

// SOLO INVESTIGATION |

LA DICK: LOS ANGELES 1947-1953

| REP: WALK-IN 

SOLO NOIR

PROCEDURAL CASE ENGINE

D6 CORE

A5 / TABLETOP

RULEBOOK

A SOLO DETECTIVE GAME

- LOS ANGELES, POSTWAR

L.A. DICK 1953

A SOLO INVESTIGATION ENGINE

LOS ANGELES, 1947

PRIVATE LICENSE. STUDIO MONEY.

THE FILE STAYS OPEN.

PROCEDURAL CASE GENERATOR. EVIDENCE FILE.
THE SIT-DOWN. WAR-FORGED CODE.

// EYE // LEGS // NERVE // WALK // LEAN // PULL //

PRIVATE INVESTIGATION

LOS ANGELES BUREAU



PT. I

THE OFFICE

Clients, reputation, factions, the city.

PT. II

THE WORK

Case generator, the file, the sit-down.

PT. III

THE LIFE

Investigator build, war detail, vice, code.

SOLO

ONE PLAYER, ONE PI, ONE FILE

LOS ANGELES // 1947-1953

A5 TABLETOP

A SOLO DETECTIVE GAME

L.A.
DICK

A Solo Investigation Engine for Postwar Los Angeles

Edition 01 · Set in 1947–1953

SOLO // ONE PLAYER // ONE PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

A solo investigation game set in Los Angeles between V-J Day and the early fifties. You play a licensed private investigator — a veteran of the war, working out of a downtown walk-up or a Hollywood office, taking studio money and police money and family money and the occasional case nobody is paying for.

Generate a case in seven steps. Walk the city, lean on sources, pull records. Build the file through five stages. Walk into the sit-down with the subject before the clock fires twice. Close it tight, close it clean, leave it open, or watch it blow up in your face. The cops can close their books. Your file stays open.

Self-contained. Requires nothing but this book, a fistful of D6, one D8, one D10, a notebook, and an index card per case.

A solo procedural in the noir register
Setting: Los Angeles, 1947–1953
Engine: D6 Core

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INTRODUCTION

The case is open. The file stays open until you close it.

The case is open. The file stays open until you close it. Sometimes the file outlives the case.

WHAT THIS GAME IS

LA Dick is a solo detective game. One player. One private investigator. One case at a time, in Los Angeles, between V-J Day and the early fifties.

You are licensed by the state. You came home from the war and put your name on the door. Clients walk in: a studio fixer needs a problem made quiet before Confidential prints it; a defense lawyer wants the case the cops won't build; a wife wants to know where her husband goes on Tuesday nights; a cop you trust hands you a name off the books. You take their money. You work the case. You decide what you'll do to close it and what you won't.

Each case is one investigation. Roll the generator, build the file, walk into the sit-down with the subject, close it or don't. Cases stand alone. Chain them into a career if you want a reputation that compounds and a city that remembers your face.

This is not a shooting game. Something happened. Someone knows. You find the thread before the city buries it, or you don't. The cops are corrupt. The studios are corrupt. The mob is in business. The witnesses lie or are afraid or both. You are the only thing in your office that's still trying to tell the truth, and you don't always manage it either.

HOW IT WORKS

The Case Generator (CH.03) produces a complete investigation in seven steps. The mechanics in CH.04 cover the Cold Read, the Tail, the Interview, and how the file advances. The Sit-Down (CH.05) is the case climax: three rolls across a desk, evidence against protection, with the subject answering or not. CH.06 builds your investigator from scratch — war detail, vice, specialization, the Code. CH.07 tracks your career across cases.

What you need at the desk. A fistful of D6. One D8. One D10. Tokens or coins for Hard Facts, Leads, Leverage, and Heat. A notebook. One index card per case. A drink optional.

HOW A CASE RUNS // SIX MOVES

1. **Roll the case.** Seven Generator steps. One index card.
2. **Write the Three Targets.** Person, Place, Record. Hidden at setup — you wrote them, your investigator hasn't found them yet.
3. **Cold Read.** Surface assessment before the work begins.
4. **Build the file.** WALK, LEAN, PULL. Five stages: Incident → Pattern → Actor → Motive → Proof.
5. **Manage Heat.** Failures leave traces. At 9 your standing is gone.
6. **The Sit-Down.** Three rolls. Tight, Clean, Open, Blown, or Blown Bad.

3–5 sessions of about thirty minutes each. Cases stand alone or chain into a career.

DICE NOTATION // LOWER IS BETTER

Attributes are written as a number with a plus sign: **3+, 4+, 5+**. That's the number you need to roll on a D6 to succeed. **Lower is better.** EYE 3+ is sharper than EYE 4+. The investigation lives at 3+ and 4+; the case turns difficult at 5+; 6+ is mathematically out of reach once Heat starts climbing.

FIRST TIME // READ ORDER

The chapter order is reference order, not reading order. For your first case: read CH.06 (build your investigator) and the Worked Example at the back of the book first. Then come back to CH.03 with dice in hand. The rules in CH.04 and CH.05 will read more cleanly once you have a character on the page and have seen one case run end to end.

STARTING YOUR FIRST CASE

If this is your first time at the desk, do not build the perfect investigator. Open a case. The engine teaches itself fastest when the Clock is already moving and a body is already cold.

STEP	DO THIS	WHERE
1	Use the Walk-In Investigator profile. Choose one Specialization, one Code sentence, one War Detail, one Vice.	CH.06
2	Roll the seven Case Generator steps. Write only what fits on the index card.	CH.03
3	Write or roll the three case case targets: the Person, the Place, the Record. Keep them face-down on the card.	CH.03 Step 2
4	Run the Cold Read. Reveal one target on a success, two on a Natural 6.	CH.04
5	Play Session 1: three actions, then tick the Clock once. Stop there if you are learning.	CH.04

FIRST SESSION // IF YOU FREEZE

Use this opening rhythm: **WALK** the scene or institution named by the brief. **PULL** the most obvious record (the morgue jacket, the phone log, the blotter, the registration). **LEAN** on the first source the evidence points toward. If one of those actions feels impossible, that impossibility is information: pick the route that asks why.

THE SOLO LOOP

You are the investigator and the city. You play your PI. The city runs on itself: factions react, sources move, the clock ticks. The case has its own three targets — three hidden targets you wrote down at setup but your investigator has not yet uncovered.

The turn sequence layers three new phases on top of the standard solo round. They give the time before the sit-down its own shape.

PHASE	WHEN	WHAT IT DOES
The Cold Read	Before investigation begins	Surface assessment. Earn one or two case targets before the clock ticks.
Investigation	Every session	Walk, lean, pull. Build the file. Manage Heat. Tail as needed.
The Sit-Down	When the file reaches Stage 4	Three-beat resolution across a desk. No firefight required.

THE CASE INDEX CARD

Write the generator results on one index card. Seven lines. If the case doesn't fit on the card, it isn't defined yet.

CASE INDEX CARD // FIELD FORMAT

Case Type: _____

Crime: Nature ___ / Scale ___ / Wrinkle ___

Territory: _____

Subject: Protection ___ / Faction ___ / Posture ___

Complication: _____

Client: _____ (Angle: ___)

Clock: ___ / Targets: [Person] [Place] [Record]

Starts With: Leverage ___ / Leads ___ / Heat ___ (seed from Step 6 client and any Office requisitions)

Live Track: File ___ / Hard ___ / Leads ___ / Leverage ___ / Heat ___ / Clock ___

The three case target boxes start hidden. **You wrote them. Your investigator hasn't found them yet.** When a WALK, LEAN, or PULL clearly lands on one, flip it face-up and earn a Leverage Token toward the Sit-Down.

THE CORE VERB

Every decision you make at the desk is an attempt to do one thing: close the case.

Not solve it. Not win. Close it. Closing means documentation sufficient to act on. The file doesn't promise the subject faces consequences. It promises the record exists. When you don't know what to do next, return to the verb. What is the next thing between you and closing?

FIELD NOTE // FROM A LICENSED PI'S DESK BLOTTER, BUNKER HILL, UNDATED

"The city isn't hiding things from you. The city just moves faster than you do. That's the whole game. You're not smarter than it. You're just more patient. And you're cheaper than a lawyer."

GLOSSARY AT A GLANCE

Terms used throughout. Detailed rules in the chapters cited.

TERM	ONE-LINE MEANING	DEFINED
WALK	Investigation action against scenes, locations, physical evidence, institutional records on site. Uses LEGS or EYE.	CH.04
LEAN	Investigation action against witnesses, suspects, contacts. Uses NERVE.	CH.04
PULL	Investigation action against archives, files, ledgers, records pulled off-site. Uses EYE.	CH.04
EYE / LEGS / NERVE	The three investigation attributes. Each is a target number you roll D6 against (e.g., EYE 4+).	CH.06
GUN / FISTS	Two more attributes — ranged and close combat. Investigators rarely use them. They cover the case if it goes hostile.	CH.06
Hard Fact	Evidence currency. Two in pool advances the file one stage.	CH.04
Lead	Unconfirmed intel. +1 to one roll. Carries between sessions.	CH.04
Leverage	Sit-down currency. Comes from target hits. Cap 4. Determines close quality.	CH.04
Heat	Exposure counter. Failures and Natural 1s push it up. Triggers consequences at 3 / 5 / 7 / 9.	CH.04
The File	Five-stage tracker (Incident → Pattern → Actor → Motive → Proof). Reaching Stage 4 unlocks the sit-down.	CH.04
Case target	One of three hidden case elements: the Person, the Place, the Record. Hitting one mid-action generates a Leverage Token.	CH.04
The Code	One sentence stating what the war taught you not to do. Crossing it gives +2 to one Sit-Down roll, with consequences.	CH.06
The Sit-Down	The case climax. Three rolls (Leverage / Pressure / Resolution). Available at Stage 4.	CH.05

02/

THE OFFICE

A desk, a phone, a safe, and the line of clients who want a man who'll take their money and not all of their instructions.

