



a game of post-apocalyptic community by jim pinto

one more pull of the trigger
before it's all over
all the world can go to hell

make me captain
or I don't play nice

f~~u~~ckers!

GMzero

the carcass

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The Carcass is Book 4 in the *GMZero* series.

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gmzero

GMZero is a series of GMless games by Post World Games. While this series makes no judgment over one style or another, the focus of GMZero is to provide an alternative method of play from the *reliant focus model* of traditional roleplaying games.

There are many designers making GMless games, but the GMZero series is an attempt to make these ideas a little easier to swallow for the traditional crowd, while still creating original works. To achieve this goal, I've adhered to the following philosophy.

First. There is no right or wrong way to do anything. I redesign and hack other people's games all the time to fit my play style. You should too. This game, and others like it, are not bibles of absolute authority. While the structure has been designed and developed and playtested and enhanced to produce a specific game experience, I can't emulate 100% the game experience you want. Only you can do that.

This is social contracts 101. Fun is the ultimate goal, but the vehicle driving that fun is a shared understanding of what can and cannot be done.

Second. Structure makes sure everyone understands the rules and framework of a game. What can and cannot be done with it. Going off the rails feels weird and foreign. I get nervous when people try to make *The Carcass* into a *different* post apocalyptic game, because that wasn't my intent. Following the structure means doing what the game intends.

That doesn't mean you can't go off the rails. But every artist will tell you, you need to understand the rules to understand why you are breaking them.

Third. Everyone has a voice. No longer are stories dependent upon one person with all the secrets waiting behind the screen to "surprise" you with the trick ending that's not really a surprise. Now, everyone adds ingredients to an ever-growing narrative. To understand this better we have to let go of what we expect traditional games to do and re-learn the process of storytelling.

This is the core philosophy of GMZero, actually. But it's going to take some work to explain it to you. Page 5 has more information. Just be prepared to accept that no one is in charge. No one person has the final say.

Let me explain.

Traditional plot-driven or location-driven adventure gaming is about following a pre-set number of bread crumbs to the banana bread at the end of the adventure. Linking together these bread crumbs into a coherent narrative is a talent. Do not get me wrong. Quality gamemasters can make some great banana bread, but published "by the nose/on rails/paint by numbers" adventures and modern character-centric game mechanics make the gamemaster kind of redundant.

Now. I love banana bread, but I don't want to eat it every meal.

Organic story telling is a fascinating form of writing. Movies gave this up a long time ago and TV shows that try to do this fail with the masses — *Deadwood* comes to mind — though I'd still like to see more. Let's not even address the formula of novels.

This is where GMZero gives everyone a role... a purpose... a voice.

agency

Agency is that new buzzword everyone uses to describe the power a character has over his/her own story. But in the context of story games, agency is the power the player has to impact the story. It's a bit meta.

GMZero is no different in this regard.

Everyone playing has a stake in ensuring the game goes well. In order to accomplish this, everyone must share in the duties of determining what becomes canon and ultimately a part of the story. If everyone agrees to play *The Carcass*, they are agreeing that society is in decline and the leader is dead. The roles and world building emphasize this. To break these rules means everyone shares in the authority of saying, *"We are playing on a verdant waterworld under the yoke of an oppressive tyrannical leader."*

Everyone has the agency to say what is right and what is wrong. That means respecting theme, tone, and all kinds of things best left to the gamemaster in the old games.

Each game in the GMZero series has its own way of dealing with player agency. The mechanics are sometimes obvious, and other times subtle. But, I assure you, there is never an instance where no one is in charge. Even if it's the dice.

measuring development

GMZero games are (usually) less than four hours long. If necessary, players can keep track of the "history" of a given story on paper, but for the most part everyone playing has the memory to recall some kind of continuity. Especially since a majority of these games are about perspective anyway. That means each player is like a guest star director focusing on the elements that they think hold [VALUE].

GMZero games do not have laborious rules or stricture to ensure people respect what has come before. It is organic and natural for people to want to build upon what has been written before. Honor this phenomenon with or without my direction.

"I want to kill the bartender."

"You can't. He's important to the story."

"And I'm not?"

A better term is probably community.

These violations of accepted tenets should not be taken lightly.

You wanted to win and be in charge? Now you know how much work that is.

Sometimes going off the rails is unintentional, or only slightly disruptive. But if it doesn't add to the gestalt, what is it? If the suspension of disbelief is threatened, players can take action to protect that, bringing a rogue or errant player back into the fabric of the game.

"I don't care if you think there were unicorns in the first scene. I don't remember them and I think they are silly. So, I'm not putting them in my scene."

[VALUE] is the immeasurable measure of a thing. We all gain enjoyment from something, for instance, but how can we measure that in quantifiable terms? We can't even gauge how much fun one person had over another with any kind of unit of measure. So, we just assert that something has a [VALUE].

framing scenes

The majority of games in the *GMZero* line are scene-framing games. Scene framing is a technique many story games use to narrow the focus of play to “key moments.” One does not waste table time buying gear at the adventure shop unless something important happens there.

There are generally few specific rules on how to frame a scene, though some games try. A good scene includes the elements that make the game what it is. But too many rules — and merciless stricture about what can and cannot be said — limit creativity. However, there are tried and true methods and rules that generate *better* scenes. Before you go into a game, be aware of just how many scenes you’ll be establishing from beginning to end and plan to not squander one with a rehashing of what you already know.

In media res is the concept of starting in the middle of the action. Don’t worry about how the characters got here, being surrounded by a pack of wild dogs creates immediate tension. Another player can explain it away later, if they must.

A good scene starts late and ends early. Open with a strong sentence that implies some kind of history. Call “scene” or “cut” before someone ruins a perfectly-timed line with a weaker retort.

Bookends and mirrors. Framing tools can be visual, obvious, grad school crutches. But they can still enhance a roleplaying experience. Don’t be afraid to bookend a scene with the sample elements at the front and back. Don’t be afraid to use something that’s been used before.

The micro-management of framing a scene can ensure the scene doesn’t slip off the rails with precise details about everyone’s role. Conversely, a hands off approach can allow the drama to go in unexpected directions.

Cause and effect are your friends. Let the characters’ mistakes grow into drama for a following scene.

Cliffhangers are useful in the middle of a story, but hold little value early on. Also, the action of Act III washes away any possible tension of “does he make the jump,” because we will know soon enough.

Placing two characters into an awkward or inexplicable scene can be dangerous, or it can produce results you weren’t expecting. Knowing going in that two characters hate each other creates better drama than two characters who agree with one another on everything.

GMless story games aren’t all scene-framing games, it’s just my preferred style.

It does not add to the story to stop and buy 50 feet of rope. If you want it, you have it.

Your mileage may vary.

We don’t need an explanation about how the characters get through the gate. Open the scene with the characters inside the gate and in the middle of talking. We don’t need an explanation about how the characters escape. End the scene with the characters in chains.

Or its opposite.

Consider using photos of Arizona, Death Valley, Mars, and the Makgadikgadi as visual aids and props for the game.

Avoid self-indulgence, scenes without an exit strategy, scenes without goals, and scenes about minutia. It is not necessary to explain how someone gets their hands on a gun or gets to the bus stop. The drama is not in having the gun. The drama is in pointing the gun.

more advice

I've been quoted many times as saying, "the social contract is more important than the game you play." This is especially true for people who play non-traditional games.

The objective of traditional roleplaying games is for players to set personal goals and achieve them at any cost. This game structure rewards personal achievement with experience points that equate to monster killing and treasure hoarding. These are not ingredients in the GMZero series.

The goal is to write a good story. The reward is a well-written story.

Certainly games have developed reward systems beyond that, but if your mind-set is to win, you're going to find a different game experience within these pages than someone who plays in order to write a good story. So while it's impossible for everyone to share 100% of the same interests in the game, being completely at odds with the expectations of the mechanics is like expecting chess to have better touchdown rules.

improvisation is not the answer

Many non-traditional games rely on improvisation and making things up on the fly. The basic logic is that improv teaches us to listen to what the other person is saying and work with it. The answer to any made up piece of information is always "yes," or "no... but..." This means that we respect one another's ideas and use them as seeds for even better ideas.

But improvization has a way of producing 'ham.'

Characters who ham-it-up in grand-standing scenes glorify their own characters. This is self-serving and does little to improve the story. Players learn this technique in traditional games when they first transition from 'rollplaying' to 'roleplaying.'

Some people think talking with an accent is roleplaying or hating lizardmen gives them new depth. The list of superficial ingredients in roleplaying goes on. I can't tell you what's best for your kind of fun, but the good scenes are generous, generating room for other characters to grow. If you're really into the soliloquy, there's always youtube.

Tattoo this on your arm if you have to.

Just like someone showing up for a hack and slash game to "socialize."

It is never, "no."

Everyone loves this clever little cliché so much.

the carcass

The Carcass is a roleplaying story game where players take on the roles of the last members of a dying post-apocalyptic tribe. The tribal leader is dead, the community in tatters, and the future a mystery. What will become of you in this barren wasteland?

Like most story roleplaying games, the players take on roles in the story as well as authors of the game. Unlike most of the *GMZero* or *Protocol* story roleplaying games I've designed, in this one characters will die. Players without characters are still involved in the game, but their options for affecting the story are limited. Death is inevitable.

The Carcass is played over the course of three to eight hours (or more). Each player takes on the role of a character vital to the tribe, who believes himself or herself most capable of leading the tribe and surviving the hard conditions.

Players create two characters. One is a key figure in the community and the player's main character. The other is an NPC member of the tribe of some influence. Beyond that, the tribe is made up of dozens of people who are just trying to survive.

What sets *The Carcass* apart from other roleplaying games is that the story is not (solely) about success or failure, but about the range of the narrative. Actions with consequences have interesting consequences. Actions with results have unexpected results. Actions with value have measurable and recognizable value. The game revolves around unique action charts for each character role.

Often player expectations focus on 'winning,' especially with such important goals created through character design. But the interesting actions in *The Carcass* are not about winning, but about dramatic results. Do not expect to win, or have control over most of the game.

The Carcass has no set end point. Players continue until they feel the narrative has been fully explored, or until all of the key characters are dead. Feel free to play until all the NPCs are dead, as well. This could take more than one session.

I know what you're thinking. It sounds like *Apocalypse World*. Well. I hope it doesn't end up that way. It doesn't play like that for me.

But, we're all smart enough to know that's these stories don't end on a happy note. So. Get that notion out of your head now and everything will be fine.

I recommend writing these NPCs onto index cards or a central piece of paper that everyone can reference.

