

Utopolis: Policing the Retrofuture

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This game is an entry for the Reversed Engineering Challenge organized by Kevin Allen, Jr. This game uses the character sheet designed by Thom Foster available at <http://www.kevinallenjr.com/reverseengineer/reversed.html>

Thanks to Kevin and Thom for the idea and the sheet to make this game possible, and to you for reading this.

Welcome to the Retrofuture

It is the turn of the millennium, the year 2000. But this is not the world in which we live, but rather the world that could have been, as imagined by the prognosticators of the 1950s. It is the retrofuture.

The city of Utopolis is a shining beacon of all that mankind has achieved in the past 50 years. Monumental skyscrapers of shiny glass and steel dominate the skyline. Each is virtually a city itself, with living space, businesses, and entertainment all contained within. Pedestrian slidewalks and sky bridges connect these bastions of modernity, while rooftop aerodromes allow quick jaunts by automatically-piloted jetcars or aerotaxis should the need arise.

At ground level, the automobiles of the retrofuture—huge vehicles of chrome and glass with sweeping fins and aerodynamic profiles—are driven in orderly formations at breakneck speed by automated systems, while the passengers recline in comfort. The weather-control satellites ensure that it is always sunny and temperate, with occasional gentle rains. There is no pollution, no smog—everything is operated via electricity from solar or atomic power.

The citizens of Utopolis live a pampered existence. All heavy labor is done by anthropomorphic robots, with bulky limbs and glass domes and vacuum tubes for heads. House-sized supercomputers keep the city and most businesses running in an orderly fashion. People can only work 20 hours a week by law, leaving the rest of their time for leisure and family. Food is pre-made and cooked by microwave or consumed in pill form. Plastics abound in housewares and interior construction, allowing robot maids to efficiently hose down an entire house in minutes. Fashion has remained much as it was in the 1950s, with conservative suits and hats for the gentlemen and modest dresses for the women. Virtual entertainment and civic fraternal organizations occupy much of citizens' time. And everyone can keep in touch by videophone, either in their home or on their wrist.

Technology and science have made Utopolis a world of plenty, of well-ordered prosperity, a world of endless optimism and opportunity—for everyone but you.

Policing the Retrofuture

Despite the wonders of Utopolis, there are still citizens who fall into vice or crime and threaten the city's order. You were once one of these malcontents and criminals, but you were caught and taken to one of

Utopolis' reeducation centers, where you were instructed on the error of your ways and the values of a good citizen. Along the way, you "forgot" the nature of your crime, the facts surrounding it, and all aspects of your prior life. Once reeducated, the final phase of your rehabilitation began, your service as a member of the Utopolis Police Department.

Now you are armed with a zapgun, a wrist videophone, a suit, and a badge. Paired with your robot partner, your task is to investigate disorderly events and uncover criminals, setting the city right again. In addition to serving as your backup and a source of exhaustive knowledge about the city, your robot partner, clad in its black tailored suit, also ensures that you have learned your lesson and are on the road to becoming an exemplary citizen. Your partner is a robot like all the others, with a glass dome and vacuum tubes for a head and a mechanical voice devoid of emotion. It's name is a combination of a letter and numbers, although some detectives insist on giving their partner a nickname.

When not on the job your time is spent in one of the police department dormitories, where you have a bed and a foot locker to store your clothes and few personal items. After a few years of honorable service, you can expect a return to normal civilian life, but with a police detective's pension to smooth your transition and fund your leisure.

Certainly, some citizens are suspicious of police detectives, particularly rookies, but you have every intention of proving your worth and making your mark on the city. And former police detectives have even gone on to serve in Utopolis' government and establish businesses of their own. It's an opportunity, a new start. But sometimes, in the dark of the night or upon arriving at a crime scene, you feel something scratching around in the depths of your head, something lurking, a dark remnant of your past and your forgotten crime. Will you persevere, catching the criminals and becoming a model citizen, or will your hidden demons slowly reveal themselves and tempt you into uncovering, even returning to, your forgotten life? You've got a clean slate—will it redeem or destroy you in the beautiful city of Utopolis?

Playing Utopolis

Utopolis is a role-playing game of criminal investigation and keeping your fears and flaws in check while you solve crimes in the retrofuture. One player will serve as the gamemaster (the "GM"), and the others will each play two roles — that of their individual police detective and the robot partner of the player to their left. The game is best played by a GM and two to four players.

In addition to a GM and several players, you need copies of the character sheet provided with these rules, pencils, a deck of cards, one six-sided die (d6) or the special question die (Who-What-When-Where-Why-How) sold by Koplow Games (www.koplowgames.com), and tokens (glass beads, coins, poker chips, etc.) of two different types or colors.

