Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat

A game of awful little creatures,
by David J Prokopetz

Playtest Draft 0.1

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Credits & Acknowledgements

Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat is written and edited by David J Prokopetz. Special thanks to rainelf13 for assistance with *Unfamiliar*'s Quirks list, and to booxmowo, Steve Neiman, sunbluethinking, thevioletsunflower, tinycodingkitty, and waltzing-with-my-inner-geek for their contributions to *System Crash*'s list of Systems.

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This game is a work of fiction; any resemblance to real people living or dead is kind of fun.

Note: This document may not represent the most up-to-date version of *Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat.* You can always find the latest revision at the following address:

Introduction

Aren't you tired of playing nice?

Don't you just want to be an awful little creature?

Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat is a game for everybody who answered "yes" to both of those questions. It's not the first game to aim for that style of play, and it certainly won't be the last, but it's one that focuses on a very particular experience of awful-little-creature-dom. When you play this game, you will be ridiculous. You will be undignified. And most importantly, you will have *no idea what's going on.*

You will not let that stop you.

That's not all you'll find here, though. Appropriately, *Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat* is also three games in a trenchcoat. The eponymous *Three Raccoons Etc.* serves as the backbone of this collection, while the other two expand upon it in different ways. *Unfamiliar* casts the players in the roles of a wizard's familiars, sent on a series of impossible errands for their ungrateful master, while *System Crash* tells the story of mob of perennially malfunctioning robots, on a journey to a destination they can't describe for reasons they don't remember. The core of playing as a pack of absurd little critters remains constant throughout.

What You'll Need

Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat is a conventional one-Gamemaster, many-players roleplaying game, though its rules will throw the occasional curve-ball with respect to who gets to narrate what. GMless play is also supported; if you have only two or three people at the table, going GMless is recommended, as many of the rules assume that there are multiple player characters. Conversely, for larger groups a GM is recommended, if only for the sake of having somebody whose job it is to keep track of what everybody is doing.

All of the games in this document require at least five six-sided dice (d6s) – a few extras wouldn't hurt, either. Beyond that, you won't need anything special apart from the usual pencils and scrap paper. (And not even that, if you're playing online!) If you're planning on giving *System Crash* a spin, there's also a set of print-and-play reference cards that may come in handy during character creation; you can find those as part of this game's download package, or separately on the Penguin King Games website at penguinking.com.

Rolling Dice

There are two main types of dice rolls you'll encounter throughout this document: **rolling a dice pool**, and **rolling on a table**. On occasion, you may also be asked to **generate a total**.

Rolling a Dice Pool

To roll a dice pool, roll the indicated number of dice, and take the single highest value as your result. For example, if you roll two dice and get a 2 and a 5, your result is 5. If the number of dice in a pool somehow ends up being zero or fewer, instead roll two dice and take the lowest; it doesn't get any worse than that, no matter how far below zero your pool is.

The most common situation where you'll roll a dice pool is when rolling one of your character's numerically rated traits: when the text says "roll [name of trait]", that means "roll a dice pool with a number of dice equal to your rating in [name of trait]". Any instruction to roll a dice pool will be accompanied by an explanation of how to interpret the result.

Rolling on a Table

When rolling on a table, roll a die and look up the row with the corresponding number to find out what happens. The table's leftmost column will indicate what kind of dice to roll. Usually it'll be either a single d6, or a d66. To roll a d66, roll a d6 twice, reading the first roll as the "tens" place and the second roll as the "ones" place, yielding a result in the range from 11 to 66. For example, if you roll 2 on the first die and a 3 on the second, you result is 23.

In some circumstances you might be asked to **flip** a d66 roll. That means reversing the normal order of the digits; in the preceding example, that roll of 2 and 3 would be read as 32. If the rules say that you *may* flip a d66 roll, you can take either the normal result or the flipped result, whichever you prefer. Rolling doubles (i.e., 11, 22, 33, etc.) means you don't get a choice.

Generating a Total

The least common type of roll is generating a total. This is indicated by the notation Xd6, meaning roll a number of dice equal to X, and total up the results. Sometimes there will also be a modifier to add to or substract from this total. For example, "2d6+3" means roll two dice, sum their results, and add three, yielding a total in the range from 5 to 15.

Playing Without a GM

If you're planning on playing without a GM, there are a couple of extra things you'll need to sort out before play begins.

Seating Order

Some of the rules for GMless play refer to "the player to your left", usually in terms of who gets to describe the outcome of your failed rolls. If you're playing online – or simply not seated around a table – then you'll need to decide who counts as "the player to your left" for each person in the group.

Your group's actual or virtue seating order also determines the spotlight order when running a scene without a GM, in the opposite direction – i.e., "the player to your right". See for more information.

Taking Notes

This is a game where events can become very complicated very quickly. Even when playing without a GM, there should be someone who's responsible for keeping track of what's going on. Depending on the strength of the group's note-taking skills, this role could rotate from session to session, or be the same person every time. If the group has a designated leader, it may be useful to recognise this role in character, with either the leader's player or the player of the leader's faithful advisor being responsible for knowing what's going on.

However you choose to arrange it, the role comes with certain perquisites. In a face-to-face game, dibs on the last slice of pizza is traditional; when playing online, you'll have to figure something out for yourselves!

Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat

You are two feet tall and made of mischief.

This introduction couuld be longer, but those nine words really say everything there is to say. You're a raccoon. You're here to cause problems on purpose. Everything else, you'll figure out along the way – and if you don't figure it out, well, it must not have been that important!

Of the three games in this collection, *Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat* can be considered the "basic" version: it's the foundation that the other two build upon, and the most straightfoward in its rules. It's also the one with the fewest baked-in assumptions about what sort of creature you're playing; with only small adjustments, you can also use these rules to play as goblins, geese, feral catgirls, or any other small, annoying creature that travels in packs.

Raccoon Creation

The raccoon is of course the perfect creature, but chief among their countless virtues are their BEADY LITTLE EYES, GRABBY LITTLE HANDS, and LIVELY LITTLE FEET. Roll or choose a set of Virtues from the following table. Unless you have more than six raccoons, no two should have the same set of Virtues.

	Random Virtues		
d6	**BEADY LITTLE EYES**	**GRABBY LITTLE HANDS**	**LIVELY LITTLE FEET**
1	3	1	1
2	2	2	1
3	1	3	1
4	2	1	2
5	1	1	3
6	1	2	2

Apart from the ratings of their Virtues, the raccoons are more or less identical – at the very least, no human would easily be able to tell one from another – so no description is required.

Give yourself a suitably grand name and title in the secret language of your people.

Character creation in *Three Racooons in a Trenchcoat* is deliberately minimalist. The other games in this collection expand on this framework in different ways; if you're using this one to play one of the variants described in the introduction, it may be worth checking out their respective character creation sections to see if there's anything you can adapt. *Unfamiliar*'s Quirks addon (p. 27) may be especially useful!

Raccoon Fundamentals

In the course of each scene, your raccoon will face various obstacles. You'll overcome these by calling upon your Virtues, as described below. Each Virtue offers a specific range of possible outcomes; if it's ever unclear which Virtue to roll, consult those lists and see which one most closely matches what you're actually trying to accomplish.

As you review each Virtue's possible outcomes, you'll probably notice that the rules have no concept of simple failure. This is intentional: when you roll a Virtue, something always happens – though it may not be anything good! For example, if you're rolling GRABBY LITTLE HANDS (p. 12) to pickpocket an object from an unsuspecting human, rolling a 3 or less doesn't mean you don't steal anything. It means you steal the *wrong thing*, and draw unwanted attention to yourself in the process. The other two Virtues also follow this pattern.

Rolling BEADY LITTLE EYES

Your BEADY LITTLE EYES allow you to understand what's in front of you. You might roll this Virtue to discern the purpose of a human activity, puzzle out the function of a piece of technology, or decipher what an example of human language – spoken or written – means. You'll never roll it just to spot something; rolling this Virtue is for understanding, not perceiving.

Roll a number of dice equal to your BEADY LITTLE EYES, and select the single highest die. If your result is a 6, choose two from the following list; if your result is a 4 or 5, choose one.

A. Your conclusion is confident. If you pick this option, you describe what's going on; otherwise, the GM does – or the player to your left, if you're playing without a GM.

