DIESEL EMPIRES

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Creating Characters

Before the game starts, the **GM** will pass around a set of sheets that contain all of the *species*, *Paths*, and *Traits* for the game (which can be found at **UpTooLateGames.com**).

- **Pick your character's species**, which gives your character a set of *attributes*.
- **Pick *one Path* for your character.** Paths describe the character's course through their life and gives them a set of *Backgrounds* and *Traits* to select.
- **Pick *one Background* from their Path**, which has a set of *Traits*. **These Traits begin with a rank of *two* (2).** You also gain the *extra assets* of the Background.
- **Some Traits have <u>underlined</u> keywords** which have *special* meaning.

You have an additional *three* (3) points to spend:

- *One* (1) **point** will give a character **a *new* Background**, but **the new Traits start at *one* (1).** You also gain the *extra assets* of the Background.
- *One* (1) **point will increase a Trait's rank by *one* (1)**, but you can **only increase Traits from your character's *starting* or *purchased* Backgrounds.**
- **You can *only* pick Backgrounds from your character's Path**, and you **cannot gain *new* Paths.**

Playing the Game

The Deck

The game requires a *standard Poker deck* with *both Jokers*.

Everyone *except* for the GM gets *five* (5) cards at the start of the game. The GM *never* carries a hand and **players can *never* have *more* than *five* (5) cards in their hand.**

The *base value* of the cards is *zero* (0) for *Pip cards* (the cards numbered *2* through *10*), *one* (1) for *Royal cards* (Queens, Kings, Jacks), *two* (2) for *Aces*, and *three* (3) for *Jokers*.

Whenever the deck runs out of cards, immediately *reshuffle* the discard pile and create a *new* deck.

Strain

Strain cards represent the **physical** or **mental** fatigue of a character and are **dealt to the player *face down*** and **stay with the character until a *Check* is *resolved* or the character *rests*.**

Checks

The GM can call for a *Check* anytime the *outcome* of a character's action will have a *meaningful* impact on the story. **The GM also chooses the *type* of Check**, which also determines **the *suit* of Check:**

Check	Suit	
Grit	♣ **Club**	Endurance, willpower, strength.
Sharp	♦ **Diamond**	Experience, knowledge, training.
Wits	♥ **Heart**	Awareness, intuition, presence.
Reflex	♠ **Spade**	Precision, finesse, speed.

Add *one* (+1) to the base value of *all* cards that *match* the *suit* of the Check, so *Pip Club* cards are worth *one* (1) during a *Grit* Check. **Jokers do not get this bonus**, but are still worth *three* (3).

Complications

Before the player plays cards for their character, the GM can **deal** *one* (**1**) Strain for any complications that could have a *meaningful* impact on the Check, so a *driving* Check in *poor* weather, and on *bad* roads might add *two* (**2**) Strain.

The character also gains *one* (**1**) Strain for *each Wound* or *Stress* level they carry into the Check.

The Character Play

If the character has a *Trait* that is relevant to the Check, the player **draws and plays** *one* (**1**) **card from the deck** for *each rank* in the Trait, so a rank *two* (**2**) Trait gives a player *two* (**2**) draws.

The player can play any card from their hand for their character.

The player can also *discard* cards from their hand, and **each** discard allows the player to **draw and play** *one* (**1**) **card from the deck**, so *three* (**3**) discards gives the player *three* (**3**) draws.

A player **can** *play* or *discard* **as long as they still have cards in their hand**, so a player *can* discard *or* play cards *one card* at a time until they run out of cards.

The Outcome

Once the player has *finished* playing their cards, **reveal all of the Strain cards** and *subtract* the total **value of the Strain cards from the total value of the character's cards** to determine the outcome:

Total	Outcome	
3	**Superb**	They <u>*succeed*</u> and they gain an ***immediate*** advantage.
2	**Ideal**	They <u>*succeed*</u>.
1	**Messy**	They <u>*succeed*</u>, but they **gain** *one* (**1**) *Strain*.
0	**Failure**	They <u>*fail*</u> and **gain** *one* (**1**) *Strain*.
-1	**Bad**	They <u>*fail*</u> and **gain** *one* (**1**) *Wound or Stress* (GM's choice).
-2	**Dismal**	They <u>*fail*</u> and **gain** *two* (**2**) *Wounds or Stress* (GM's choice).

The GM narrates the outcome, and ***all* of the cards revealed for the Check are *discarded*. Any *new* Strain gained from the outcome is *dealt*.**

If the player has *zero* (**0**) cards in their hand, they may *draw one* (**1**) card for their hand.

Rest

Rest restores **both** *cards* **and** *Strain*, depending on the *quality* of rest.

Rest		Hand Size	Strain Left
Half	**Having the safety** to *eat a quick meal* or something similar.	*Three* (**3**) **cards**	1
Full	Getting **two hours of** *sleep*, or the *equivalent*.	*Five* (**5**) **cards**	0

Rest recovers cards back to a set *hand size*, so if a player has *one* (**1**) card in their hand, a *Half* Rest *would* bring them back to *three* (**3**) cards.

Rest *also* **recovers Strain back to a set level**, so if a character had *three* (**3**) Strain, a *Half* Rest would bring them down to *one* (**1**) Strain. **Recovered Strain is** *discarded*.

Cards and Strain can be recovered in other ways, like *stimulants*, *magic*, or *achieving milestones*, but it is **up to the GM to decide** *what* is recovered and if there are any *side-effects*.

Wounds and Stress

Wounds or Stress can only be gained through *failed* Checks, and represent the character's **physical and** *mental trauma*.

A character can only endure a total of *four* (**4**) levels of *Wounds or Stress*.

If a character suffers a *Wound*, it *replaces* Stress *first*, so if a character with *one* (1) Stress and *one* (1) Wound suffers a *Wound*, they now have *two* (2) Wounds.