The Lines and Veils of Retrofuture Crime

Utopolis involves crime and violence, but it centers on a setting of the optimistic future and orderly prosperity tinged with oppression and vice. As such, some content that would be appropriate in a game emulating modern police television shows could be out of place. Each group can decide what types of content they find inappropriate to their game, but some general advice on how to conduct such a discussion is in order.

Before beginning play, everyone should discuss his or her vision for the game together. This can be in the general terms of images evoked from the description of Utopolis, or in specific terms of vintage television shows and movies that they want to emulate. With this idea of how the game will look in mind, turn to whether there are any types of themes or content you feel are incompatible with this vision. This discussion should establish any “lines” and “veils” that the group wants to abide by for this game of Utopolis.¹

A line is a rule that excludes certain content or themes from play. For example, a player can ask that sexual abuse not be featured in the game. A player can also propose that some types of events not be described except in the most general terms, establishing a veil with respect to that subject matter. For example, a player could request that graphic descriptions of murder victims be avoided, instead describing cause of death in general terms. Any player can propose a line or veil, and the other players should accept it as a limit on the creation of their characters and the scenes during play.

During play, if a scene moves very close to a line or veil or toward content that a player feels uncomfortable with, the GM and players should check in with each other, reinforcing or establishing a line or veil if necessary. Deliberately violating an established line or veil during play is not to be tolerated—it is not only poor game play, it is being unkind and hurtful to your fellow players as human beings.

¹ “Lines” and “veils” are terms coined by Ron Edwards in *Sex & Sorcery*, a supplement for his game *Sorcerer*.

Creating Your Police Detective

Character creation starts with your character concept. What type of Utopolis police detective do you want to play—an idealistic rookie, a cynical veteran, the precinct clown, or the resident egghead? Once you have a basic concept in mind, discuss it with the GM and other players to ensure there is not too much repetition among the characters. If you are having trouble coming up with a character concept, feel free to take suggestions from the GM and other players.

Identity, Persona, and Muse

Once you have decided on a character concept, pare it down to a word or short phrase and write it in the space marked “Persona” on your character sheet. In the space marked “Identity,” write your character’s name.

Your character’s “Muse” determines two things. First, the choice of Muse indicates the type of crimes that resonate personally for your character, those that particularly arouse his anger or curiosity. When investigating that kind of crime, you may choose to draw an additional two cards into your hand when resolving a conflict related to the investigation. You may choose to draw these additional cards at any time during the resolution of the conflict, including after seeing your hand and your opposition’s hand.

Second, the choice of Muse is a hint at the nature of your character’s forgotten crime, the misdeed that resulted in his serving as a Utopolis police detective. As a result, if you choose to receive the two additional cards in resolving a conflict, then you must make a Flaw/Fear test following the scene. If your character ever remembers his crime as the result of any failed Flaw/Fear test, then it must be a crime that falls under his Muse.

Although there are nine Muses in Greek mythology, only six are eligible to be chosen here:

- Erato – Related to crimes of passion
- Melpomene – Related to crimes of particular tragedy
- Polyhymnia – Related to justified crimes of self-defense or vigilantism
- Thalia – Related to drug crimes
- Clio – Related to cold cases and criminals long uncaught
- Calliope – Related to organized crime and major crimes requiring a task force

Choose a Muse and write her name in the appropriate space on your character sheet.

Example:

Jake, Dave, and Ryan sit down to play Utopolis. Ryan will serve as the GM, so Jake and Dave each need to make police detectives. Jake decides on a true detective-type character who enjoys the intellectual stimulation of mysteries but doesn't get emotionally involved. He puts "Detached Detective" in the Persona area of his character sheet. Jake decides Detective Donald Krake is a good name and puts it down in "Identity." Finally, to serve as a foil to Donald's lack of emotion he decides to choose the "Muse" Erato, hinting that Donald may not always have been so detached.

Attributes

Next, you must choose your character's attribute levels. The key attribute for all characters is Core — a general measure of the character's experience as a police detective and core competence in doing the job. You will draw a number of cards equal to your character's Core, usually drawing additional cards as well, in every resolution of a conflict and Flaw/Fear test.

Most characters start play with a Core of three, representing the training they receive before being placed with their robot partners and beginning work. You may choose to begin with a Core of four or even the maximum Core of five, but your character must take an additional point of either Flaw or Fear in exchange for each point of Core above three. A character with a higher Core has been working as a detective for a while, with both the greater experience and mental stress to show for it.