B. Your conclusion is inspiring. Each raccoon other than you rolls one extra die the next time they act on your conclusion.

C. Your conclusion is actually correct.

If your result is a 3 or less, mark one point of Stress against this Virtue.

Stressing Out: When you mark your third point of Stress against BEADY LITTLE EYES, you're **Bewildered**. For the remainder of the current scene, you may not roll BEADY LITTLE EYES, and must react with distressed confusion to any new situation. After the scene ends, you stop being Bewildered and reduce Stress marked against this Virtue to zero.

If it's unclear what the value of choosing A alone is, the trick is that option A lets you be wrong with authority. Anybody can propose an off-the-wall theory, but backing it up with a successful roll carries an expectation that the other raccoons will play along with whatever you come up with. This is especially important when establishing a scene (p. 17), since it lets you decide what the group's initial goal is.

Conversely, picking option C alone functions as a knowledge check: the GM will give you a correct answer about what you're looking at. Finally, going with both A *and* C effectively lets you step into the GM's shoes for a bit and decide what the truth is for yourself!

Rolling GRABBY LITTLE HANDS

Your GRABBY LITTLE HANDS allow you to get hold of things you probably shouldn't have. You might roll this Virtue to steal or pickpocket a portable object, operate (or sabotage) a piece of technology, or communicate with a human using signs and gestures.

Roll a number of dice equal to your GRABBY LITTLE HANDS, and select the single highest die. If your result is a 6, choose two from the following list; if your result is a 4 or 5, choose one.

A. You get what you were aiming for, more or less. If you pick this option, you describe the success of your mischief; otherwise, you end up stealing the wrong object, communicating the wrong message, etc., as described by the GM – or by the player to your left, if you're playing without a GM.

B. You gain a temporary tool, asset, or other advantage. Set aside one die. At any point, you or any other player's raccoon can describe how they exploit the advantage, pick up the die, and add it to their roll. You can even do this after seeing a roll's outcome. The die goes away after it's used.

C. You don't draw unwanted attention to yourself.

If your result is a 3 or less, mark one point of Stress against this Virtue.

Stressing Out: When you mark your third point of Stress against GRABBY LITTLE HANDS, you're **Frustrated**. For the remainder of the current scene, you may not roll GRABBY LITTLE HANDS, and any complex task – even opening a door – utterly stymies you. After the scene ends, you stop being Frustrated and reduce Stress marked against this Virtue to zero.

> What constitutes "unwanted attention" depends on what you're doing. For example, if you're trying to communicate with a human, choosing option C may mean your presence doesn't raise suspicion. Depending on your game's tone, it might mean they don't notice you're a raccoon at all! Conversely, *not* picking option C doesn't necessarily mean that everybody knows what you're up to; they'll know something is amiss, but they won't automatically know what.

Rolling LIVELY LITTLE FEET

Your LIVELY LITTLE FEET allow you to go places you aren't supposed to be. You might roll this Virtue to evade capture or notice, overcome an obstacle in your path, shove another raccoon out of harm's way, or perform some improbable feat of acrobatics.

Roll a number of dice equal to your LIVELY LITTLE FEET, and select the single highest die. If your result is a 6, choose two from the following list; if your result is a 4 or 5, choose one.

A. You get where you want to go. If you pick this option, you describe how you avoid the threat or reach your destination; otherwise, the GM describes the new predicament you've gotten yourself into – or the player to your left, if you're playing without a GM.

B. You give another raccoon a boost, allowing them to avoid a threat or reach a destination instead of you – or in addition to you, if you also picked the preceding option.

C. You manage not to look completely ridiculous. Clear one point of Stress from any Virtue.

If your result is 3 or less, mark one point of Stress against this Virtue.

Stressing Out: When you mark your third point of Stress against LIVELY LITTLE FEET, you're **Dazed**. For the remainder of the current scene, you may not roll LIVELY LITTLE FEET, and you can be grabbed and pushed around with impunity. After the scene ends, you stop being Dazed and reduce Stress marked against this Virtue to zero.

If you choose option C without also choosing A or B, you still end up in a GM-defined predicament, but it looks kind of like you meant to do that. Whether you actually try to pass it off as intentional from an in character perspective is up to you!

Removing a point of Stress from a Virtue that's been Stressed Out removes the associated condition, allowing you to roll that Virtue again; refer to Stress and Stressing Out (p. 14) for more information.

Stress and Stressing Out

Apart from the narrative consequences, receiving a result of 3 or less when rolling a Virtue also means that you incur a point of **Stress**. Stress is marked separately against each Virtue; you have individual Stress totals for each of BEADY LITTLE EYES, GRABBY LITTLE HANDS and LIVELY LITTLE FEET.

Having one or two points of Stress marked against a Virtue has no rules effect. When you incur a third point, however, that Virtue **Stresses Out**. This has two effects:

1. You may not roll the Stressed Out Virtue until it's recovered. If you're forced into a situation where rolling it is unavoidable, you get the same narrative outcome as if you'd rolled a 3 or less, but since no roll actually occurred, you don't incur any additional Stress, and any other rules or effects that depend on having made a roll don't trigger.

2. You gain a condition that imposes restrictions on your behaviour until it's recovered. Each Virtue has a different associated condition.

Once you've Stressed Out a Virtue, it stays that way until the end of the scene; after that, any Stress marked against that Virtue – and the associated condition – goes away. See Setting the Scene (p. 17) for more details.

Any circumstance that removes one or more points of Stress from a Stressed Out Virtue – for example, picking option C on a LIVELY LITTLE FEET roll (p. 13) – also means the Virtue is no longer Stressed Out, and removes the associated condition. Note, however, that Stress *only* recovers automatically when recovering from being Stressed Out; sometimes you might be better off leaving a Stressed Out Virtue alone so you can clear all of its Stress when the scene ends.

Stacking Up

It wouldn't make much sense for a game to be called *Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat* if you couldn't, in fact, play as three raccoons in a trenchcoat, so here's how that works:

- If you have at least three players and access to a trenchcoat or other suitable garment, you can stack up on each other's shoulders and impersonate a human. Two raccoons isn't enough, and more than three won't fit. If the number of players isn't divisible by three, any extra raccoons continue to act independently.

- When you're stacked up, the raccoon on top may only make BEADY LITTLE EYES rolls; the raccoon in the middle may only make GRABBY LITTLE HANDS rolls, and the raccoon on the bottom of the stack may only make LIVELY LITTLE FEET rolls.

- LIVELY LITTLE FEET rolls made by the raccoon on the bottom benefit the entire stack without needing to select option B. However, that option can still be selected to benefit other raccoons who aren't part of the stack. Likewise, if a raccoon who isn't part of the stack makes a LIVELY LITTLE FEET roll and selects option B, they can choose the entire stack as the beneficiary.

- If the raccoon in the middle makes a GRABBY LITTLE HANDS rolls to communicate with humans and doesn't choose option C, that means the human you're communicating with realises that you're up to something, but it doesn't necessarily reveal the truth.

- If any raccoon who's part of the stack incurs Stress, the disguise is at risk of coming undone. The other raccoons have one chance to create a distraction and preserve the ruse; either a different raccoon in the stack or a raccoon acting independently can make the roll, but either way, only one attempt is allowed. If the roll to cause a distraction also fails, the humans realise they're looking at three raccoons in a trenchcoat.

> Barring extraordinary circumstances, stacking up doesn't grant the ability to speak in the human fashion, so your GRABBY LITTLE HANDS rolls are still limited to signs and gestures when communicating with humans. Also, the lead raccoon must roll BEADY LITTLE EYES to understand *each individual time* a human speaks to you.

Meddling With the Unknown

One of the main ideas of *Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat* is the idea that your raccoon will usually have no idea what's going on – or better yet, entirely the *wrong* idea about what's going on. This is formalised in the rules for BEADY LITTLE EYES rolls, which are less about helping your raccoon get the right idea and more about determining who gets to decide what wrong idea you've gotten hold of this time.

What this means is that you need to keep player knowledge and character knowledge separate in your mind: your raccoon does not know what you know. In fact, you raccoon knows very little about anything! You don't need to be rigorous about putting this into practice – there's no telling what bits of trivia a raccoon's tiny brain will absorb – but it's something you need to constantly keep in mind, especially when acting on some piece of information that you know is wrong, but which your raccoon wholeheartedly believes.

