

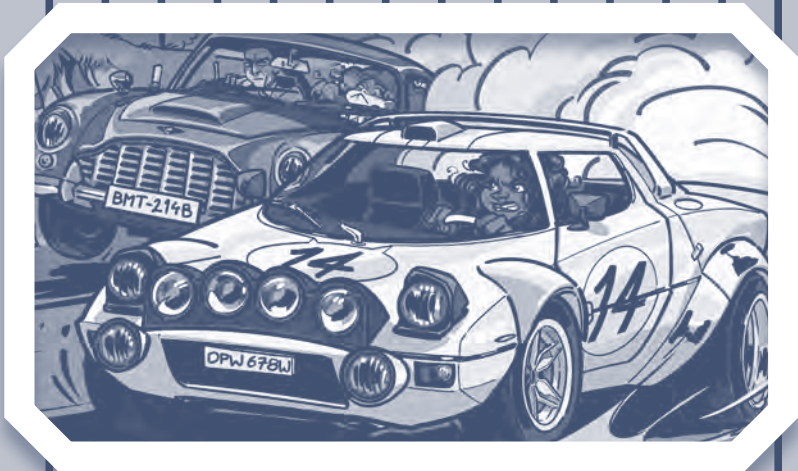


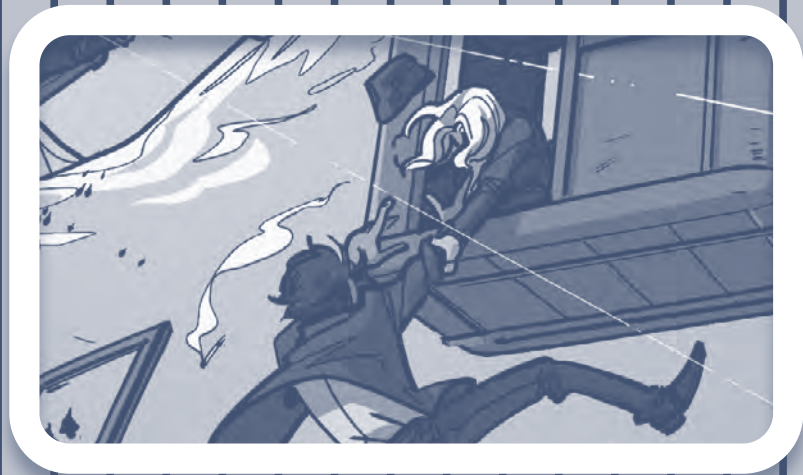
THE TROUBLESHOOTERS



AN ACTION-ADVENTURE
ROLEPLAYING GAME

BY KRISTER SUNDELIN





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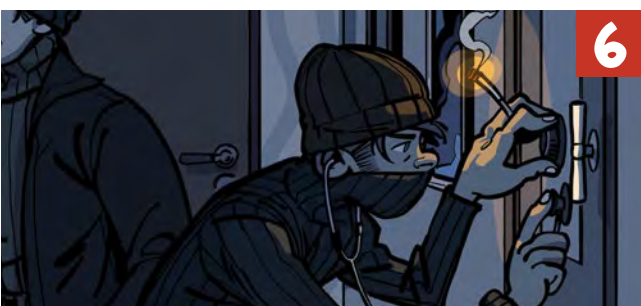
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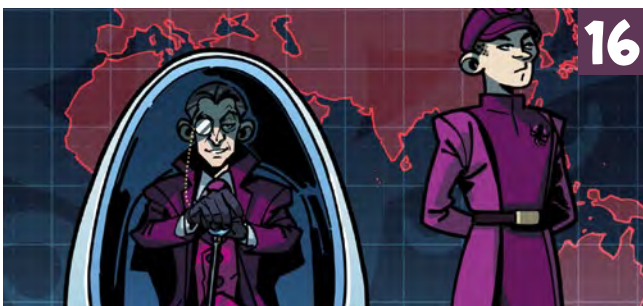
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INTRODUCTION

You may have noticed that this is *not* a comic book. It's a *tabletop roleplaying game*, albeit one that is inspired by comic books.

If you haven't played tabletop roleplaying games before, welcome to a new and exciting hobby!

This is a game of imagination, where the story is created through conversations with the other participants. You and a group of friends sit down together

and create a story about exciting adventures, inspired mostly by Belgian and French comics like *Spirou et Fantasio*, *Tintin*, *Yoko Tsuno* and many others. There's no winning in tabletop roleplaying, only the creation of stories.

This book contains rules, ideas and guidelines for creating such stories, and will guide you through setting up and running a game of the Troubleshooters on your own.

Hello! I'm Elektra, professional rally driver for the ERF Oil team. I'm one of the best in the field, good enough to compete with world-class drivers. And with a car like the Lancia, I'm among the best of the best.



**ELEKTRA
AMBROSIA**

Being one of very few girls in the sport makes me a lot more popular in the media, though. Nobody knows the top drivers of the other teams by name, and nobody could point them out in a crowd. But everyone knows who Elektra Ambrosia is!

