantheons of gods and practitioners of magic

Unified by their belief in the divine, the Kylem see themselves as vital components of a natural order, both as rulers and servants. The divine is true and immutable, either inherent in themselves or harnessed and channeled by them. Loyal to their families, tradition, and their worshipers, their privilege and right to rule comes hand in hand with a responsibility to fulfill their role in the natural order.



Tuatha De

The fae folk and shape shifters

Magic is real and where it flows the Tuatha De thrive. They are the hidden people, who always seem to live just north of civilization on the boundary between worlds. Be it a howl to the moon, a gingerbread house, or a kingdom of eternal beauty and youth, humans know there is no safety among the hidden people. They have miracles to spare, but just like their magic, everything the Tuatha De offer has its price.



Lucifera

Aliens, cryptids, and the host of angels

Whether it's from demons, negatives, or other oratum, the Lucifera devote themselves to The Mission, shepherding and shielding humanity from the myriad of forces looking to prey upon or destroy them. Once two competing factions, they've been unified as part-church part-army by The Morningstar, their visionary leader, illuminating the path to a utopian future for both mankind and the oratum, living in harmony.



Pragmatiste

Monsters and the living dead

Taboo made manifest, the Pragmatiste are everything humanity dreads, from the hook-handed killer stalking you through the woods to the vampire outside your window asking sweetly to be let in. They're monsters and they know it, reviled, hated, even hunted. Pushed together by external forces, the normally fiercely independent Pragmatiste have formed a powerful union that rivals the Kylem for internal loyalty. Cross one and face the horde.



Titans

Since before the advent of the written word the houses of oratum, great and small, warred against each other for supremacy. They smashed their armies into their neighbor's, taking their wealth, worshipers, and temples. Then the Titanomachy came, a decades-long war where the first titans manifested. The titans, apocalyptic beings of near limitless power, were springing up and hunting the oratum to extinction. Rome's fall? Titan. Europe's dark age? Titan. Where'd Atlantis go? Titan. The titans couldn't be defeated. At best they could be imprisoned, only for them to later resurface stronger than ever. The oratum were losing, their numbers dwindling. Some believed the end was inevitable while others imagined something new.

The Covenant of Orleans

Refugees from all over the world gathered at Orleans to debate what to do about the titans. It took over nine months and hundreds of drafts, but in the end the Covenant was signed by all the major parties. This document legally formed the **Metikos**—a government that claimed to rule over all oratum, with the primary focus of surviving the titans. The Metikos is ruled by a King's Council, where each conspiracy seats a monarch to jointly rule. Their rulings, which must come as a three-fourths majority, become the body of law that supplements the Covenant. However, the Covenant also created two Supreme Justices who are meant to act as a check to the King's Council and have the ability to strike down any ruling if deemed in conflict with the Covenant.

Section 7

Article One, Section 7 of the Covenant states, "All citizens must maintain The Mystery, keeping humanity ignorant of the true nature of its members. Failure to do so, by fault or ignorance, will be deemed aiding the titan nemesis." The cause of the titans is believed to be humans taking up arms against the oratum. The Mystery was designed to prevent that from happening. History has borne out Section 7's success, for the titans remain

slumbering for now. But how then can the oratum get the veneration they need without revealing their true nature? The resulting law shaped the Conspiracies and the design of the whole modern world.

The Nobility

Under the kings of each conspiracy are dukes, who have counts, who have barons, and so on. There's not an inch of the world that's not, at least in name, claimed by an oratum noble. This chain of fealty stretches out across the world, enforcing the Metikos' laws on every continent. The transition of power for many of the great families remains a hereditary power structure. Others take a more modern approach, like the Pragmatiste's meritocracy. The Covenant establishes the nobility's right to rule, with two notable exceptions—citizenship rights and The Compass Rose.

The Knights of the Compass Rose

The founders were aware that without a check on the nobility they would eventually fracture and return to their infighting. To enforce the Metikos' laws four orders of knights were formed. Each order is led by a Knight Commander who reports directly to the King's Council. Their charges vary based on their order, but all are tasked with maintaining the integrity of the fledgling government.



UNION AFFAIRS (UA): Investigates crimes against the Metikos and breaches of its most fundamental principles.

DEPARTMENT OF SOLVENCY (DOS): The royal tax collectors, census keepers, and relief agents for counties in distress.

INFORMATION AUTHORITY (IA): Originally created to pass official messages securely for the government; in modern times are better known for their spies, code masters, and attorneys.

RAPID PRIMARY RESPONSE (RPR): The royal army, ostensibly created to fight the titans. Infamous for their scorched earth practices.