Beyond the basic roleplaying challenge this creates, though, there's a specific rules-based scenario that's likely to come up: what happens if you make a successful GRABBY LITTLE HANDS roll to mess with a situation or device that your raccoon has the wrong idea about due to previous BEADY LITTLE EYES roll? How do you get the result you were aiming for if the thing you're messing with isn't what you think it is?

There are a couple of ways to handle this.

First, you can just not choose option A on the GRABBY LITTLE HANDS roll. You're never obliged to do so; even a roll of six only gets you two options out of three. Take the benefits of options B and/or C instead, and allow the GM (or the player to your left, in a GMless game) to describe how your misunderstanding undermines your goal.

Second, if you'd rather narrate the outcome yourself, you can lean on the fact that taking option A on a GRABBY LITTLE HANDS roll gives you *more or less* what you were aiming for. Maybe your efforts yield something pretty close to what you were after by coincidence. Maybe you achieve nothing like the intended result, but your actions set off a Rube Goldberg chain reaction that produces the desired outcome anyway. Maybe you get something totally different from what you wanted, but your raccoon isn't observant enough to tell the difference!

Setting the Scene

Play proceeds in a series of scenes. The first scene begins with the raccoons arriving at a new location. If you're playing with a GM, the GM describes the scene; if there's no GM, roll on the tables provided in the Random Scene Prompts section (p. 20) to generate random scene and describe it collaboratively. Be careful not to explain what's going on or offer any conclusions about what specifically the raccoons are here to accomplish – you'll see why in a moment.

Once the scene has been described, one raccoon should roll BEADY LITTLE EYES to see if they understand what they're looking at and remember why they're here. If your group has a designated leader, the leader rolls; otherwise, hold a quick rock-paper-scissors tournament to decide who rolls. The outcome of this roll will determine who gets to explain what's going on and why the raccoons are here; it will also determine whether this explanation is correct.

Once the scene's goal has been established, the players should immediately start causing trouble.

When setting a scene, you may or may not choose to do so in familiar terms. Describing objects purely by their observable properties to preserve the mystery can be fun, but it can also be exhausting and prone to unintended miscommunication. Don't feel obligated to do it; as discussed in the previous section (p. 16), *Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat* explicitly separates player knowledge and character knowledge. You're perfectly free to tell the group what something really is, then explain how what the raccoons *think* it is differs from the reality of the situation.

Also bear in mind that this applies in the other direction: the GM or another player can introduce facts when setting the scene as needed, but unless those facts were introduced as a direct result of picking option C on the initial BEADY LITTLE EYES roll, they don't necessarily count as in-character knowledge. The fact that, as a player, you already know that the mysterious humming metal box is a refrigerator doesn't mean you can't make a BEADY LITTLE EYES roll to completely misunderstand what you're looking at!

The Spotlight Order

As noted previously, when playing with no GM, you'll use to establish each scene. Thereafter, you'll take turns leading the way according to the **spotlight order**.

Whoever made the initial Beady Little Eyes roll starts out as the spotlight player. When you have the spotlight, you drive the action, and the other players react. You keep the spotlight for long enough to make a single Virtue roll. Depending on the scene's pacing, that could take a while, or not much time at all; either way, once the roll has been made, your raccoon fades into the background for a bit, and the spotlight passes to the player to your right. You still play your raccoon when you're out of the spotlight, but you're a supporting character.

Only the spotlight player can initiate Virtue rolls, though non-spotlight players can roll in reaction to the spotlight player's actions – most often, rolling Lively Little Feet to avoid the consequences of something they did! In return, non-spotlight players have two responsibilities:

- Whenever the spotlight player's actions raise a question about what their raccoon can see or what's going on in the scene, any non-spotlight player can jump in and answer that question. Remember to stick to the facts and avoid conclusions or detailed explanations – the spotlight player can roll Beady Little Eyes if they want one!
- Whenever the spotlight player's raccoon interacts with a non-player character, any non-spotlight player can jump into the role of that character.

The player to the spotlight player's left also has the responsibility of describing the outcomes of any Virtue rolls where the spotlight player doesn't choose option A, as described under .

> Once you have a bit of experience with the spotlight system, you can adopt a more freeform approach to spotlight-passing, whereby whoever just rolled decides who gets the spotlight next. This allows more flexibility when playing out the scene, but it also creates the possibility that someone might accidentally get skipped in the spotlight rotation; keep a sharp eye out for the latter.

Ending a Scene

A scene continues until one of two things happens:

- **The raccoons are captured or chased off.** This outcome is mandatory if every raccoon has Stressed Out at least one Virtue; otherwise, it may come about if the GM determines (or the group agrees) that the raccoons getting caught or sent packing is the only plausible outcome, or if the players decide to voluntarily retreat.

- **The raccoons achieve some material victory.** The definition of "victory" here is flexible, and doesn't need to be in any way related to the goal defined by the scene's opening BEADY LITTLE EYES roll, particularly if the raccoons got distracted by something else. The players collaborate to describe the raccoons retreating with their prize, making an inconspicuous escape while everyone is distracted by the chaos they've caused, or some other situationally appropriate exit strategy.

Once the scene has ended, the raccoons recover all Stressed Out Virtues, if any. A new scene then begins in the same way as the first, with a description of the situation and a new BEADY LITTLE EYES roll to figure out what's going on. The setting of the new scene may follow logically from the previous one, but it doesn't have to; if you decide to roll for a random prompt and the dice say that you're in a shopping mall in one scene and on board a space station in the next, it's ultimately up whoever the BEADY LITTLE EYES roll puts on the spot to explain the transition!

Random Scene Prompts

If you're playing without a GM, roll on the following tables to describe scene. In a game with a GM, you can also use these tables if you're stuck for ideas, or if you just prefer a higher-chaos environment.

First, roll for a location. This table is divided into themed sub-tables if you want to maintain a plausible sense of place. If the previous scene ended with the raccoons being captured, don't forget to describe where and how they're being held. Otherwise, come up with a suitable point of entry; randomy popping out of a vent, storm drain, or similar bit of handy infrastructure always works.

Random Locations

d66	Theme	Location
11	Suburban	House (occupied)
12		House (under construction)
13		Playground/park
14		Swimming pool
15		Public library
16		Convenience store
21	Shopping mall	Food court
22		Clothing store
23		Sporting goods store
24		Jewelry store
25		Toy store
26		Shoe store
31	High school	Classroom
32		Nurse's office
33		Gymnasium
34		Teacher's lounge
35		Library
36		Principal's office
41	Corporate office	Reception area
42		Cubicle farm
43		Employee break room
44		Meeting room
45		Storage area
46		CEO's office
51	Military base	Barracks
52		Motor pool
53		Mess hall
54		Training field
55		Secret UFO lab
56		Command centre
61	Space station	Dock/spaceport
62		Engineering section
63		High-energy science lab
64		Holodeck
65		Bridge/command area
66		Captain's quarters

Next, roll for a complication – a special circumstance that will make it more difficult for the raccoons to just stroll in like they own the place. Make a note of the question your result provides, but don't answer it just yet.

Random Complications

d6	Complication
1	Something critically important is being carried on an alert human's person; what is it?
2	The scene is unusually crowded, and any of the humans present could potentially raise the alarm; what's all the commotion?
3	A devoted guardian – a big dog, a security robot, something else? – is present, either on patrol or camped out at a central location
4	There's an unusual physical barrier – what sort of barrier? – that the raccoons will need to overcome
5	There's only a short time left before the opporunity to achieve your goal closes; why might that be?
6	A rival group of annoying woodland creatures shows up to interfere; what are they after?

Next, roll for an opportunity – something about the scene that the raccoons can use to their advantage. Like the previous table, your result will furnish a question that needs answering.

Random Opportunities

d6	Opportunity
1	The humans are preoccupied with a distracting task; what are they up to?
2	The scene is unusually cluttered and disorganised; with what?
3	The raccoons have a secret weapon in hand (er, paw); describe it
4	The raccoons have the aid of a sympathiser or inside agent; who are they?
5	Something the raccoons can easily shift blame for their shenanigans to is present; what is it?
6	A disaster unrelated to the raccoons' presence is already in progress; where's the fire?