The license doesn't promise justice. It promises a desk, a phone, and a name on the door.

THE INVESTIGATOR AND THE CITY

You are a licensed private investigator working in Los Angeles between V-J Day and the early fifties. Your license came from the state — a paper card, a renewal fee, a thumbprint on file with the Department of Professional Standards. The license lets you carry a gun, take a fee, and put your name on a door. It doesn't make you a cop. It doesn't keep cops from putting you in a holding cell when they feel like it.

You came home from the war. The work suited what came back with you. Most days the cases are small — a missing husband, a contested will, a process to serve. Some days a man walks in who needs you to find a body, or to make sure a body is never found. Some days the man doesn't walk in. He calls. He sends a car. He gives you an envelope on a corner. The cases that pay best are the ones that keep you awake.

The cops have their own files. The studios have their own files. The mob has its own books. Your file is the only one with your name on it, and it is the one the city is least interested in protecting.

WHY YOU TAKE THE CASE

You take cases because rent is due, because a name from your war years called, because the client has a face you don't want to turn away, or because the case has a shape you can't stop looking at. Reasons compound. The honest answer to why are you doing this is rarely just one of them.

The factions don't care about your reasons. They care about which side your work helps and which side it hurts. There is no oversight body, no neutrality charter, no public record. There is the file in your safe, and there is whatever the city does with the copies that leak.

FROM A 1948 LICENSE RENEWAL FORM // STATE OF CALIFORNIA

"The licensee acknowledges that the privileges of this license confer no immunity, no police power, and no special standing before any court of this state. The licensee is a citizen with permission to charge a fee."

REPUTATION TIERS

Three tiers. Reputation determines what kind of client walks in, what kind of cases come your way, and how a phone call from your office is received downtown.

TIER	CLIENTS	WHAT THEY BRING	NOTES
Walk-In	Off the street, out of the phone book, off a card pinned in a hotel lobby	Small cases, cheap retainers, the occasional cold body that turns into something	Entry level. Most investigators stay here. The work is steady and ungrateful.
Referred	A defense lawyer, a desk sergeant, a fixer, a retired cop who likes you	Better cases. Faction-adjacent. The retainer is in cash. So is the discretion.	Requires a closed file with a clean result on record. Three consecutive disasters and the calls stop.
By Name	Clients ask for you specifically. Sometimes by name in writing. Sometimes by description.	Rare. The studios. Senators' wives. The DA's office in trouble. The work is bigger and the trouble is bigger.	Earned through demonstrated discretion. Lost in one indiscretion.

Failed cases stay on the record. A case that doesn't close doesn't disappear from your file — the city remembers. Three consecutive losses without even a partial close end your referred work. There is no formal notice. The phone just stops ringing.

THE SIX CLIENTS

Six categories of client define the work. Every generated case has one. The client tells you what they want. The client is also lying, in some part, about why they want it.

The Studio. MGM, Warner, Paramount, RKO, Fox, Columbia. The fixer's office calls. They have a problem — an actor in a hotel room he shouldn't be in, a starlet whose Iowa origin story has cracks, a screenwriter the Bureau is asking about. They want it quiet. They will pay in cash, in markers, in introductions. They forget nothing.

The Lawyer. Defense or civil. They want the case the cops won't build, the witness the prosecution didn't list, the timeline that breaks the alibi. The retainer is reliable. The case is whatever they tell you it is, and they are not always honest about what they want it to do.

The Newspaper. The Examiner on Hearst's side, the Times on Chandler's, the Mirror in the middle, the scandal sheets when they show up. They have a story half-written. They want the documents that lift it from rumor to print. The pay is fast. The byline is theirs. The friend at the desk you make is yours forever.

The Family. The wife, the husband, the son, the sister. Someone is missing or dead or living a life that doesn't match the photographs. The retainer is small. The motive is real. The truth is sometimes worse than the lie they came in with.

The Cop. A detective who can't work the case officially. A sergeant whose brother-in-law is the witness. A vice captain whose informant just turned up dead. They pay in favors, not paper. The favors are sometimes worth more than money. Sometimes they're a noose.

Yourself. A name from the war. A girl who used to call. A debt that aged. The case is the payment. Nobody walked in. You opened the file because you couldn't sleep.

CASE TYPES YOU TAKE

Six categories of case define the work the city actually generates. Every rolled case lands in one of them.

Homicide. A body. The cops closed it, misclassified it, or never opened a file. The coroner's report doesn't match the scene, or the scene doesn't match the body, or the body is missing entirely.

Disappearance. A person gone. No body, no evidence of violence, timing suspicious. Studio publicity says they left voluntarily. The people who knew them say otherwise.

Vice. Pornography rings. Abortion rings. Call-girl operations. Boys procured for studio executives. Drugs — heroin, hop, the morphine still moving from VA hospitals. The vice squad is paid not to see it. Someone wants you to.

Corruption. Police shakedowns. City Hall payoffs. Studio bookkeeping. Union pension funds. Real estate redlining. Evidence buried in official record systems. The crime isn't the money. The crime is who signed off on it.

Territorial Incident. A killing or a robbery on the line between LAPD and Sheriff jurisdiction, between mob territories, between studios. Every party claims it happened on the other side of the line. Nobody investigates. You do.

Cold Case. Years old. New evidence has surfaced, or a prior investigator's file has been reopened. Someone wants it buried again before it gains traction. The Black Dahlia is the avatar. Every PI works one of these eventually.

WHAT MAKES AN INVESTIGATOR

A cop is paid to work cases inside a chain of command. A PI is paid to work cases outside of one. The skill overlap is real. The disposition isn't the same.

Cops run leads inside a department that protects its own. Investigators run cases against institutions that have had decades to learn how to look clean. The terrain is the first obstacle. The source who won't talk is the second. Your own pattern-recognition instincts — trained on a different kind of work, in another country, in a war — are the third.

The war is in the room with you. It shaped what you'll do for money. It shaped what you won't. The Code is the line you wrote in a hotel in Manila or Antwerp or Naples in 1945, and the city is going to test it.

FIELD NOTE // CONVERSATION OVERHEARD AT THE PIG'N WHISTLE

"The clients ask you to find things. Finding is fast. Proving takes everything you have, and at the end of it the city looks exactly like it did before you started. You just know more about why."

03/

THE CASE GENERATOR

Seven steps. One index card. Everything you need to walk into it.

Seven steps. One index card. Everything you need to walk into it.

OVERVIEW

Run Steps 1 through 7 in order. Each step constrains the next. By the end you have a complete case on an index card. The generator builds investigations you didn't plan for. Your investigator closes them or doesn't.

Write the results on the Case Index Card (see CH.01). Seven lines. If a result doesn't fit on the card, the case isn't defined enough yet.

STEP 1: CASE TYPE

Roll D6.

D6	CASE TYPE	THE BRIEF
1	Homicide	Body found. The cops closed it in 48 hours. The coroner's report doesn't match the scene.
2	Disappearance	Person gone. No body, no evidence of violence, timing suspicious. The studio or family says voluntary departure.
3	Vice	Pornography, abortion, prostitution, narcotics, procurement. Vice squad is paid not to see it. Someone wants you to.
4	Corruption	Financial crime implicating a faction institution. Evidence buried. Someone at the top signed off.
5	Territorial Incident	Crime on a jurisdictional line. Every party claims it happened on the other side. Nobody's filing.
6	Cold Case	Years old. New evidence surfaced. Someone wants it buried again before it goes anywhere.

THE QUESTION EACH CASE TYPE ANSWERS

Closing this case means answering one core question. Keep it on the index card. When you don't know what to do next, return to the question.

Homicide. Who killed them, and can I prove it on paper before the city forgets?

Disappearance. Where did they go — willingly or not — and what proves the version that's true?

Vice. Who's running it, where does the chain end, and what ledger proves it?

Corruption. Who signed off, where did the money flow, and what's the un-edited paper trail?

Territorial Incident. What actually happened on the line, and who has the un-doctored report?

Cold Case. What new evidence breaks the old close, and who wanted it buried in the first place?

STEP 2: THE CRIME

Roll D10 for Nature, D6 for Scale, D8 for Wrinkle. The three case targets — the Person, the Place, the Record — are hidden at setup. Write them face-down on the index card. You reveal them through play.

SOLO HIDDEN INFORMATION // PLAYER KNOWS, INVESTIGATOR DOESN'T

If you are playing solo, it is legal for you to write the hidden case targets yourself. Treat them as sealed evidence: you may steer toward plausible actions, but your investigator cannot name, use, or claim a target until the Cold Read, an action, or a rule reveals it. If that feels too visible, write each target on a separate slip, fold it, and only open the slip when revealed.