Each role has its own charts with unique results. Each time you play, try a different role.

It's called *The Carcass*, not *Rainbow Sprinkles™*.

This is vastly different to other *GMZero* games.

It is recommended that players not finish the game until a leader is decided and/or all of the trepidation (page 19) has been dealt with.

overview

In *The Carcass*, players create a tribe of people living in a post-apocalyptic wasteland. Each player creates one character and one NPC. They will explore character relationships and roles, answer questions about world building, and define character goals. During play, the players take on the roles of characters, help to author the story of a post-apocalyptic tribe, and play the foil to the person on their right.

Scenes are framed by the players, called directors. During these scenes, characters can take two different kinds of actions: immediate and extended, one of which happens immediately and one of which takes time to plan and execute.

Key actions require die rolls to execute and the player's foil interprets the results, though there are exceptions. Drama points can be used to influence the story, join scenes you are not in, take additional actions, make problems worse, and roll more dice.

Players will also vie for leadership and track the growing trepidation of the populace — the general mood of the other villagers. Actions have large implications and character death is a real possibility.

Gameplay continues as long as you like, but players should recognize when the story is coming to a close. The game can even be campaigned for a short period.

Being a foil means to thwart their actions, or at the very least make things difficult for them.

You won't be rolling dice to clean your gun or farm the land. But anytime you want to perform a dramatic action, you'll need to roll the dice.

Fighting and dying so that others may live.

show me someone unwilling to kill
to keep what's his and i'll show you
a carcass



first

Before the game can start, the group determines why the tribe is in decay and how the leader died. Each player may help to add to the drama of the tribe, providing ideas or supporting the group's decisions. There's a separate section on world building (called Dents and Scratches, page 12), but for now explore the environment you'll be playing in. Is the community built in crags or along the desert wastes? Do mutants or marauders hunt the tribe? How scarce is water?

Note: This game can benefit from a gamemaster, but it isn't necessary.

This shouldn't take more than 15 minutes to complete.

the tribe

In *The Carcass*, characters are key members of a dying tribe. The game presumes a few living NPCs remain, but their relative strengths are questionable. This means the NPCs will lean on the characters for help from time to time, instead of the other way around.

Name your tribe and two neighboring tribes — one is neutral and one is hostile. These tribes may be mentioned during 'Dents and Scratches' (page 12) and during play.

In case you are out of name ideas for tribes, I suggest:

Ape Hangers, Blood Eyes, Crows, Dogmen, Evergons, The First, Ghosts, Hammers, Iron Buzzards, Jackals, Knights of Glade, Liar Drakes, Marauders, Night Razors, Originals, The Precious Ones, Quiet Giants, Redtails, Scions of Glass, Soldiers of the Stone, Tall Locusts, Tritons, Vipers, War Dogs, and Warriors.

characters

Each player creates one character and one key NPC for the tribe. Anyone may play this NPC (as needed). However, no one may play your character for you. Characters need names, roles (page 11), and goals (page 12). The NPCs needs names, roles, and simple affectations. Each of these elements is explained in detail on the following pages.

In case you are out of name ideas for characters, I suggest:

Ace, Axel, Bone, Brutus, Claw, Cleo, Dartmouth, Damien, Evian, Exit, Flow, Forest, Go, Grey, Hacksaw, Horace, Indigo, Ipad, Jasmine, Jayk, Karot, Kline, Lane, Lincoln, Maddox, Mister, Never, Noel, Only, Oscar, Patients, Plinth, Qu, Quore, Reason, Rue, Saint, Seven, Sinn, Sturdy, Tank, Tees, Trenton, Ulys, Under, Webster, White, Xray, Yard, Yale, Zen

the foil

The player to your left is your character's foil. He or she represents all the bad things that will ever happen to your character. Every time a result is rolled on any chart, the player to your left interprets the results in the narrative. This is explained more fully on see page 24. For now, just know who your foil is.

Note: You will never interpret your own die results.

One exception is when a witch rolls doubles (see page 34). The other exception involves leadership (see page 20).

roles

Each character takes on a role in the tribe. Role-duplication is allowed, but boring. Mix it up. Below is a short explanation of each. The next page has more information on how to play these characters.

- Curate. The person who guards the past.
- Drone. The person who toils.
- Expert. The person who knows things.
- Hatchet. The person who murders.
- Marker. The person who scouts.
- Rover. The person who drives.
- Soldier. The person who fights.
- Welder. The person who fixes junk.
- Witch. The person who works miracles.
- Wrecker. The person who collects junk.

Each role lists five questions. Players choose two of these questions to answer. The first question relates to a 'who' in the tribe, but not a character in the game. It is marked with an asterisk (*). This should be one of the NPCs the players created, but it is not 100% necessary. Creating a new NPC here is acceptable, but should relate back to the key characters somehow.

The second, third, and fourth questions relate to a 'who' in the game, namely another character (or yourself). This is not secret information. Make sure to let everyone know the answer to this question, especially the person you've selected.

The last question is a secret and marked with two asterisks (**). The answer is not revealed to the other players.

Character sheets for each of the roles appear on pages 26 through 35.

If you are playing with the optional hobbling rules (see page 36), this is completed before moving onto the next step ('Dents and Scratches').

Each role is explained on pages 26 through 35 with their own resolution charts for role-specific, fighting, and general conflict resolution. You'll be selecting a role for your character *and* the NPC you're creating.



Some groups may eschew private or secret information, preferring the players reveal these questions to the group. Doing so can increase the dramatic potential, but also remove the fun of a 'reveal' scene. Advanced players should explore the questions however they like.

'dents and scratches'

Post-Apocalyptic games are not about what caused the world to end, but about rebuilding something in place of the ravaged society. So, now the players work together to determine how ugly the world is by answering some questions. Each player selects one question and one player to answer that question — one per player.

goals

In *The Carcass*, characters have three goals: one is personal, one is the survival of the tribe, and one is to find an effective leader. Your actions ultimately affect what is best for everyone and who views you as leadership material.

Each player should now write privately what they see as the personal goal of his or her character as well as how he or she sees the tribe surviving. This information is kept secret during play and only comes out through roleplaying (if at all).

drama points

Players start the game with two drama points each. Drama points represent authorial control. They are used to change elements of the narrative, assume agency you do not normally have, break the rules, and roll more dice during an action or conflict. They can essentially do anything except change a die roll that has already been rolled.

Nearly everything costs one drama point, though group consensus may determine that more points are needed for something specific. And players are welcome to spend drama points against one another in an attempt to cancel something out, with the winner being the player who spends the most points.

The general action chart has three specific results that allow the foil to spend drama points to make matters worse for a character. The rules are specific here, even if the results are not.

Players gain more drama points during play when characters fail miserably, become the leader, or die. Some roles start with more drama points than others. NPCs do not have drama points.

- How long ago did the world collapse? Is this the first generation? The second? Unknown?
- What measures does the tribe take to secure food/shelter/water?
- What is sacred to the tribe?
- Define one vital resource the tribe lacks.
- How big was the tribe before the fall?
- Why do you want to be the leader?
Why does everyone *think* you want to be the leader?
- Who among you was secretly related to the old tribal leader? How?
- What was your rank in the tribe before the fall? Now?
- What does the tribe do to those they suspect are witches?
- How does the tribe acquire/refine fuel for the vehicles?
- Why are there no children in the tribe?
- How have the neighboring tribes made life difficult for your tribe?
- How has your tribe made life difficult for itself?
- Who pretends to be leader in the meantime?

Spent drama points are given to your foil (see page 24).

For instance, being the director two times in a row might cost three drama points (or more).

Players should agree beforehand whether or not drama points can cause/prevent a character death.

setup example

Abe, Bianca, Carl, and Diana are all playing *The Carcass*. For their main characters, Abe is playing a welder named Buzzsaw, Bianca is playing a soldier named Killswitch, Carl is playing a rover named Drago, and Diana is playing a witch named Deliah. The group decides to name their tribe The Fire Ranks and the neighboring tribes Hanji and Rat Pilum.

Abe creates a drone NPC named Isaiah who lost his entire family during the fall and walks with a cane, despite his middle age. Bianca creates a curate NPC named Gossamer who once tried to become leader but no one took her seriously because she cannot bear children (a local superstition Bianca decides). Carl creates a soldier NPC named Flikk who doesn't sleep and has trouble making lasting relationships. Finally, Diana creates a wrecker NPC named Saxr who was once convicted of murder, but fled his old tribe to join this one. Everyone knows what Saxr did, but the old leadership trusted him.

Abe pulls out the welder character sheet and answers two of the five questions on the sheet:

Who* did you maim with your makeshift repairs?

Who do you secretly hate?

Since the first question is about an NPC, Abe decides Buzzsaw cut off Flikk's left hand by accident a few years ago while making a special three barrel shotgun that fires fletchettes without a casing. Flikk has never been the same since the accident, though he is still a functional soldier. Since Flikk is an NPC, the information is public and written on his card/sheet. Abe then decides to answer the third question on his character sheet. He notes secretly that Buzzsaw hates Deliah, blaming her for Gossamer's infertility, though he's kind enough to her face.

The rest of the players continue in this manner, providing public answers when necessary and noting things in private that only they would know. Abe decides that Drago once screwed Buzzsaw over, taking every last piece of metal and tool (without asking) to armor a truck. The truck was later abandoned 50 miles from the settlement when the engine block cracked and could not be repaired. The pieces from Buzzsaw's shop are still out in the desert. Bianca decides that Killswitch killed the previous leader for being a witch.

The tension is mounting.

Abe decides to ask the first 'Dents and Scratches' question to Bianca (his foil): *What does the tribe do to those they suspect are witches?* Bianca responds that they are taken into the desert, staked to the earth, and left for the carrion-feeders. The tribe then moves the settlement so the witch can never find them, even if he or she survives the ordeal.

Bianca in turn asks a question of Diana, Diana asks one of Carl, and Carl asks one of Abe. From these questions, the players determine the tribe is running out of healthy seeds for future crops. A lack of water and arable land has added to the tribe's difficulties. And with no children being born in the last 10 years, due to a blight (blamed on a witch's curse), the future of the tribe is in jeopardy. Leaderless, the tribe stumbles through the days looking for a reason to go on.

With the world framed enough to roleplay in, the players now secretly define the goals of their characters and what they believe will bring salvation.