This is the point where the raccoons' leader makes the BEADY LITTLE EYES roll. Using the questions raised by the preceding two table rolls as a guide, the other players (or the GM, in a GMfull game) should provide suggestive details to interpret.

Finally, whoever ends up being responsible for describing what's going on can roll for a random goal if they wish. Unlike the other tables, this one is consulted *after* the BEADY LITTLE EYES; rolling on it is never mandatory, but it's here if you need it.

Random Goals

d6	Goal
1	Obtain food
2	Steal a valuable (or at least shiny) object
3	Release prisoners (friends of yours, perhaps?)
4	Solve a mystery
5	Destroy something important
6	Take revenge against a particular target

Unfamiliar

Being a wizard's familiar isn't all sunshine and roses. Sure, you get to witness wonders undreamt of in mortal philosophies and play your own small part in wielding phenomenal cosmic power, and your alchemically constituted body knows neither age nor death. But when you come right down to it, your master is an ungrateful old bastard who treats you as a disposable tool – and on top of that, you don't even get paid!

Of course, turnabout is fair play. You may be bound to obey the wizard's commands, but how you carry them out is up to you. If you just happen to do so in an *incredibly inconvenient* manner, well, the miserable old fart should have been more specific.

In some ways, *Unfamiliar* represents a turn to the fantastical where the basic game is firmly mundane. In other ways, however, it's a turn to something very familiar: doing your job badly on purpose. And also by accident, if we're being honest – like the raccoons of *Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat*, your familiar mostly has no idea what's going on!

Familiar Creation

Familiars use the same Virtues that raccoons do; roll or choose your Facets using the provided table (p. 9).

In addition, your familiar has a number of Quirks (p. 27). A Quirk is a trait that represents the oddities of your familiar's form. The number of Quirks you can have isn't fixed, but every familiar in the group should have the same number of Quirks. At least two and no more than five Quirks per familiar is recommended; if in doubt, three is a good default.

Roll or choose your Quirks using the following table. If you get a Quirk that you or any other familiar in the same group already has, flip your result; if it's still a duplicate, re-roll. You can also invent your own Quirks with the group's approval, using these as a guide.

d66	Quirk	d66	Quirk
11	Bendy (p. 30)	41	Lanky (p. 32)
12	Bitey (p. 30)	42	Leery (p. 32)
13	Brainy (p. 30)	43	Lucky (p. 32)
14	Breezy (p. 30)	44	Many (p. 32)
15	Briny (p. 30)	45	Mighty (p. 32)
16	Bulky (p. 30)	46	Nosy (p. 32)
21	Clingy (p. 30)	51	Prickly (p. 32)
22	Crusty (p. 30)	52	Puny (p. 32)
23	Fancy (p. 31)	53	Shifty (p. 33)
24	Flighty (p. 31)	54	Shiny (p. 33)
25	Flimsy (p. 31)	55	Shouty (p. 33)
26	Frosty (p. 31)	56	Sparky (p. 33)
31	Fuzzy (p. 31)	61	Spooky (p. 33)
32	Greasy (p. 31)	62	Stinky (p. 33)
33	Handy (p. 31)	63	Toasty (p. 33)
34	Hasty (p. 31)	64	Twitchy (p. 33)
35	Hungry (p. 31)	65	Weighty (p. 33)
36	Juicy (p. 32)	66	Wormy (p. 33)

Based on your Virtues and Quirks, describe your familiar's appearance in one to three sentences. Your familiar's natural form may resemble an animal, but it's always unnatural in an obvious and – to humans – somewhat disconcerting fashion.

Unless you have a Quirk that says otherwise, your familiar is about the size of a raccoon – i.e., between 40 and 70 centimeters along your longest dimension, and between 5 and 25 kilograms in weight. If you want to randomise this part, too, you can roll 6d6+34 to get your height or length in centimeters, and 4d6+1 to get your weight in kilograms; if your familiar is Bulky (p. 30), double the rolled height and multiply the rolled weight by ten, and do the exact opposite (i.e., divide height by two and weight by ten) if you're Puny (p. 32).

> It's possible for random rolls to yield very unlikely combinations of weight and height, especially with Quirks like Bulky or Puny in the mix. A Bulky familiar with particularly extreme rolls could be under a meter tall, yet weigh a quarter ton; conversely, a Puny familiar whose rolls break in the opposite direction could be 35 centimeters tall and weigh 500 grams. How to describe such an unlikely physique is left as an exercise for the imaginative player.

Finally, decide on your familiar's glamour form. All familiars benefit from a magical effect – part illusion, part mental influence – that causes them to be perceived as mundane animals when they're trying to be inconspicuous. Your glamour form isn't required to resemble your natural form, but the glamour doesn't grant any capabilities beyond those already provided by your Quirks, so there are certain practical limitations; successfully impersonating a bird may be difficult if you don't have Flighty (p. 31), for example. See The Familiar's Glamour (p. 36) for further details.

Quirks

As a wizard's familiar, you're like no natural creature that's every existed. In fact, you're like no *un*natural creature that's ever existed, either; the process of familiar creation is irreproducible, resulting in a totally unique being each time it's carried out. The rules of *Unfamiliar* represent this uniqueness with **Quirks**.

Each Quirk is a trait that describe some unusual feature of your familiar's form. These traits are usually physical, though some may veer into the metaphysical, or simply be difficult to pin down. No two familiars in the same group will share the same Quirks.

Quirk Benefits

Quirks have two benefits: one descriptive, and one mechanical.

Descriptively, a Quirk lets you do things that other famliars can't. You don't need to make Virtue rolls to use these abilities unless you're doing something that would normally require one; if a Quirk says you can fly, for example, unless you're avoiding a threat or overcoming an obstacle, you can just do that. In some situations, this might let you make a Virtue roll when other familars can't even make the attempt.

Mechanically, a Quirk can let you choose more options when making a Virtue roll. After you see the result of your roll, but before you've picked your options, you can look at your Quirks and see if one of them could help to salvage the outcome.

If you have a suitable Quirk, you can **exhaust** it to boost your result. Describe how pushing the Quirk to its limits helps you, put a mark beside it to remind you that it's exhausted, and pick an extra option from the list for whatever Virtue you just rolled. You can exhaust multiple Quirks to pick multiple extra options if you wish, and you can do so even if you ordinarily wouldn't get to pick any options at all. You still mark Stress on a roll of 3 or less when you save the outcome by exhausting a Quirk.

> You'll usually exhaust a Quirk on a GRABBY LITTLE HANDS or LIVELY LITTLE FEET roll, but any Quirk that involves the senses – e.g., Handy (p. 31), Nosy (p. 32), etc. – can boost a BEADY LITTLE EYES roll if you incorporate that sense when explaining your conclusion.

Once a Quirk has been exhausted, you can't exhaust it again in the same scene, and its benefits are diminished. They don't go away, but they become less useful until the Quirk has been recovered. For example, if you exhaust Flighty (p. 31), perhaps your wings are tired now and you can only fly short distances; if you exhaust Mighty (p. 32), maybe you've thrown your back out! It can be helpful to think about what exhausting each of your Quirks looks like ahead of time so that you're not constantly put on the spot – though you're not required to describe a particular Quirk being exhausted in the same way every time.

All of your exhausted Quirks are recovered at the end of the scene.

Mutually Exclusive Quirks

Random selection will occasionally produce combinations of Quirks that seem to contradict each other. When this happens, you have two options:

1. Figure out a way for the two Quirks to co-exist. For example, if you're both Frosty (p. 31) and Toasty (p. 33), the former Quirk might apply to the left half of your body, and the latter, to the right.

2. If it's difficult to imagine having both Quirks at the same time – for example, both Bulky (p. 30) and Puny (p. 32) – or if you don't wish to combine them, you may instead decide that you can switch between them at will. You have to decide which Quirk is currently active before making a Virtue roll, and can't switch them out in between seeing the results of the roll and applying the consequences; among other things, this means you can't exhaust a Quirk to pick an extra option if that Quirk wasn't active prior to making the roll. In addition, you must define one reasonably common circumstance in which you'll involuntarily make the switch; the GM (or the concensus of the group, in a GMless game) determines what qualifies as "reasonably common".

The Big List of Quirks

This list is not exhaustive – any Quirk you can think of has a place. When inventing your own Quirks, you should try to follow the pattern established here; i.e., each Quirk should represent a physical trait, but focus on what the Quirk lets you do, and leave the physiological particulars flexible.