Delayed option. If you want maximum surprise, leave one or more targets blank at setup. When a rule would reveal that target, roll or choose from the Case Target Seeds below and write the answer then. The reveal is still valid.

CRIME NATURE (D10)

D10	NATURE	WHAT IT MEANS
1	Premeditated	Planned for months. Someone knew this was coming. The scene was staged to close clean.
2	Opportunistic	Someone saw a window and moved. Evidence of improvisation. The cover story has cracks.
3	Institutional	A policy, not a person. The crime was authorized somewhere up the chain. The paperwork exists.
4	Covered	Scene was professionally cleaned after the fact. A second team came through. Two sets of evidence.
5	Ongoing	The crime hasn't stopped. New victims are possible. Every day you don't close it, something else happens.
6	Political	Someone benefits from what happened. The crime is the message. Follow who read it.
7	Studio	Crime exists inside the publicity machine, the contract files, the morals clause, the casting couch ledger. Physical evidence is incidental.
8	Paper	The crime exists in records: forged ledgers, altered titles, signatures that came from a key that wasn't issued yet. Bodies, if any, are downstream.
9	Factional	Two or more factions have a stake in how this closes. Both are watching. Neither wants the truth.
10	Personal	Connected to your investigator's history. Roll D6: 1–2 prior case, 3–4 a contact, 5–6 someone the investigator knew before the war or from it.

CRIME SCALE (D6)

D6	SCALE	SCOPE
1	Single	One victim. Contained scene. Local stakes. No faction exposure.
2	Cluster	Three to five connected victims or locations. Pattern emerging. Someone is repeating.
3	Network	Active operation. Multiple cells. Chain of command above the scene you're looking at.
4	Institutional	An organization is complicit. Not just individuals. The policy goes up.
5	Cross-Faction	Multiple territories implicated. Jurisdiction actively contested. Your authority is challenged at every step.
6	Citywide	The crime is a feature of how the city works. Removing it requires removing a structure. That structure has allies.

SCENE WRINKLE (D8)**D8 WRINKLE**

- 1** The key witness is a contract player at a major studio. LEAN threshold is Extreme until you establish standing with the studio's publicity office or get them off-lot.
- 2** Evidence exists only in records that have been partially scrubbed. PULL threshold for the primary record system is Very Hard until you find the access (a clerk, a duplicate, a misfiled copy).
- 3** The victim's identity is contested. Two parties knew this person. Both are lying about something. The real identity is a case target.
- 4** Jurisdiction is actively contested by LAPD and Sheriff's, or by two factions. Both claim warrants. Your authority is technically valid and practically challenged at every source.
- 5** A prior PI worked this case. They went dark. Their last file is incomplete and sealed in a lawyer's safe. It contains one case target you don't have.
- 6** The client routing this case has a documented relationship with one named subject. They disclosed it. What they didn't disclose is what the relationship cost them.
- 7** Physical evidence was moved after the incident. The scene you're working is not where the crime happened. The real location is a case target.
- 8** Someone else is closing this case from the other direction. They're ahead of you. They are not paid by your client, and they are not interested in documentation that protects yours.

CASE TARGET SEEDS

Use this table during setup if the brief has not already suggested a Person, Place, or Record. Roll D6 once on each axis for your Case Type, or choose the entries that make the case feel most alive. A target may be literal, symbolic, or one step removed: the Person can be a witness rather than the perpetrator; the Place can be where evidence sits rather than where the crime happened; the Record can be a biological trace, a financial trail, or an altered archive.

FIRST CASE // USE THESE AS WRITTEN

If this is your first time at the desk, roll D6 once on this table for each of Person, Place, and Record. **Use the results as written. Don't workshop them.** Treat the three lines as loose truth under the case, not homework. The card will teach you the verb-to-target mapping (Person → LEAN, Place → WALK, Record → PULL) faster than any reading does.

CASE TYPE	D6	PERSON	PLACE	RECORD
Homicide	1	The killer, still in the city.	The body's actual death site.	The autopsy report, sealed or replaced.
Homicide	2	The witness who reached the scene first.	The room where it was decided.	The hotel register or doorman's log.
Homicide	3	The dead person's last contact.	The cleanup team's staging area.	The overwritten patrol log.
Homicide	4	The detective who closed the report.	The dead person's last private space.	The Department's case-closure file.
Homicide	5	The procurer of the means.	The corridor of shared monitoring (a switchboard, a building lobby, a phone booth bank).	The phone company's toll record.
Homicide	6	The dead person's relative or lover.	The morgue, post-edit.	The fingerprint file pulled from active.
Disappearance	1	The disappeared, alive and held.	The transit point where they stepped off.	The voluntary-departure statement.
Disappearance	2	The studio publicist who processed the cover.	Their unit, untouched.	Their final-day financial trail.
Disappearance	3	The last person to see them.	The hotel they used.	The encrypted message thread (a Western Union code, a hand-cipher).

CASE TYPE	D6	PERSON	PLACE	RECORD
Disappearance	4	The fixer who arranged a new identity.	The clinic where the changes were made.	The previous case file, sealed by a former agency.
Disappearance	5	Their previous lawyer or PI.	The boarding house holding the non-compliant.	The locked correspondence box.
Disappearance	6	The doctor handling the new face.	The route out of the territory.	The final-week surveillance log.
Vice	1	The procured girl or boy, moved against will.	The clinic-of-origin's records room.	The forged transfer file.
Vice	2	The senior procurer.	The clinic room staff avoid.	The trick book.
Vice	3	The freight broker.	The cross-border transfer node (Tijuana, Las Vegas).	The registration discrepancy log.
Vice	4	The studio medical officer.	The buyer's hold facility.	The financial transfer.
Vice	5	The buyer.	The body-modification suite.	The broker's client ledger.
Vice	6	The escaped prior subject.	The route's safe house.	The discharge summary under another name.
Corruption	1	The signatory.	The office where the decision was made.	The signed authorization.
Corruption	2	The auditor who flagged it.	The records room with un-edited copies.	The pre-edit financial flow.

CASE TYPE	D6	PERSON	PLACE	RECORD
Corruption	3	The clerk who built the documents.	The official archive.	The redacted audit memo.
Corruption	4	The patron at the top.	The patron's residence.	The compromised correspondence chain.
Corruption	5	The internal affairs officer.	The auditor's reassigned office.	The patron's calendar.
Corruption	6	The whistleblower.	The off-site facility receiving diverted resources.	The beneficiary intake confirmation.
Territorial Incident	1	The aggressor.	The exact incident site.	The patrol log showing incursion.
Territorial Incident	2	The witness across the line.	The crossing corridor.	The medical intake.
Territorial Incident	3	The cross-border fixer.	The medical facility.	The recovered evidence (a cartridge, a watch, a notebook).
Territorial Incident	4	The detective who would file but won't.	The Sheriff's substation that took the call.	The competing reports.
Territorial Incident	5	The opposing-faction officer.	The smuggler's safehouse.	The filed and unfiled reports.
Territorial Incident	6	The civilian who should not be there.	The disputed checkpoint.	The journalist's unpublished draft.

CASE TYPE	D6	PERSON	PLACE	RECORD
Cold Case	1	The original investigator (PI or cop).	The original crime scene.	The original sealed file.
Cold Case	2	The original subject.	The Department archive.	The new evidence.
Cold Case	3	The original witness.	The subject's current location.	The original investigator's notes.
Cold Case	4	A new witness produced by recent technology (a better lab, a clearer photograph).	A private archive or storage unit.	The modern forensic comparison.
Cold Case	5	The original client.	The faction office that pressured the close.	The pressure correspondence.
Cold Case	6	A relative with a private archive.	The journalist's office.	The original field reports.

STEP 3: TERRITORY

Roll D8. Territory determines who polices the streets, what your license is worth, and what the operating conditions look like.

D8	TERRITORY	INVESTIGATIVE TEXTURE
1	Hollywood	Studios, agents, the Garden of Allah, Schwab's. Every source is performing for someone. PULL threshold against any studio system is Hard or worse. LEAN against an actor below the line is Standard; above the line is Very Hard until you have studio cover.
2	Bunker Hill	Boarding houses, fading Victorians, residential hotels. People who came west and stopped. LEAN is one tier easier; everyone is lonely and most have a reason to talk. The Hill is also where the city dumps its files when nobody is looking.
3	Central Avenue	Black Los Angeles. The Dunbar, the Lincoln, the clubs, the after-hours. LAPD treats it as occupied territory. A white PI is visible without trying. A Black source is calculating exactly what telling you costs them. Heat consequences escalate one tier faster here for any investigator the LAPD doesn't recognize.
4	Long Beach / San Pedro	Navy town, oil, longshoremen, the Pike. Mob-adjacent. PULL against shipping records is gold; LEAN against a longshoreman is Hard. Cohen and Dragna's people work the docks. Don't ask whose.
5	The Valley	Orange groves still. Ranches. New tract housing. Things get buried here, sometimes literally. WALK is one tier easier — nobody saw anything — but witnesses who do have something to say tend to make appointments rather than walk-ins.
6	Pasadena / San Marino	Old money. Caltech. The Huntington. Doors don't open without a name. LEAN is Very Hard until you have one. Once you have a name, it tends to open every door at once, which is its own problem.
7	East LA / Boyle Heights	Mexican, Jewish, Russian. LAPD intelligence runs informants through here. Heat rises faster. There is always somebody watching for the Department. Any failed PULL has an extra +1 Heat in this territory.
8	Downtown	City Hall, the Hall of Justice, Pershing Square, Skid Row, the Biltmore. All the institutions are here. All the rot is here. Faction territory. Your license is worth what the desk sergeant says it's worth on any given afternoon.