The other four attributes that measure your character's abilities are Tenacity, Stability, Prowess, and Aptitude. Each has a maximum value of three and a minimum value of zero. Tenacity is your character's willingness to persevere in the face of difficulty and resist the temptations of his Flaw, while Stability is your character's ability to keep cool and focused under pressure and remain mentally balanced in the face of his Fear. In addition to allowing you to draw cards in resolving appropriate conflicts, you use these attributes to draw cards in Flaw/Fear tests.

Prowess and Aptitude, on the other hand, are used only to draw cards in resolving appropriate conflicts. Prowess is your character's level of skillfulness in using his body, a combination of strength, speed, coordination, and resilience. Aptitude is a measure of your character's mental acuity, perception, and reasoning ability.

Divide seven points among your character's Tenacity, Stability, Prowess, and Aptitude. Each can be no higher than three, and you may allocate zero points to an attribute if you like.

Your final two attributes are Flaw and Fear. Your character's Flaw is some defect in character that led to his first commission of a crime, be it jealousy, greed, rage, etc. Your character's Fear, on the other hand, is his unreasoning terror at the thought of losing control, of losing his very sanity, of remembering the details of his crime and reeducation. Your current level of Flaw and Fear are subtracted from the number of cards you would ordinarily receive when your character must make a Flaw/Fear test.

Both Flaw and Fear begin at one, unless you choose for your character to begin play with a Core higher than three. If you do, then you must allocate one additional point to Flaw or Fear for each additional point of Core. Flaw and Fear have a minimum value of zero and no maximum value.

As you determine your character's attributes, write the chosen levels in the space provided under each.

Example:

Jake continues creating Detective Donald Krake. He decides that Donald has already worked on several cases, so he will have a Core of four. He divides seven points among Donald's Tenacity, Stability, Prowess, and Aptitude. Jake decides that Donald's intellectual and detached tendencies call for a higher Stability and Aptitude. So he assigns his seven points: Tenacity – 1, Stability – 3, Prowess – 0, and Aptitude – 3.

Because Jake decided on a Core of four, he must allocate an extra point to Donald's Flaw or Fear. Jake decides that he'd like to see Donald tempted by his old criminal ways, so he goes with Flaw – 2 and Fear – 1.

Talents

In addition to attributes, each police detective has talents — areas in which they excel due to practice or have received extra training. Each talent has a proficiency score between one and three associated with it. All talents have a maximum proficiency score of three. When using a talent in resolving a conflict, you can draw additional cards equal to your character's proficiency score in that talent.

Every police detective begins play with the talents of Utopolis Knowledge, Investigation, and Zapgun at one. You may allocate seven additional

points among these and any other talents that you wish. You can choose talents from the table below or make up one of your own with the GM's permission.

<i>Talent</i>	<i>Description</i>
Automobile Driving	Manually driving an automobile, useful in chases
Bureaucracy	Cutting your way through red tape and administrative procedure and documents
Criminology	The psychology of criminals
Fisticuffs	Fighting hand-to-hand
Forensics	Scientifically analyzing evidence
Interrogation	Squeezing answers from witnesses or suspects
Intuition	A sixth sense for danger, lies, and where to find the next clue
Investigation	Gathering evidence, interviewing witnesses, noticing clues
Jetcar Piloting	Manually piloting a jetcar, a key skill for aerial chases
Mechanical Training	Fixing automobiles, picking locks, defusing a bomb, etc.
Medical Training	Administering first aid, diagnosing diseases, performing an autopsy, etc.
Social Interaction	Being charming, knowing how to dress and talk with others in general Utopolis society
Surveillance	Shadowing, tailing, and staking out suspects without being discovered
Unsavory Contacts	Finding out illicit knowledge in Utopolis, having a network of underground contacts
Utopolis Knowledge	Knowing people of note, where things are, and just about any other public knowledge
Zapgun	Firing the non-lethal sidearms of the Utopolis Police Department

Write your character's talents and the proficiency score for each in the spaces provided on your character sheet.

Example:

The final thing Jake needs to do is give his police detective talents. Detective Donald

Krake begins play with Utopolis Knowledge, Investigation, and Zapgun at one each. He distributes his other seven points and ends up with: Bureaucracy – 1, Criminology – 2, Forensics – 1, Interrogation – 1, Investigation – 3, Utopolis Knowledge – 1, and Zapgun – 1.