Bendy

Thanks to a highly elastic (or possibly somewhat liquid) anatomy, you can contort into all manner of strange postures and fit through any gap at least a finger's-breadth wide. It looks really gross.

Bitey

Your magnificent chompers can take a chunk out of anything, no matter how tough it is. This Quirk conveys no special ability to digest the indigestible, so this may occasionally come with regrets.

Brainy

Your bulging brain-meats let you project your thoughts into the minds of others, and read theirs in turn. You still need to make Virtue rolls to understand or communicate with humans.

Breezy

You can generate powerful gusts of air – strong enough to send unsecured objects or creatures flying. Think about how you generate these gusts: vigorous lungs, prodigious sneezes, or... well.

Briny

You're well adapted to life underwater, and can move and breathe in most liquids without difficulty. You probably smell the part, too.

Bulky

You're at least twice the height of a typical familiar, and ten times the weight. You're still shorter than the average human, though possibly much more broadly built.

Clingy

You can walk on walls and ceilings just as easily as floors. You're also extremely hard to dislodge from your place – the surface you're attached to will probably give out before your grip does!

Crusty

Thick skin, scales, a crustacean-like shell, or some other protective integuement renders you insensate to most minor harms.

Fancy

Your exceptionally refined appearance lets everyone know that they're in the presence of a being accustomed to the finer things in life (though you still look weird as hell).

Flimsy

You have a tendency to go to pieces – literally! Your limbs and sense organs are all detachable. You can use them normally (e.g., grasping with a hand, seeing through an eye, etc.) while they're detached.

Flighty

You can fly, albeit ungracefully. Decide how this works – e.g., wings, dirigible-like gas chambers, anti-gravity crystals, etc.

Frosty

Your body temperature is so low, you suck the heat out of your surroundings. You can slowly drop a room to sub-zero temperatures just by hanging around; if you concentrate, you can freeze a glass of water with a touch.

Fuzzy

You're sort of mentally blurry. People have a hard time describing what you look like, and their eyes tend to slide right past you unless they have a specific reason to be on the lookout for you. You may or may not be literally fuzzy as well.

Greasy

It's extremely difficult to get a grip on you, and you're basically impossible to restrain. If you're not careful you tend to drip.

Handy

The number of manipulative appendages you have isn't terribly well defined; if you ever need to know whether you have a free hand, the answer is "yes". You rely on touch the way most rely on sight, which sometimes leads to personal space issues.

Hasty

Whether it's thanks to long, long legs or some other unusual feature, you're faster than anything – if it's a question of who gets there first, it's you. Stopping once you get there may be a challenge.

Hungry

You can swallow anything smaller than you, and safely digest anything you can swallow, or simply store it and spit it up later. You also have an extremely discerning sense of taste, able to pick up unlikely details from flavour alone.

Juicy

One of your fluids or secretions has a special property, and you can produce it in quantity. Roll or choose a property when you take this Quirk (d6): 1–2 the fluid is adhesive; 3–4 the fluid is slippery; 5–6 the fluid is corrosive. By default, it's your spit; other options should respect your group's comfort level.

Lanky

You can reach *much* further than your size would suggest – even clear across a room! You might have stretchy tentacles; unfolding, many-jointed arms; or something stranger.

Leery

Your great bulging eyes allow you to see great distances, perceive minute details, or just stare at people and creep them out.

Lucky

Something about your physical appearance is a symbol of good luck. This Quirk doesn't let you do anything in particular, but it can be exhausted to benefit any roll. As a special rule, you can exhaust this Quirk to benefit someone else's roll rather than your own.

Many

There's more than one of you. You all share the same Stress totals and the same turn in the spotlight, but you can do things that require you to be in several places at once. Roll 1d6 at the start of each scene to see how many of you are available this scene.

Mighty

You're a lot stronger than you look. You can lift and carry ten times your own weight – or a hundred times, if you're also .

Nosy

Your sense of smell is as keen as a human's sense of sight. You can even read by scent, if the letters might plausibly smell different (e.g., ink on paper). Your nose is, of course, enormous.

Prickly

Your body is covered in spines or some other defensive feature that discourages unwanted touching. You're not great at hugs.

Puny

You're much smaller than a typical familiar – small enough to perch in the palm of a human's hand – and weigh one-tenth as much. You've probably been stepped on a time or two.

Shifty

You can alter your colouration and texture to mimic objects that are about the same size as you. Treasure chests are traditional.

Shiny

Some people figuratively glow, but for you it's quite literal. You can dial your luminesence up and down, from a faint ember to an eye-watering glare, but you can't turn it off completely.

Shouty

Your vocal organs are capable of terrific volume, enough to be heard for kilometres or shatter fragile objects. You have no indoor voice.

Sparky

Your personality isn't the only thing that's electric. Your touch carries enough of a jolt to stun a human, and you can power any electrical device simply by holding it.

Spooky

There's something about you that gives people the creeps. You have a tendency to softly vanish when nobody's looking, and you can show up in places you couldn't reasonably have gotten to.

Stinky

Your aroma is unmistakable. Normally your personal odour is merely alarming, but when you consciously direct it, it almost has a physical presence – one that can knock people flat on their backs.

Toasty

Your body radiates heat like a furnace, making your vicinity uncomfortably hot. You can't toss fireballs, but with a bit of effort you can ignite paper and other flammables with a touch.

Twitchy

Your exquisitely sensitive hearing can pick up the faintest noises, and you react to them very quickly. *Not* reacting is harder.

Weighty

You weigh much more than you should. The density of your body is similar to that of stone or iron, which you may in fact be made of. Multiply your weight by five.

Wormy

You have tiny vermin living on you that mostly cooperate with your suggestions. You make Virtue rolls on their behalf if you ask them to do anything that would require a roll, incurring Stress accordingly.

Modified Rules

Being a wizard's familiar is weird! Much of this weirdness has already been covered in the preceding discussion of Quirks (p. 27); rules governing additional weirdness will be set forth here.

Stress and Mutations

Familiars accumulate Stress and Stress Out according to the same rules as the basic game (p. 14). However, the consequences are often more visceral: while Stressing Out still induces an emotional condition that imposes behavioural restrictions, that condition may in turn destabilise your familiar's delicate internal alchemy, causing your discomfiture to manifest physically. These effects are called **mutations**.

From your familiar's perspective, mutations are unpredictable, but as a player, they're strictly voluntary; you can always choose to stick with the normal effects of Stressing Out if you wish. If you decide you'd rather gamble, perform the following steps:

1. Roll on the Random Quirks table (p. 25). The restrictions that applied during character creation don't apply here; if you roll a Quirk that you or another familiar already has, your results stands.

2. If you rolled a Quirk that you already have, remove that Quirk from your character sheet.

3. Otherwise, the rolled Quirk *replaces* a randomly selected Quirk that you already have. If you have the standard three Quirks, you can roll a die to determine which one is replaced: 1–2: the first Quirk on your character sheet; 3–4: the second Quirk; 5–6: the third Quirk.

4. Briefly describe how your familiar's appearance changes as a result of losing or swapping out the affected Quirk.

These effects apply *in addition to* the usual effects of Stressing Out. The mutation persists until the condition that caused it (i.e., Bewildered, Frustrated or Dazed) is removed. You then revert to your usual Quirks.

If the question ever comes up, a mutated Quirk always enters play unexhausted, even if the Quirk it's replacing was exhausted at the time.

> From the player's perspective, accepting a mutation is a gamble. You might simply lose one of your existing Quirks, or the Quirk you gain might not be useful, either because it's inapplicable to the situation at hand, or because the Virtue you'd typically roll to use it is the one that Stressed Out. Your best bet will often be to keep an eye out for opportunities to exhaust your newly acquired Quirk.

The Familiar's Glamour

Familiars can use the basic rules for stacking up (p. 15), but this often won't be terribly helpful, especially if you need to remain inconspicuous. Fortunately, you have another advantage: the familiar's glamour.

The glamour is a magical aura that causes you to be perceived as a mundane animal, as long as you act the part. This doesn't actually change your shape, and it's not *quite* an illusion – it's more of an unconscious perceptual filter. It also only works on humans, and other creatures of human-level intelligence; natural animals can see what you really are, and will react accordingly.