Citizenship

Citizenship is often credited with the Metikos' actual success. Revolutionary for the time, it gave all oratum, regardless of family or title, sweeping legal protections. So long as a citizen remained in good standing they could be secure that no noble could unjustly wrong them without facing devastating punishment from the Knights. Murder of a citizen meant losing one's title and being banished from the Metikos, a practical death sentence. These protections brought the common oratum citizens, who vastly outnumbered the nobility, into the fold and created a peaceful foundation for the Metikos to build upon.

The County

The most influential noble that most oratum are likely to encounter is their local count, who usually rules over a mortal county or major metropolitan city. Because it's the count's responsibility to provide safety for their citizens and enforce the Metikos' laws, such as collecting taxes, they usually empower select citizens as officers to maintain critical responsibilities. Common offices include:

SENATOR: Head of a local faction or family, who can expect direct access to the count and in some counties may have direct influence over matters of state.

ENFORCER: Often a sheriff, local enforcers are tasked with enforcing local laws and working with Knights when necessary.

MASTER OF CEREMONY: MCs are responsible for facilitating official events, the most important of which are galas, legally protected parties where all oratum are welcome and strict laws of privacy and security are enforced.

CUSTODIAN: The cleaner only has one narrow responsibility, Section 7. In this, they are given near unlimited latitude.

PUBLICAN: Part tax collector, part notary, the publican officiates everything from marriages, to business deals, to legal duels to the death.



RULES OF THE GAME

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

To start all you need is at least one other person to collaboratively tell a story with. Together you'll be the **players**—the writers, actors, and audience for your story. Once you have players you'll next need the information in this guide, a set of polyhedral dice, pencils, and some pieces of scrap paper. You may want access to a printer to print out character sheets and the premise document, but digital versions of these tools also exist (scan the QR code on page X to access them). Once you have these materials, the next step is to determine who will be the story's director. The director facilitates the story by representing the setting, the supporting characters, and by planning out the creative framing of the story, called the premise.

THE PREMISE

The premise is designed before the story starts. Like the foundation of a building, the premise contains the creative constraints your story is built on. A solid premise allows your story to withstand real world stressors, while a weak or absent premise leaves it vulnerable to falling apart. The premise document, found for free to download and print on the aedpublishing.com website, is designed to help build a strong premise. What a premise gives you and your group is **buy-in**, enthusiastic agreement on the core concepts of the story. It also helps by tease out conscious or unconscious disagreements, called **premise rejection**.

There are five core sections to the premise document, each covering a different important aspect of your upcoming story. With buy-in for all five sections, you and your story are set up for success. The director fills out the premise document before play begins, then as a group you review the premise, getting buy-in or changing things as premise rejection surfaces. Option-

ally, some groups may have better success designing the premise together.

SETTING: The when and where your story takes place.

TONE: The genre your story will be in and vibe your story will have.

HOOK: The events that kick off the drama of your story, dramatically tying the cast characters together.

SAFETY TOOLS: Systems to ensure that nothing in the storytelling process ruins the experience for the players.

COMMITMENT: The real world logistical requirements for telling the story.

CASTING

The players, other than the director, use the creative constraints of the premise to design the cast characters, the main protagonists of the story. If your group would like to jump right into play there are eight pre-made characters, one from each faction, available for free to download and print at aedpublishing.com. If you'd like to create your own character you'll need the blank character sheet and the rules for casting from the core 5th Conspiracy rulebook (scan the QR code on page X to access them).

NEEDS

After coming up with a concept for their character, each player determines their character's needs. Needs are what make characters interesting enough to tell a story about. The first need is their **deep need**, the need

standing between them and being complete. This is the *why* of the character. It could be revenge, redemption, peace, or family. Whatever it is, it's abstract and not easy for the character to achieve. The second need is the **inciting need**, which ties them tightly to the core narrative arch of the story. If the hook for the story is a dead body washing up on the beach, the inciting need might be that the victim was your character's lover, partner, or (in the case of a detective) job. Whatever the need is, it must create a strong narrative and dramatic pressure that pushes the character towards the main plot of the story. Strong enough to overcome the negative pressure of obstacles that will pop-up over the course of the story. The final need is a **situational need**, which is the character's best guess on how they'll make progress to meeting their deep need. This is something tangible and not abstract, such as going on a date or reconciling with their father. This need creates the subplot for the character and will somehow tie back into the main arc of the story.

EPISODES

Now you're all set to start telling your story. An episode is a single sitting where you pass narrative control around the table, telling a story together. A player of a cast character narrates what their character does in the story and the other players react, especially the director who is tasked with creating the world and supporting characters. For more information, examples, and guides on how this collaborative storytelling works in practice, check out the 5th Conspiracy core rulebook. Directors in particular should reference the Directing section (Chapter 4) and how to tie the many needs of the characters into a unified multi-threaded narrative arch.