However, being at the centre of attention sometimes pulls me into adventures outside the rally track. Luckily, I don't have to face these adventures on my own.

Skills: Alertness 65%, Credit 45%, Endurance 65%, Engineering 65%, Machinery 45%, Melee 45%, Search 45%, Status 45%, Strength 45%, Vehicles 75%, Willpower 65%; other Skills 15%

Vitality: 5

Abilities: Born Behind the Wheel, Been Everywhere

Complications: Overconfident

Languages: Greek (native); English, French (fluent)

Plot Hooks: Media Darling

Gear kits: Racing car (signature), Film camera, Mechanic's toolbox, Wad of cash, Beach wear



Not a problem.
Éloïse, your turn!

What?

What?

It is obviously too small for me or Frida, but not for our skinny teen mad inventor. I spend two **Story Points** if necessary to make it so.

Sigh. Okay, why not?

I don't want to crawl in there alone!

Don't worry, we'll tie this rope around you and pull you out if you're stuck. And here, take the flashlight.

Frida and I hoist up Éloïse to the air intake.

Waah! It's dark in here!

And it's very very tight. I want an **Agility task check** to avoid getting stuck.

40. That's a fail.
But I'm like, Young and skinny, so I spend a **Story Point** to flip that to 04, and wiggle through anyway.

Usually, Young allows you to spend a **Story Point** to be ignored by adults, but okay, I'll allow it this once.

I could spend another **Story Point** if you want to play by the rules.

No, that's okay. You squeeze through and crawl on, and find an opening into the corridor leading to the exit.

Is there anyone there?

No, it's empty.

Then I drop down into the corridor. I look around for anything unusual, anyone detecting me, security cameras and things like that.

Make a **Search task check**.

41. Success.

No, nothing here, unless I secretly made the check more difficult.

Let's hope not. I untie myself, go down the corridor to the door and open it. Is it a lock wheel, like a bank vault?



THE CAST



Now that you know who we are, it's time to talk about you: who you are, what you're good at, what your dreams are, who your friends are and how you'll function within a group.

You are going to step into a world of adventure and action, and you need to know where you are to know where you are going.

The journey will take you all over the world. You never know where you will end up or what will happen there. But it's important to understand your abilities and your limitations when tackling an adventure. And that's what we're about to take a look at.

Do you have your passport ready?
Because we're going now!

WHAT IS A CHARACTER

In traditional roleplaying games – such as *The Troubleshooters* – the character is the means through which the player interacts with and experiences the setting. It is your role, your vessel through which you contribute to the creation of the common story.

Your character has two components: the game stats in the Passport, which are used with the rules to determine the direction of the story; and the description, which could consist of all kinds of things, such as a character's portrait, background story, description of their appearance, or journals chronicling adventures you've had with your friends.

This combination of story and game stats is your character, and through it you act and participate in *The Troubleshooters*.



The Passport

The Passport is where you keep track of your character's journey. You can use the 32-page Passport booklet available in stores, or the simplified double-sided Emergency Passport form that you can download from our website.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CHARACTER

The Troubleshooters is not a game of intrigue and conspiracies. It's a game of fun, friendship and adventure. While tension between the characters is good drama, it's not the kind of drama that *The Troubleshooters* aims for. If you prefer it, by all means, go ahead and play the game that way.

However, the game is designed around the idea of a group of friends helping each other and cooperating to achieve a common goal. In this mode, tension between characters is just there to spice things up and to differentiate the characters, not to drive the story.

A good character in *The Troubleshooters*:

- Is competent and can do her job
- Does not replace any other character, but brings something unique to the group
- Has plenty of reasons to get involved in adventures, sometimes willingly, but even kicking and screaming will do
- Allows for character growth and development
- Has weaknesses that can be used to enhance the story or make the game more interesting
- Is fun to interact with
- And most important, is fun to play!

WHAT THE STATS MEAN

The core game stats in *The Troubleshooters* are the Skills and **Max Vitality**. These allow you to perform actions and take hits.

In addition, there are the story mechanism stats: **Plot Hooks**, Traits, Abilities, Complications, and **Story Points**, that allow you to influence the way events unfold.

Finally, there are Tags, especially on equipment, that define their special characteristics in game terms. Protective gear also has a Protection stat, and weapons have a Damage stat.

PLOT HOOKS

Plot Hooks are used to get your character into adventures. They also help define each character's individual motivations.

There's a list of 11 possible **Plot Hooks**, and each character has one or two from that list. Adventure modules will have startup handouts for four to six of the **Plot Hooks**, and the director uses one or two of them to start the adventure. The other players are encouraged to play it up and help make the **Plot Hook** characters feel truly special.

Plot Hooks could be used for homebrew adventures as well.

SKILLS

Skills are measured on a percentile scale. The lowest Skill value you can have is 15. Theoretically, the highest value you can have in any Skill is 106. The highest starting value is 85.