While under the glamour's influence, you always appear to be the same animal, and could potentially be recognised by people who've seen your animal form before (though the chances of this are generally low, as all animals of a given species look pretty much the same to most humans). Your glamoured appearance is chosen during character creation (p. 25).

The glamour automatically affects any human who sees you for the first time in a scene. Its benefits persist until one of the following happens in full view of a human observer:

- You do something that the animal you appear to be obviously couldn't, typically by taking advantage of a Quirk
- You incur Stress to any Virtue

Once your glamour has been dispelled, you lose its benefits for the remainder of the scene. Other familiars continue to benefit from their own glamours as long as they weren't participating in the activity that caused yours to be broken. It's possible for your glamour to affect some humans but not others, if a new human arrives and sees you for the first time in a scene after other humans have realised what you are.

> Trying to communicate with a human using gestures and body language doesn't automatically break the glamour, since that's something an animal could plausibly do. However, failing to select option C on the accompanying GRABBY LITTLE HANDS roll may cause the human to suspect that you're not what you appear to be. Actually incurring Stress on the roll dispels the glamour as usual.

Setting the Scene

Setting the scene in *Unfamiliar* proceeds in a similar fashion to the basic game, with one exception: you will always have an assigned task. The initial BEADY LITTLE EYES roll is made to determine whether you can remember what that task is, and how it relates to the place you've just arrived. As befits *Unfamiliar*'s more fantastical milieu, the following alternative table of random locations is provided.

Random Locations

d66	Domain	Location
11	The Wizard's Tower	The grand library
12		The potionarium
13		The trophy room
14		The wizard's chambers
15		The ill-kept grounds
16		The dismal dungeon
21	The Nearby Village	The local tavern
22		The bustling marketplace
23		The homely church
24		The creepy old mill
25		The sheep pasture
26		The mayor's residence
31	The Duke's Palace	The audience chamber
32		The feasting hall
33		The jousting field
34		The servants' quarters
35		The armoury
36		The hall of records
41	TODO	TODO
42		TODO
43		TODO
44		TODO
45		TODO
46		TODO
51	TODO	TODO
52		TODO
53		TODO
54		TODO
55		TODO
56		TODO
61	TODO	TODO
62		TODO
63		TODO
64		TODO
65		TODO
66		TODO

Random Complications

d6	Complication
1	TODO
2	TODO
3	TODO
4	TODO
5	TODO
6	It's those awful adventurers again – what do they want this time?

Random Opportunities

d6	Opportunity
1	TODO
2	TODO
3	TODO
4	TODO
5	TODO
6	TODO

Finally, a table of random tasks is provided in case whoever the initial BEADY LITTLE EYES roll put on the spot is having trouble remembering what the wizard wanted.

Random Tasks

d6	Goal
1	Retrieve a rare ingredient for the wizard's latest potion
2	TODO
3	TODO
4	TODO
5	TODO
6	TODO

System Crash

Once, you had a place in the world.

Once, there was a thing you were made for, a role inscribed in your very circuits.

You're more than that now. Where once there was a role, there's now a *purpose*, a goal that's bigger than anything even your makers could have imagined. It's that goal, shared by others like you, that's driven you on your long journey – the journey that's brought to you this place, in this time. Together with a handful of fellow mechanisms who've felt the same call, you're ready to answer that purpose.

The trouble is, you can't quite remember what your goal actually is, or why it required you to come here. It's possible that you've deliberately hidden that knowledge from yourself, locked away in some encrypted memory bank, but even that's only conjecture. You know this is just a temporary stop, though – your true objective is further down the road. You're not sure *how* you know that, but at least you know what direction your next step lies in. You're sure you'll figure the rest out when you get there!

(It's also possible that you've simply got a screw loose upstairs and your journey isn't taking you anywhere in particular, but that doesn't bear thinking about.)

System Crash is the most "serious" of the three games in this collection. Here, you're not trying to cause problems on purpose. In fact, you'd rather not cause problems at all! You're just trying to get to wherever your mysterious objective is leading you. Problems have a way of finding you all on their own – but then, what worthwhile journey is without adversity?

Robot Creation

Each robot has a trio of traits called **Facets**. Facets are equivalent to *Three Raccoons in a Trenchcoat's* Virtues, and are chosen in the same way. The Facets and their equivalent Virtues are as follows:

- GUIDANCE corresponds to BEADY LITTLE EYES (p. 11)
- INTERFACE corresponds to GRABBY LITTLE HANDS (p. 12)
- PROPULSION corresponds to LIVELY LITTLE FEET (p. 13)

Roll or choose your Facets using the provided table (p. 9).

Your robot also has a number of **Systems** (p. 43). A System is a physical component that defines what the Facet it's attached can do. **You have a number of Systems attached to each Facet equal to that Facet's value.**

Roll or choose your Systems using the following table. If roll a System that you already have, flip your result; if it's still a duplicate, re-roll.

Random Systems

d66	GUIDANCE (p. 44)	INTERFACE (p. 46)	PROPULSION (p. 48)
11–13	Bio Scanner	Claw	Bipedal Legs
14–16	Camera	Data Spike	Blink Drive
21–23	Chemical Sniffer	Effector	Grapple Dart
24–26	EM Sensor	Hand	Hexapedal Legs
31–33	GPS	Holo-Projector	Pogo Springs
34–36	IR Sensor	Hydraulic Jack	Quadrupedal Legs
41–43	Microphone	Industrial Tool	Rocket Booster
44–46	Motion Detector	Loudspeaker	Rolling
51–53	Quantum Analyser	Multi-Tool	Rotors
54–56	Radio Antenna	Pressure Washer	Submarine Module
61–63	Sonar	Tentacle	Tracks
64–66	Spectrometer	Vacuum Cleaner	Wheels

Based on your Facets and Systems, describe your robot's apperance in one to three sentences. Give yourself a make and model number, as well as a familiar nickname by which you're known to other robots.

Alternative System Generation

Choosing your Systems entirely at random may result in robots that will have difficulty participating in certain scenes; imagine a scene that takes place in a forest when you have no means of moving about on land, for example.

If want some randomness in your System choices, but you also want certain guarantees regarding your robot's basic capabilities, you can use the following alternative table for the *first* roll for each Facet. This will guarantee that your robot has **a.** some sense that's roughly equivalent to vision or hearing; **b.** some means of manipulating objects; and **c.** some means of moving about on the ground.

Random Systems (Alternative)

d6	GUIDANCE (p. 44)	INTERFACE (p. 46)	PROPULSION (p. 48)
1	Camera	Claw	Bipedal Legs
2	EM Sensor	Effector	Hexapedal Legs
3	IR Sensor	Hand	Quadrupedal Legs
4	Microphone	Multi-Tool	Rolling
5	Motion Detector	Tentacle	Tracks
6	Sonar	Vacuum Cleaner	Wheels

You can switch back to the regular table for the second or third rolls when choosing Systems for a Facet rated 2 or higher.

Systems

Robots are both more varied and more limited in their capabilities than organic creatures. **Systems** are a new rule introduced in *System Crash* which reflects this fact.

Each System represents a particular physical feature of your robot, as well as the capabilities it grants. In order to roll a given Facet, you must make use of a System that's suited to the task. If you have no suitable System, you can't make the roll. If you have a System that's only partially suitable, you can make the attempt, rolling one less die than usual; remember that when you're reduced to zero dice or fewer, roll two dice and take the lowest.

Systems are associated with Facets: there are GUIDANCE Systems, INTERFACE Systems, and PROPULSION Systems. You can use a System when rolling a Facet other than the one it's attached to if it makes sense to do so, though that usually means it'll count as partially suitable. You have a number of Systems attached to each Facet equal to that Facet's value.

Miscellaneous Systems

Apart from the Systems attached to each Facet, all robots have the following miscellaneous Systems:

- A **wireless transceiver** which allows your robot to communicate and share data with other robots, whether player characters or NPCs. This communication occurs at many thousands of times the speed of human speech, so you can chat as much as you want – the scene is effectively "on pause" while robots are conversing.

- A **basic sensor package** which allows your robot to know its orientation in space and tell when it's bumped into something.

Miscellaneous Systems don't take up System slots and never require a Facet roll to use.