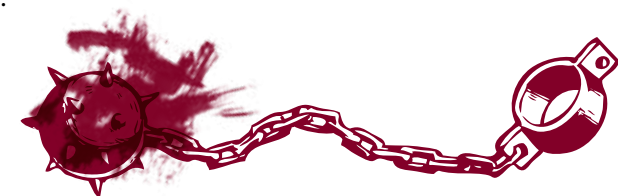
Buzzsaw (Abe) secretly hopes Killswitch becomes the leader and knows that the tribe cannot flourish until Deliah is condemned as a witch.

Bianca writes down that Killswitch's goal is to find a new place for the tribe to live, where they can hunt and fish. In order to do that, they need to get mobile. Drago's role in Bianca's vision is to get as many vehicles working as possible.

Drago (Carl) is scared of Killswitch. While the two share no animosity, Drago doesn't know who she will kill next. He hopes that by making Abe the leader it will cure their issues and keep Killswitch at bay. He's not sure how this will play out exactly, however, as he's not a good long-term planner.

Diana's character — Deliah — can sense that she is an outcast. She's hidden her witch powers this long and she just needs to wait a little longer before her brethren rescue her from the tribe. Any day now. But she doesn't see much future with the tribe, either. It can't survive. And it won't survive when her brethren rescue her.

Any day...



playing the game

Like all *GMZero* games, players take turns as directors, framing scenes and narrating the action before letting the players take over. Just pick someone to be the first director and go around the table from there. There is no specific order to be director, so long as everyone get an equal opportunity at the job. The opening pages of this document provide examples of scene-framing techniques. However, there are a few specific rules in *The Carcass*.

- The director's character must appear in a scene that he or she frames.
- There must be at least two characters in a scene.
- Scenes do not need an immediate conflict. Sometimes tone is enough.
- The scene ends once everyone has taken one immediate action each (see page 16). Alternatively, it ends once the director feels it's gone 'far enough.'
- There are very specific rules to extended actions.

conflict

Conflict is inevitable in roleplaying games. Sometimes conflict is character to environment, character to NPC, or even character to character. For instance, a character may want to repair a broken trailer, a broken relationship, or a broken arm. Or she may choose to fire a gun, steal a gun from someone, or build a gun from scrap parts.

Anything mundane can be accomplished without a roll. But mundane actions do not help the tribe, nor do they determine who should lead. Every time you take an action, you are doing something that requires a die roll (see page 15). Conflict informs actions, actions inform the dice, and the dice inform the results.

Regardless of the intent, all conflict is resolved through actions and die rolls. All actions require a roll with a questionable outcome. If you want to assert more control over this outcome, spend drama points and roll more dice. Otherwise, players should grow accustomed to their character's limited control over the world.

the carcass.

one dies so that others may live.



dice

Everyone rolls two dice for every action (two six-sided dice specifically). Dice are rolled whenever an *action* is declared. Each character sheet has a different chart for role-specific actions, fighting, and general actions. For soldiers, fighting is their role-specific chart.

Sometimes a player may roll more than two dice (i.e. a bonus from drama points, etc.), but only two dice are kept for any given roll. It is not necessary to choose the two highest and it is always the choice of the person rolling which two to keep.

Regardless of the result, the player's foil always interprets and narrates the result of the roll. This is not a negotiable act of the game. You cannot spend drama points to change the result or negotiate your way out of the die result.

when to roll dice

Rule #1. Bad things happen when you roll the dice.

Rule #2. You have to roll the dice.

If you're in a scene, chances are you're going to be rolling dice. Either you want to be the leader, you want something to happen, or you just want to avoid the onslaught of doom and anguish that *The Carcass* brings. The dice are not your friend. You cannot control what happens when you use them. Try as you might, *The Carcass* will turn on you.

Whenever something is in conflict (or something important needs to get done), a player may take an action to overcome it. What the player wants to accomplish by the roll should be clear before the dice are picked up, since the player's foil is going to describe the outcome. So be clear about what is in conflict and what you are rolling the dice for.

Actions are explained in further details on page 16.

spending drama points

Drama points may be spent to add additional dice to any action. For one drama point, a player may add one die to the roll. Regardless of how many dice are rolled, only two are kept. Players eager to succeed are encouraged to spend one or two drama points on a die roll.

Remember, this point goes to your foil (see page 24).

Note: This is a game of results that are interpreted through the story. This game is called *The Carcass*. You will not have the level of control you are used to in a scene-framing game. People are going to get hurt. If you need absolute control of your fate before you pick up the dice, don't pick up the dice. Just perform nice safe actions like boiling water and waiting for the vultures.

This game is not about you being in control.

The logic is simply this: the dice represent forks in the narrative. They are not there to create comfortable moments, but to reflect tough choices and the consequences of these actions. I did not want to create a clone of what has already been done. I wanted to create a road with many forks and dead ends. Be aware of that before picking up the dice.



actions

Everything in *The Carcass* revolves around the actions a character wants to perform. The players decide when they want to risk an action and the foil interprets the value of the action itself, by virtue of the dice. The foil also chooses whether or not to compound upon a failure, when a *stymied* action leads to a *trepidation result*, and so on.

How you define the action determines which chart is used (per a character's role). Actions performed within a role's sphere of influence are more likely to succeed. Soldiers for instance are the best at killing.

Actions fall into one of two categories: extended and immediate. An extended action affects the community or larger world and an immediate action affects the character (or a few characters). During each scene, a character may perform one immediate action and one extended action. Extended actions take a great deal of time and are explained in depth on page 17. Immediate actions should be self-explanatory, but involve direct and immediate needs/wants.

Depending on your play style, it will become apparent who is fit to lead the tribe and who is not. A character who is constantly taking actions that lead to trepidations is likely to be viewed unfavorably by others. See page 19 for more on *trepidations*.

That said, the dice may decide the fool is meant to be king after all.

The character needs to escape a mob or wants to search out for fuel before attacking the enemy.

immediate actions

An immediate action is anything in the here and now. A character may fire a gun, repair a water tower, seduce the enemy, or do anything that may create interesting narrative effects. When performing an immediate action, declare what the action is, what is at stake, and what you expect to have happen. Then roll two dice and consult the chart related to the action. If you're in a fight, read up on fighting (page 22).

Regardless of the roll, your foil narrates the results. The only exception is leadership (see page 20) and when the witch rolls doubles.

love and hate are a waste of energy

i don't feel anything for my neighbors

unless they have food and water

then i'll gladly pretend to be their best friend

extended actions

Extended actions represent long-term planning. A character who wants to build something important cannot do it with a single action and die roll. It takes time and perseverance. The player must first plan the action, then follow up with two or three additional steps to see the plan to completion. The additional steps take place in future scenes. Effectively, each step becomes an action in and of itself.

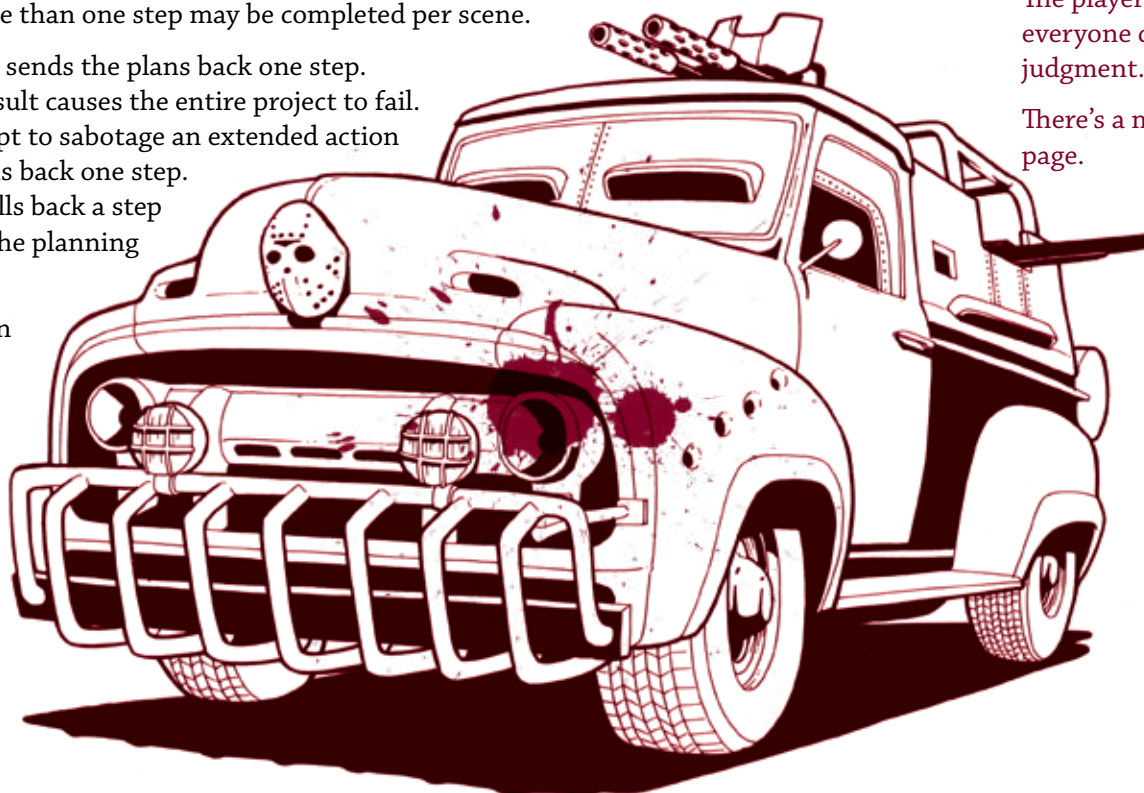
Once the action is planned, the player still has to roll the dice to see if the plan itself is sound. Failure indicates the entire plan is a wash. But if the plan is successful, the player places an index card or piece of paper on the table with the steps clearly written. During subsequent scenes, any player may attempt to help with the other steps.

Or sabotage them.

The same rules apply for subsequent scenes. Each step of the plan requires an extended action roll. Any character may extend or sabotage the action, or a player may just frame a scene about the plan. There are numerous ways for an extended action to continue on through the scenes, but no more than one step may be completed per scene.

Any stymied result sends the plans back one step.
Any trepidation result causes the entire project to fail.
A successful attempt to sabotage an extended action also sends the plans back one step.
Any project that falls back a step when it is only in the planning stages, fails.

Fighting is never an extended action. Even a siege. The building of siege engines might be an extended action, but the siege itself is still fighting (see page 22).



Though since they are extended actions, a character can still perform an immediate action in a scene.

Buzzsaw wants to repair the East wall of the town. He decides the first step is to draw up plans of what the wall will look like and what resources he'll need to do it. The second step is to get Saxr to collect enough materials to make the wall. The third and final step is to patch everything together as quickly as possible, because there's no telling when the Dust Devil tribe is coming.