Tokens and Cinema

“Tokens” and “Cinema” are two pools of points that you can spend during the resolution of a conflict or during a Flaw/Fear test. You can use Cinema points when your character is present in a scene, and they allow you to take control of a scene in much the same way a director controls a movie. You can spend Cinema points to do the following:

- Spend one point to reroll the question die that determines the type of clue you can find in a scene
- Spend one point to narrate into a scene an item, event, or person that is helpful in achieving your intent, allowing you to draw an additional card
- Spend one point to narrate a complicating factor into a scene and randomly discard one card from the hand of the GM or another opposing character
- Spend one point to seize narration of your failure in a scene from the GM
- Spend points equal to your character’s current proficiency score in a talent +1 to raise that talent’s proficiency score by one, to a maximum of three. You can only do this at the end of a scene.
- Spend points equal to two times the next level of your character’s Tenacity, Stability, Prowess, or Aptitude attribute to raise that attribute to the new higher level (e.g., spend six Cinema points to raise your Prowess from two to three). You can only do this at the end of a scene, and you can only raise an attribute one level in a given scene (e.g., you cannot spend two Cinema points to raise your Tenacity from zero to one and four more to raise it to two in the same scene).

Your character begins play with three Cinema points, and he will receive additional points as the result of succeeding and failing in resolving conflicts.

Tokens points are used when you are playing the role of the robot partner of the player to your left. You begin play with ten Tokens points, and they refresh to ten points at the beginning of each investigation of a new crime. You can spend Tokens points to do the following:

- Spend one point to create a fact about Utopolis that affects the current scene
- Spend one point to narrate how you help your partner, allowing him to draw on additional card
- Spend one point to narrate how you hinder your partner, purposely or not, and randomly discard one card from his hand
- Spend one point to seize narration of your partner's success from him
- Spend all remaining points (but at least two) to intervene against your partner in a scene, drawing your own hand of seven cards to oppose him

Put the appropriate number of tokens of each different type on top of the "Tokens" and "Cinema" areas on your character sheet.

Remarks?

The only blank area that should remain on your character sheet is "Remarks." In this area you can take notes of the clues and evidence that you and the other police detectives have found so far in the current case.

With all your characters made, let's look at the structure of play.

The Structure of Play

Each session of Utopolis centers on the investigation of a crime and the investigation's effects on the mental well-being of the detectives. Play generally features one character and his robot partner in a scene, with a round-robin sequence of play ensuring that each character gets a scene in turn and relatively equal screen time. Certain points at the beginning and end of an investigation will bring all the characters together to discover the nature of the current crime and finally to apprehend the criminal responsible. But players are free to request that their character be included in other scenes at any point, so long as the GM and player whose scene it is does not object.

Beginning the Investigation

The GM frames the initial scene that introduces the crime and begins the investigation. This can either involve all the characters gathering at a crime scene, or, depending upon the crime, an interview of a citizen reporting a crime. The GM is free to choose a crime that suits his taste or he can roll 1d6 and use a crime under the Muse that corresponds to his roll. Example crimes that fall under each of the Muses are listed in

Appendix A to get you started quickly. Over several sessions, the GM should ensure that each character gets to investigate a crime that falls under his particular Muse.

The characters are free to ask questions and get a better sense of the nature of the crime. The GM should provide several starting clues (one for each player) to get the investigation underway, and the GM can allow a conflict to emerge as well so the successful player with the highest-ranked hand can narrate an additional clue. The GM can provide an initial suspect (who can later be cleared or further implicated by player narration of clues) or leave the issue of who committed the crime completely open.

The GM begins the investigation with a number of Crime points equal to 12 plus two per player. These points can be used by the GM to draw additional cards in a conflict. Crime points do not replenish themselves, and they do not carry over between investigations; the GM simply receives a new allotment at the beginning of each investigation.

Following the Trail

After the investigation begins, you will pursue existing clues, discover new clues and evidence, and come into all kinds of conflicts along the way. Before your scene begins, explain to the GM what clue you are currently pursuing. You may choose a clue you have previously narrated into being at the end of a prior scene or a clue that another player or the GM has narrated. Then, you must roll the question die or 1d6 (using the table below) to determine what kind of additional clue or evidence your pursuit of the chosen clue in this scene could reveal.

1 = Who	4 = Where
2 = What	5 = Why
3 = When	6 = How

After you make this roll (and any rerolls you might choose to make), the GM frames the beginning of your scene, based on the nature of the clue that you are currently pursuing. Generally, this will establish the time and place of the scene, and what you are currently doing. The GM is free to frame a scene *in medias res*, jumping right into the action and only after it is resolved allowing whoever has the right to narrate the resolution to flash back and explain what brought you there.

Then free role-play proceeds until a conflict arises between characters. Successfully resolving a conflict allows you to narrate a new clue or piece of evidence of the appropriate type that you find, guiding the

investigation in whatever ways you wish. You can introduce characters, objects, or anything else you desire. Failing in a conflict allows the GM to present a lead that he narrates for you or another player to follow up on in a later scene, or to narrate a follow-up conflict that changes the situation in the scene and requires further action on your part to resolve.