When making a task check, you try to roll lower than or equal to the Skill value in order to succeed. In an opposed check, you also want to roll higher than your opponent's roll. The outcome of task checks are binary – you succeed or you don't, or in the case of opposed checks, you win or you don't – but it is good to regard higher rolls as "better" or more successful than lower ones, even if there is no specific rule that says this. That way, you get a bit of extra input when narrating the outcome, plus you train yourself to handle opposed checks.

Next to each Skill value is an improvement checkbox. Check this when you use the Skill in a meaningful way. You don't have to succeed, or even actually make the task check, just so long as the attempt moves the plot forward. However, if you use the Skill just to put a mark in the checkbox, you don't get the improvement check. You can only have one check per Skill at any given time.



I'm a real secret agent, and an officer, so I will probably take the Doer role.

I'm more of a Fixer. I know everyone, but they probably aren't as savvy as Frida would prefer.



I'm probably a bit of the Muscle type. I do physical stuff, not just driving cars, but also punching people. And kicking them in the groin.

I'm a pure Specialist. My role is to create gadgets. I will probably investigate gadgets too, and I will know things, so I'll probably take the Investigator role.



LOCATION

When you create the team, you should also decide on where the characters usually stay. It's better if they are pretty close to one another, so agree on a city or town, preferably in Europe.

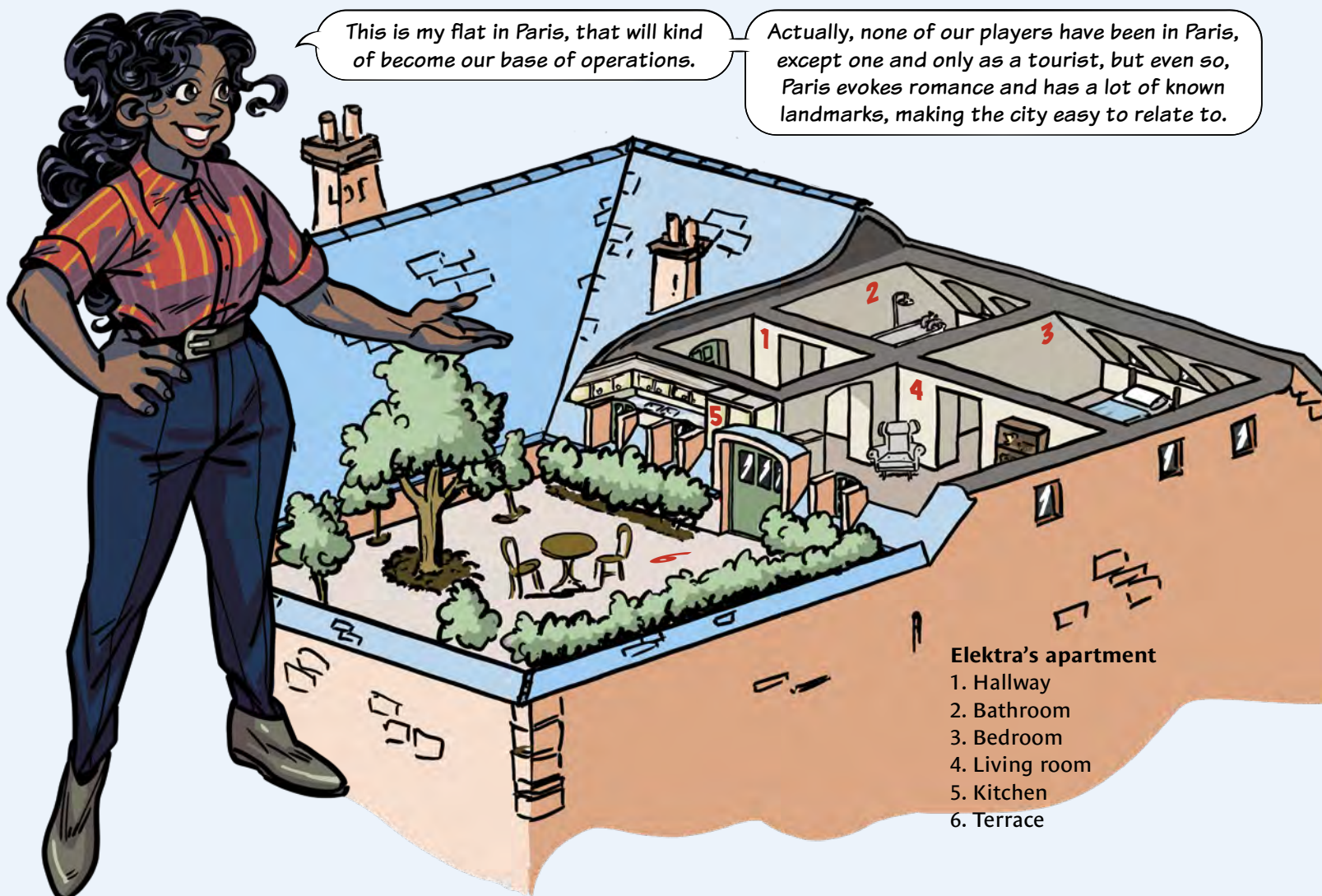
Some things to think about:

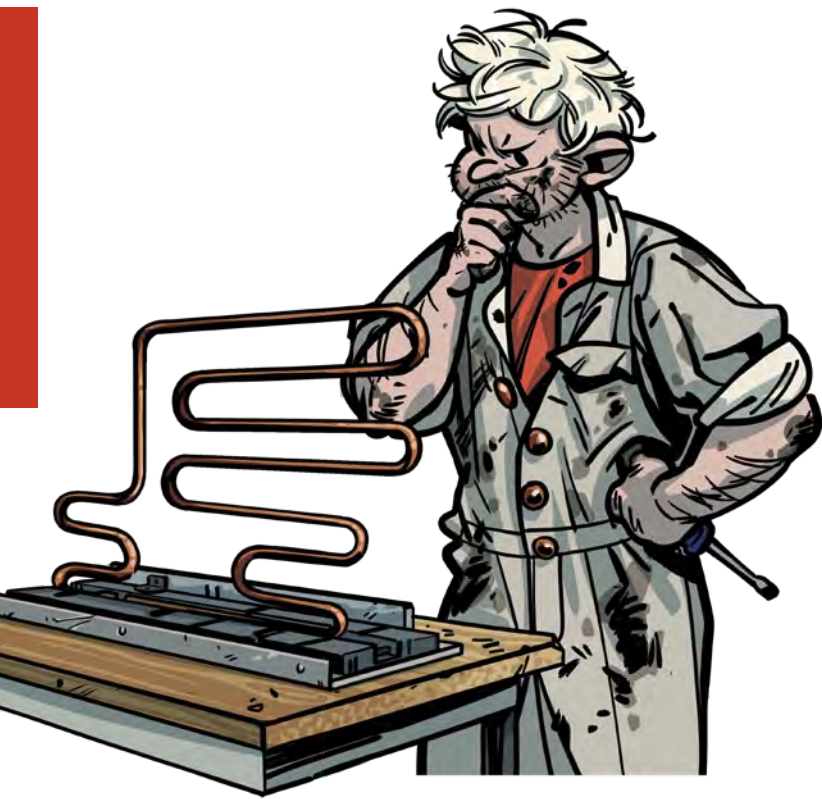
- Where do you live?
- Where do you work?
- Where do you have lunch?

We will use Paris as a starting point for many of our adventures.

We decided on Paris because of the location and importance as a communications hub all over the world, and because it is a beautiful capital city with a rich history.

One key asset in our adventures will be the fictional newspaper *La République*, located at Avenue Claude Vellefaux in X^e arrondissement. The newspaper is social-democratic but unaffiliated to any regional or national French party.





CURIOUS ENGINEER

Machines are wonderful. They do things! But the best thing is not the machine itself – the machine is just a source of pride representing a job well done. But creating a machine, or understanding it, that’s the real challenge, and it’s the reason that you chose your job.

Skills: Set the following Skills: **Engineering** 75, **Electronics** 65, **Machinery** 65, **Science** 65, **Search** 65, **Contacts** 45, **Security** 45, **Investigation** 45, **Melee** 45, **Vehicles** 45, **Willpower** 45. Set all other Skills to 15.

Abilities: Pick two of the following Abilities: Cheerful, Curious, Focused, Licensed Professional, Tech Wiz. Ignore any requirements on these Abilities.

Complications: Pick one of the following Complications: Combat Paralysis, Crude, Unlucky

Vitality: 5

Languages: —

Gear: You have a Mechanic’s toolbox, **Electronics** toolbox and a Ham radio set. Select one of them as your **Signature Gadget**. Pick up to two more gear kits of your choice.

Suggested Plot Hooks: Pick one or preferably two **Plot Hooks**, for instance one or two of these: **Exile**, **Looking for an Adventure**, **Friends in High Places**, **I Owe You**

Hello, my little friend! What kind of device are you, and what are you doing in my engine?

– Matti Kivisto, Curious Engineer

DIPLOMAT

Diplomacy is often described as the ability to tell someone to go to Hell and make him look forward to the journey. That’s not true: diplomacy is much more nefarious than that. But it is a part of the Big Game between nations, and you are playing it. You need to be devious on the highest arena there is.

Skills: Set the following Skills: **Status** 75, **Charm** 65, **Contacts** 65, **Languages** 65, **Red Tape** 65, **Alertness** 45, **Credit** 45, **Investigation** 45, **Search** 45, **Subterfuge** 45, **Willpower** 45. Set all other Skills to 15.

Abilities: Pick two of the following Abilities: Diplomatic Immunity, Good Reputation, Famous, Military Rank, Tough Liver. Ignore any requirements on these Abilities.