STEP 4: THE SUBJECT

Roll three D6: one for Protection Level, one for Faction Affiliation, one for Defensive Posture. The subject is who you're building the case against. They may not be the perpetrator. Follow the evidence.

PROTECTION LEVEL (D6)

D6	LEVEL	SIT-DOWN THRESHOLD
1-2	Exposed	Good (2+). Minimal resources. Limited ability to fight or flee the record.
3-4	Shielded	Hard (4+). Faction connections. Legal resources. Can delay proceedings and challenge evidence.
5	Protected	Very Hard (5+). Active faction security. Your standing will be formally challenged. Influential intel required.
6	Unreachable	Extreme (6+). Embedded in faction structure. Closing tight requires taking the structure on directly, not just the subject.

FACTION AFFILIATION (D6)

D6	AFFILIATION
1	LAPD (a working detective, an Intelligence Division officer, a vice captain, a Hat Squad veteran)
2	The Bureau (FBI special agent, informant handler, OSS-era veteran working on Hoover's payroll)
3	The Studios (a fixer, a contract executive, a publicity man, a contracted physician)
4	The Mob (Cohen, Dragna, the Outfit's western arm, a labor racketeer)
5	City Hall / DA's Office (a deputy DA, a commissioner, a bagman, a councilman)
6	The Press (a Hearst columnist, a Times editor, a scandal-sheet stringer, a freelance smear man)

DEFENSIVE POSTURE (D6)

D6	POSTURE	WHAT THEY DO WHEN THEY KNOW YOU'RE CLOSE
1	Buried	Moves evidence deeper. Your next PULL threshold increases one tier.
2	Lawyered	Files a challenge against your standing. Clock ticks one step. The lawyer leaves a card on your desk.
3	Fled	Relocates the primary case target (Person). You must find them again.
4	Threatened	Applies pressure to your most recent source. That source's next LEAN threshold increases two tiers.
5	Watched	Sets surveillance on you. For two sessions, the Tail fails automatically. If you skip the Tail in either session, mark 1 Heat instead; they're watching whether you move or stay still.
6	Burned	Destroys a piece of evidence. One Hard Fact already in the pool is removed; if the pool is empty when the posture fires, the next Hard Fact you generate this case is voided instead. Additionally, for the rest of the case, any time you generate Hard Facts on a Natural 6, generate only 1 (no Lead bonus). The subject is paying someone to clean as you go.

When the subject knows. The subject activates their defensive posture when Heat hits 5 or when the file reaches Stage 3 (Actor), whichever comes first. Record the posture on the index card at case open. Apply it when triggered.

STEP 5: CASE COMPLICATION

Roll D10. Something is wrong with the brief. Something is always wrong with the brief.

Reveals At. Each complication has a moment in play when it surfaces. Some are visible at case open because their mechanical effect is already on the index card (3, 9). Most are hidden until a specific trigger in the investigation. Do not preview a hidden complication in your opening notes — let it land when the trigger fires.

D10	COMPLICATION	REVEALS AT
1	The brief is wrong. The subject's protection level is one tier higher than rolled. Your client calls it a clerical error. It isn't.	Stage 3 (Actor). Protection tier bumps when the subject realizes you're close.
2	Someone worked this before. A prior PI reached Stage 2 and stopped. Their file exists. It costs a Referred-tier favor or a successful PULL Hard (4+) to access.	Stage 2 (Pattern). You find their name in a records office logbook, or a source mentions them by accident.
3	The clock was already running. The case opens with 2 Clock ticks already marked. Someone started the countdown before you got the call.	Case open. The two ticks are visible on the index card from the start; mention the cause in your brief.
4	The client goes quiet. Your client stops responding after Session 1. No retainer extension. No introductions. No follow-up. If the case closes, the payout upgrades one tier. If it doesn't, you ate the fee.	End of Session 1. The line goes quiet between sessions.
5	Second subject. There are two subjects. Same case, connected crimes, each with their own protection level. Closing on one burns the other's evidence unless you work both chains simultaneously.	Stage 2 (Pattern). The second name turns up in the connecting evidence.

D10 COMPLICATION

REVEALS AT

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| 6 | <p>The source network is compromised. One random case target (Person) has been warned about you. Their LEAN threshold starts at Extreme.</p> | <p>The first LEAN your investigator attempts on the Person target. The door doesn't open; the threshold jumps.</p> |
| 7 | <p>Case type shifts mid-investigation. At Stage 3 (Actor), the crime turns out to be a different case type than rolled. Re-roll Step 1. The clock ticks once. Any File-tier bonus tied to the original Case Type stops applying for the rest of this case. The sit-down closes against the new case type and credit accrues to it on close.</p> | <p>Stage 3 (Actor). The motive and the act stop matching the cover.</p> |
| 8 | <p>A faction wants this closed their way. A faction (LAPD, a studio, a mob crew, the Bureau) contacts you. They will provide one Lead per session if you close the case in a way that protects their interest. Define what that interest is when they contact you, and write it on the index card alongside the Complication entry: "Complication 8: [faction] wants [interest]; Lead/session if I play their way." Mark a +1 Lead on the live track at the start of every session. At case close, decide whether you closed their way (no extra cost) or against them. If you take their leads and close against them, mark +2 Heat at case close and start the next case in that territory at Heat 2. The faction knows you took the deal.</p> | <p>End of Session 1. A man in a hat. A car at the curb. They make their offer between sessions.</p> |
| 9 | <p>The subject is watching. The subject already has surveillance on the client who routed the case. They knew you were coming before you arrived. Defensive posture activates immediately.</p> | <p>Case open. The posture is already on the card from turn one; mention it in your brief.</p> |

D10 COMPLICATION**REVEALS AT**

10 This one is connected to you. The case has a direct line to your investigator's history. Determine the connection: a prior case, a contact, a war buddy, a girl who used to call, or a name from before. The subject knows about it.

Stage 3 (Actor). The connection becomes specific when the actor has a name.

FIRST CASE // COMPLICATION RE-ROLL

On your first case, you may re-roll any Complication of 5, 7, or 10 once. These three add a parallel chain, mid-case re-roll, or personal-history thread that play more cleanly after you have run a case end to end. Keep the re-roll for cases two and beyond.

STEP 6: YOUR CLIENT

Roll D6. Each client has a personality, an Intel Quality, and an unstated Angle — the part they aren't telling you. Determine the Angle when the file reaches Stage 3 (Actor).

D6	CLIENT	PERSONALITY	INTEL QUALITY
1	The Studio (fixer's office)	Polished, exact, hostile to surprise. Knows what it wants. Knows what it'll do if it doesn't get it.	Excellent inside the studio gates. Worthless outside them. D3 bonus Leads at case open.
2	The Lawyer (defense or civil)	Measured. Holds back more than they share. Has a reason for everything they don't tell you.	Good. Once per case, reroll one Climax Variable result.
3	The Newspaper (desk editor or columnist)	Hungry. Has the story half-written. Wants you to lift it from rumor to print.	Mixed. Subject information is accurate. Territory information is six months out of date.
4	The Family (wife, husband, sister, son)	Anxious, over-disclosing, sometimes lying about the relationship that made them call. Genuinely trying.	Poor. After Session 1, roll D6: 1–3 reroll one random Step result and replace it with the new result; on 4–6, the family member produces a photograph or a letter and grants 1 Lead.
5	The Cop (off the books)	Laconic. Routes the case, hands you what they have, disappears. "Don't burn me on this one."	Field-tested. 1 free Leverage Token at case open.
6	Yourself	You opened the file because you couldn't sleep. There is no client. The case is the payment.	None. No leads. No payouts in cash. Heat starts at +1. Reputation upgrades one tier if the case closes tight (you proved something to yourself the city is going to have to live with).

STEP 7: CLOCK STATE

Roll D6. The clock measures how much time pressure exists when the case opens.

D6	CLOCK STATE	STARTING TICKS
1-2	Cold	0 ticks. The case is new or has been dormant. You have time.
3-4	Active	1 tick. Something is already happening. The evidence is not getting fresher.
5	Running	2 ticks. The subject is moving. Sources are being pressured. Work fast.
6	Critical	3 ticks. The case is almost out of time. One more tick and the clock fires before you reach Stage 4.

When the clock fires. At 5 ticks, the clock fires. Roll D6 on the Climax Variables table (CH.05) and apply the result immediately. The clock resets to 2 ticks after firing. If setup puts the clock at 5 or higher, resolve that fire before Session 1 and count it as the first fire. A second fire before the sit-down ends the investigation with an Open File at best, unless the file is already at Stage 4 or higher and you cross your Code to force the sit-down immediately.

READ THE GENERATOR ALOUD // OPENING BRIEF TEMPLATE

The seven rolls produce a case. To play the opening, read them back as one paragraph in your own voice. Use this template — substitute the rolled results; drop any line that would spoil a complication. A complication with a hidden Reveals At trigger does not appear in the opening.