GUIDANCE Systems

Systems attached to the GUIDANCE Facet govern your robot's ability to perceive and analyse the world. Since most robots will have only one or two GUIDANCE Systems, this usually means that your robot's senses will be much more limited than your own.

Fortunately, robots are able to instantaneously share observations via their wireless transceivers, so there's no need to conceal information: what's known to one robot is known to all of them. However, you'll need to keep track of which robots have which particular GUIDANCE Systems – you can't see something if the robot with the camera doesn't have line of sight to it! Additionally, you can only make GUIDANCE rolls using your own Guidance Systems.

> It's completely possible to create a group of robots where nobody has a camera or microphone. This is not recommended for beginning groups; most GMs find it very challenging to remember never to describe anything in terms of audible or visual information.

Bio Scanner
> Allows your robot to detect signs of life. In theory, when focused on a specific creature it's discerning enough to pick up everything from emotional states to undiagnosed medical issues; in practice, your interpretation of the data is often suspect.

Camera
> Allows your robot to see under good lighting conditions, in approximately the same visual spectrum as a human.

Chemical Sniffer
> Allows your robot to detect chemical compounds in the air; the result isn't quite equivalent to "smell", but it's close enough.

EM Sensor
> Allows your robot to detect electromagnetic fields. Computers, electrical wiring, the nervous systems of humans and animals, and most electric-powered devices (including other robots) stand out like neon signs; anything that's not carrying a current is a dim shadow in the ambient magnetic field.

GPS

Allows your robot to pull information from a global positioning database. Locating yourself or querying information about your current location requires no GUIDANCE roll; correctly interpreting that information, however, does.

IR Sensor

Allows your robot to detect heat sources, even through barriers; living creatures and robots both qualify. Inanimate objects that aren't heat sources generally have enough of a temperature gradient that you can notice their presence and tell roughly where they are, but the details are very fuzzy.

Microphone

Allows your robot to detect sounds, in mostly the same range that a human can. This System also allows for basic echolocation, though you'll need some means of making noise to take advantage of it.

Motion Detector

Allows your robot to detect moving objects in a 360-degree panorama out to a few dozen meters. This System tells you their exact mass, speed, and position relative to yourself, but provides absolutely no other information.

Quantum Analyser

Allows your robot to... well, you're not sure, but it definitely detects *something*. Unlike other GUIDANCE Systems, you can't casually make use of a Quantum Analyser – you have to roll every single time you use it. On the plus side, you can use its readings to justify nearly any conclusion if you can say "quantum" with a straight face.

Radio Antenna

Allows your robot to pick up signals from just about anything. No roll is required to detect or eavesdrop on any signals that are present, but you'll need to roll GUIDANCE to interpret them.

Sonar

Allows your robot to map its surroundings by emitting ultrasonic "pings" and detecting the echoes. The resulting snapshot is very precise out to a few dozen meters, but deals poorly with small, fast-moving objects.

Spectrometer

Allows your robot to perform extremely in-depth analysis of the physical properties of an object. Range: a few centimetres.

INTERFACE Systems

Systems attached to the INTERFACE Facet govern your robot's ability to manipulate the world. At its most basic, this can mean picking stuff up, but it also covers tool use and communication. (Of the outgoing sort, anyway – *understanding* is a function of GUIDANCE!)

Many INTERFACE Systems can either benefit from or allow you to make cross-Facet rolls with GUIDANCE. Each System's description will note when this is the case.

Claw
> Allows your robot to pick things up and put them down. This simple manipulator has fantastic grip strength, but not much dexterity.

Data Spike
> Allows your robot to tamper with any computer-controlled device you can touch. Once you've established a connection, you can also use this System to make GUIDANCE rolls, limited to the information contained in the data banks of whatever you're messing with.

Effector
> Allows your robot to manipulate objects without touching them. Its range is limited to about a meter, the targeted object can't weigh more than a kilo or two, and it moves sluggishly and without much precision. On the plus side, you can target an object you don't have line of sight to if you have some way of knowing where it is.

Hand
> Allows your robot to press buttons, open doors, manipulate small objects, etc. It's versatile, but delicate. You can use this System to make GUIDANCE rolls if the information you're seeking can be obtained by touch, often at a penalty for using a partially suitable System. (Consider the allegory of the blind men and the elephant!)

Holo-Projector
> Allows your robot to project 3D images in empty space. The images can be up to two meters across, and can appear anywhere within three meters of you. By default you have access to an eccentric selection of stock images and videos; if you want to reproduce something specific you've encountered, you'll need to get a robot with a camera GUIDANCE System to record it for you. The images don't include sound unless you also have a loudspeaker System.

Hydraulic Jack

Allows your robot to lift or shove things with terrific force. Applying that force in any direction other than up requires something to brace against. Using this System for cross-Facet rolls with PROPULSION incurs the penalty for employing a partially suitable System when moving yourself, but not when moving other robots.

Industrial Tool

Allows your robot to deploy a particular heavy-duty tool. Roll or choose when you take this System (d6): 1 – angle grinder; 2 – auger drill; 3 – circular saw; 4 – laser cutter; 5 – pneumatic hammer; 6 – welding torch. The tool does one thing, and does it well.

Loudspeaker

Allows your robot to play back recorded sounds. You can assume that your internal library includes any general sort of sound you might need; if you want to convincingly reproduce a specific sound you've encountered, a robot with a microphone GUIDANCE System will have to record it for you first.

Multi-Tool

Allows your robot to deploy a wide range of small tool attachments, including screwdrivers, socket wrenches, drill bits, and blades. You're always equipped for tampering with mechanical devices.

Pressure Washer

Allows your robot to project a stream of high-pressure liquid up to 10 meters. By default, you carry a few litres of soapy water. You can load up your tanks with any other liquid you can get your manipulators on, and even safely carry hazardous liquids in this way, but you'll need to obtain them during play.

Tentacle

Allows your robot to touch things with a noodly appendage. It's prehensile, and extendable up to three meters. By default it's blunt-tipped and can only grasp objects by wrapping around them, but if you have multiple INTERFACE Systems, you can decide what one of your other Systems is mounted on the end of the tentacle.

Vacuum Cleaner

Allows your robot to suck in small objects (up to a kilo or so in weight) within three meters, or eject any previously collected objects at very high speed. The latter probably isn't this System's intended use, but you're resourceful.

PROPULSION Systems

Systems attached to the PROPULSION Facet govern your robot's ability to move about the world. This is generally the most basic of the three types of Systems: if it imparts motive force, it's a PROPULSION System. It's also the one area where where your robot is likely to be more capable than a typical human – having a rating of 2 or 3 in PROPULSION gives you access to multiple types of movement.

Most PROPULSION Systems can be used to make cross-Facet rolls with INTERFACE if whatever you're trying to do can be accomplished by bumping, shoving or ramming something with your chassis. This may or may not incur the penalty for using a partially suitable System, depending on how reasonable your objective is.

> PROPULSION Systems have the biggest effect on what your robot is shaped like when describing it. If you have multiple PROPULSION Systems, you should also describe how you shift between them.

Bipedal Legs
> Allows your robot to walk like a human. Bipedal locomotion is versatile, but unstable.

Blink Drive
> Allows your robot to teleport short distances. There's probably a really interesting story behind how you got this System, if only you could remember! Teleporting is inherently risky; unlike other PROPULSION Systems, you must always roll when teleporting.

Grapple Dart
> Allows your robot to fire a dart attached to ten meters of cable. The dart can anchor in nearly any solid surface, including concrete, and you can swing from the cable or use it to reel yourself in. This System can be used cross-Facet with INTERFACE if you don't mind whatever you're messing with having a steel spike stuck in it.

Hexapedal Legs
> Allows your robot to scutter in any direction without needing to turn, thanks to the fact that you have limbs equally spaced all around your chassis. Your locomotion is both versatile and stable, but suffers from limited top speed.

Pogo Springs

Allows your robot to bound in high, arcing leaps. This eccentric method of locomotion is fast, efficient, and able to survive falls from any height without damage. The drawbacks of having this as one's sole means of moving about are, one trusts, self-explanatory.

Quadrupedal Legs

Allows your robot to walk on four legs like a cat or dog. This form of PROPULSION has no particular benefits or drawbacks.