Complications: Pick one of the following Complications: Code of Honour, Memorable, Overconfident

Vitality: 4

Languages: Pick two extra languages.

Gear: You have an Evening dress or Dinner jacket, an Overnight bag, and a Tape recorder. Select one of them as your **Signature Gadget**. Pick up to two more gear kits of your choice.

Suggested Plot Hooks: Pick one or preferably two **Plot Hooks**, for instance one or two of these: **Secret Service**, **Friends in High Places**, **Arch-Enemy: The Octopus**, **I Owe You**

I believe that we are close to a breakthrough in these negotiations, don't you think?

– Colonel Bennet, Diplomat



Use when: Outside combat, use the Skill to assess the price and craftsmanship of melee weapons, the skill of other combatants, and to contact other martial artists and weapon makers.

In combat, use **Melee** for attack and defence checks. You can use **Melee** for defence against ranged attacks if the attacker is in the same zone, but you can't use the Skill for defence against ranged attacks from outside the same zone.

One Combat Skill is used with **Agility** to determine **Vitality**, if you customise your Template or build a new Template from scratch.

If the task check fails: In combat, you miss your attack. Outside combat, you do not get the information you are looking for.

PRESTIDIGITATION

Background Skill

Prestidigitation is the art of having quick and nimble fingers. It's a common Skill among pickpockets, stage magicians, escape artists, lockpickers, card cheaters and the like.

Use when: Make a **Prestidigitation task check** when you want to pick someone's pocket, perform a card trick, juggle crystal balls in your fingers and palms, pick a lock, and so on.

If the target is alert and prepared, make an opposed check against **Alertness**.

Prestidigitation is often used in challenges with for instance **Engineering**, **Search** and **Investigation** to break into secure sites.

If the task check fails: You can't do what you wanted to do. The lock is too hard, the pocket is closed, you drop the crystal ball, et cetera. If you're picking pockets, you're not discovered. Being discovered happens when you get **Bad Karma**.

RANGED COMBAT

Combat Skill

Ranged Combat encompasses the use of handguns, submachine guns, machine guns, rifles, and even bows and crossbows.

Using handguns is a bit of an oddity in Europe. Most conscripts in Europe get to fire a handgun a few times, but are not trained to use them. It's mostly for police officers and guards, athletes, and a few enthusiasts.

Rifles are much more common, both for hunting and sport, and of course for national defence: conscripted soldiers are trained in the use of rifles, and in many national militias the soldiers keep their rifle in their home.

Archery is a curiosity these days, its practice mostly restricted to athletes, movie stars, reenactors and a few traditionalists.

Use when: Outside combat, use the Skill to assess wounds, the price and craftsmanship of ranged weapons, the skill of other shooters, and to contact other shooters, gunsmiths and bowmakers.

In combat, use **Ranged Combat** for attack checks with handguns, rifles, machine guns, bows, crossbows and the like. You can't use the Skill for defence.

One Combat Skill is used with **Agility** to determine **Vitality**, if you customise your Template or build a new Template from scratch.

If the task check fails: In combat, you miss your attack. Outside combat, you do not get the information you are looking for.

RED TAPE

Investigation Skill

Cutting through red tape and navigating the tangled maze of bureaucracy is not easy, but it can be done. It requires an equal measure of know-how, know-who, social flexibility, and an understanding of rules, regulations, jurisdictions and procedures. But if there is anything a sleuth must know, it's bureaucracy and law. After all, sleuthing is about finding those that break the law and doing the paperwork to prove their guilt.

Being allowed to practice law is another thing. Knowledge about the law and even having a law degree is not enough. You also have to have the Called to the Bar Ability to be licenced to practice law.

Use when: You want to navigate bureaucracy smoothly, you're building a case before court, negotiating business deals, et cetera. You may also use **Red Tape** as part of a challenge or during an investigation.

If the task check fails: You cannot find a precedent to support the case, the law is unclear or contradictory on a matter, you're stuck in the labyrinth of regulations, or it's beyond your field of expertise.

SCIENCE

Investigation Skill

The Troubleshooters is set in the age of rocketry and atomics and the emerging science of computers and robots. This Skill reflects the science behind all those advancements and more. It's about astronomy, chemistry, astrophysics, quantum physics, materials science, and much more.

Use when: **Science** is often used for investigation in a challenge, or as a task check to understand what Professor Mikhailov is talking about. Conceivably, the Skill could be used to control a nuclear reactor or plot an orbit for a space shuttle or space capsule. Together with **Engineering** and **Electronics**, it could be used in a challenge to construct gadgets.

If the task check fails: Huh?



ACTION



I am the best rally driver in the world! It shouldn't be a problem for me to outrun that crazy MI6 agent, not even if he's in an Aston Martin DB5.

I wouldn't count on it. After all, nobody does it better than him, not even a Greek rally princess, and he has a four-litre straight six in his DB5 with three side-draught Weber carburettors!



Wanna bet? I don't care how many technical gizmos he has in his car, he is not going to overtake Elektra Ambrosia!