The player may decide the plan requires more than three steps or everyone collectively may come to this conclusion. Use your best judgment. You can't build an entire town in three steps.

There's a more extensive example of an extended action on the next page.



extended action example

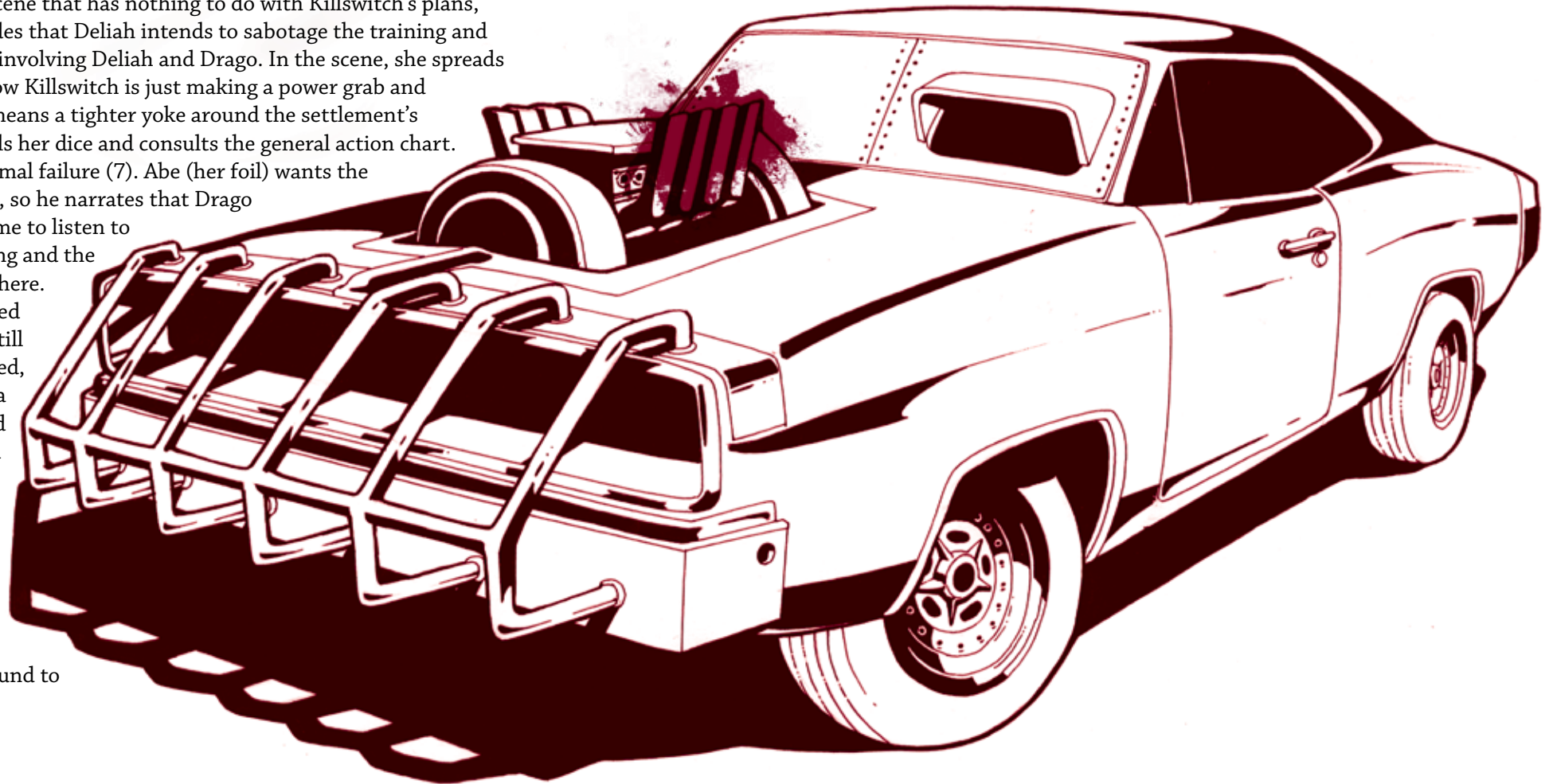
Killswitch intends to train some of the settlement's citizens. She knows that she needs time, volunteers, and weapons. She also needs to convince the people that the threat of attack is real. Bianca decides to frame a scene where Killswitch explains to Buzzsaw her plans — “I need to gather two dozen of our best people together and train them how to fire guns” — she rolls her dice and gets a minimal success (8).

Carl (her foil) narrates that the while the plan looks good, at best Killswitch can get a dozen people to help. Based on this, Bianca writes up her plan. Step two involves finding time to train people who already toil in the settlement — farming and so on. Step three involves building enough weapons for the newly trained citizens. Buzzsaw will be vital to this part of the plan.

Carl frames a scene that has nothing to do with Killswitch's plans, but Diana decides that Deliah intends to sabotage the training and frames a scene involving Deliah and Drago. In the scene, she spreads gossip about how Killswitch is just making a power grab and more soldiers means a tighter yoke around the settlement's neck. Diana rolls her dice and consults the general action chart. She gets a minimal failure (7). Abe (her foil) wants the plan to succeed, so he narrates that Drago doesn't have time to listen to Deliah's prattling and the rumors go nowhere. Had Deliah rolled double 4s she still would have failed, but since she's a witch, she could have narrated a different result for herself. Had she rolled a 9, the rumors would have spread and the project would have ground to a halt.

On Abe's turn, he frames a scene with Buzzsaw, Killswitch, and Drago, regarding the plans. Buzzsaw spends the scene trying to convince Drago that this is all doable if they work together. “We're going to need raw materials for bullets as well.” Drago negotiates that he will gladly support the endeavor if they support his move to become leader. There is some back and forth debate about this before Abe rolls the dice. He rolls a success (11) and Bianca is more than happy to narrate the conclusion in a positive light.

Finally, it is Killswitch's turn again. Bianca frames a scene with Drago and Killswitch that is unrelated to the project, but she makes sure to mention that Buzzsaw is finishing up the touches on some new rifles. Bianca spends two drama points to roll two additional dice. She more than easily rolls the 10 she needs to get a success. Carl narrates the conclusion to the project, before continuing with the scene.



trepidation

Trepidation reflects those actions that key characters take that lead to larger problems for the community. Trepidation is as simple as a failed course of action that others take notice of or something more complicated that resonates throughout the community. This is when a disquieting feeling turns to fear. Or worse. As such, trepidation can have a lasting impact on a character's role in the community.

Whenever a character does something that leads to trepidation, the players need to note this for future reference. Take out an index card (or similar) and write down the details of the ongoing problem along with the character's name. Make sure it is visible for everyone. The foil then chooses one NPC who is concerned (positively) about the situation and one NPC who is starting to panic over this issue.

taking action

One can always attempt to solve their trepidations head on. This isn't always safe and can make things worse. A failure, stymie, or another trepidation result while dealing with trepidation is one step away from death, exile, and so on. But trepidations can go away on their own.

If there is any trepidation related to the character — and so long as the character is rolling for something related to the community — the player rolls one die at the end of the action. If the die is '1', the result of the action (regardless of value) includes an exacerbation of the trepidation. If the die is a '6' the trepidation starts to fade in the background noise, as people find other problems to worry about. Any other result is ignored.

This extra die is not part of the action roll.

leadership

Trepidation can affect one's ability to become leader (see page 20). Any character attempting to become leader rolls one die for each trepidation related to their character. If any of the dice come up a 1, the character's action fails outright before a die roll can be made. The player's immediate action is lost.

When you are leader, trepidations can affect your ability to lead.

Some players may not need this rule, but it's here as a helpful tool for keeping track of 'status' in the tribe.

Panic is a strong word for a post-apocalyptic game. Overly concerned in an inauspicious way is more accurate. But that doesn't fit so nicely on an index card. I just use + and – symbols.

Trepidation that is not dealt with grows into a bigger problem. This is one of the elements of play that can keep the game going longer. If all of the players are building trepidation, then a leader isn't emerging.

Don't forget to use your drama points.

The foil should do his or her best to incorporate the NPCs related to the trepidation in the narration, if possible.

In general, the tribe (except the characters) do not know who should be leader, but know that they need one. Their opinions can change and sway throughout the game, especially if the players play the long game of selling themselves or plotting for a leadership change.

Leadership

The Carcass is about a number of themes, one of which is authority — the right to rule. Someone in charge of the tribe has more authority and control in the game, narrating certain results they previously could not. This is one of the rewards of becoming the tribal leader.

Vying for leadership is risky, but rewarding. For starters, the moment you become leader you gain one drama point, regardless of how many times leadership has changed hands. You also gain more control over the story. Every time it's the leader's turn to direct, he or she directs two scenes instead of one. Lastly, the leader narrates the value of his or her own die rolls whenever an 8 or more is rolled on any of the charts.

becoming leader

At any moment in the game, a character in a scene may nominate any character as the leader. Doing so can be done as either an immediate or extended action. As an immediate action, the player sets up a conflict. Based on the situation, the player may nominate someone, without needing a die roll or action. This is the part of the game that feels most uneven, as the players are forced take an active or passive stance on some issues.

Whoever becomes the leader, regardless of method, gains one drama point.

changing leadership

Once someone becomes leader, it is harder for the other characters to take over. A character that wants to usurp the present leadership must do so as an extended action. This action is always three steps long and must meet with the support of at least one other character.

Whoever becomes the leader, regardless of method, gains one drama point. No, the previous leader does not give his drama point back.

if you don't like how i do things,
there's an entire wasteland of rocks and sand you can rule over
they'll give as much f^ucks to what you have to say
as i do

Becoming leader can be the direct result of an open (physical) challenge or through the slow plodding act of garnering the favor of the tribe. Allowing the others to amass trepidation against themselves is a perfectly reasonable way of becoming the leader, after all.

Merely announcing you are leader is also acceptable, though easier to challenge. Depending on your play style, you may find leadership changing often or never being attained.

Even a character who is usurped and becomes leader for a second time gains one drama point.

using drama points

Drama points represent dramatic authority. Players may spend drama points to bend the story to their will. Drama points can break just about any rule. Players may decide to make the NPC an old ally or the foil may have a gun run out of ammunition at a key moment in the story as a result of action. There are few limits.

Drama points cannot change a die result once rolled. Players rolling a failure must accept that failure. The moment of authority or control is before the die is rolled. Drama points do grant more dice to roll (beforehand), however.

Drama points are gained during dramatic moments of extreme duress and are spent to control/ensure specific agency in the story. Players should not hold onto their drama points waiting for the climactic moment that may never come. Get engaged and do it often.