"[Day], [time]. [Client opener — how they reach you, from Step 6 personality]. The brief: [Case Type from Step 1, in plain language] — [Crime Nature line, abbreviated]. The wrinkle is [Scene Wrinkle from Step 2]. The territory is [Territory from Step 3 — one sentence of texture]. The name they want you to make stick is affiliated with [Faction from Step 4]. Their protection is [Protection from Step 4]. When they realize you're close, they'll [Defensive Posture from Step 4, future tense]. [Clock state from Step 7, framed as time you do or don't have]. [If complication is 3 or 9: name the visible condition. If complication is 1 or 2: hint at unease without naming it. Otherwise omit.] You take the retainer. You take the address. You hang up."

The template is scaffolding. Once you have read three or four briefs aloud, the rolls will start composing themselves.

04/

INVESTIGATION MECHANICS

Every source has a reason to lie. Your job is to make lying more expensive than talking.

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THE INVESTIGATION LOOP

Each session, you work sources, advance the file, and manage Heat. Three actions available per session unless complications reduce them. At the end of each session, the clock ticks once. Apply clock effects. Determine whether the sit-down is available (file at Stage 4 or higher). If not, begin the next session.

The loop runs until the case closes. The clock does not end the case when it fires. It fires complications (see Climax Variables in CH.05) and resets to 2 ticks. A second clock fire before the sit-down forces an Open File close unless the file is at Stage 4 or higher and you cross your Code to force the sit-down under pressure. You are always working against the next fire, not a single deadline.

AT FILE STAGE	IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO	GOOD DEFAULT ACTION
1 Incident	Establish the first hard fact. Don't chase every witness yet.	WALK the scene or PULL the obvious record (morgue, blotter, registration).
2 Pattern	Turn the first connection into a person, office, route, or system.	LEAN on a cooperative source or run a Tail before direct contact.
3 Actor	The subject knows or is about to. Convert leads into target hits.	Interview a named source; WALK or PULL a revealed target.
4 Motive	Decide whether to close now or risk one more session for Proof.	Sit down if Heat or Clock is high. If not, push one target for Stage 5.
5 Proof	The record is strong enough. Delay only if the fiction demands it.	Sit down before the clock gives the city another chance.

THE THREE VERBS

Three verbs. Each maps to one of your investigation attributes.

ACTION	ATTRIBUTE	USE
WALK	LEGS (physical) or EYE (analytical)	Scenes, locations, physical evidence, on-site institutional inspection.
LEAN	NERVE	Witnesses, suspects, informants, contacts. Sitting across from a person and not blinking.
PULL	EYE	Records, archives, ledgers, files, phone logs, registries pulled off-site.

LEGS vs. EYE for WALK. Use LEGS when the work is physical: moving through a space, reading a body, tracking, surveillance, getting to the scene before the cleaners do. Use EYE when the work is analytical: pulling files on site, interpreting documents, identifying patterns across a scene.

VERB TO TARGET // ONE LINE

Person → **LEAN**. **Place** → **WALK**. **Record** → **PULL**. The three hidden case targets you wrote on the index card map one-to-one onto the three verbs. When you don't know which verb to use, ask which target you're closest to.

FIRST MOVE // IF YOU FREEZE AT THE TOP OF SESSION 1

Start with **WALK** if you want to examine a place. Start with **PULL** if you want paperwork. Save **LEAN** for when you have a person worth pressing. The first move's job is to put one Hard Fact on the card. After that the file tells you the next move.

THRESHOLDS

Five tiers. Same language across the whole game.

THRESHOLD	ROLL	CONTEXT
Good	2+	Cooperative source. Fresh scene. Minimal security.
Standard	3+	Neutral source. Weeks-old scene. Standard institutional security.
Hard	4+	Reluctant source. Cleaned scene. Active faction security.
Very Hard	5+	Hostile source. Professionally buried scene. Institutional records under lock.
Extreme	6+	Source with active protection. Scene destroyed. Black-file system.

Use the stricter of your attribute target and the source's threshold. A character with EYE 4+ never rolls a Standard (3+) check at 3+; they roll at 4+. Modifiers add to the die roll, never to the threshold. The threshold itself is fixed.

Threshold floor and ceiling. Thresholds cannot be moved easier than Good (2+) or harder than Extreme (6+). When a territory, specialization, or other effect would push a threshold below 2+ or above 6+, it stops at the floor or ceiling. Apply remaining bonuses as die-roll modifiers instead.

Default source threshold. If no rule, table result, territory, posture, or obvious fiction sets the source threshold, use Standard (3+). Move to Good for cooperative sources, Hard for reluctant or guarded sources, Very Hard for hostile or networked sources, and Extreme for protected witnesses or sealed black files.

ACTION RESOLUTION

On your turn, name your action and the source or system. Roll D6, apply modifiers, compare to threshold.

Success. Generate 1 Hard Fact. Case target: also 1 Leverage Token.

Failure. Mark 1 Heat. Source threshold goes up one tier for that source.

Natural 6. Generate 1 Hard Fact and 1 Lead. Case target: also 1 Leverage Token.

Natural 1. Mark 2 Heat. Plus the action-specific consequence below.

ACTION	NATURAL 1 CONSEQUENCE
WALK	You disturbed the scene. WALK threshold at this location goes up one additional tier for the case.
LEAN	The source warns someone — the subject, or a faction-aligned contact. Word travels.
PULL	The records office logs the inquiry under your name and license number. PULL threshold against this system family +1 tier for the case.

CLARIFICATION // NATURAL RESULTS

Natural 6 and Natural 1 are the raw die results before modifiers. A modified 6 (rolling 4 with +2) does not trigger Natural 6. A natural 1 always fails and marks 2 Heat — modifiers cannot save it.

AFTER THE MISS // YOU STILL HAVE A SESSION

A failed roll isn't the end of the session. You still have actions remaining. Pick a different verb against a different source, set the threshold against the fiction, and try again. Heat is the cost of working — you're meant to take some. If a source's threshold just went up, work around them: PULL the record they would have told you about, or WALK the place they would have named. The file advances on Hard Facts, not on which door you knocked on first.

THE THREE VERBS IN DETAIL

WALK

Attribute. LEGS or EYE (context-dependent).

Physical examination of locations, on-site evidence reading, surveillance of a fixed scene. WALK is the primary action for building the file at crime scenes, institutional sites, and physical locations.

Standard results apply. On success, generate 1 Hard Fact; on target hit, also 1 Leverage Token; on Natural 6, also 1 Lead.

LEAN

Attribute. NERVE.

Working contacts, conducting interviews, applying social pressure, extracting information from people. Investigation-grade pressure resolves under fire, not charm. A source that goes wrong in an interview goes wrong all at once.

Standard results apply. On Natural 6, the source also becomes an active contact: one more direct answer this case, no roll required.

PULL

Attribute. EYE.

Pulling files. Records offices, lawyers' archives, newspaper morgues, phone company toll records, hotel registers, the County Recorder, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the morgue jacket. PULL covers any record retrievable by paper or by the right person at the right desk.

Standard results apply. On failure, an inquiry is logged under your name. See Tracked Consequences below. On Natural 6, the pull also surfaces a partial truth about a source you haven't yet reached.

Threshold reduction after cooperation. When a source has been successfully LEANed and voluntarily provides access (a key, a name, a card), reduce the PULL threshold by one tier for that specific system. Cooperation is established by a successful LEAN that makes the source an active contact, a Natural 6 LEAN, or a successful Interview Beat 3 that produces Partial Truth or better. This must happen before the PULL is declared.

LAY LOW

Full-session action. At Heat 5–8, declare Lay Low at session start, before any Heat consequences trigger. No Tail. No investigation actions. Heat –1. Skip all start-of-session Heat consequences. The Clock still ticks at session end.

EVIDENCE TOKENS

Keep tokens on the desk. Their presence is visible to you and tracks the investigation's progress.

Hard Facts. Advance the file. Two Hard Facts in the pool: the file moves forward one stage. Remove both tokens.

Pool overflow. When an action brings the pool to 2 or more in a single resolution (whether the action generated 1 Hard Fact onto an existing 1, or 2 Hard Facts onto an empty pool, or 2 Hard Facts onto an existing 1), the file advances once. Both tokens are removed. Any further Hard Facts generated by that same action are lost — the next pool always starts empty after an advancement, even if the same roll would have refilled it. One advancement per action.

Leads. Unconfirmed intel. They make the next step easier but don't advance the file. Each Lead provides +1 to one investigation roll of your choice per session. Declare the spend before rolling. Leads carry between sessions within a case. They do not carry between cases — new case opens with an empty pool unless a client, requisition, or after-case event grants leads. Leads have no cap. Hold as many as the case earns you.

Going cold. At the start of each new session, you may retire 1 Lead as having gone cold — if a lead has stopped feeling alive at the desk, drop it. Optional.

Leverage. The second currency. Leverage tracks how strong a position you're building for the sit-down. Leverage tokens come from target hits only. They don't advance the file. They determine whether you can close cleanly when you get there. Cap: 4 Leverage at any time. A fifth converts into 1 Lead.

THE FILE

A five-stage tracker. It maps the investigation's progress from first contact with the crime to documentation sufficient to act on. It sits face-up on the desk. Moving it forward is the primary goal of every session.