RESOLVING ACTIONS

The Troubleshooters is played as a dialogue between the players and the Director. The Director usually sets the scene and describes it. The players describe how their characters act or react. The situation then develops as is reasonable or by using and interpreting the rules. Other things happen as a result. This way, you create a story together.

Sometimes, the outcome of an action is not that clear. You may need some structure to progress through a scene, or you may want a way of resolving actions that everyone agrees is "fair". That's when you use task resolution.

The most basic rule of *The Troubleshooters* is this:

When you want to do something, describe what you do and how. If the desired outcome is reasonably likely but not guaranteed, find a fitting Skill, roll percentile dice and compare the outcome to the Skill value.



So we're still at one-nothing in wins. You saw him get off on that alternate route, and you can still see the rear lights now and then in front of the truck. Your turn.

Okay, I think it's time for some serious driving. As we approach Graz, I step on the accelerator and overtake the lorry and catch up with him. So that's **Vehicles**, and I think I should have **+2 pips** from the Lancia. Ha! 82! Beat that!



He tries to keep you at bay with a roll of 69, but that's less than your 82, so it's a second win for you.

Right, suddenly I zoom by the lorry, headlights glaring in the night and come up side by side with him, right in front of a surprised lorry driver honking his horn like a madman!



Right, he reacts violently, and as you pass the city limit of Graz, he pulls his gun and shoots at you. It's a hit of 36. You may oppose his **Ranged Combat** with **Agility** if you want.

Ow, I have 15 in Agility. I can't even beat that.



I'm still here. Can I yank his arm with **Melee** instead?



Uhm. Okay, I will accept that.



Right. Oh, 44! That's a win and a **Good Karma** as well. As he pulls his gun and aims across the passenger seat, I grab his arm and pull it down so that he only shoots the inside of the car. I bite him in the arm for good measure.

Haha! Three wins! As Éloïse yanks his arm and bites him, he loses control of his car and slams right into a bus stop!



Poor car.



LIST OF GEAR KITS

ALPINIST GEAR

Story Points: 1

Contents: Hammer, spikes, cramps, line, hooks, crampons

Tags: Mountaineering: **+2 pips**

ARCHAEOLOGIST KIT

Story Points: 1

Contents: Shovel, pickaxe, trowel, brushes, dust pan, sculpting tools, dentist's tools, tape measure, compass, nylon string, scale arrow, pens and notepads, an assortment of paper and ziplock plastic bags.

Tags: Archaeology or excavation: **+2 pips**

ARCTIC GEAR

Story Points: 1

Contents: Fleece underclothes, down trousers, fur trimmed down coat with hood, warm gloves or mittens, warm boots, crampons, protective goggles.

Tags: Survival, arctic: **+2 pips**



ASSAULT RIFLE

Story Points: 2

Contents: Assault rifle (typically 7.62 mm), strap, 4 magazines, bag or pouches for magazines

Tags: Assault rifle: **Ranged Combat**, Damage **7dX**, *Loud*, *Reload (8-0)*

AUTOGYRO

Story Points: 2

Contents: Small single-seat or double-seat aircraft with propeller and auto-rotating rotary wing, crash helmet

Tags: Flight

BEACHWEAR

Story Points: 1

Contents: Swimsuit or swimming trunks, sandals, summer dress or shorts and polo shirt, sunglasses, elegant hat, beach towel, parasol

Tags: Impression on the Riviera: **+2 pips**

BICYCLE

Story Points: 1

Contents: Bicycle, repair kit, pump, basket, lock

Tags: Short distance or heavy traffic travel: **+2 pips**

BINOCULARS

Story Points: 1

Contents: Binoculars, strap, carrying case

Tags: Spotting at a distance: **+2 pips**

CAMERA

Story Points: 1

Contents: 35 mm camera, lenses, rolls of film, padded bag

Tags: Documentation and location analysis: **+2 pips**



CAMPING GEAR

Story Points: 1

Contents: Backpack, tent, tarp, sleeping bag, blanket, freeze-dried rations, simple knife, roll of string, pot, pan, matches, camping stove, lightweight folding chair