CHARACTER STATISTICS

All characters in 5C have statistics which are an abstraction of who they are, what they know, and how likely they are to succeed in high stakes situations.

FACTION: An oratum's faction gives a high-level category of the myth their tulpa descends from. A character's faction usually determines which Conspiracy they're brought into, but not always.

FACTIONS



ÁLFAR

The fairies; leprechauns, elves, dwarves, local legends, pixies



THE HOST

The angels; guardian angels, sphinx, angels of wrath, fallen angels, messenger angels



LEVIATHANS

The monsters; dragons, redcaps, giants, gorgon, eldritch abominations



NOCTURN

The shapeshifters; werewolves, skin walkers, bogymen, dryads, jaguar warriors



PANTHEON

The gods; Greek/Roman gods, Norse gods, Aztec gods, Egyptian gods, Chinese gods



PRACTITIONERS

The magic users; witches, hermetics, voodoo priests, warlocks, bruja



REVENANTS

The undead; Mummies, vampires, ghosts, ghouls, the vengeful



TRAVELERS

The cryptids; grey aliens, reptoids, yeti, nordic aliens, mad scientists

FAMILY: Determines the specific nature of an oratum's tulpa. The difference between two shape-shifters, such as a werewolf and a boogyman.

ATTRIBUTES: Represent the core natural talent of the character. Attributes use a step system, starting at a d4, four-sided die, and increasing by steps, d6, d8, etc.

- *Fitness:* How healthy they are.
- *Coordination:* How adept they are at navigating the world.
- *Keen:* How powerful a mind they have.
- *Personality:* How strong a sense of self they have.

TRAITS: Areas of strong natural talent, attached to an attribute and further defining them. Traits use a rank system starting at zero (average) and increasing by one each rank up to a maximum of five (best in the world).

- *Brawn (fitness):* Vigor, Strength, Energy, Power
- *Tough (fitness):* Health, Stamina, Endurance, Stalwartness
- *Dexterity (coordination):* Quickness, Accuracy, Finesse, Handiness
- *Agility (coordination):* Nimbleness, Grace, Fleetness, Spryness
- *Aware (keen):* Perceptiveness, Alertness, Intuition, Instinct
- *Smarts (keen):* Cunning, Memory, Reasoning, Comprehension
- *Charm (personality):* Amiability, Guile, Sexiness, Manipulativeness
- *Will (personality):* Drive, Leadership, Fearsomeness, Composure

IDENTITIES: Play a very important role in establishing who the character is. They represent a role the character has played throughout their life; I.E. Police Officer, Parent, PHD Student. Identities represent what the character knows how to do, what resources they might have at their disposal, and other people they might know and have relationships with. Identities use a step system like attributes, starting at a d4.

IDENTITY FOCUSES: Are perks that one of the character's identities affords them, such as wealth, connections to an organization, or acolyte followers.

- *Acolyte:* An employee, servant, worshiper, or follower who is more capable than most other supporting characters.
- *Ally:* A friend, sibling, partner, or peer that is even more capable than an acolyte but also has their own problems they'll need your help with occasionally.
- *Connected:* Establishes a relationship between your character and a group or organization. You have some pull with this group and have an ear to the ground about their inner workings.
- *Patron:* A boss, mentor, parent, or leader who has taken a special interest in the success of your character.
- *Wealth:* Cash, investments, land, businesses or other forms of income that allow your character to live a finer lifestyle and afford more things than other characters.

BALANCE: If the character is an oratum they'll have a balance rank, representing how human vs. idea the character has become. This represents the strength of their tulpa.

DOMAINS: Manifestations of the ideas that make up the myths that created them; boogeymen are scary, gods rule, and witches are outsiders. An oratum character gets a domain from their faction, their family, and then are able to choose the last domain themselves. This personal domain allows their tulpa to be unique—the difference between a Greek god of war and knowledge, a nosferatu and an Ann Rice inspired vampire.

ARTS: The superpowers oratum have at their disposal. Determined by the character's domains, with faction and family domains having prerequisite arts that must be chosen first.

GEASA: The higher their balance rank, the more powerful arts the character has at their disposal but the less free will they have left, becoming a slave to their geasa. These supernatural restrictions are why fairies can't lie, vampires burn up in the sun, and werewolves transform during the full moon.



DRAMATIC ACTIONS

While telling your story, we'll use dice as a narrative abstraction to determine whether or not our characters succeed or fail to accomplish their goals in a scene. When we as both writers and audience for our story don't know the answer, we use dice to resolve the question.

NO STAKES NO ROLL: In 5C if there isn't an interesting and dramatic consequence for failing, then your character automatically succeeds.

GOAL FIRST: 5C inverts the normal flow of procedure in a TTRPG. Instead of starting with the description of what your character is doing, you start by specifying the outcome your character wishes to achieve.