If a character suffers *Stress* when they have *four* (**4**) **levels of Wounds *or* Stress, it becomes a *Wound*,** so if a character with *three* (3) Stress and *one* (1) Wound suffers *Stress*, they now have *two* (2) Stress and *two* (2) Wounds.

The character is *incapacitated* at *three* (**3**) *Wounds*, and *dying* at *four* (**4**) **Wounds**. *Dying* characters that take *any Wounds or Stress die*.

Recovery

One (**1**) **level of *Stress* can be *removed*** if the character makes a *successful Grit* Check *or* if *another* **character** makes a *successful Wits* Check. Either attempt requires a *Half Rest*.

Wounds **can be removed** if a character can make a *successful Sharp* Check to apply <u>*medical aid*</u>, or a *successful Grit Check* to heal **naturally**. Either attempt requires a **Full Rest**.

Combat Checks

Combat Checks work as normal, but the *Check types* have different meanings based on the fight:

Check	Suit	
Grit	♣ **Club**	Dirty, desperate, and bloody.
Sharp	♦ **Diamond**	Strategic and calculated.
Wits	♥ **Heart**	Cautious and defensive.
Reflex	♠ **Spade**	Clean, fast, and lethal.

Attack Strength

If a character lands a *successful* attack, their Check *total* **is the *attack strength***, which is **the amount of *Strain* inflicted on a target**, so a result of *two* (2) on an attack Check has an attack strength of *two* (2) *and* inflicts *two* (2) Strain.

Magic Checks

Magic Checks work as normal, but the *Check types* have a different meanings based on the magic:

Check	Suit	
Grit	♣ **Club**	Massive and potent.
Sharp	♦ **Diamond**	Carefully crafted.
Wits	♥ **Heart**	Subtle and unassuming.
Reflex	♠ **Spade**	Instant and focused.

Magic Keywords

These keywords indicate the specific method a Trait can be used to channel magic:

- <u>*Ritual*</u> **magic uses a *prepared* body**, like a *ritual circle* or *consecrated sacrifice*. It is the *oldest* form of spell casting, and it is *safer* since the body can be purposefully built to *endure* channeling, though *run-away effects* can still be dangerous.
- <u>*Evocation*</u> **channels magic through the *caster's body*.** This poses *extreme* risks for the spell caster because they have to split their focus between an intricate channeling rite, and the **physical labor of *containing* magic**. This allows a caster to shape effects by **simply *speaking* a rite**, but **it always causes *one* (1) *extra* Strain *after* the Check** (even if they *succeed*). The *recited* component allows <u>evocation</u> rites to be **cast as a <u>*ritual*</u> instead** (which does *not* cause *extra* Strain).

- _**Psychic** evocation_ is the **same as regular** <u>evocation</u>, but **without a** _spoken_ component, and **it still causes** _one_ (**1**) _extra_ **Strain** _after_ **the Check**. However, since psychics rely **entirely** on _instinct_ and _intuition_, psychics _cannot_ inscribe their rites as a _ritual_.

Non-Player Characters (NPCs)

The GM never draws cards for their NPCs. Instead, every NPC has a **Difficulty rating** (**DR**), which is the amount of _Strain_ the NPC causes as a _complication_. **In most cases** this is _zero_ (**0**), but _professional_ NPCs start at _two_ (**2**), and _veteran_ NPCs start at _three_ (**3**).

When an NPC suffers _Strain_ from an attack, _reduce_ their _DR_ for each level of Strain. When an **NPC's DR falls** _below zero_ (**0**), the GM decides if they are _incapacitated_ or _dead_.

Weapons And Armor

Weapons

The _Strength_ (**ST**) of a weapon is _added_ to the _attack strength if_ a character _succeeds_, so a 2 ST weapon simply increases the attack strength of an attack by _two_ (**2**). **If a character is** _hit_ by a weapon, the **ST** is the amount of **additional Strain** the character suffers.

The number of "+" _after_ **ST is the amount to reduce** _armor rating_, to a minimum of _zero_ (**0**), **before armor affects attack strength**, so a weapon with _2+ ST_ would add _two_ (**2**) to the attack strength, and _subtract one_ (**1**) from the armor rating of the target.

	Strength (ST)
Bare Hands and Feets. The classic.	0
Combat Knife. The first upgrade.	1
Long Sword. The mainstay weapon of the Silohain.	2
Longbow. Aside from magic, this is the main ranged weapon of the Silohain.	2
.38 Pistol. Most civilian pistols.	2+
.454 Pistol. Heavier firepower, but harder to manage.	3
.223 Combat Rifle. The kind of rifle favored by many modern militaries.	3+
.308 Combat Rifle. A heavier rifle, usually reserved for support fire.	4

Armor

The **armor rating** (**AR**) _reduces_ **the** _attack strength_ of an attack to a minimum of _zero_ (0), so _3 AR_ armor will reduce an _attack strength two_ (2) to attack strength _zero_ (0).

Armor _only_ **affects** _attack strength_, so a character who _fails_ a defense Check against an attack will still suffer at least _one_ (1) Strain from the _failed_ Check.

	Rating (AR)
Ballistic Leather. Synthetically strengthened leather that a lot of survivalists wear.	1
Elven Plate. Magically enhanced steel armor which is as light as aluminum.	3
Class IIa Kevlar. Commonly given to watch members in major cities.	2
Class E IIa KevFlex. Magically enhanced to be woven into plain clothes.	2
Combat Armor. Stiff laminate cloth with a steel plate backing.	2
Class E III KevFlex, with ceramic inserts. Used in advanced militaries.	3
Class E IV KevFlex, with ceramic inserts. Rarely fielded due to its weight and cost.	4