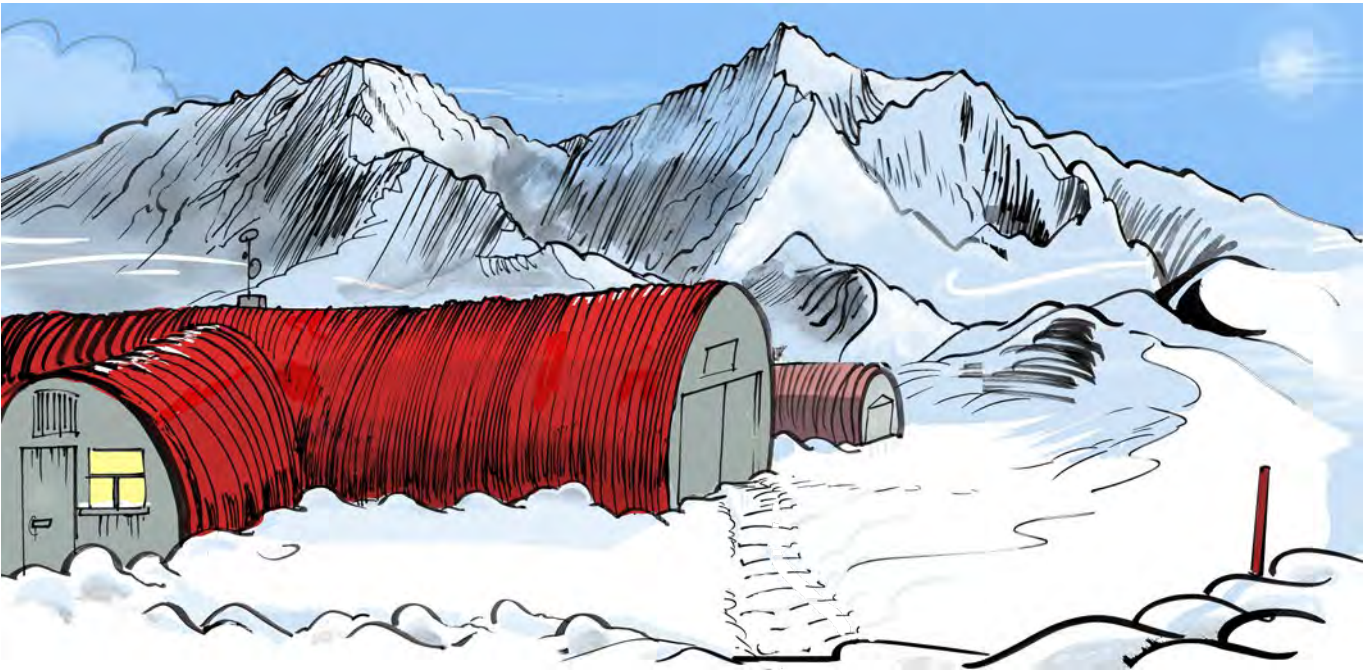
Tags: Survival and camping: **+2 pips**

CHEMISTRY LAB SET

Story Points: 1

Contents: Microscope, glass slides, slide covers, test tubes, erlenmeyer flasks, pipettes, glass tubes, catalyzers, reactants, alcohol burner, alcohol, distilled water, protection mask, cotton swabs and wipes, case.

Tags: Chemistry analysis or investigation: **+2 pips**



Challenge: Get on the supply flight

Contacts, to know who can get you a seat.
Red Tape, to get through the bureaucracy.
Science, to have legitimate business.
Status, to be important enough to be flown there.

Modifications

Having a really good reason: +2 pips to all task checks.

Not having a reason, or not wanting to state the reason: -2 pips

Outcome

Great outcome: You get a seat on the next supply flight.

Good outcome: Your application takes **1d6** days to process,

Limited outcome: Your application takes **2d6** days to process, after which you get a seat on a flight in **1d6** days. If the Antarctic winter hits in February, the slot rolls over to next summer in November.

Bad outcome: Your application is denied.

Abysmal outcome: Your application is accepted after **1d6** days, but the flight is cancelled at the last moment due to engine problems and you find yourself stuck at McMurdo Station instead.

Challenge: Charter or rent a plane

Contacts, to know someone who knows someone who owns planes adapted to Antarctic conditions.
Credit, because renting a plane is expensive.
Red Tape, to get the flight permits in order.

Modifications

+2 pips on **Credit**, but **-2 pips** on **Red Tape** if a character can fly the plane and you don't have to pay the pilot.

Outcome

Great outcome: Travel permit and visa application accepted after **1d6** days.

Good outcome: You get a plane from New Zealand with a stopover at the New Zealand Scott Base or the US McMurdo Station. The entire trip, including arrangements, takes **2d6** days in the Antarctic summer.

Limited outcome: You get a plane from Argentina with a stopover at Belgrano station, but you have to bribe some officials to make it happen. The entire trip takes **3d6** days in the Antarctic summer, and you get a **-2 pips** modification on the next **Credit** task check.

