

BULLETS AT THE ORPHANAGE

EXT. ORPHANAGE. DAY.

A sound man sticks a microphone onto a podium. The podium is on a cloth-covered riser about ten feet above the pavement. Behind the podium a number of official-looking men and women in business attire find the fold-up seats assigned to them. Obviously a public ceremony of some sort is about to begin.

The camera pans over to a building. A big red ribbon has been suspended on stanchions in front of the doorway. Hanging from a rope on one of the large chrome stanchions is an oversized, gleaming pair of scissors.

INSERT SHOT.

A sign on the building's door reads NEW PROSPERITY ORPHANAGE.

EXT. ORPHANAGE.

Cut back to the scene on the platform. The camera pans across the smiling faces of the PLAYER CHARACTERS, who are all standing in a line. They wear their fanciest clothes, whatever those may be. (Perhaps the PC most uncomfortable with a formal outfit tugs unhappily at his collar, loosening his tie. If one of the PCs is from another juncture, he may be looking with curiosity at the modern shoes upon his feet.)

In front of each PC is a freshly-scrubbed, beaming young ORPHAN. The camera keeps panning. After it finishes panning down the row of PCs, we see that standing beside them is FAST EDDIE LO. FAST EDDIE leans over and speaks into the ear of the PC beside him.

Fast Eddie appears in *Feng Shui*, on p. 237. If you can't use him in your series (like, say, if your PCs shot him dead), substitute

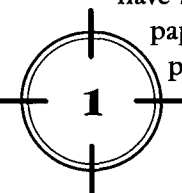
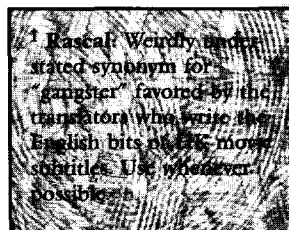
another mob boss of the PCs' acquaintance. He must be the sort of bad guy with whom the PCs have a mutually antagonistic, but not actively homicidal, relationship. In other words, they should fear him, know him as formidable, but not want to draw on him the second they see him.

FAST EDDIE

You didn't think I'd miss this, did you?
After you finagled me into paying for the place?

Your players' eyebrows may be raising at this point, in the universal symbol of "huh?" Tell them that Fast Eddie is referring to something that took place between this episode and the last. Your latest encounter with the Jade Wheel's favorite "rascal"¹ ended up with you and Fast Eddie at a stand-off. You had one of those metal-shelled suitcases full of his money, and each side had the drop on the other. You proposed a face-saving way for both to back down: You'd donate Fast Eddie's dough to the New Prosperity Orphanage in Tsimshatsui, but put the donation in his name.

Now, there's nothing to stop you from creating a prequel adventure of your own that leads up to that conclusion, and actually playing it out before starting *Four Bastards*. On the other hand, there is a lesson to be taught to players who object to things occasionally happening to their characters "off-stage." Make sure you have several sheets of scrap paper available for this purpose.





If someone complains that “hey, my character wouldn’t be—” take one of the sheets of paper, roll it up into a ball, and toss it into the quibbler’s lap with a hearty cry of “**Grenade!**”

If the player protests further, tell him he’d better do something about that grenade before it blows up the entire group plus a legion of cute orphans. The longer he waits with the balled-up paper in his lap, the bigger the penalty you should assess to his combat AV when he finally realizes he ought to be getting rid of it. Even if the player responds quickly, assess him a penalty of 1 if he speaks verbally but doesn’t throw the prop “grenade” away.² Then skip to the paragraph that starts, “Suddenly, black vans . . .” below.

If everyone accepts the *in media res*³ opening sequence with proper good cheer, continue to describe the scene. Keep the other pieces of paper handy for use as future grenades.

thank them for their efforts. She thanks Fast Eddie, too, reaching up to pinch him on the cheek. FAST EDDIE’S BODYGUARD looks worried to see someone interfering with the big boss, but Eddie smiles and flirts back with her.

FAST EDDIE

Anything for you, Granny.

Fanny pats the most-nervous PC on the shoulder.