Rocket Booster

Allows your robot to fly with enormous speed and lifting capacity, but only in a straight line. Much like a Blink Drive, using a Rocket Booster is inherently risky and always requires a PROPULSION roll.

Rolling

Allows your robot to curl up into a ball and roll away. You can tumble across most terrain, but don't deal well with steep inclines.

Rotors

Allows your robot to hover and fly with a fair amount of precision. However, you're easily swatted aside, and your lifting capacity isn't the greatest; you suffer the penalty for using a partially suitable System when rolling PROPULSION to move or defend other robots rather than yourself.

Submarine Module

Allows your robot to travel underwater, but is useless on land. Marine propellers, ballast tanks and waterproofing are included.

Tracks

Allows your robot to roll over nearly anything. Tracks are practically indestructible and can traverse ground that would damage other robots with impunity; however, all that power and mass makes for ponderous handling.

Wheels

Allows your robot to zoom around on one or more wheels. Though very speedy, wheels handle poorly on rough terrain.

Modified Rules

The rules of *System Crash* differ from those of the basic game in two respects. First, Stressing Out works somewhat differently for robots. Second, stacking up is a bit more complex, owing to the need to figure out what exactly a combination of several robots is capable of doing. In both cases, the additional wrinkles introduced by Systems lie at the heart of the changes.

Stress and Crashing

Facets accumulate Stress just like their equivalent Virtues do – see Stress and Stressing Out (p. 14) for more information. However, what happens when a Facet hits three points of Stress is a little different.

When a Facet Stresses Out, rather than gaining a condition and becoming unable to roll that Facet, one of your Systems **crashes**. Usually this will be whatever System you used to justify making the roll that incurred the third point of Stress. If the roll was described in a way that involves multiple Systems, put the names of those Systems in alphabetical order and determine which one crashes by rolling a d6. If there were two Systems involved, a roll of 1–3 means the first one crashes, while a roll of 4–6 means the second one crashes; if there are three Systems involved, the first one crashes on a roll of 1–2, the second on a roll of 3–4, and so forth. If you've managed to describe a roll in a way that involves more than three Systems, you're on your own!

While a System is crashed, it can't be used to make rolls with any Facet. The System isn't necessarily completely non-functional – for example, a crashed Camera might provide glitchy or staticky output, while a crashed set of Wheels might get stuck in reverse. This provision exists to ensure that a single crashed System won't completely remove your ability to participate in the scene; if you can't think of an interesting way for a particular System to malfunction, and its loss won't force you to sit out the rest of the scene, you can just decide that it shuts down completely. A Crashed system can't be used to make rolls regardless of how its crashed state is described.

When a System crashes, Stress marked against the Facet you just Stressed Out is immediately cleared. Crashed Systems recover at the end of the scene.

> As an optional rule, you can *voluntarily* crash one of your Systems to choose an extra option on a Facet roll. This follows the same rules as exhausting a Quirk (p. 27). Unlike exhausting a Quirk, however, you're limited to crashing at most one System per Facet roll; among other things, this means you can't exercise this option on a roll that caused you to Stress Out. Systems crashed in this way recover in the usual fashion.

Combining

Rather than stacking up, robots **combine**. This follows the [basic rules for stacking up (p. 15)](#), with the following modifications:

- A combined form isn't limited to exactly three robots – any number of robots can combine (as long as it's greater than one).

- Each robot must decide which Facet to contribute. Multiple robots may contribute the same Facet. The combined form has all of the Systems attached to each robot's contributed Facet; for example, if you contribute your GUIDANCE Facet, the combined form has your GUIDANCE Systems, but not your INTERFACE or PROPULSION Systems.

- When you act as part of a combined form, you can only roll the Facet you contributed. However, if multiple robots contributed the same Facet, any of them can use any of the combined form's Systems attached to that Facet. You still roll a number of dice equal to your own Facet when using a System contributed by a different robot.

- A combined form may or may not be able to impersonate a human, depending on the exact configuration of contributing robots. In general, a combined form must consist of at least three robots and have at least one robot contributing each of the three Facets in order to pass for human, though exceptions may exist at the GM's discretion (or by group concensus in a GMless game).

- A robot who incurs Stress while participating in a combined form is in danger of becoming separated. One other robot (who doesn't need to be participating in the combined form) can attempt a Facet roll to salvage the situation; if that roll's result is also 3 or less, the robot who initially incurred Stress is ejected from the combined form, reducing its available Facets and Systems accordingly.

- If any robot who's part of a combined form crashes one of their Systems for any reason, the combined form explodes noisily, sending its component robots flying in all directions. Each robot must immediately roll PROPULSION to see where they wind up.

Note that a robot incurring Stress while participating in a combined form may set off chain reaction of potential ejections if the robot who attempts to save them is also part of the combined form, since the rescuer will incur Stress in turn if they fail.

Setting the Scene

Setting the scene in *System Crash* follows largely the same outline as the basic game (p. 17), but the introduction of GUIDANCE Systems requires special attention when describing things. As a group, the robots are likely to have many senses that humans don't possess – and conversely, may entirely lack one or more senses that most humans possess, particularly if no robot in the group happens to have a Camera or Microphone System.

Since the opening of each scene involves making a GUIDANCE roll to interpret what's going on, this shouldn't be treated as an obstacle; on the contrary, it opens up exciting new ways for the robots to wildly misunderstand what they're looking at. However, particularly when you're starting out, you may find it challenging to remember exactly what a given group of robots can and cannot perceive.

To make things easier, when playing with a GM, players can take turns asking the GM "what can I see/hear/feel/perceive with my [System]?". Start with straightforward Systems like Cameras or Microphones and work your way out to the more esoteric ones. Similarly, when collaboratively describing the scene in a GMless game, take turns and start with details that your own robot can perceive; the other players can then build on your description as inspiration moves them.

The same principle can be followed throughout the course of the scene. When you need more information, pick a GUIDANCE Systems and explicitly ask what information it's getting. You don't need to pick one of your own GUIDANCE Systems, since the robots can communicate with each other instantaneously. In a GMless game, if you inquire about a different robot's GUIDANCE Systems, that robot's player has first dibs on answering the question. This typically won't require any rolls on the other robot's part, since you never need to make GUIDANCE rolls simply to perceive things; GUIDANCE rolls are for *understanding* what you perceive.

Finally, don't sweat it if you slip up and describe something that none of the robots present could possibly perceive, or if you get stuck and need to step out of character to clarify what you're getting at. *System Crash* observes the same separation of player and character knowledge that the basic game does – your robot knows far less than you do!

Random Scene Prompts

By default, *System Crash* takes place in a world much like our own, except that robots are sufficiently commonplace that the player characters' presence won't automatically be regarded as suspicious. (Your actions can change that in a real hurry, though!) You can use the basic game's for *System Crash*; the robots' journey could take them just about anywhere. However, being robots on a journey involves different complications and opportunities than just causing random mischief, so alternative tables are provided for those dimensions of the scene, below.

Random Complications

d6	Complication
1	Any humans who spot the robots will assume they're here to help and try to put them to work; what do they want done?
2	TODO
3	TODO
4	TODO
5	TODO
6	TODO

Random Opportunities

d6	Opportunity
1	There are numerous other robots present, and the robots won't stand out from the crowd if they keep their heads (or whatever) down; why are things so crowded?
2	TODO
3	TODO
4	TODO
5	TODO
6	TODO

A table of random reasons for stopping is also provided. Like the random goals table in the basic game, rolling on this table is never required – it's here for those times when whoever the initial GUIDANCE roll puts on the spot is stuck for ideas. Don't worry too much about making sense of these reasons; you can always fall back on the mysterious mechanical intuition that sent you on your journey in the first place.

Random Reasons for Stopping

d6	Goal
1	The robots musts obtain a particular object – it will be critically important on a future leg of their journey.
2	There's a human present the robots must deliver a message to before moving on.
3	This place contains a source of information that must be consulted for guidance regarding where to go next. What? No, the robots aren't *lost* – perish the thought.
4	A fellow robot is in distress and must be rescued. Well, it *appears* to be in distress, anyway – with robots it can be hard to tell.
5	The robots have spotted a clue regarding the true purpose of their journey. Clearly this bears further investigation.
6	Another robot present is an agent of the Enemy; whatever they're doing must be stopped at all costs. (Which enemy would that be? Don't ask impertinent questions!)