As the investigation progresses, characters may be forced to undergo Flaw/Fear tests as the stress of the investigation takes its toll. These are always individual character scenes (although a robot partner may be present) inserted between the clue-driven scenes that allow the player to explore the character's forgotten past.

Clues and Evidence

Clues and evidence are the keys to solving crimes in Utopolis. Clues are anything that guides the police detectives toward solving the crime—footprints, a dropped matchbook, a hunch, a lingering smell, etc. Clues always should suggest a next step toward pursuing that clue further—going to the store that sold the shoes that made the footprints, the restaurant the matchbook came from, where your hunch says a person would look for help in that neighborhood, or where you recall a similar smell.

Evidence is a particular subset of clues—those that directly prove or disprove that an individual committed the crime you are investigating. Evidence consists of physical clues (a bloody knife, blood spatter, hair and fibers, etc.), statements by a suspect (admissions, lies that are later contradicted, etc.), and statements by witnesses (alibis, eyewitnesses, perhaps the victim, etc.). Clues move an investigation forward, but it is evidence that brings it to a successful close.

Clues narrated by the players in the categories of Who-What-When-Where-Why-How can serve as substantive evidence, or a clue can just provide a hint or lead that will later lead to true evidence. Which a given clue is depends upon your narration. The initial characterization of a clue is not binding, however. Later narration by a player can re-explain a clue or cast it in a new light to show how it is evidence of one type or another. Multiple clues or pieces of evidence of one type are not only okay, they can further enrich the story of the investigation and serve to contradict prior clues or evidence, leading the characters on a merry chase as they seek to discover the truth. Red herrings and surprise twists should be a feature of every investigation.

Making the Arrest

Eventually as the characters accumulate clues and evidence they will want to make an arrest. This generally involves a scene with all the characters converging to apprehend the criminal. Usually a conflict erupts that must be successfully resolved in order to secure the criminal and bring him back to the station.

Once back at the station, the characters must present the evidence of the criminal's guilt, with the GM playing the gigantic supercomputer housed at police headquarters that renders judgment. In order to make a valid arrest and successfully close the investigation, the characters need evidence of Means (what happened and how the crime was accomplished), Motive (why the crime was done), Opportunity (when and where the crime was done and eliminating any alibi), and Identity (who the criminal is). The players must present this evidence based on what they have already gathered; they cannot narrate additional facts or clues at this time.

Generally, players will need evidence of each of the six types on the question die to close the investigation successfully. If the players decide to make an arrest before having evidence of each type, then the GM must roll the question die and if a question comes up that the players do not have evidence for, then the criminal is released on insufficient evidence and the investigation is discontinued for the time being. Of course, this allows the players to reinitiate the investigation later, perhaps after another similar crime is committed.

Major crimes are particularly important to the Utopolis Police Department because of their political or public relations importance and require two pieces of evidence of each type, otherwise a roll must be made as above.

Conflict Resolution

Whenever your character appears in a scene as part of an investigation, there will eventually be a conflict of interest between your character and a character played by another player or the GM. Maybe you want a witness to spill his guts, while he wants to stay mum, or you want to chase down a suspect and he does not want to be caught. That's when the conflict resolution rules come into play. Most scenes will end after one conflict is resolved one way or another, but a player or GM may request a follow-up conflict where it makes sense. A follow-up conflict is not a second chance to achieve the same intent; it is a new conflict that is a natural outflow of the one that just ended. The GM may cut to the

other characters and give them each a scene before returning to your character to resolve the follow-up conflict.

In order to resolve conflicts in Utopolis, you use a deck of cards that includes two Jokers. After each conflict is resolved, a player who is not involved in the current scene should reshuffle the deck.

Stating Intent

Once it is apparent that there is a conflict of interest between two or more characters in a scene, each player whose character is involved in the conflict should state his character's intent, and the GM should state the intent of any characters that he is playing. There is no set order for declaring intents, and you are always free to change your character's intent upon hearing the intent of another character.

Once everyone is satisfied with his character's intent, it is time to draw a hand of cards. Players playing robot partners do not state intents and draw a hand of cards unless they choose to spend all their remaining Tokens points and intervene against their partner.

Drawing Cards

Drawing cards serves as the initiation of the characters' actions. Each player of a character with an intent must briefly narrate the action his character is beginning to take. This narration must describe whether the character is using his Tenacity, Stability, Prowess, or Aptitude to aid in the action, and whether the character is using any talents. Using attributes and talents is flexible, but the GM can veto use that is clearly inappropriate to the character's intent. Watch for the reaction of other players; if one or more appears to disapprove of the attribute or talent use, then the GM should veto it.