When a character becomes the leader, is wounded, fails horribly, or dies, he or she gains more drama points.

Optional Rule: Any drama points gained above five leave play.

Spent drama points do not leave play, but are given to your foil instead. This essentially gives power to your foil every time you take authorial power for yourself. This also keeps the drama points on the table.

The foil can spend drama points to turn failures into deeper failures, successes into greater successes, to redirect the praise of a success to someone else and so on. The action results (page 25) indicate specific uses for drama points as well.



fighting

This is a conflict-intensive roleplaying game. Fighting is inevitable. Guns, knives, flamethrowers, and anything else the players can imagine become weapons to be used against the threats of the wasteland... or each other. But the characters can also be harmed by their enemies.

Fighting is not a task-by-task simulation of every second of a fight, but rather a larger resolution of these moments. A single die roll in a fight represents an expressed tactic. A character that fires a gun at the enemy is sure to be fired back at, so a failure result means nothing happens to the character, but a stymied result definitely reflects that the enemy is getting the best of that character (pinned down, wounded, etc.).

Failure in combat does not automatically result in a wound. A stymie result can be interpreted as a wound or someone drawing a lot of fire. A trepidation result might reflect that someone's ammunition supply is about to run out and the vehicle they are next to has now caught fire. The more creatively the results are interpreted, the richer the game experience. The parameters of the game are vague enough to allow the players to use the results to frame whatever they like.

Character death is in the hands of the foil. A wounded character who is again wounded does not automatically die, unless the foil spends more drama points than the player does.

A character who is bleeding to death from a trepidation does not automatically die, unless the foil spends more drama points than the player does. But, the character has a long way to go for recovery.

A character who is bleeding to death from a trepidation automatically dies when he or she is wounded or draws another trepidation.

An example of game play appears on pages 38 and an example of fighting appears on page 41.

everything but fighting

Not all conflict will get you killed by an opponent. But it can still get you hurt. The risk of an action and how it is articulated can result in a character merely failing or harming himself or herself in the process. A rover trying to jump across a chasm during a chase is more likely to injure himself than a wrecker digging through a pile of trash.



the carcass

Everyone dies in the end. Isn't that the way of things? Things go wrong and the characters will be left bleeding and alone in a blasted plain far from the others. And when death comes to one, the others soon follow.

There are no hit points in *The Carcass*. A character is either alive, wounded, or dead. Logic dictates which state someone is in. Being wounded means having trouble running, lifting, and so on.

- The first time a character becomes wounded, he or she gains one drama point.
- When a character dies, the character is removed from the game, but the player gains three drama points.

A player without a character may still spend drama points to affect play, even spending points to exacerbate an action value (minimal failure to trepidation, etc.) or even give a player extra dice to roll. The player still directs scenes and acts as a foil, though his or her character does not appear in scenes any longer. He or she is welcome to play any NPCs.

Note: Drama points can be used for or against the other players, even if your character is alive.

the world was slowly erasing us
making the entire place a cinder heap
of bad ideas and worse people
who the fuck would want to rule this?



the foil

The role of the foil is to counter, obstruct, thwart, or otherwise reinterpret game results. There is no game master, but the game still needs an adversary.

It is not your job to challenge the actions of the other players, but to interpret the results of those actions in interesting ways. The grittier the results, the meaner your game of *The Carcass*. The softer your results, the less like a post-apocalyptic game you have.

The foil should be mindfully aware of which actions require a roll and which do not. Players should not be doing a thousand things during a scene. They have one immediate and one extended action per scene and the foil needs to monitor a player who is running the show.

Certainly this level of ‘competition’ isn’t for everyone. Some people may just want to tell a story. And that’s good too. Tough foils will make their presence known and limit the actions of players, while soft foils will encourage players to take over the story. This creates an interesting dynamic actually. Players know who is the most assertive out of play and natural foil ‘roles’ will develop.

creative interpretation

Page 25 lists all of the action results that can be rolled on the various charts in *The Carcass*. These are guidelines. The foil should be loosely aware of the range of results that can be generated by the chart and know how these results reflect a specific character.

Part of your role as foil is to give roleplaying prompts to the player rolling. “The wrecker has found that his acetylene torch isn’t working at this altitude. He can’t get enough oxygen and the fuel is just going to waste.” This doesn’t mean that the wrecker can’t try again later, but it should inform a more creative way to tackle the next challenge.

You didn’t think I’d miss out on a chance to show you how to be nefarious and combative.

This is you.

You’re not trying to make lemonade out of lemon carcass.

The Carcass is about controlling the narrative. You want to take away that control from other players and get their drama points out of their hands.

The hatchet for instance has many emotional results when rolling poorly, while the curate’s low die rolls reflect information that is untrustworthy or flat out wrong.

If your character does not like the other player’s character, find a way (as foil) to interpret the results in your favor, without of course jeopardizing the spirit of the game.

action results

Baffled. The action has perplexed the character to such a degree that no additional action may be taken during this scene or the next without expending one drama point.

The Bargain. The action changes to a success if the player negotiates a deal with the foil. The player must give up something in order to succeed. This can be anything from drama points to the player's next scene as a director to support for leadership, and so on.

Blindsided. The action has conferred erroneous information and hampered the character's perception moving forward.

Breakdown. The action has caused something to stop working, requiring additional work to repair.

Confused. The action has imparted poor knowledge and planning onto those in question, leading to more confusion.

Empty Handed. The action fails to produce any useful equipment or resources. In addition, the community takes notice and grows worried about this.



Failure. The action fails. Depending on the risks, this could be a nominal issue or something grave. If the foil chooses to spend one drama point, the failure turns to a stymied result instead.

Guilt. The action causes the character to lament and focus on past transgressions. If the character already has trepidation, it worsens.

Meltdown. The action has led to a complete and utter mechanical meltdown and cannot be undone.

Minimal Failure. The action fails, though with minimal consequences. If the foil chooses to spend one drama point, trepidation is added.

Minimal Success. The action succeeds, though barely. If the foil chooses to spend one drama point, trepidation is added.

Misled. The action has imparted poor information, leading the character to an illogical, but confident conclusion.

Overwhelming Success. The action succeeds with dramatic results.

Paralyzed. The action leads to a complete (psychological) shut down as the memories of those dead by the character's hand return in a rush.

The Pieces. The action leads to the loss of something. A piece of the character is somehow gone, either literally or metaphorically. The character can still function, but he or she will never be whole again.

Press On. The action neither fails or succeeds. The character may try again at a -1 to all the subsequent rolls for this action.

Ruined. The action should have by all accounts succeeded, but something has gone wrong and the success is ruined as a result.

Rust. The action takes a considerable amount of time and results in the ruin of something of value to the character.

Stymied. The action fails and the character is 'stuck' in the action. The duration is contingent on many factors. If the action is in combat, then the character is wounded and unable to continue. If the action is a repair, then the character is stuck working on it longer than necessary before realizing it's a lost cause.

Success. The action succeeds with interesting results.

Suspicious. The action leads the community to question the motives of the character.

Trepidation. A problem is made worse by the action and worry sets in. A wound becomes a bleeder, an angry opponent turns hostile, a poorly-maintained vehicle becomes inoperable. The player gains one drama point. Be sure to note this on an index card for everyone to see.

Unmendable. Something has gone so wrong that it cannot be repaired or undone. The effects should be dramatic.

Unbearable. Something has gone so wrong that the character is left alone to deal with it.

curate

The curate knows the most about the old world and how things came to be. Not everything is accurate and sometimes the facts are muddled with myth and bias. But the curate is still regarded as an authority on many things. A curate starts play with one additional drama point and always narrates the opening scene.

Who* taught you about the event?

Who thinks you are invaluable to the tribe?

Who made you de facto authority (in the meantime)?

Who have you derided in a public forum?

Who do you try to send out on deadly missions?**

Anytime the curate rolls dice on an action related to knowledge or diplomacy skill, he or she rolls on the curate action chart. All other rolls are made on the curate fight chart or general action chart.

without understanding the past

we cannot build a future

and if we do not produce a future

the present has no meaning

curate action chart

Roll	Value
2	Failure. Misled.
3-4	Failure. Confused.
5-6	Minimal Failure.
7	Press on.
8	Minimal Success.
9-10	Success.
11-12	Overwhelming Success.

curate fight chart

Roll	Value
2-4	Failure. Trepidation.
5	Failure. The Pieces.
6	Failure. Stymied.
7	Minimal Failure.
8	Press on.
9-10	Minimal Success.
11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

general action chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Trepidation.
4-5	Failure. Stymied.*
6-7	Minimal Failure.*
8	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
9	Minimal Success.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

* Foil may spend one drama point

drone

The drone performs the tasks that no one else wants to do. Cooking, farming, hauling, sorting, and so on. Of all the roles in *The Carcass*, the drone is the least specialized. A drone starts play with two additional drama points and a minor tool related to his or her craft.

Who* did you lose during the fall?

Who thinks you are worthless to the tribe?

Who do you sneak extra food to?

Who openly opposes your desire to be leader?

Who do you love, but they do not know it?**

Anytime the drone rolls dice on an action related to a skill no one in the tribe possesses, he or she rolls on the drone action chart. All other rolls are made on the drone fight chart or general action chart.

one does not toil for the sake of toil
or for the fruit of labor
but for the benefit of the community
and for others

drone action chart

Roll	Value
2	Failure. Unmendable.
3-4	Failure. Unbearable.
5-6	Minimal Failure.
7	Press on.
8	Minimal Success.
9-10	Success.
11-12	Overwhelming Success.

drone fight chart

Roll	Value
2-4	Failure. Trepidation.
5-6	Failure. Stymied.
7	Minimal Failure.
8	Press on.
9	Minimal Success.
10	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

general action chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Trepidation.
4-5	Failure. Stymied.*
6-7	Minimal Failure.*
8	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
9	Minimal Success.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

* Foil may spend one drama point

expert

The expert performs specific, technical tasks for the group. He or she is an expert in one thing: astronomy, chemistry, geology, generators, greenhouses, smithing, windmills, and so on. The expert is the opposite of the drone. An expert starts play with one additional drama point and a major tool related to his or her expertise.

Who* will never help?

Who took your lover from you?

Who needs your help the most?

Who refers to you by an unflattering nickname? Why?