STAGE	NAME	WHAT YOU'VE ESTABLISHED	WHAT UNLOCKS
1	Incident	Something happened. You have a scene and a timeline.	WALK and PULL available. LEAN at Hard threshold until Stage 2.
2	Pattern	It wasn't random. A second data point connects to the first.	LEAN drops to Standard for cooperative sources. Tail available.
3	Actor	Someone did this. You have a name or an entity.	Subject's defensive posture activates. Interview Sub-Sequence available.
4	Motive	Someone paid for it or benefited. You understand the why.	The Sit-Down becomes available.
5	Proof	You can document it. The file is complete.	Sit-Down rolls at +1. Closed Tight threshold drops one tier.

WHAT THIS STAGE ASKS

The file is the investigator's question, advancing. At every stage, one question is the next thing between you and closing. When you don't know what to do, return to the question.

Stage 1 Incident. What actually happened?

Stage 2 Pattern. How is this connected to anything else?

Stage 3 Actor. Who did it, or authorized it?

Stage 4 Motive. Why did they do it? Who benefits?

Stage 5 Proof. Can I prove this on paper?

Pair the stage question with the Case Type question from CH.03 Step 1. The Case Type question is the thing you'll answer at the sit-down. The stage question is the thing your investigator is answering at the desk this afternoon.

Advancing the file. When the pool reaches 2 Hard Facts, the file advances one stage. Narrate the breakthrough. Remove both tokens.

Closing before Stage 4. You may declare an Open File close at Stage 3 if a faction action, second clock fire, or table result would otherwise blow the case. If a second clock fire happens before the sit-down and the file is at Stage 4 or higher, you may instead cross your Code and force the sit-down immediately. Beat 2 is one tier harder and the Resolution Roll takes -1 . If the case closes at Stage 3 or below, the city logs it as Open File. You have established an actor without motive. The subject may have resources to challenge the documentation. Apply the Open File outcome from CH.05.

THE THREE TARGETS

Every case has three case targets. Hidden at setup. Revealed through investigation. Hitting them produces Leverage Tokens that directly determine sit-down quality.

At setup. Write three case targets face-down on the index card:

- **The Person.** A named individual who either committed the crime, authorized it, witnessed it, or holds the primary evidence. Naturally hit by LEAN.
- **The Place.** A specific location where something happened or where evidence exists that the scene doesn't show. Naturally hit by WALK.
- **The Record.** A document, ledger, photograph, financial trail, or biological trace that proves the connection between subject and crime. Naturally hit by PULL.

Verb-to-target mapping. The natural verb-to-target mapping is in the names: LEAN hits the Person, WALK hits the Place, PULL hits the Record. Cross-verb hits are legal when the fiction clearly supports them — a PULL on an autopsy photo that surfaces the killer's face is a Person hit; a WALK that uncovers a stashed ledger is a Record hit. Default to the natural verb. Cross only when the fiction makes the case.

Revealing case targets. A case target is revealed when your investigation action specifically lands on it. You decide when an action has reached a case target based on the investigation's direction and the fiction. If a WALK or LEAN clearly hits one of the three hidden elements, flip it face-up. When in doubt, the target is hit when the action would name a specific Person, Place, or Record on the index card you wrote at setup.

Target hits. When you succeed on an investigation action against a revealed case target, you generate a Leverage Token in addition to the standard Hard Fact. This is an target hit. Target hits at the case close determine payout and sit-down quality.

Re-hits are allowed. A case target can be hit more than once. Each successful action against a revealed target generates another Leverage Token, up to the cap of 4. The 5th converts into a Lead.

The Person target and the subject. If the Person seed names the subject directly (e.g., "the killer, still in the territory" when the subject IS the killer), the Person target is hit only on actions that confront the subject directly — typically the first Interview Beat 3 success or the Sit-Down itself. Earlier scene work uncovers the path to the Person, but doesn't strike the target.

Primary case target. When a rule references "the subject's primary case target" (Defensive Posture 3 and Climax Variable 6), use the Person unless the case fiction makes the Place or Record more central to the subject's protection. The player decides at the moment the rule fires.

SOLO ORACLE // KEEP THE TARGET HONEST

When you are unsure whether an action has landed on a case target, ask one narrow question: **would naming this action aloud match what you wrote on the card?** If yes, reveal it. If no, generate the normal Hard Fact and keep moving. Do not withhold a target to protect a mystery; do not reveal one just because you want the sit-down bonus.

Worked example. Your Person card reads: "The morgue attendant who handled the body before the official autopsy." You declare a LEAN: "I lean on the night-shift attendant at the County morgue, the one who logged the body in." That description and the card describe the same man. Flip the Person card face-up. The roll resolves normally; on a success, generate 1 Hard Fact and 1 Leverage Token.

Counter-example. Same Person card. You declare a WALK: "I walk the alley behind the building where the body was found." The alley is not the morgue attendant. Generate the Hard Fact (if successful), but do not flip the Person card. The action didn't land on him.

THE COLD READ

Before the investigation clock starts, you can do a surface assessment: open-source records, the brief itself, what the city already knows about the territory and the subject. No clock tick. One roll.

When it runs. Declared before the first investigation session begins. One Cold Read per case.

Roll EYE. Standard (3+) for most investigators. Hard (4+) for cases where the subject's faction has active surveillance presence in the territory.

RESULT	EFFECT
Success	Reveal one case target from the index card.
Natural 6	Reveal two case targets.
Natural 1	False information. One case target you think you know is wrong. Mark it with a question mark. When you first act on it, the action fails, marks 1 Heat, and reveals the target as false; then flip a different case target face-up.
Failure	No case target revealed. Case opens cold.

File-history bonus. If your career file contains three or more prior cases in this territory, start with one case target already known. No roll required. You've read this neighborhood before.

THE TAIL

Between scene visits, you can run passive surveillance on a subject or location without triggering Heat. The Tail is quiet work: sitting in a parked Plymouth across the street, walking three blocks behind, watching a building from a coffee shop window.

When it runs. Declared at the start of any session, before investigation actions. One Tail per session.

Roll LEGS 3+.

RESULT	EFFECT
Success	Generate 1 Lead. No Heat risk.
Natural 6	Generate 1 Lead and 1 Hard Fact. The surveillance produced direct evidence (a meeting, an exchange, a face).
Failure	No Lead. The subject or location gains a Suspicion token: LEAN threshold for the next direct contact with this source increases one tier.
Natural 1	The subject notices. Their defensive posture activates one stage early (if not already active). Mark 1 Heat. (The Tail's quiet-work bonus reduces the standard Natural 1 Heat from 2 to 1; you were never in the room.)

HEAT

The Heat counter tracks how exposed the investigation has become. Every failure leaves a trace. Every Natural 1 leaves a scar. The counter is not hidden. You see it rise.

Heat triggers are tied directly to dice results. Failure calls the Heat. You don't decide.

TRIGGER	HEAT
Failed WALK	+1
Failed LEAN	+1
Failed PULL	+1
Natural 1 on any investigation action	+2

HEAT CONSEQUENCES

Heat consequences are persistent pressure, not one-time warnings. When Heat reaches a threshold, apply that row immediately. At the start of each later session, apply every row at or below the current Heat that still has an ongoing effect.

HEAT TOTAL	CONSEQUENCE
3	Soft surveillance. Someone is asking about your movements — a faction security contact, a police informant, a building manager. While Heat is 3 or higher, sources become one tier harder to LEAN.
5	Active surveillance. A faction has a file on your case activity. The subject's defensive posture activates if it hasn't already. Remove 1 Lead now and at the start of each later session while Heat is 5 or higher.
7	Direct action. A faction security team acts against the investigation. They go after your best current source first. That source goes silent. The Clock ticks once now and at the start of each later session while Heat is 7 or higher.
9	The case is blown. The subject has enough on you to challenge your standing formally. While Heat is 9 or higher, all LEAN thresholds increase one additional tier. Your client is under pressure to pull the case file.

Heat 7 repeat timing. The first source removal happens when Heat reaches 7. At the start of each later session while Heat remains 7 or higher, tick the Clock again. Remove another source only if the fiction shows faction security taking fresh direct action, or if there is a clearly exposed source they would hit next. The standing rule is pressure every session; the source removal is the first strike.

Who acts at Heat 7. The faction response comes from whoever owns the system that tripped the highest Heat. If a passive monitor on a PULL failure belongs to a faction different from the subject's affiliation, that faction acts first with their own agenda, which may not be the subject's protection.

THE INVESTIGATION CLOCK

The clock measures time pressure. The clock ticks once per session automatically. Faction actions that succeed against your investigation also tick the clock.

Clock Philosophy. Tighten sources you haven't reached yet, not sources you've already exhausted. The clock creates routing problems: it forces a different path to evidence. It doesn't build walls. Unavailable is a last resort. When in doubt, tighten a Hard source to Very Hard before making anything unavailable.

At 5 ticks, the clock fires. Roll the Climax Variables table in CH.05 and apply the result immediately. The clock resets to 2 ticks. If the clock reaches 5 during case setup, resolve the fire before Session 1 begins and count it as the first fire. A second fire before the sit-down ends the investigation at Open File unless the file is at Stage 4 or higher and you cross your Code to force the sit-down immediately.