Once each player has provided this narration, each draws a number of cards equal to the total of his character's Core, the attribute used, and any talent used. Then the GM describes the initiation of his characters' actions and declares how many Crime points he is going to use to draw extra cards. The GM draws seven cards, plus one for each Crime point spent.

After the GM draws his cards or any time during your own narration, you may spend Cinema points to narrate the appearance of a helpful item, event, or person or a complicating factor, adjusting your hand and the hand of the GM or other opposing player accordingly. At this point, the

player playing your robot partner can also narrate efforts it takes on your behalf, to your benefit or detriment.

Note that initiating narration should be brief, narrating only how your character goes about beginning to perform an action to achieve his stated intent. The narration of how well your character actually executes his action as well as its effects is reserved for after success or failure is determined. Once all initiating narration is finished, it is time to see who actually succeeds in their intent.

Determining Success

Everyone reveals his cards. If you have a higher-ranked hand than the GM or another player whose character is opposing you, then your character is successful in achieving his intent. If the GM or another player whose character is opposing you has a higher-ranked hand, then you fail to achieve your intent. Hands are ranked in the following fashion:

- (1) Highest in rank are hands with two or more of the same card (2-A) (a pair, three of a kind, etc.).
- (2) Next in rank are hands with two or more cards of the same suit.
- (3) Next in rank are hands with two or more cards of the same color.
- (4) Lowest in rank is a hand with the high card, with Ace being the highest.

Jokers are wild and can be considered any card of any color or suit, including a clone of a card that is in a player's hand (e.g., a second Ace of Spades).

To break a tie between two hands of the same rank, look first to the number of cards that establish the hand's rank—the hand with the higher number of such cards is considered higher rank (e.g., three of a kind beats a pair, or three Hearts beats two Spades).

If this number is the same, then look to the next lower rank classification and see if one hand has more qualifying cards. If it does, then that hand is considered higher rank. If that number of cards also is tied, then go down to the next lower rank classification, each in turn, until the tie is broken.

For example, if both you and the GM have a pair, then look to see which hand has the higher number of cards of the same suit. If you and the GM also have the same number of cards of the same suit, then look to see which hand has the higher number of cards of the same color. If that,

too, is tied, then look to see which hand has the high card after removing any ties on a one-for-one basis. In the unlikely event that two hands have cards that are tied even with respect to high cards (e.g., two hands with the exact same cards but of two different suits), then the GM's hand is considered higher rank.

Double or Nothing?

If you have determined your hand is insufficient to succeed in achieving your character's intent, then you can choose to discard your hand and immediately draw the same number of cards. The price for this second chance: After the scene ends, your character must undergo a Flaw/Fear test.

The GM or an opposing robot partner may not discard and redraw in this manner; only characters with Flaw and Fear may do so. If your new hand of cards still is not higher rank than the hand of the GM or other opposition, then your character does not achieve his intent.

Awarding Cinema Points

Win or lose, your character can still gain Cinema points for participating in a conflict. If your character succeeds and your hand was higher-ranked without having to break any ties, then you receive a number of Cinema points equal to the number of qualifying cards that established your hand's higher rank. For example, if you had three of a kind and the GM only had four cards of the same suit, then you receive three Cinema points.

If a tie had to be broken in order to determine you had the higher-ranked hand, then you receive a number of Cinema points equal to the difference between the number of qualifying cards in your hand and the other hand. For example, if you and the GM both had a pair and broke the tie by your four cards of the same suit to his three, then you earn one Cinema point.

If your character failed to achieve his intent, then you receive a number of Cinema points equal to the number of Crime points the GM used in the scene divided by the number of players in the scene rounded down. If you were opposed by another player, then you receive a number of Cinema points equal to the number of his own Cinema points he spent to oppose you.

Taking Damage

Generally, there is no need to worry about keeping track of damage inflicted on GM characters because success in achieving your character's intent allows you narrate whatever damage you like to them.

But for your character and those of the other players, damage is a more important concern. If your character fails to achieve his intent and the GM or other opposing player's hand has more Clubs than your hand has Hearts, then your character suffers some lasting damage. If the number of Clubs exceeds the number of Hearts by one or more, then any talent you used in this conflict is considered to be one level lower in the next conflict in which it is used. If the number of Clubs exceeds the number of Hearts by two or more, then whichever attribute among Tenacity, Stability, Prowess, or Aptitude you used in this conflict also is considered to be one level lower in the next conflict in which it is used. Finally, if the number of Clubs exceeds the number of Hearts by four or more, then your Core also is considered to be one level lower in the next conflict in which it is used. The player narrating your failure (you, the GM, or another successful player in a multi-player conflict) can describe this lasting damage in any way he likes—bruises, broken bones, being knocked unconscious, etc. Note that while your character can suffer lasting damage, he usually cannot be killed as the result of a conflict. If you wish for your character to die as the result of a failed conflict, then you must use a Cinema point to steal narration from the GM and narrate a fitting end for your character. The GM or another player cannot narrate your character's death.