Who do you oppose (strenuously) for leader?**

Anytime the expert rolls dice on an action related to his or her specific expertise, he or she rolls on the expert action chart. All other rolls are made on the expert fight chart or general action chart.

expert action chart

Roll	Value
2	Failure. Baffled.
3-4	Failure. Confused.
5	Minimal Failure.
6-8	Press on.
9-10	Success.
11-12	Overwhelming Success.

expert fight chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Trepidation.
4-6	Failure. Stymied.
7	Minimal Failure.
8	Press on.
9-10	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

general action chart

Roll	Value
2-4	Failure. Trepidation.
5-6	Failure. Stymied.*
7	Minimal Failure.*
8-9	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

* Foil may spend one drama point

the community needs me

more than I need it

but then again, without the community

where would I be?

a new quandary to ponder I think...

hatchet

The hatchet murders for the sake of the tribe. Not to be confused with the soldier, the hatchet is not trained in various fighting styles and weapons, but rather kills with the simplest of methods. Everyone in the tribe knows exactly why the hatchet is there. There is no question of his or her brutal methods. A hatchet starts play with one additional drama point and a crude, but effective, weapon. The hatchet never directs the opening scene.

Who* among your tribe have you been forced to kill?

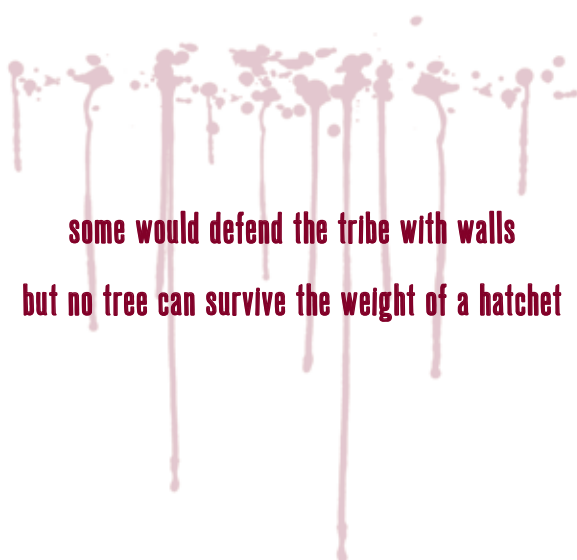
Who keeps a safe distance from you?

Who gives you orders to kill (in the leader's stead)?

Who do you regret killing for? Why?

Who do you have an unhealthy fascination for?**

Anytime the hatchet rolls dice on an action related to murder (but not fighting), he or she rolls on the hatchet action chart. All other rolls are made on the hatchet fight chart or general action chart.



hatchet action chart

Roll	Value
2	Failure. Paralyzed.
3	Failure. Guilt.
4-7	Minimal Failure. Trepidation.
8-10	Success. Trepidation.
11-12	Overwhelming Success.

hatchet fight chart

Roll	Value
2	Failure. Trepidation.
3	Failure. Stymied.
4-5	Minimal Failure.
6	Press on.
7-8	Minimal Success.
9	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

general action chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Trepidation.
4-5	Failure. Stymied.*
6-7	Minimal Failure.*
8-10	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

* Foil may spend one drama point

marker

The marker can see at great distances, hear things no one else can, and generally navigates the tribe through hostile terrain without incident. There should be some explanation for the marker's almost supernatural talents of observation: ESP, a mutant power, a tool, or even implants.

Who* died because you weren't watching?

Who have you saved?

Who do you openly support for leader?

Who do you never want to go on patrols with?

Who do you consider a coward?**

Anytime the marker rolls dice on an action related to scouting, spotting, or otherwise marking a target, he or she rolls on the marker action chart. All other rolls are made on the marker fight chart or general action chart.

communities are tough

there are people suited to being around others

people ready to fight to protect what is theirs

i'll never understand people like that

marker action chart

Roll	Value
2	Failure. Blindsided.
3	Failure. Confused.
4-5	Minimal Failure.
6	Press on.
7-8	Minimal Success.
9-10	Success.
11-12	Overwhelming Success.

marker fight chart

Roll	Value
2-4	Failure. Trepidation.
5	Failure. The Pieces.
6	Failure. Stymied.
7	Minimal Failure.
8	Press on.
9	Minimal Success.
10	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

general action chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Trepidation.
4-5	Failure. Stymied.*
6-7	Minimal Failure.*
8	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
9	Minimal Success.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

* Foil may spend one drama point

rover

The rover can drive and repair almost any vehicle. Though anyone can get behind the wheel of a buzzer or hedgehog, the rover is more likely to do so without risk. A rover starts play with a vehicle of some kind suffering from one major mechanical fault and one ongoing problem (that gives it its charm). The rover also has a small weapon or tool hidden in the vehicle.

Who* did you kill to get your present vehicle?

Who have you screwed over? How?

Who (or what) are you running from?

Who have you openly scorned?

Who do you secretly avoid?**

Anytime the rover rolls dice on an action related to driving, modifying, or repairing a vehicle, he or she rolls on the rover action chart. All other rolls are made on the rover fight chart or general action chart.

communities are tough
i've been running from one form of family
or another all my life
but some of us are just built that way
sitting idle is for farmers

rover action chart

Roll	Value
2	Failure. Meltdown.
3-4	Failure. Breakdown.
5-6	Minimal Failure.
7	Press on.
8	Minimal Success.
9-10	Success.
11-12	Overwhelming Success.

rover fight chart

Roll	Value
2	Failure. Trepidation.
3-5	Failure. Stymied.
6	Minimal Failure.
7	Press on.
8-9	Minimal Success.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

general action chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Trepidation.
4-5	Failure. Stymied.*
6-7	Minimal Failure.*
8	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
9	Minimal Success.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

* Foil may spend one drama point

soldier

The soldier can fight better than anyone else. He or she can set ambushes, field strip weapons, unjam makeshift guns, and generally engage in firefights. Some soldiers are better with bladed weapons, sledges, or even flamethrowers. Each soldier is different. A soldier starts play with a personal weapon and fighting style, defined by the player.

Who* among your tribe have you sworn to protect?

Who openly blames you for the fall?

Who stayed with your sick father/mother while you fought?

Who should lead (if not you)?

Who do you secretly follow at night?**

Anytime the soldier rolls dice on an action related to fighting, he or she rolls on the soldier fight chart. All other rolls are made on the general action chart.

soldier fight chart

Roll	Value
2	Failure. Trepidation.
3	Failure. Stymied.
4-5	Minimal Failure.
6	Press on.
7-8	Minimal Success.
9-10	Success.
11-12	Overwhelming Success.

general action chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Trepidation.
4-5	Failure. Stymied.*
6-7	Minimal Failure.*
8	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
9	Minimal Success.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

* Foil may spend one drama point



welder

The welder can repair almost anything. He or she doesn't always need a welding tool to do it, either. There's always something broken in the wastelands and welders are worth their weight in gold. Welders start the game with one unique tool (for repairs) and one additional drama point.

Who* did you maim with your makeshift repairs?

Who have you stolen from?

Who owes you more than a few favors?

Who have you made a prosthetic for?

Who do you secretly hate?**

Anytime the welder rolls dice on an action related to fixing something important, he or she rolls on the welder action chart. All other rolls are made on the welder fight chart or general action chart.

communities are tough
but they're worth it
without guys like me, there is no way
they would hold together though

welder action chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Meltdown.
4-5	Failure. Breakdown.
6	Minimal Failure.
7	Press on.
8	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
9-10	Success.
11-12	Overwhelming Success.

welder fight chart

Roll	Value
2	Failure. Trepidation.
3-4	Failure. Stymied.
5-6	Minimal Failure.
7	Press on.
8-9	Minimal Success.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

general action chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Trepidation.
4-5	Failure. Stymied.*
6-7	Minimal Failure.*
8	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
9	Minimal Success.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

* Foil may spend one drama point

witch

The witch continually confounds the tribe with his or her ability to solve problems in completely irrational ways. There doesn't seem to be any proof the witch can perform miracles... or is a witch at all. Nonetheless, rumors spread and fiction becomes fact. The witch starts play with three additional drama points.

Who* kicked you out of the tribe before the fall?

Who triggers your anxiety/headaches when he or she is around?

Who have you openly cursed?

Who are you divorced from?

Who** have you put a curse on?

Anytime the witch rolls dice on an action related to the impossible, he or she rolls on the witch action chart. All other rolls are made on the witch fight chart or general action chart. Whenever the witch rolls doubles, he or she interpret his or her own results and not the foil.

Roleplaying Hint: Consider subtle 'miracles.' Perhaps you can sense the future or trick people into doing what you want. Witches aren't necessarily obvious with their magical or mutant abilities... if they have any at all. Some witches are just misunderstood.

I didn't ask to be born this way
I didn't ask for people's assumptions
I didn't ask for any of this
I just want it to go away
I just want it to end

witch action chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Suspicion.
4-5	Failure. Trepidation.
6	Press on.
7	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
8-10	Success.
11	Overwhelming Success. Trepidation.
12	Overwhelming Success.

witch fight chart

Roll	Value
2-4	Failure. Trepidation.
5	Failure. The Pieces.
6	Failure. Stymied.
7-8	Press on.
9	Minimal Success.
10	Success.
11	Overwhelming Success. Trepidation.
12	Overwhelming Success.

general action chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Trepidation.
4-5	Failure. Stymied.*
6-7	Minimal Failure.*
8	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
9	Minimal Success.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

* Foil may spend one drama point

wrecker

The wrecker can find useful resources amongst the worst scraps. He or she can scrounge out tools from refuse and food from rot. Wreckers are known to reuse or repurpose items, making one useless thing into something else very useful. Wreckers begin play with one unique item that serves two purposes.

Who* was left to die (during the fall) because of your inaction?

Who tried to have you killed?

Who doesn't make time for you?

Who forces you to eat last at dinner time?

Who do you want to be most like?**

Anytime the wrecker rolls dice on an action related to repurposing or scrounging, he or she rolls on the wrecker action chart. All other rolls are made on the wrecker fight chart or general action chart.

we've picked the earth clean of all its scabs

first gold, then coal, iron, and fuel

now we pick through its offal

hoping the world left behind a few scraps

like a dog who waits for a bone

wrecker action chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Rust.
4-5	Failure. Empty Handed.
6-7	Press on.
8	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
9-10	Success.
11-12	Overwhelming Success.

wrecker fight chart

Roll	Value
2	Failure. Trepidation.
3-4	Failure. Stymied.
5-6	Minimal Failure.
7	Press on.
8-9	Minimal Success.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

general action chart

Roll	Value
2-3	Failure. Trepidation.
4-5	Failure. Stymied.*
6-7	Minimal Failure.*
8	Minimal Success. The Bargain.
9	Minimal Success.
10-11	Success.
12	Overwhelming Success.