APPROACH: Next you pick the approach your character is going to use to achieve their goal. This is done by choosing one of the character's eight traits and one identity.

ROLL & COMPARE: Each part of the approach (Trait's paired Attribute and Identity) has a polyhedral die associated with it. Roll both. You don't add the dice together, instead you compare each dice against a **Target Number (TN)** set by the director, usually the number 4.

- **Success:** If the result of either die equals or exceeds the TN your character succeeds in accomplishing their goal.
- **Dramatic Beat:** If both dice equal or exceed the TN you also get a Dramatic Beat. Achieving a beat gives you extra narrative control for the outcome of your character's approach.
- **Failure:** If neither result equals or exceeds the TN you may choose to fail or succeed but at the cost of a terrible consequence that will increase the danger and complication to your character for at least the remainder of the scene.
- **Consequence:** If you roll and the results of both dice are ones (snake eyes), before any modifications, your character fails to achieve their goal and they suffer a terrible consequence.

DESCRIPTION: Now armed with knowledge of the goal, the approach, and the outcome; describe how events play out and lead to that conclusion.

TN4	
SUCCESS	DRAMATIC BEAT
FAILURE	CONSEQUENCE

MODIFIERS

A few factors can modify your approach's outcome before you have your final result. Elements in the scene, powers your character possesses, magical artifacts, or being injured can all effect your chances at success. The most common of all of these is your character's traits, which give you a chance to reroll the attribute die in the approach if you get a low result, and Advantage/Disadvantage, which adds or subtracts from the end result on the die.

- **Advantage:** Having one or more ranks of advantage allows you to add those ranks to one of the two dice—your choice.
- **Disadvantage:** Ranks of disadvantage subtract from the highest result between the two dice.
- **Trait Ranks:** If you have higher than a zero in a trait and roll that number or lower on that die during an approach, you may re-roll the die but must take the new result.

TN4	
ADVANTAGE	DISADVANTAGE
TRAIT RANKS	

TYPES OF BEATS

- **Advantage/Disadvantage:** You create situational advantage or disadvantage, a one time use modifier for you, your opponent, or an ally to use in the current scene, often the very next approach roll made by a character.
- **Information:** You discover a useful piece of information that you weren't aware of before.
- **Quick:** You complete your action much faster than expected.
- **Efficient:** You use much fewer resources than expected to accomplish your goal.
- **Panache:** You achieve your goal in a manner that emotionally moved someone else in the scene; such as leaving them feeling touched, impressed, frightened, charmed, etc.
- **Tool:** You gain a temporary tool to assist your efforts in the remainder of the scene.
- **Narrative Element:** With the director's approval, you may add a narrative change to the current scene.

DRAMATIC CONFLICT

When characters oppose each other in a goal you have a dramatic conflict. These are resolved as two opposed approaches, where both characters roll and then compare results, acting as the other character's TN for determining success. The TN for success is set by the opponent's best approach result and you must beat that number, not just match it. If the results for both players tie, either both characters get what they want (if that's possible), or neither do.

TN	
5	4A
SUCCESS	DRAMATIC BEAT
8 3	7 6
TIE	FAILURE
5 1	4 2
CONSEQUENCE	
1 1	

ACTION SCENES

When action breaks out with a likelihood of multiple dramatic conflicts, such as a car chase or a bar room brawl, we use an action scene to resolve what happens. The director starts a thirty-second timer, during which everyone writes down their character's goal and approach and then all roll simultaneously. During this time the players aren't allowed to strategize or talk in character. When the timer goes off, everyone reveals their action and result at the same time. The player with the worst result goes first and narrates what their character attempts to accomplish. If no one opposed them or no one opposing them rolled a better result, they get to narrate the outcome of their goal for the that round. Then they pass narrative control to the player with the next lowest result. This continues until the player with the best result finishes the narration for the round and the sequence repeats with the director starting the timer. You loop through these steps until the narrative tension of the scene is resolved; someone wins the fight, the suspect gets away, etc. See the main rulebook for suggestions for modifying the stressors, such as the timer, to meet the accessibility needs of your group.

DRAMATIC ACTION SCENE SEQUENCE

1. Director starts the timer.
2. The players come up with action.
 - A. Players write down their goal.
 - B. Players write down their approach (Trait + Identity).
 - C. Players roll their approach.
3. The timer goes off and everyone reveals their action and result.
4. The director adjudicates goals and approaches, while the other players present their highest approach result.
5. Each player takes a turn narrating the outcome of their character's dramatic action, starting with the player who rolled the lowest and ascending.
6. The director checks if there are any questions and clarifies before starting the next round back at step 1 or ends the dramatic action because the stakes have been resolved.