When the clock fires mid-session. Apply the Climax Variable, reset the clock to 2 ticks, and continue the session as normal. Remaining actions still happen. The end-of-session tick still applies. A fire mid-session and the auto-tick at session end can both occur in the same session — that is correct.

THE WAR IN THE ROOM

Every investigator carries a War Detail (see CH.06). It provides a measurable edge in specific investigative contexts and a Heat pressure in scenes that touch what the war put into them. The advantage and the liability are the same biography.

War Details apply automatically when their conditions are met. They require no declaration. Liabilities also apply automatically — if a scene's content matches your War Detail's pressure trigger, mark Heat as written.

THE INTERVIEW

Named interviews of key witnesses and identified subjects use a three-roll Interview instead of a single LEAN roll. Optional for general sources. Required for named subjects once the file reaches Stage 3 (Actor).

BEAT 1: ESTABLISH

Open the subject. LEAN action, threshold as set. Standard success: move to Beat 2. Failure: the subject closes off. LEAN threshold increases one tier. No further interview this session.

Natural results during the Interview. The standalone Natural 6 LEAN bonus (source becomes an active contact) does not apply during an Interview — the Interview replaces the standalone roll. A Natural 6 on Beat 1 still counts as a Success for advancing to Beat 2. Natural 1 on any Interview beat still marks 2 Heat as written and ends the Interview this session; it does not auto-fail Beat 3.

BEAT 2: WORK

Hold the line of questioning under pushback. Roll NERVE vs. the source's resistance rating: Low = 2+, Standard = 3+, High = 4+, Protected = 5+. **Default.** If the case material doesn't specify, use Standard (3+). Move to High for protected sources or named subjects, Low for cooperative ones, Protected for hostile faction-aligned subjects. Success: move to Beat 3. Failure: the source gives a partial truth only (generate 1 Lead instead of a Hard Fact). Mark 1 Heat.

BEAT 3: BREAK OR CONNECT

Roll D6, modified by Beat 1 and Beat 2 results.

BOTH BEATS SUCCEEDED	BEAT 1 SUCCESS, BEAT 2 FAILED	BEAT 1 SUCCESS, BEAT 2 BARELY PASSED (RESULT = THRESHOLD EXACTLY)
+2 to roll	No modifier	+1 to roll

D6 (MODIFIED)	RESULT
6+	Full truth. Generate 1 Hard Fact and 1 Leverage Token. If case target, generate 2 Hard Facts and 1 Leverage Token.
4-5	Partial truth. Generate 1 Hard Fact. The source is protecting something. One more interview action may reach the rest.
2-3	Refusal. No evidence. The source locks down. LEAN threshold increases two tiers for this case.
1 or less	Counter-pressure. The source knows who sent you. They warn someone in the subject's network. Clock ticks once. Mark 1 Heat.

TRACKED CONSEQUENCES: LOGGED INQUIRIES

A failed PULL leaves your name on a log. When marking the Heat, note who owns the records office. That faction is now aware that someone made an unauthorized inquiry.

If the records office belongs to a different party than the subject, you may run two parallel consequence tracks. The records owner acts first at Heat 7 with their own agenda. That agenda may conflict with the subject's protection rather than reinforce it.

PARTIAL TRUTHS

A failed LEAN doesn't mean refusal. The source gives something that sounds useful but is strategically incomplete. Managing information the investigator doesn't know they're missing is the core craft of running this game.

Before each session, prepare two or three partial truths for each named source. Know what is true, what is visible, and what the source would protect even under full pressure. The partial truth is a formula: give the investigator enough to keep moving, not enough to close cleanly on what they don't yet know.

SOLO ORACLE // PARTIAL TRUTH ON DEMAND

If you have not pre-written partial truths and a LEAN just failed, roll D6 against the source's stake: **1–2** the source confirms a fact you already have but won't extend it; **3–4** the source names someone one step removed from the chain (a courier, an auditor, a neighbor, a doorman); **5–6** the source describes the room, the timing, or the artifact — never the person. For verbatim subject lines at the sit-down, see Sit-Down Voices in the Cookbook.

05/

THE SIT-DOWN

You built the file. Now you have to make it hold across a desk.

You built the file. Now you have to make it hold across a desk.

WHEN THE FILE REACHES STAGE 4

At Stage 4 (Motive), the sit-down becomes available. You don't have to take it immediately. Reaching Stage 5 (Proof) before the sit-down improves your position. But the clock is running and the subject's defensive posture is active. Every session you wait is a tick.

What the sit-down is. A three-beat resolution sequence. Evidence versus protection. Leverage versus resources. It is not a firefight. It can become one, but that's a failure condition, not the designed outcome.

What the sit-down isn't. You're not making an arrest. The sit-down is the moment you make the record. You present documentation. The subject responds. The file either holds or it doesn't.

The sit-down happens in a specific room. Where matters. A studio fixer's office on the lot. A judge's chambers. A bar booth at four in the afternoon. A hospital room. A hotel suite. The location is part of the leverage. Decide the room before you roll.

LEVERAGE ASSESSMENT

Before the sit-down begins, count your Leverage Tokens. This number determines your starting position.

LEVERAGE TOKENS	SIT-DOWN MODIFIER
0	-1 to all sit-down rolls.
1	No modifier.
2	+1 to all sit-down rolls.
3	+2 to all sit-down rolls.
4	+1 to all sit-down rolls. Subject's protection threshold drops one tier.

Stage 5 bonus. If the file is at Stage 5 (Proof) at the sit-down, add +1 to the Resolution Roll.

THE SIT-DOWN SEQUENCE

Three beats. Each beat is a roll. Run them in order.

SIT-DOWN AT A GLANCE

BEAT	ROLL	WHAT IT SETS
1 • Leverage	D6 + Leverage vs. Protection	The threshold for Beat 2. How off-balance the subject is when Pressure begins.
2 • Pressure	NERVE at threshold from Beat 1	Whether you reach Resolution at all, and whether the subject's Protection drops further.
3 • Resolution	D6 + Leverage vs. Protection	The close type: Tight, Clean, Open, Blown, or Blown Bad.

Crossing the Code. Your Code is the one sentence you wrote at character creation describing what the war taught you not to do (CH.06). Once per sit-down, before any one roll, declare you are crossing your Code. +2 to that roll. Mark the case file entry as Code Crossed.

WHEN TO CROSS THE CODE // DECISION GUIDE

Save the +2 for the roll where it changes the math. Three scenarios:

Beat 1 was disastrous. Cross at Beat 2 to keep the case from going Blown. The +2 buys you a Resolution Roll at all.

Beats 1 and 2 went well. Cross at Beat 3 to push from Clean to Tight, or from Open to Clean. The +2 here improves the close type, not just whether you close.

Don't cross on a roll you're already favored to make. The Code Cross is a one-time-per-sit-down lever and carries a permanent mark on the Case File. Spending it to add +2 to a roll you would have made anyway is a wasted cross. Wait for the roll where it matters.

The Hostile cap. A sit-down in which the Code was crossed cannot end Blown Bad. Treat any failed-by-3+ Resolution as Blown.

Three crossings. After three Code Crossed entries, your investigator opens an internal review. The next After-Case Event is treated as Bad Year (see below).

Already spent. If you crossed your Code to force this sit-down after a second clock fire, the declaration is already spent. See CH.06 for the full Code rule.

BEAT 1: LEVERAGE ROLL

You present the file. Roll D6 + Leverage modifier. Compare to the subject's Protection threshold.

RESULT VS. THRESHOLD	EFFECT ON BEAT 2
Beat threshold by 2+	Subject is off-balance. Beat 2 Pressure Roll at Good (2+).
Met or beat threshold by 1	Standard position. Beat 2 Pressure Roll at Standard (3+).
Failed by 1	Subject pushes back. Beat 2 Pressure Roll at Hard (4+). No Protection adjustment.
Failed by 2+	Subject has you. Beat 2 Pressure Roll at Very Hard (5+). Their Protection threshold does not drop. If Beat 2 fails, case is Blown.

BEAT 2: PRESSURE ROLL

You hold the line. Roll NERVE at the threshold set by Beat 1.

Success. Move to the Resolution Roll.

Failure. Mark 1 Heat. Subject's protection threshold for the Resolution Roll increases one tier. If you were already at Blown risk (Beat 1 failed by 2+ and Beat 2 fails), the case is Blown.

Natural 6. Move to the Resolution Roll with +1 and the subject's protection threshold drops one tier.

Natural 1. Mark 2 Heat. The sit-down has produced new exposure. Faction security is now aware of the meeting.

BEAT 3: RESOLUTION ROLL

How it closes. Roll D6 + Leverage modifier. Compare to the subject's Protection threshold (as modified by earlier beats).

Forced by the clock. If a second clock fire forced this sit-down, Beat 2 is one tier harder and the Resolution Roll takes -1. You have bought the moment, not control of it.

RESULT	CLOSE TYPE
Beat threshold by 2+ AND file at Stage 5	Closed Tight
Beat threshold by 2+ at Stage 4, OR beat by 1-2 at any stage	Closed Clean
Met threshold exactly	Open File
Failed by 1-2	Blown
Failed by 3+	Blown Bad

Precedence. Closed Tight requires both conditions: beat by 2+ AND file at Stage 5. If only one condition is met, apply the next applicable row. Beat by 2+ at Stage 4 is a Closed Clean.