* Foil may spend one drama point

hobbling

The Carcass is not a game where you get everything you want, but instead must deal with the consequences of what's in front of you.

But if you're the type of player that enjoys the challenge, the **optional** Hobbling rules allow players to make things even more difficult for one another before play even starts.

Each player hobbles the player to their right (i.e. your foil hobbles you). Hobbling means creating a character limitation before the game even starts. When you hobble another character, draw a card and refer to the prompts for hobbling below.

suit

- ♣ Affects Generic Die Rolls (-1)
- ♦ Affects Starting Drama Points (-2)
- ♥ Affects Fighting Die Rolls (-1)
- ♠ Affects Leadership Potential (-2)

value

A	Amnesia
2	Paralyzing Phobia
3	Noticeable Physical Mutation (see page 37)
4	Physical Strength Impaired
5	Headaches
6	Pariah
7	Limited Finger Dexterity
8	Tumors
9	Affected Sense
10	Addiction
J	Psychosis
Q	Suspected Witch
K	Mania (choose a specific type)
Joker	Character begins play with a trepidation

Work with the limitations, don't resist them.

These rules require the use of a deck of cards.



mutations

- 1 Abnormal Pigmentation
- 2 Antlers
- 3 Carapace
- 4 Color Blindness or Night Blindness
- 5 Cyclops
- 6 Daylight Blindness
- 7 Deformed Limb, Malformed Limb, or Vestigial Limb
- 8 Fangs or Tusks
- 9 High Metabolism
- 10 Hollow Bones
- 11 Horns
- 12 Hunchback
- 13 Hyperalgesia
- 14 Mane and Bristles
- 15 Nocturnal Biology
- 16 Pronounced Odor
- 17 Skin Abnormality
- 18 Tail
- 19 Webbed Feet or Webbed Hands
- 20 Minor Combination of Two Mutations



example of play

As established on page 13, Abe, Bianca, Carl, and Diana are all playing *The Carcass*. For their main characters, Abe is playing a welder named Buzzsaw, Bianca is playing a soldier named Killswitch, Carl is playing a rover named Drago, and Diana is playing a witch named Deliah. The group decides to name their tribe The Fire Ranks and the neighboring tribes Hanji and Rat Pilum.

Abe is directing the first scene. He selects Killswitch and Saxr to be in a scene with his character, Buzzsaw. Abe asks Diana to play Saxr. Abe wants to open with a strong scene for his character, so he decides to set an extended goal: the acquisition of more metal scrap for his shop (since Drago emptied his supply). The trio are in Buzzsaw's ramshackle shop.

Buzzsaw: We need to go back into the wastes. I need metal. It's going to be dangerous, I admit. But Saxr, I'll need your sense of what's valuable. And Killswitch, it should be obvious why I need your help.

Killswitch: (Skeptical) What's the plan?

Buzzsaw: We'll need to pack light and walk at night to avoid the heat.

Saxr: Walk?

Buzzsaw: Yeah. Walk.

Killswitch: We're not taking one of Drago's jeeps because...

Buzzsaw: I'd rather not deal with Drago at the moment.

Killswitch: Lover's quarrel?

Saxr: For f*cks sake!

Buzzsaw: He's unreliable. Can we leave it at that?

Killswitch. There is no way this plan is going to work. How do you expect us to carry anything back. *If* we even find anything.

Saxr: That's where I was going.

Buzzsaw: You want to manage Drago?

Killswitch: This is your plan. You need to think it through a little more than this.

Buzzsaw: We'll get Flikk and a few others to go with us. Out and back in three days.

Saxr: If we're lucky.

Killswitch: You know we don't have a scout in the tribe? Not since the fall.

Buzzsaw: I am aware.

Killswitch: And you're going to convince all these people to just help?

Saxr: Seriously?

Buzzsaw grows more irritated by their resistance. Abe decides this is a good time to roll for his plan. He spends one of his drama points to gain an additional die, giving the point to his foil (Bianca). Abe rolls a 3, 4, and 4. Keeping the best 2, he gets an 8, which (on the wrecker chart) is a minimal success (bargain). Abe decides that he's happy with a minimal success and doesn't bargain with Bianca.

Bianca narrates that the plan to get people into the desert is successful, but only Flikk and one soldier are willing to go. Abe writes down steps 2 and 3 of his plan — march into the wastes and walk back out — and continues the scene.

Buzzsaw: I will talk to Flikk and a few others. Once we have enough people we'll pack up and head out. We should be ready by tomorrow night.

Saxr: Fine. But I'm lodging my protest early.

Buzzsaw: Noted. And ignored.

Killswitch: Can you at least make some ammo for us? Before we leave?

Buzzsaw: I'll see what I can dig up.

Abe decides this is an immediate action for Buzzsaw and rolls again, this time he doesn't spend any drama points. He rolls a 3 and a 6 for a total of 9. Another minimal success. Bianca narrates that Buzzsaw doesn't have enough scrap metal to forge ammo, but there's 30 or so loose rounds (in various calibers) lying around his shop. Abe doesn't see the need to continue the scene further and ends it there.

It is Bianca's turn to direct a scene next.

Bianca decides that she needs to make peace between Drago and Buzzsaw. She needs them both on her side when Killswitch vies for leader and moves the tribe. For her scene, she decides that Killswitch is paying Drago a visit while he fixes his latest car.

Killswitch: (Banging on the hood) Drago!

Drago: Ow! Not so loud.

Killswitch: Up. We need to talk.

Drago: Need? Or want?

Killswitch: Up!

Drago slides out from under his car and stands up, while wearing a cocky grin. Killswitch is unamused.

Killswitch: I need you to go make nice with Buzzsaw.

Drago: Buzzsaw? I'm not mad at Buzzsaw.

Killswitch: He's mad at you, idiot.

Drago: Me? (pause) Wait. Is this about the truck?

Killswitch: It's about you being unreliable. He can't trust you.

Drago: Unreli —

Killswitch: I didn't come here to gossip. Go make nice. Now.

Bianca decides to roll for this. She gets a 4 and a 6. A 10 on her generic action chart is a success. Since Carl is her foil, he narrates that Drago is less likely to work things out with Buzzsaw because Killswitch asked, but rather because Drago is afraid of her.

Drago: Fine. But I'm adding this to the list.

Killswitch: What list?

Drago: The list of times you threatened me.

Killswitch: I didn't threaten you.

Drago: On my list you did.

Killswitch: Okay, Drago. How do I make it up to you?

Diana decides she wants Deliah to appear in the scene. She spends one drama point (giving it to Abe) and walks up to Drago and Killswitch in mid-sentence.

Drago: Well, there's always —

Deliah: Rumor has it you're going into the wastes?

Killswitch: Maybe?

Drago: Wait? What?

Killswitch: I told you to go make nice. Didn't I? Your reward is you get to drive us into the wastes.

Deliah: I want in.

Killswitch: You?

Deliah: Yeah. I hear you need scrap metal. I might know a place to search.

Killswitch: Again... You?

Deliah: Yes. Me.

Diana's plan is to draw some of the key tribe members into the desert to be ambushed by her friends there. The first step is to get them to let her tag along. She announces that she wants to take an extended action. Spending one drama point (giving it to Abe) and rolling the dice, Diana gets a 1, 5 and 5. She selects the two 5s, for a 10. A success! And since she's a witch, she gets to narrate it.

Deliah: Yes. You're taking me with you. I'll be your guide. I know exactly where to go. You just need to make sure Drago drives slowly.

Killswitch: Okay...

Having succeeded at getting Killswitch to take her with the group, Diana writes down step 2 and 3 of her plan — lure team to ambush and launch ambush. This plan is obviously a secret to the characters.

Bianca decides to end the scene at this point, before Diana can do more damage.

It is now Carl's turn to direct a scene.

Carl decides to honor Killswitch's request and he frames a scene between Drago and Buzzsaw. Carl doesn't waste time with scene descriptions and jumps right in.

Drago: Buzzsaw?

Buzzsaw: What do you want?

Drago: Brew up any tea?

Buzzsaw: For you?

Drago: For any visitors?

Buzzsaw: You weren't invited, Drago. What do you want?

Drago: Wow. You're not making this easy.

Buzzsaw: Was I supposed to?

Drago: Damn, man. I'm trying to... I don't know... make things right.

Buzzsaw: Make things right? You've had two months to 'make things right.' Why all of a sudden do you give a shit what I think of you?

Drago: Two months? So you are still mad about the truck.

Buzzsaw: You left the truck and all that steel in the wastes!

Drago: You wanted me to push the truck back here?

Buzzsaw: I wanted you to not steal from my shop. Barring that, I wanted you to be lost in the wastes with the truck.

Drago: A little harsh.

Buzzsaw: One less thief.

Drago: Is that what you think of me?

Buzzsaw: What do you call someone who takes what isn't theirs?

Drago: That truck is for the community. Your scrap metal is for the community.

Buzzsaw: And you lost both the truck and the metal. Should I tell the entire community what you've done?

Drago: Ugh. How do I make this right with you?

Buzzsaw: Get that truck back.

Drago: That's impossible.

Buzzsaw: Because you don't remember where it is?

Drago is hesitant to answer. Abe decides to use his immediate action to get Drago to talk. Not wanting to waste any drama points, he rolls two dice and gets a 1 and 6 for 7. Minimal failure. Bianca is Abe's foil. She could spend one drama point to make it worse, but doesn't see much value in that at this point. Bianca narrates that Buzzsaw's attitude is starting to ruffle Drago.

Drago: Look. Ass. I came here to try and work this out. I lost my truck. You lost your scrap. The entire community has suffered because of it. Just get over it, already.

Carl uses this opportunity to get Buzzsaw to lay off of Drago. He spends one drama point (giving it to Diana), grabs three dice, and rolls 2, 2, and 6. He gets a minimal success (bargain). Carl would like to turn this into a bigger success, so he asks Diana what she would like.

Diana tells Carl that Drago needs to offer to drive everyone into the wastes with his new car. Carl likes this idea because it doesn't cost him any drama points or directing rights. Diana narrates that Drago's straight-forwardness gets through to Buzzsaw.

Drago: Look. I'm working on a new car right now. I'll have it ready by tomorrow and I'll drive you into the wastes. If the Hanji haven't salvaged the truck, maybe we can get some of your scrap metal back.

Buzzsaw doesn't say much. He's taking all this in. Drago hasn't been reliable before, so he's wondering when the other shoe will drop.

Buzzsaw: You get us all into the wastes and then I'll think about forgiving you.