DRAMATIC ACTION SCENE EXAMPLE

J = Juan (he/him): Director

M = Maggie (she/they): Philippa Regis (she/her), Greek goddess of Riding

A = Aadhya (she/her): Anne Khafra (she/her), Sphinx of the Just Truth

Z = Zhong (he/him): Case Ret (they/them),
Inter-dimensional Wuxia

J: The three of you drop onto the top of the moving train, stumbling and catching yourselves before you go tumbling off the sides. The wind stings your eyes. You can feel the *clack-clack* of the train along the tracks as vibrations that shoot up through your legs. You three have just oriented yourselves on your new moving platform when you spot the cultists climbing up onto the roof of the train from the car below you. Action scene! Any questions before I start the timer?

Z: The pool stick that Case grabbed before; does he still have it after the tumble onto the train?

J: Yes, he held onto it. Any other questions? ... No? Okay, starting the timer [pushes button].

[Everyone jots down their goals and approach on their whiteboards. Thirty seconds pass and the timer beeps. Everyone flips their whiteboards face up so everyone can see their goal and reveals the result of their approach rolls at the same time.]

J: [Looking over everyone's goals] Okay, so Case and Phillipa are trying to harm the cultists. Anne's goal is get closer to the train engine to stop it, and the cultists want to harm you guys. The cultists are opposing all of you, and there is one for each of you to deal with, so no advantage or disadvantage on the rolls. Maggie, looks like Phillipa rolled the lowest. Do you want to tell us how she tried to harm the cultists?

M: Yeah, dang it. Okay, so they're climbing up onto the roof of the train car? Phillipa tries to kick the cultist closest to her before they can get up on the roof, but the train bumps at the worst moment.

J: Next lowest roll was the cultists. So, when Phillipa tries to kick the cultist and train car rocks they grab her foot, causing Phillipa to fall. She rolls off the side, catching herself on the ledge at the last moment. Phillipa is "in a spot," holding onto the side of the train car, her feet whipping in wind.

M: Haha, that's not good.

J: The other two cultists pull themselves onto the top of the train car and close in on Anne and Case. One lunges at Anne when... [Looks at Aadhya to signal she now has narrative control]

A: ...When Anne dodges the other way, causing the cult guy to grab air. Then Anne leaps across the gap in between the two cars with her supernatural gracefulness and sprints up the chain of train cars toward the engine.

J: What does Case do?

Z: I've got a weapon, does the cultist have one?

J: Not right now, no.

Z: Okay, so then I have advantage, which means if I add it to this die, I can succeed with a beat.

J: Yep!

Z: Case twirls the pool stick and pirouettes aside when the cultist charges him, coming back around and cracking the cultist in the side of the head with the pool cue. I put the cultist "in a spot" and with my beat, can I use the "impress someone" option to get the attention of the other cultist, the one that tried to stop Anne? Keep the cultist distracted so she can get to the engine?

J: Sure thing, that cultist now sees you as a bigger threat and is paying attention to you and not Anne. You crack the cultist in the head, but since it was a makeshift weapon, it breaks, splintering across the cultist's face, who collapses to the ground at your feet with a broken nose.

Z: Cool, Case tosses away the ruined pool cue and drops into a fighting stance, challenging the still-standing cultist, saying, "Come get some!"

J: [Looks around at the other players] Any questions before I start the timer? ... No? Okay. [Pushes the button to start the timer]

[Everyone writes down their goals and approach and rolls. When the timer goes off, they all flip over the boards]

J: No one is opposing Anne, so she automatically succeeds.

A: Do I have to roll to run across the top of the train? Anne wants to get there as fast as possible.

J: Unopposed and with Anne's Paragon Agility trait, there's no roll. She won't fall and gets to the engine car. But, in the back of the train Phillipa hangs on for dear life. The cultist stomps down on Phillipa's hands trying to make her let go, but because they rolled lower than you..."

M: I'm next, right? So, Phillipa switches hands at the last minute, swinging wildly in the wind. I rolled higher, so I succeed in my goal of getting out of my spot?

J: That's right.

M: Can Phillipa slide down the side of the train car and end up in the space between the two train cars as her way of getting out of her spot?

J: Sure! Phillipa, nearly losing her grip on the train car, gets pulled by the wind down the remaining length of the car, spinning herself in between the train cars and to relative safety, narrowly avoiding being thrown off the train altogether. [Turns to look at Zhong] Looks like Case is on top again, even with them having advantage because they're two against one. So, the one cultist tries to get back onto his feet to get out of his spot, while the other one pressures you by trying to grab Case.

Z: I'm succeeding here, what can I do with that?

J: Well, your goal was to harm the cultists. That means you could put the second cultist into a spot so they're both in a spot, or the one that's already in a spot you could do serious harm to.