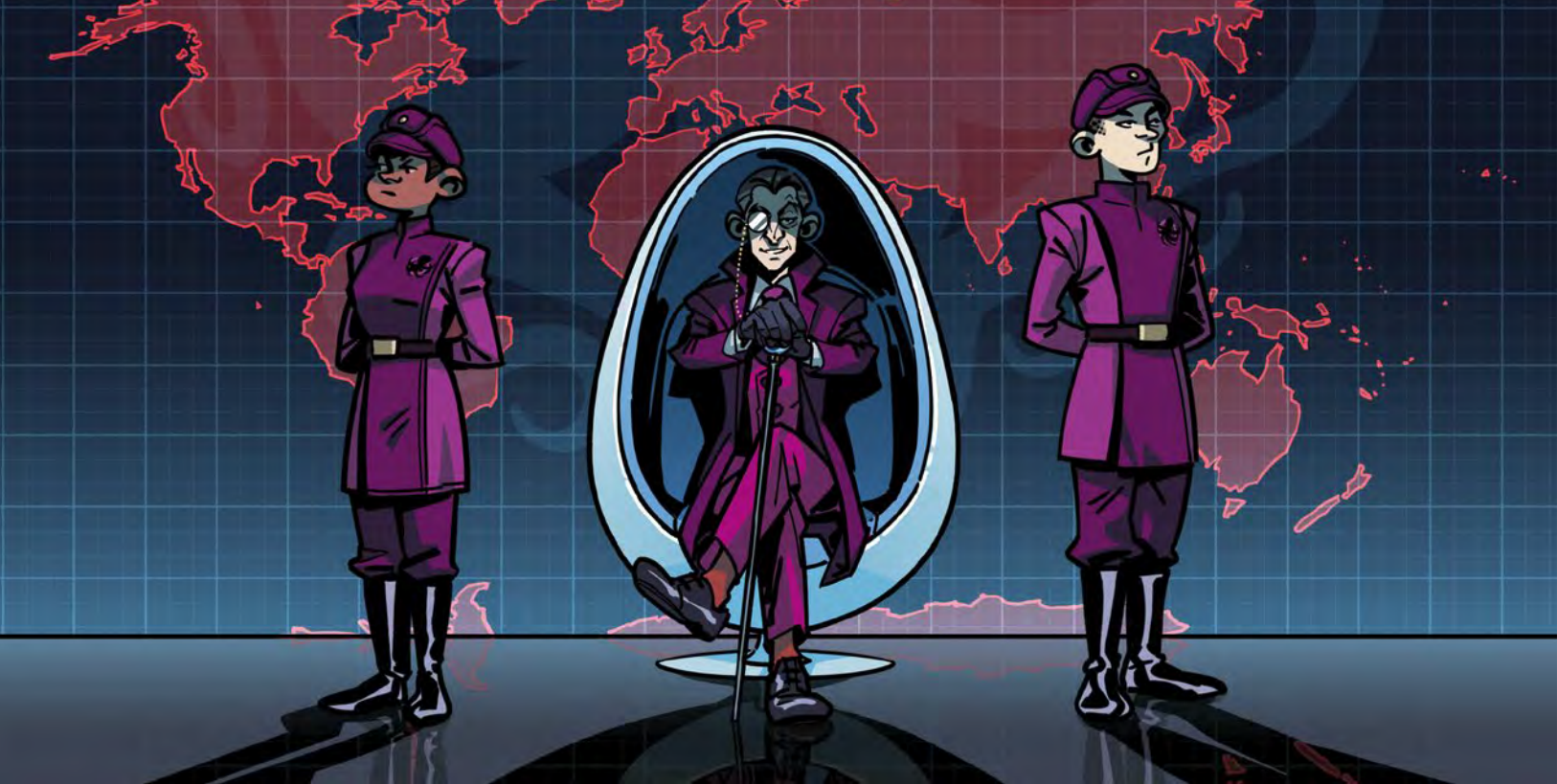
Bad outcome: There's no plane or pilot available.

Abysmal outcome: You get a plane, but there's a mechanical failure forcing the plane to land, and you are now stranded on the ice shelf. Hopefully someone will come to the rescue.



EYES ONLY

The following material is PROTECTED
under article 413-9 of the Penal Code.
For the Director of Operations' eyes only.



THE OCTOPUS



Welcome to the Octopus. No, it is not an abbreviation. What do you take us for, movie villains? "The Octopus" is simply the name of this organisation.

Like our namesake, we are masters of disguise, intelligent and cunning, deadly and stealthy, and have tentacles everywhere. You are one of those tentacles – or rather, you will be, once you have been properly indoctr... introduced.

You will make mistakes, and I encourage you to learn from them. People in the Octopus who do not learn from their mistakes tend to live very short lives. Do you understand?

Good. Please note the trapdoor, controlled by this very button, that you are standing on. The next time you report to me, you will stand on exactly that spot.

Dismissed!

THE ORIGIN OF THE OCTOPUS

The Octopus has a very long history, and like many things in the modern world, it started with the Peace of Westphalia.

The Peace of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years' War. It also reduced the influence of the Vatican and was the beginning of the end of the feudal order. This left the world with a dangerous power vacuum.

As the idea of nation-states started to gain a grip on Europe, a new power emerged to keep the fragmented world together. It didn't have a name at first, but consisted of an uneasy alliance of merchant families and companies from both the Protestant and Catholic side of the war. Inspired by the Capuchin friar Péré Joseph – the original *éminence grise* – the French Delacroix family had a major role in the formation of the alliance. They helped their mentor Péré Joseph and his master Cardinal Richelieu support the Protestant Swedish forces, and had contacts all over Europe on both sides of the divide. Other influential members were the Genovese

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