Narrating the Result

If your character is successful in achieving his intent, then you may narrate his success in any manner you like that is consistent with the scene as it has progressed so far. This means that you must account for any helpful elements or complications added to the scene in order to allow cards to be drawn or discarded. Beyond that, you may narrate freely and inflict appropriate consequences on losing GM characters as you like.

Either as a direct result of your character's intent or as a side effect, whenever your character is successful he discovers a clue or piece of evidence that moves the criminal investigation forward. The type of clue must conform to the type determined at the beginning of the scene (relating to one of the Who-What-When-Where-Why-How of the crime), but otherwise you have complete freedom to guide the story as you wish in narrating the clue or evidence you discover.

In a conflict involving multiple players, the player whose hand has the highest rank among those that are successful has the privilege of narrating the success or failure of all the characters in the scene. Again, this narration must account for helpful elements and complications the players have introduced earlier and must stay true to the intents stated by the players. In a multi-player scene, only one clue or piece of evidence is found and described as part of the narration.

If your character fails to achieve his intent or the GM's hand outranks all player hands in a multi-player conflict, then the GM gets to narrate your failure and the success of any characters he was playing in the conflict. The GM's narration must account for helpful elements and complications the players have introduced, but it also must abide by special limits. GM narration must incorporate a "No, and" or "No, but" element; GM narration cannot simply bring the investigation to a grinding halt. A "No, and" element describes how the character's failure to achieve his intent has created a new problem that must be dealt with in a follow-up conflict. A "No, but" element describes the character's failure and also directs the character elsewhere to find a clue. In both cases, the character has something to follow up on and is not left wondering where to go next. The only exception to this is when the characters are apprehending the criminal; a failure then can result in the criminal's escape and the end of the investigation.

If you choose to spend a Cinema point to steal narration of your failure from the GM, then your narration must also abide by the limitations noted above. In a multi-player conflict where all players failed, only the first player to spend a Cinema point gets to narrate the failure of all the characters involved.

Flaw/Fear Tests

Flaw/Fear tests occur immediately after a normal scene with conflict resolution. They work differently than normal scenes because they have a very different focus. Rather than allowing your character to move forward in investigating the current crime, Flaw/Fear tests allow you to explore your character's inner turmoil and slowly reveal his hidden past.

Flaw/Fear tests can come about in two ways. First, if the crime under investigation is related to your character's Muse, then you may choose to draw two additional cards during the resolution of any conflict related to that crime. You can do this in every conflict during the investigation if you wish. In exchange, however, you must follow a scene in which you drew the extra cards with a Flaw/Fear test. Second, any time you choose

to discard your entire hand and redraw in hopes of success, you must immediately follow that scene with a Flaw/Fear test.

To begin the test, you must draw a card to see which attribute, Flaw or Fear, is being tested. A red card means this will be a Flaw test, while a black card means this will be a Fear test. Once this is determined, the GM frames the scene for your character—have they left the location of the last conflict or are they still there? What are they doing? Are there any bystanders nearby? Is your robot partner there? These decisions are up to the GM.

Once the scene is framed, you can narrate something that catches your character's eye—a person, an object, a smell, etc.—that has some tie to or is reminiscent of your character's past. Feel free to be evocative in these elements and do not worry about tying them all together—that can wait for later.

Once you have described the trigger for the test, the question is whether it sets off an emotional response in your character. You draw cards equal to either your character's Core plus Tenacity minus his Flaw or Core plus Stability minus his Fear, depending upon whether this is a Flaw or Fear test. The GM draws only five cards and is not allowed to spend any of his Crime points. You can spend Cinema points if you like, narrating helpful elements or complications as you see fit. If your robot partner is present, it may role-play during the scene as normal, but it cannot spend any Tokens points to affect the hands of cards drawn as human emotions are beyond its knowledge.

Compare the hands and determine which is higher in rank just as in normal conflict resolution.

If your hand is lower, then your character's Flaw or Fear increases by one point (as appropriate to the test type) and your character remembers aspects of his past and his crime that relate to what triggered the test. Remember that your character's forgotten crime must relate to his chosen Muse. Failures should be narrated as vague and mysterious hints of past acts, brief snippets of sounds or images that point to a larger whole. Eventually they may build up to a complete revelation of the character's full past (see the section "Endgame," below), but each failed test by itself provides only a glimpse of the full picture, many of which will not easily fit together.