Z: Serious harm, all the way.

J: That means you're going to "rough up" the cultist and take them out of the fight. What does that look like?

Z: Case ducks the grab from the second cultist and then boots the first cultist trying to get back up, right off the side of the train.

J: You hear his Wilhelm scream doppler into the distance as the cultist disappears into the night. [Looking around] Any questions before I start the timer?



CONDITIONS

Conditions are the abstractions we use to represent when things aren't going well for a character. The obvious case for this are harm conditions, when a character is banged up or even dying. Normally each condition a character has adds a cumulative disadvantage on all approaches they're attempting. Unimportant supporting cast characters are usually taken out of action by a single condition, whereas the cast characters can have many conditions before being rendered helpless.

IN A SPOT: The character is in a precarious position. A cast character or important supporting character must be knocked into a spot before they can take more serious harm. Approaches to get out of a spot don't suffer disadvantage from this condition.

ROUGHED UP: A harm condition that represents serious but not life-threatening harm.

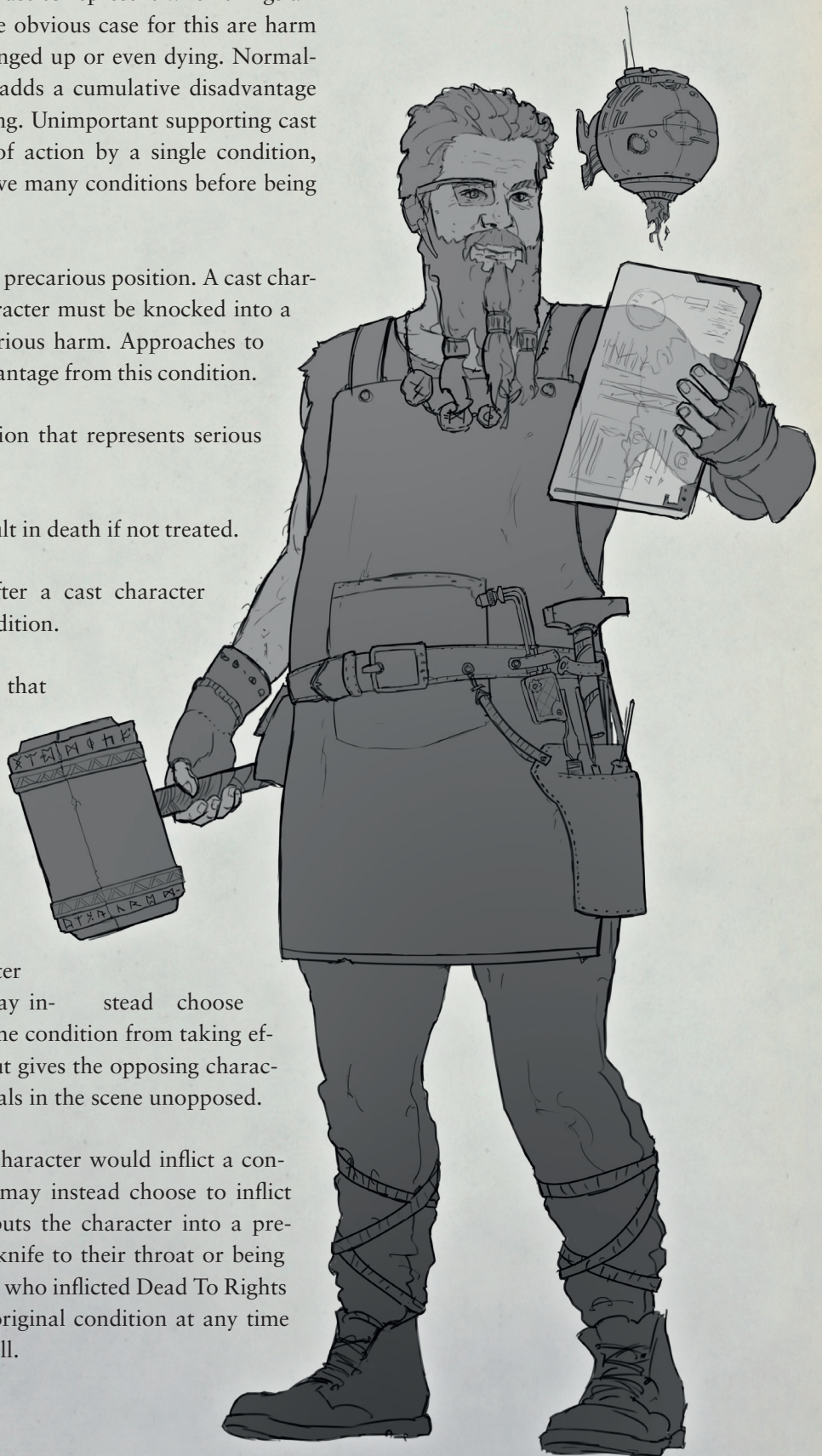
WOUNDED: Harm that will result in death if not treated.