Drago: Deal.

Carl decides to end the scene there. And it is now Diana's turn to direct a scene.

Diana advances the timeline to the next night when they are in Drago's car, out on the wastes. Her plan is to guide Drago directly into an ambush. She needs to get him to drive there without suspecting anything. So Diana decides 'it would be a miracle if Drago just drove right into the ambush' on his own. Diana spends another drama point (giving it to Abe) and rolls a 4, 6, and 6. A 12! Not only does Diana roll an overwhelming success, but she rolls doubles.

It looks like the team is driving right into an ambush...

From this example, you can see that the players have been spending their drama points quickly. This can be dangerous, especially with a witch at the table. Witches already start with the most drama points, so they can plug up the drama point cycle by holding onto all of them until the time is right. Alternatively, a witch can spend drama points nearly all the time, and on everything.

It's also important to note, this story escalated quickly. The characters are already at odds and the witch has moved onto step 2 of her plan almost immediately. They've only directed one scene each and already the game is getting deadly. Your mileage may vary.

example of fighting

The characters have found themselves in a fight now. Buzzsaw is loading his triple-barrel shotgun, while Drago tries to restart the car. Killswitch fires both of her hand-made pistols at full-bore. She is unfazed. The witch has decided not to reveal her true motive yet and is hiding during the fight, while the rest of the characters (including the NPCs) are caught in the crossfire.

Since everyone is in the fight, everyone gets to be involved and do something.

Abe is the director.

Buzzsaw loads three fletcher rounds into the shotgun and fires at two of the guys standing closest to one another. Buzzsaw rolls two dice and consults his fight chart. He rolls a 1 and a 5, minimal failure. Killswitch chooses not to spend the drama point and merely narrates that Buzzsaw's rounds scatter into the wind, pinning one of the bad guys down, but nothing else.

Killswitch: I f*cking hate Hanji!

Killswitch lets loose with one round each from her .60 caliber nightmare handguns. She still only rolls the dice once. The description of her action is flavor. The dice are the result. She rolls a 2 and a 5.

A 7 is a minimal success for a soldier in a fight. Carl narrates that Killswitch wings one of the bad guys. He goes spinning and to the ground. The noise is deafening.

Drago: I don't think this is the Hanji, Killswitch!

Drago adjusts all of the mixtures and dials in a different ratio of gas-to-air in an attempt to restart his new car, 'Bloody Bertha.' Drago spends one drama point, even though this point is going to Diana. He really wants to get the car started and get the hell out of there. He also knows Diana will narrate something awful if he fails.

Sadly, he rolls a 1, 2, and 2. A 4 is a breakdown.

Since the car is already broken down, Diana decides that the hoses connecting to the fuel tank rupture from too much pressure and the car is done (for the foreseeable future). Diana decides to spend an additional drama point (giving it to Abe) to narrate that a fire has started because of the spewing fuel. Drago is sitting inside the car when the fuel line ignites.

Diana: Who cares who they are? How did they find us?

Still playing up her cover-story, Deliah hides behind a rock but decides to use her magic to subtly adjust the pace of the battle. She wants one of the fallen soldiers to gently squeeze the trigger of his pistol and fire on Killswitch. She spends one drama point (giving it to Abe) and rolls 2, 4, and 5. A 9. Since it's not doubles, she does not get to self-narrate, so Abe narrates her success. The gun goes off in the middle of the fight, though in the chaos no one can tell where the shot came from. Killswitch takes a round in the fleshiest part of her left arm. Abe decides this is not a wound, but instead Killswitch will have to use her next action doing something other than shooting at bad guys.

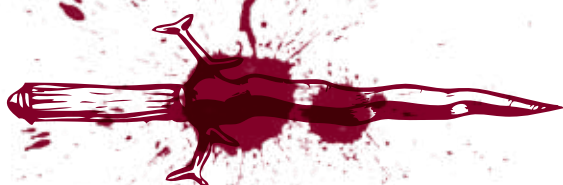
Buzzsaw reloads his shotgun. This time he uses some of his special rocksalt and chat mixture. It's not deadly, but the fumes are thick and the long-term effects can be poisonous. He spends one drama point (giving it to Bianca) and rolls 4, 5, and 5. A 10. Just what he needed. Bianca narrates that the mixture creates a thick plume of smoke that can help conceal their escape, if they decide to make a break for it.

Killswitch: That's our cue. Who here can run?

Killswitch wants to do two things here, so everyone agrees that costs two drama points. She spends them and gives them to Carl.

Killswitch tears her shirt and begins to quickly wrap up her wound. This requires a roll. She also wants to lead everyone out there, using the smoke as cover. This also requires a roll. She only has one drama point left, so she uses this on the second roll. The first roll is a 3 and 5. The second roll is a 2, 3, and 3. It is clear that both of these actions have to do with her role as a soldier, so she consults her chart and gets a minimal success and a press on, respectively.

Carl narrates that Killswitch has succeeded in stopping the bleeding, though the arm is useless for the immediate future. But the loud noise and smoke have made it hard to discern what Killswitch wants. Never the less, she keeps screaming, though no one runs away like she wants.



Drago needs to get out of the burning car and uses his action to leap to safety, perhaps even running away from the fight. He really needs to succeed here, so he spends one drama point (giving it to Diana again). He rolls a 4, 4, and 5. A 9 is a minimal success on his generic action chart. Had he been rolling to escape in a moving vehicle this would have been a much better result.

Diana narrates that Drago has escaped the flames, but that some of his clothing has been singed and burned from the flames. He falls from the car just a few feet away.

Buzzsaw: Dammit, Drago. Get that car working!

Deliah decides this is her chance to escape. Using the cloud as cover, she tries to sneak away from the group, using the excuse that she got lost in the chaos if this goes wrong. There is nothing miraculous about this, so she rolls on her generic action chart. A 2 and a 6 is a minimal success, plus a bargain.

Diana wants Deliah to escape, but Abe wants something in return. He knows she's sitting on a huge pile of drama points, so he says for two drama points Deliah can get out of here. Diana doesn't want to argue and only adds that it's important the group not know she's a traitor as a result. Abe agrees. Diana gives him two drama points and Abe narrates that Deliah is lost in the confusion.

Buzzsaw: Deliah! Killswitch! Where is everyone? Find my voice. Run to me.

Abe calls out for everyone to find his voice so they can escape together. With his new-found drama points he spends two and gives them to Bianca. He rolls a 1, 2, 3, and 5. An 8 is a minimal success and a bargain. Abe wants everyone to come to him and not just hear his voice. So he offers Bianca an additional drama point if she will let him succeed. She gladly accepts as this helps everyone. Bianca narrates that Buzzsaw's voice gets their attention and the three of them meet on the other side of a dune.

Killswitch wants to make sure they are properly covered and uses her fighting skill to guide the group safely beyond the area. She rolls a 4 and a 6. A 10 is clearly a success. Drago decides that not only does Killswitch guide them safely out of there, but they find Flikk in the chaos as well.

Drago: Come on. Flikk is over there. I think he can guide us back to the settlement.

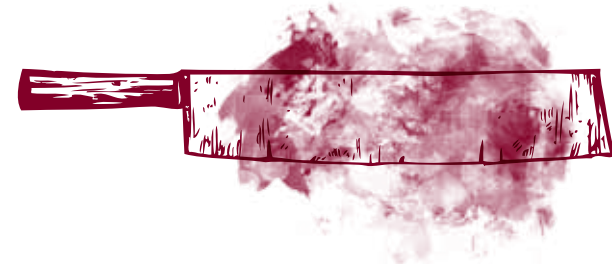
Drago decides to roll to see if Flikk can guide them out of the area. This is a unique situation where none of the PCs have the skills they need, so Flikk's presence is helpful, but in terms of game mechanics they can't use his chart. Carl decides to spend one drama point, however, to break this rule. Instead of rolling on his generic action chart, he rolls on a marker action chart. He gets a 2 and 5 for a total of 7. A minimal success. Even though Deliah isn't in the action, Diana is still Carl's foil. Diana narrates that Flikk can indeed guide them back to the settlement, but it's going to take a few days on foot and they are losing daylight already. It's quite possible the Hanji (or whoever they are) will find them before they return.

Killswitch: It's a chance we have to take. Let's move.

Abe decides this is the end of his stint as director and ends the scene. Bianca takes over, narrating a scene about covering their tracks and so on. Carl narrates a scene about finding shelter and food. Things don't get bad for the team until it's Diana's turn to narrate and she decides that the gang has found the group's hideout...

Not all games of Carcass will have one player pitted against everyone. I'm merely showing one example of play. The players are one another's foils. When you spend drama points you give the others a lot more power in the story as well. In this combat, drama points kept cycling around the table and Diana always had dice to throw at problems. Lucky for the others, there were no trepidation rolls. That could have been tricky.

Had Carl become a stop-gap for drama points, this fight may have gone differently. Essentially, the choices the players make are as important as the choices their characters make.



designer's notes

The original draft of this game was called *Knife Fight* and it was written in less than six hours. I changed the name before the first playtest, because that name is more apt on a tongue-in-cheek card game akin to *Lunch Money* than a roleplaying game about the end of the world.

Ahem. Anyway.

My goal was to design something that resisted all of the heavy-handed player agency going on in indie design at the moment. Not that I don't like it. Most of the games need it or use it properly. But I wanted a game that wasn't 'safe.' A game where you weren't sure if you should pick up the dice and roll.

The original playtest didn't go well. The players resisted the level of control that I'd built into the game. There was a gamemaster, which people also resisted. Also, the charts were confusing. And some players got silly quickly.

The playtest crashed and burned. Horribly. Barbra Streisand accent level horrible. I went home and cried. Then I worked on it for five more days.

I added more roles, gave each a role-specific chart, added more questions, and clearly defined the job of the foil. Trepidation and the NPC character were also added. I playtested it with the same group and it ran perfectly. The only change after the playtest was where drama points went when you spent them — to your foil of course.

I wrote for a few more hours on it. And now you have a 44-page document that I wrote in less than one week.

In some ways this game is not too different from *Death of Ulfstater* — another game replete with characters jockeying for authority. Fighting one another to be leader is half the fun.

Foiling one another's plans is the other half.

I still think people will try to play this like a standard scene-framing game, but it's so much more than that. I'll be taking this to GENCON with me and running it down at Strategicon as well (2014).

I'd love to hear how your games went and if people are finding anything confusing in this document, I'll gladly update the PDF for free.

All of the dice roll examples are real. I wrote whatever I rolled sitting at my desk. I hope that proves a point about the game.