FANNY

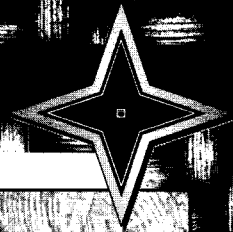
Don’t worry about the cameras. I know you’ll knock ‘em dead.

Suddenly, black vans screech up the street and stop in front of the orphanage. A legion of badly clad, heavily tattooed Chinese men jump out of the vans, wildly firing *faux* machine guns. The orphans are in danger!

Yes, there’s no way to avoid the orphanage shoot-out. Quibbling just starts the fracas sooner, and more dangerously.

² Obviously this is not a trick to pull on a player with real-life physical problems that prevent him from quickly tossing the “grenade.” Duh.

³ *In media res*. Latin for “not boring!”



Kids scream! Officials dive for cover! Fast Eddie's bodyguard catches a grenade and falls windmilling backwards off the risers. He lands with a thump, shielding others from the grenade's impact by smothering its blast with his body. Nonetheless, a shiver of impact rattles the stage.

FAST EDDIE

Damn! I promised his auntie I'd take care of him!

Call for initiative checks. The opposition consists of six mooks for every PC. There are also six for Fast Eddie. Despite the bad guys' upcoming attempts to cover their tracks, he is the true target of this attack.

Fast Eddie draws his gun and fires back at the mooks. Here are his stats, so you don't have to waste precious head-booting time looking them up in the rulebook.

The real threat offered by the mooks is not to the PCs, but to the various apple-cheeked orphans running about. The PCs' challenge is to take down the punks without endangering the kids. As far as Fast Eddie is concerned, his own safety takes precedence over the survival of a bunch of snot-nosed poor kids.

Things That Could Happen During the Fight

- Fast Eddie draws on a mook but a PC sees that he is likely to hit a kid instead. If the PC doesn't do something, the kid gets shot.
- Mooks grab up kids to use as human shields.
- A cowardly, crawling official does the same.
- Someone lifts up the heavy wooden podium and heaves it down from the risers onto someone else.
- Someone should be conked with a big chrome stanchion.
- The ceremonial scissors might be hurled into someone's chest.
- The ceremonial ribbon can be used to hog-tie a group of mooks together. A monkish martial artist could wield it as a whip-like weapon.
- The orphanage has an awning. Characters could jump down from it onto their foes, or duel on top of it.

Attacking Mooks

Sample Dialogue: "We were hired by this monk guy. Yeah, that's it. A monk."

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mind 4, Ref 5

Skills: Martial Arts 9, Guns 8

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), Intruder Tec-9 (10/3/32-1, 3 shot reload), machete (9)

Fast Eddie Lo

Sample Dialogue: "Assassination attempts severely disrupt my sense of inner peace."

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 4, Mind 7, Ref 6

Skills: Martial Arts 9, Guns 12, Gambling 8, Leadership 12

Info/Traits: 10

Weapons: punch (6), kick (7), Colt 380 Gov't Pocket Pistol (10/1/7-1)

- If forced to fight close-up, the mooks drop their Tec-9s and whip out machetes, at which they are marginally more adept.

At the point when more than three quarters of the mooks end up chewing pavement, the rest, perhaps realizing that they're just mooks, get wise and high-tail it back towards their vans (which, by the way, are Pep -2/Wreck 9). They fight only to eliminate obstacles between themselves and escape. They might do something stupid, though, like shoot up their own vehicles. If not stopped, they try to roar away in the vans. Depending on whether they've preserved any downed mooks for interrogation, the PCs may wish to give chase in their own vehicles. The mooks fire backwards at pursuing PCs as they careen through the narrow HK streets.

ROLL CREDITS. CUE STIRRING THEME MUSIC.⁵

⁴ In honor of the highly visible occasion, Fast Eddie has opted for something a tad more elegant (and concealable) than his usual Colt King Cobra.

⁵ Soundtrack suggestions: Check out the *Crim-Fax* series from Rhine, Caputo's *Madness*, *Hollywood or Crime Scene* (in their *Ultra Lounge* series), *The Money Spider* by the James Taylor Quartet (acid jazz—and no, it's not the same James Taylor as the seventies folkie guy) or *Bereft 70: Roaring Themes* from *Thrilling Italian Policing* (1971-80) (Crippled Dick).