DYING: The condition taken after a cast character receives their second wounded condition.

TAXED: Represents an oratum that is running out of veneration. Instead of imposing disadvantage a taxed condition increases the severity of all geas by one category. A second taxed condition means the oratum is unable to willingly make depletion checks.

HELPLESS: Any time a character would receive a condition they may instead choose to go "Helpless," which prevents the condition from taking effect, except the dying condition, but gives the opposing character liberty to achieve their other goals in the scene unopposed.

DEAD TO RIGHTS: When a character would inflict a condition on another character, they may instead choose to inflict "Dead To Rights" instead. This puts the character into a precarious position such as having a knife to their throat or being dangled over a ledge. The character who inflicted Dead To Rights may swap that condition for the original condition at any time without having to make another roll.



HEALING ACTION

Allows a character to discard a harm condition, usually achieved from an extended period of rest and recuperation, but can be triggered by certain arts and through receiving veneration.

DEPLETION CHECKS

Each day oratum must make a depletion check. This is a roll of a single die, starting at a d4 step with the goal of rolling equal to or under their balance rank. If they succeed in rolling under, the depletion die increases a step to a d6 for their next depletion check. The depletion die continues to increase in steps until they fail a depletion check by rolling over their balance.

On a failed check the depletion die resets to a d4 and the character takes on the taxed condition. There are other circumstances that might require a depletion check, such as using certain powerful arts or by willingly giving up veneration to another oratum.

VENERATION

All oratum need veneration to survive. The way they acquire veneration is unique to their tulpa; a vampire drinks blood, a fairy makes bargains, a god is worshiped. Being venerated has to involve humanity, either through a ritual, a location, a number of worshipers, a sacrifice, or some combination of the above. To be venerated an oratum needs to accumulate enough veneration points to equal their balance. When venerated, they may reset their depletion die and remove a taxed condition or take the healing action.

Veneration Points

RITUAL	LOCATION
Simple Ritual +2 Serious Ritual +4 Sacred Ritual +6	Tulpa's Temple +1 Significant Temple +3 At a Locus +1 Domain Locus +2
WORSHIPERS	SACRIFICE
Believers equal Balance +1 Believers Double Balance +2 Believers 10x Balance +4	Simple Sacrifice +1 Tithing Sacrifice +2 Great Sacrifice +4 Mortal Sacrifice +6



DIRECTING

THE DIRECTOR'S JOB

The director is responsible for playing the roles of supporting characters, narrating the setting, and helping arbitrate disagreements. The director is another player, a member of the audience for the story. They don't know how the story will end. They don't have special authority to overrule other players. The director is not an adjudicator of rules, but rather the advocate for the narrative of the story whose most important responsibilities are: coming up with the premise, managing the handoff of narrative control between players, setting and facilitating dramatic scenes, and weaving the A and B plots together in the form of tent post narrative elements.

TENT POSTS AND PLOT

5th Conspiracy is a game about characters, and so the plot can't take shape until after the characters are created. Unlike in novels, tabletop RPGs are a collaborative storytelling process where several people instead of a single author participate. That's why it's important to view the plot of the game not as "what's going to happen" but instead as "these are the things that could happen." Rather than preparing a linear path the story will follow, the director prepares conflicts that stands in the way of the cast achieving their goals; moments that will create tension and drama. A good way of thinking about these major dramatic moments are as "tent posts" that hold up the story and create the narrative skeleton upon which the rest of the events are draped.

Tent posts are problems the characters will need to overcome, sidestep, or resolve. The director doesn't need to have a solution for how this will happen—that's the casts' job. Every tent post should have at least two or more facets that make it possible for the characters to resolve them in dynamic ways.

A PLOT / B PLOT

Every episode should be guided by twin forces. The "A Plot" is the heart of the story, the events kicked off by the inciting incident. The A plot might evolve over the course of play, resolving one A plot only to birth a new one. When all of the linking A plots are finally resolved the season and the game comes to an end. The "B Plot", on the other hand, revolves around the characters' deep needs. Each tent post should be married to one or more of the characters' immediate and deep needs.

As the director, it's your job to create tent post problems that wind both the A and the B plots together in order to create vibrant and compelling narratives. These should have strings that lead the characters toward other tent posts that are similarly tied together. Try to not plan a path from tent post to tent post but instead create the web of connections and let the players have agency over which posts their characters choose to follow as the story plays out.

