

Conspiracies and Capers - rules neutral system for investigation gaming.

A new **Master Mind** (M.M.) has hatched a plot. Will they succeed or will the PCs thwart it? All you need a six sided die and your RPG system of choice to find out.

A **PLOT** is a series of capers designed to bring about a some major goal of the M.M.; be it topple a ruler or just accumulate enough wealth to retire. The M.M. is driven to succeed and will stop at nothing. This supplement gives a framework for keeping the action moving, even in the background, and always giving the PCs something useful they can be doing. It's assumed the M.M. is antagonistic to the PCs.

The (probable) goal of the PCs will be to investigate **CLUES**, upgrade them into **EVIDENCE** and further refine that into **PROOF of SUSPECTS** involvement. Then they must kill or capture **RINGLEADERS** while gathering clues about the **MASTER MIND**. They may put the M.M. on **ALERT** during the investigation. All leading up to a showdown. Or, you know, they can ignore it all and let the M.M. complete his/her nefarious goal and deal with the aftermath. >:D

ALERT is how aware and threatened the antagonist group is of investigation. It starts at zero and goes to ten or more. An ALERT of zero is still cautious. An ALERT of ten is freaked out and paranoid. ALERTS over ten will cause the caper to fail on a roll of 5 or 6 checked once per cycle. (A minor player victory, but better to capture the ringleader!) Reset ALERT to zero and begin new caper.

Step 1 - Choose groups

Choose the antagonist group and a victim group. Pick one from each list, or two from combined list. A group can even be against itself with two secret factions.

Sample Establishment Groups

1. Military
2. Watch
3. Nobles
4. Merchant Guild
5. Tax Collectors
6. Adventurer's Guild

Sample Criminal Groups

1. Thieve's Guild
2. Street Gang
3. Contraband Cartel
4. Corrupt Nobles
5. Foreign spies
6. Adventurer's Guild

Step 2 - Flesh out groups

Give each group a leader and some personality. Roll once for each leader and once for each group. Name your leaders and write up a stat block and any other details you desire. Give your antagonist a overarching goal. Ideally one the PCs would prefer didn't come to pass. Stat up a sample mook for each group and some ringleaders.

Sample Attitudes

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. Pragmatic | 4. Bureaucratic |
| 2. Paranoid | 5. Ruthless |
| 3. Vengeful | 6. Benevolent |

The leader of the antagonist group is the **MASTER MIND** (M.M.) of the operation. Give them a big goal! They will attempt the "big operation" after some successful capers.

Step 4 - Choose the capers

The antagonist group will perform a series of capers. The capers **timeline** has a sample. Use the steps that make sense. The antagonist timeline advances on it's own. It's up to the PCs to slow or stop it.

Choose or roll a series of 1d6+3 capers and make some notes about how they link together. The final caper is should be the culmination of the M.M.s plans. The capers leading up to it should somehow support or prepare for the main event. Some may already be complete or ongoing.

Sample caper types

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Assassination | 4. Robbery |
| 2. Kidnapping | 5. Prison Break |
| 3. Blackmail | 6. Sabotage |

Step 5 - The hook

Give the PCs a hook. It could be in the form of a few clues, or an appeal from the victim group. Be as light or heavy handed as you desire.

Step 6 - Run Investigation Cycle

Cycle time is assumed to be one day per cycle. But you may adjust this as you see fit.

Roll the antagonist progress on the caper table at the start of every cycle.

PCs get one action per cycle per player. PCs may stick together or split up as you and they prefer. See the PC investigation rules.

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PC Investigation Rules

GATHER CLUES:

Give the PCs 1d6 clues to start off. Any time PCs wish one can spend a cycle to get 1d6 additional clues.

Sample Clue Types

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Name | 4. Location |
| 2. Sketch/Map/Document | 5. Object |
| 3. Rumor | 6. Witness |

INVESTIGATE CLUES

Each PC may spend a cycle attempting to upgrade a clue to evidence.

Investigate Clue Results

- 1-2. Clue is a dead end.
 - 3-4. 1d6 additional clues
 - 5-6. The clue leads to evidence.
- Pick or roll

Sample Evidence Types

1. Coded Message
2. Safe House
3. Dead Drop
4. Suspect
5. Meeting Place
6. Branch "office" of antagonist group.

INVESTIGATE EVIDENCE

Each PC may spend a cycle attempting to upgrade EVIDENCE into PROOF. They must have appropriate evidence to perform actions. Proof is whatever is sufficient in your context to firmly tie an individual to the plot at hand and results in a known SUSPECT.

PC INVESTIGATION OPTIONS

PC's may try various things to upgrade evidence to PROOF. Apply +1/-1 for appropriate PC skills. Some possible actions are

- Decode any coded messages.
- Stakeout a known location or follow a suspect.
- Break In to a known safe house or office.
- PC's may suggest other reasonable options. Roll on results table with +1/-1 as you see fit.

Evidence Investigation Results

- 1-3. Dead end
- 4-5. Uncover a SUSPECT
6. Uncover the RINGLEADER and get **M.M. Clue**

BREAKING IN

(Break out the location map and use your systems rules.)

Players may stage a break-in of a known location. There are two types of break-ins: **Stealthy** and **Forceful**. Stealth break-ins convert to forceful if the PCs are detected. Failed forceful break-ins give no results other than +1d6 to ALERT.

Stealth Break-In Results

Ignore suspect results if none are known
+1/-1 bonuses for character skills and circumstances

- 1-2. No known suspects located.
- 3+. One known suspect is located and can be killed without a fight.
- 4+. One known suspect is located and can be killed or captured without a fight.

Forceful Break-In results

Ignore suspect results if none are known

Players must overcome 1d6/2 + ALERT guards.

- 1-2. Known suspects not located.
- 3+. One known suspect is located and can be killed or attempt capture. If PCs choose to attempt a capture the suspect escapes on 1-2 on 1d6 or using whatever mechanics from your system you prefer.

Break in Clues

All successful break-ins produce
1d6 CLUES
1d6-4 EVIDENCE
1d6-5 PROOF

Regardless of suspects all forceful break ins result in +1d6 to ALERT

Killed or Captured suspect results

(Killing or capturing a known RINGLEADER always disrupts the plot.)

- 1-3. No effect on the plot
- 4-5. Participant loss sets plot back 1d6/2 steps.
6. Ringleader and the caper is disrupted. **PCs gain one M.M. clue.**

Captured Suspect Results

Captured suspects produce clues while in custody for 1d6 cycles

- Roll each cycle
- 1-4. 1d6 CLUES
 - 5-6. One peice of EVIDENCE

MASTER MIND CLUES - or How To Win

PCs will eventually gather master mind clues. It may take several capers to get enough. Master Mind Clues can be investigated and upgraded just like other clues but they never reveal information about the current plot. They must be upgraded to PROOF to discover the Identity of the Master Mind. Once the Identity of the Master Mind is discovered the PCs will have to kill, capture or neutralize them. A well connected Master Mind could be difficult or slippery indeed. Once one Master Mind is disposed of, there are always others willing to fill the power vacuum. If a Master Mind achieves a goal, they may go into hiding or choose a new goal.