Your character's failed Flaw/Fear tests are narrated by the other players in a round-robin fashion. So your first failed Flaw/Fear test is narrated by the player to your left, the second by the player to his left, and so on around the table. Each bit of narration can build on the previous ones or

be entirely different, leaving it a challenge to somehow interrelate them later.

If your hand is higher ranked, your character is largely unaffected by the trigger. Perhaps he stays strong in the face of half-remembered past demons, or the blocks put in place by his reeducation are simply too strong to give way yet. This is up to you since you narrate your success.

No Cinema points are awarded for either failure or success in a Flaw/Fear test.

As Flaw and Fear increase, you should foreshadow your character's slip toward his criminal ways or madness in other scenes. Dropping hints and crafting connections between the elements revealed so far should become more and more prevalent as play continues.

Endgame

The game for your character can end in one of two ways—being released back into general society or being overcome by his past demons.

After an investigation is successfully closed, you may advance your character by raising his Core by one (to a maximum of five) or lowering either his Flaw or Fear by one (to a minimum of zero). If this results in your character having a Core of five and a Flaw and Fear that are both zero, then your character has served his time as a police detective and is ready to be released into society once more. Narrate a brief epilogue describing the next phase of your character's life—does he settle down to a life of leisure, join the higher ranks of government service, or travel abroad to spread the prosperity of the retrofuture to those less fortunate?

If, at the beginning of a Flaw/Fear test, the base number of cards you draw for your character's Core plus Tenacity or Stability minus Flaw or Fear, respectively, ever equals zero, then your character's time as a police detective ends in a less glowing fashion. Flaw or Fear has consumed your character, breaking down the walls of his reeducation and flooding him with full knowledge of what he was before. Invariably this leads him down a dark path and removes him from play.

If it is his Flaw that overwhelms him, then your character likely gives into his prior fatal flaw that caused him to commit his past crime. If Fear holds sway, then he has a complete mental breakdown from the stress of the job and the newly remembered horrors of reeducation and his past life.

Either way, this is your character's last investigation. From that point, you must play your character toward his end, revealing more and more of it in each scene. Eventually the other characters or your robot partner may confront you, or perhaps you can effectively close this last case before falling apart. It is even possible that you can guide the investigation to find that you are the criminal in this last case. Once you reach your character's final scene, narrate an epilogue that ties together all the prior narrations from his failed Flaw/Fear tests and describes his final fate.

Appendix A - Quick Start Crimes [by Muse]

Erato (Crimes of Passion)

- A television star is missing, and videophone logs show calls from an obsessed fan that may be responsible.
- The star quarterback of Utopolis High has been found dead in a trash compacter, covered with lipstick and burns.

Melpomene (Particularly Tragic Crimes)

- An entire family has been murdered in their penthouse suite and their robot maid is missing.
- An elevated slidewalk has malfunctioned, sending several people falling to their deaths. The maintenance crew alleges sabotage.

Polyhymnia (Self-Defense and Vigilantism)

- An unknown party is using spraypaint to mark government buildings with anti-American slogans accusing the government of mind control.
- A man has come into the station reporting that he killed his wife in self-defense, but her body is not where he left it.

Thalia (Drug Crimes)

- An automat's food and beverages were drugged with hallucinogens, causing chaos in one arcology.
- After a horrendous multi-jetcar accident, the pilot who caused the catastrophe is discovered to have already been dead due to an overdose of mood enhancers.

Clio (Cold Cases)

- The death of a night shift supervisor at an automated factory has gone unsolved ten years. But now another supervisor has died in the exact same fashion.
- Humans remains with evidence of foul play have been unearthed at a construction site.

Calliope (Organized Crime and Major Crimes)

- A police detective has been murdered in one of the dormitories.
- A ring of secretive gambling dens have sprung up around Utopolis, causing good citizens to squander their money in vice.
- The assistant to the mayor of Utopolis has been found floating in an arcology swimming pool, with no apparent cause of death.

Design Notes

This game is in large part inspired by *InSpectres* by Jared A. Sorensen and *The Holmes and Watson Committee* by Troy Costisick. Both are awesome investigation-style games that you should definitely check out. In writing this game I was trying to capture the coolness of a collaboratively-solved mystery with the added spice of an exotic setting and unreliable characters with hidden pasts.

The robot partners being played by the other players is inspired by the use of demons in Ron Edwards' *Sorcerer*.

Thanks to my wife for late night editing of the early drafts.

If you play this game or have read it and have comments, I'd love to hear from you. Please post at The Forge (www.indie-rpgs.com) or Story Games (www.story-games.com/forums/) or email me at ejbplm AT hotmail DOT com.

Cheers!