NARRATIVE SPINE

The narrative's spine is made up of the A Plot tent posts that must happen. I recommend not having more than three of these per A plot: the inciting incident, a major turn in the middle, and the climax. Having this narrative spine helps support the story you want to tell and keeps the narrative from drifting too far off course as the players attempt to circumnavigate the tent post scenes you've designed. Imagine a line between the beginning and end of the A plot, this is the narrative spine. Your other tent posts should more or less move the action of the story toward that final tent post, the climax of the story. It's okay if these tent posts zig-zag as you play. The line should be pulled left and right by the B plots, but they should always still have forward momentum to the conclusion. The cast will occasionally be prone to wandering far from the path of the story. Use A and B plot tent posts, obstacles the characters must overcome to achieve their needs, to guide them back to the narrative spine.



THE RULE OF THREE

A director should always have at least three tent posts prepared going into an episode, but I'd strongly recommend not preparing more than six. There is a fine balance the director needs to strike between over and under preparing. 5th Conspiracy is a collaborative storytelling game, emphasis on the collaborative. A director can never know which direction the other players may take the story. However, knowing that the players have made characters with strong needs that tie into the A and B plots, we can use those needs to create tent post problems the cast "needs" to overcome. Too few tent posts, and you risk the story losing forward momentum or reaching a premature conclusion. Too many, and you risk having spent a lot of thought and preparation for scenes that never happen, and end up left on the proverbial cutting room floor.



PLAYING 5TH CONSPIRACY

SCENE PREMISE

The story is told in a series of scenes, much like a novel or TV show. There are typically two methods for choosing what the next scene will be about. The first is that the director chooses. The other is that each of the players takes a turn describing what the next scene of the story will be about. Either way, the director or the player should start with a premise. This premise needs to hint at the dramatic intent of the scene. What is this scene really about? Not necessarily what's going to happen but the dramatic significance of the events.

SCENE SETUP

Once the premise of the scene has been given by the player, the director narrates through the **Setup**, the details that lead up to the dramatic moment about to unfold. The players are all encouraged to help add or adjust details to make the setup fit the internal logic of the story. However, be careful to not spend too much time on the setup, because by nature it's not what the scene is about. Instead, these are the implicit details of the dramatic scene which the director is trying to get as close to as possible. Since there are no dramatic stakes in a setup, there are never dramatic action rolls.

NARRATION AND CONTROL

Once narrative control has been passed over to the players, they control the events surrounding their characters in the story. The actors play their characters through improvisational roleplay to decide what their characters say and do, while the director adds details to the setting when necessary and acts out the roles of the supporting cast the protagonists need to interact with. Because there are now dramatic stakes, dramatic rolls

may be necessary to determine what the results of the character's choices will be. It's the director's job to help ensure the players use goal-first dramatic actions. This means managing the passing of narrative control back and forth as the story unfolds so that the actor for each character has control for the narrative outcomes for their character.

GOAL BEFORE APPROACH

Oftentimes, a player will tell you the character's approach without expressing their goal. This is one of the most common ways expectations get misaligned. It's also not how dramatic actions work in 5th Conspiracy. The player should state their goal before they come up with an approach. This makes it clear what the intended outcome of their approach is supposed to be and allows the director to give additional information, apply advantage or disadvantage, and set the correct difficulty.

APPROACH BEFORE NARRATION

There's a natural inclination once you've been roleplaying in a scene that suddenly needs a dramatic action to continue to roleplay that action before you've come up with an approach. This is especially true with social actions, like attempting to persuade or intimidate a supporting character. Suppose a character gives a great and convincing speech only to roll snake eyes on their approach they roll afterward. Instead, go the other direction—make the approach and then roleplay the results. What happened that makes your normally charming character unable to convince the supporting character? As the director, feel free to give suggestions to the player if they're struggling for ideas.

RESOURCES, CONTACTS, AND PREPAREDNESS

Identities represent more than what a character knows. It's an important part of their life experience, who they know, what they own, and what they might have access to. Whenever a character asks a question like "Can my character have a sports car?" or "Do I know anyone who can fence stolen goods?" or even "I put on my bulletproof vest before going into the store," if the answer isn't obvious, it should be a dramatic action using that identity in the approach. Success means the character has that resource available to them, and on a failure, they don't. Dramatic beats or consequences on these kinds of rolls can represent everything from their gear being shoddy and secondhand to owing a favor or having extra features or being extra prepared.

WHAT NOW?

You've got everything you need to tell a story in the world of 5th Conspiracy. Grab some friends and tell your story!

Consider getting the full text of 5th Conspiracy from aedpublishing.com. The core rulebook has examples, more detailed explanations, and many more tools for telling exceptional stories.

Subscribe to our mailing list to get information about upcoming games and products.

Join the 5th Conspiracy Discord community. Fans of the game are telling stories together there right now. Come ask your questions, find new friends to play with, and tell us about the stories you and your crew have written.