CLOSE TYPES

Closed Tight. The case is documented at full evidentiary weight. The subject is identified, the motive is established, and the record is complete. Faction courts cannot expunge it. The file in your safe holds. Career credit: Closed Tight. Payout at full tier. The case file entry earns a bonus reputation check.

Closed Clean. The case closes with documentation sufficient to act on. Not full proof, but enough. The record is updated. The subject may have resources to delay consequences, but the record exists. Career credit: Closed Clean. Payout at standard tier.

Open File. The file is on record but incomplete. The subject has resources to challenge it, and the sit-down didn't land cleanly. The case is marked Open in your file. You can return to it. Closing it in a later case gives you a bonus at case open. Career credit: Open. Payout at reduced tier.

Blown. The evidence is challenged. Your Heat total is on record. The subject's faction has enough to formally dispute the case. Mark Heat +2. The case returns to the investigation phase. The subject now knows exactly who is working against them. The next sit-down attempt is at -1 to all rolls.

Blown Bad. Same as Blown, plus the subject takes direct action. They go after one of your active sources, your client, or you directly. If you are targeted, resolve the attack using the Hostile Action rules below. If a source or client is targeted, remove their support until a future case reopens that contact. This is the worst outcome. It doesn't end the case. It changes what the case costs.

HOSTILE ACTION

If a Blown Bad targets you, the encounter resolves with attribute rolls and consequences. Use this lightweight handler unless you have a more detailed combat system you prefer.

The Approach. Roll EYE 4+. Success: you spotted them and chose your ground. Take +1 to the next roll. Failure: they had the jump.

The Engagement. Roll GUN 4+ if you went armed and intend to use it; FISTS 4+ if you went unarmed or chose to. Success: you held the ground. Failure: a wound (see below).

The Aftermath. Roll LEGS 4+ to clear the scene before the cops arrive. Success: nobody who matters knows what happened. Failure: an arrest report is generated. Your reputation drops one tier for the next case.

Wounds. A wound is Light, Mortal, or Lethal. Light: -1 to all rolls until the next case close. Mortal: same penalty plus a NERVE 4+ check between cases or it carries forward. Lethal: the investigator dies. Make a new one. The file in his safe stays open. Someone will find it.

BETWEEN CASES

If chaining cases into a career, resolve in this order after each close.

1. Wound Recovery. Light wounds recover automatically. Mortal Wounds persist. Roll NERVE 4+ to recover each Mortal Wound. Failure: the wound carries into the next case.

2. Heat Reset. Closed Clean or better: Heat resets to 0. Open File: Heat resets to 3. Blown: Heat resets to 5. Blown Bad: Heat resets to 7 (you start the next case already exposed).

3. Reputation Check. Apply any reputation tier advancement (CH.07). Check for personal evolution triggers.

4. Case File Update. Record this case. Case type, territory, subject protection level, close type, target hits, Leverage Tokens at sit-down, one line of field notes.

5. After-Case Event. Roll D8 on the After-Case Events table below. **If the result requires something you don't have yet** (a second case file entry to connect, an Open File to relocate, a territory to remember you), hold it pending and apply at the next eligible close.

6. Personal Evolution Check. Standard advancement triggers (see CH.07). Skip this step if you are running the WALK-IN INVESTIGATOR quickstart from CH.06; evolution applies once you upgrade to a full point-buy build.

AFTER-CASE EVENTS (D8)

D8 EVENT

- 1 Source comes forward.** A contact from this case reaches out voluntarily. They have something they didn't give you. It's relevant to the next case you roll. Start that case with 1 Lead already in the pool.
- 2 The record is challenged.** A faction's lawyers file a formal dispute against your case close. Your next case in this territory starts with 2 Clock ticks already marked.
- 3 Reputation review.** Your case close triggered a quiet conversation among the people who route work to you. Roll your current reputation advancement check now. Apply the result before the next case.
- 4 Client moves on.** Your client has new representation, a new firm, or a new job. Re-roll Step 6 of the Case Generator for your next case.
- 5 The subject moves.** Your Open File or Blown subject has relocated and is building something. The case type on any reopened Open File shifts one step (your call).
- 6 Something connects.** Two of your case file entries are connected. Pick the two and identify the link. Your next case starts with 1 case target already revealed.
- 7 Quiet period.** No complications between cases. Recover as normal. Start next case with 1 free Lead.
- 8 The city remembers.** Your name is circulating in the territory where you last worked. Sources in that territory either go one tier easier (they respect the record) or one tier harder (they've been warned). Decide based on the case's close type: Closed Tight or Closed Clean = easier; Open File = mixed signal, no shift; Blown or Blown Bad = harder.

CLIMAX VARIABLES

When the Investigation Clock fires (at 5 ticks), roll D6 and apply the result immediately.

D6 VARIABLE

- 1 **Source goes silent.** Your most recently accessed source closes completely. Their LEAN threshold is now Extreme for this case. The case target they held (if any) must be approached through a different source.
 - 2 **Evidence is compromised.** One Hard Fact currently in the pool is removed. A piece of physical evidence has been moved, degraded, or officially reclassified.
 - 3 **Faction escalates.** The faction affiliated with your subject deploys security presence in the territory. The Tail fails automatically. The subject's defensive posture activates.
 - 4 **A second party enters.** Someone else is now investigating the same case. They are not your client. They may want documentation that aligns with yours, or the opposite. Roll D6: even = potential ally; odd = active obstruction.
 - 5 **New evidence surfaces.** An unexpected source makes contact. Reveal one case target immediately (your choice of which). The source comes with a condition.
 - 6 **Window opens.** The subject overplayed their hand. Their defensive posture backfired. For the next session, all investigation action thresholds drop one tier against the subject's primary case target.
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06/

THE INVESTIGATOR

The city has been here longer than you have. Build accordingly.

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BUILDING YOUR INVESTIGATOR

Your investigator is fully generative. No pre-built characters. You construct them from attributes, a War Detail, a Vice, a Specialization, and a Code — one sentence the war taught you not to cross. The Case Generator will test all of it.

Assign attributes per point-buy. Choose one Specialization. Roll or pick one War Detail. Roll or pick one Vice. Write your Code (one sentence: what the war taught you not to do to close a case). Record everything on your character sheet plus the Case File card (CH.07).

WALK-IN INVESTIGATOR // IF YOU DO NOT HAVE POINT-BUY OPEN

Use this baseline PI for your first case: **EYE 3+, LEGS 4+, NERVE 3+, GUN 5+, FISTS 5+**. Choose one Specialization below. Write one Code sentence. Roll one War Detail and one Vice. Start at the Walk-In tier and choose two Office items.

This is a legal starter profile for learning the game. Replace it with a full point-buy investigator when you want custom attribute math. While running the quickstart, skip the Personal Evolution step in the After-Case sequence (CH.05); it applies once you upgrade to a point-buy build.

Quick glossary, in case you haven't read CH.04 yet. **3+/4+/5+** is the number you need on a D6 to succeed — lower is better. **WALK** examines scenes (LEGS or EYE). **LEAN** works sources (NERVE). **PULL** reads records (EYE). **Hard Facts** stack to advance the file. **Leverage** sets up the Sit-Down. **Heat** is the city noticing.

ATTRIBUTES

Five attributes. Three of them carry the weight of the work. The other two cover the case if it goes hostile.

EYE. Reads scenes and records. Pulling files, interpreting documents, identifying patterns across a body or a building. Your EYE roll is the investigation's primary engine for building the file through WALK (analytical) and PULL.

LEGS. The physical work of the city. Walking the scene, surveillance, tailing, getting in and out of places, reading a body for what the cleaners missed. Your LEGS roll drives WALK (physical) and the Tail.

NERVE. Sitting across from a person and not blinking. Holding a line of questioning under pushback. The interrogation attribute. NERVE runs all LEAN actions and holds the Pressure Roll in the sit-down. Investigation-grade pressure is sustained focus under the threat of being thrown out, not a single act of bravery.

GUN. When the case turns hostile and there's distance. The .38 in the shoulder rig, the war-issue Colt in the desk drawer, the shotgun a friend lent you.

FISTS. When the case turns hostile and it's closer than the gun. Bar fights, doorway scuffles, the alley behind the Brown Derby.

ATTRIBUTE NOTE // WHAT TO PRIORITIZE

Investigators are not required to be combat-capable. Most cases keep direct engagement rare. An investigator with low GUN and FISTS is not at a disadvantage in investigation play. They are at a disadvantage if the case turns hostile before the sit-down. Build toward your specialization. Keep enough NERVE to hold a source when they push back.

Avoid placing any investigation attribute (EYE, LEGS, NERVE) at a target of 5+ unless you accept that cases routing into that attribute will likely close at Open File. Persistent Heat pushes thresholds up by one or two tiers; a 5+ target stacked with Heat 3+ becomes 6+ or 7+ on standard sources, mathematically out of reach. Keep your three investigation attributes at 4+ or better. Sacrifice GUN or FISTS instead.

THE WAR DETAIL

Every investigator carries one thing the war put into them. It provides a measurable advantage in specific contexts and a Heat pressure in scenes that touch what it cost. The advantage and the liability are the same biography. Roll D8 or pick.

D8	WAR DETAIL	ADVANTAGE	LIABILITY
1	OSS, European Theater	+2 to PULL against any institutional records (you have read worse).	Heat rises one extra in scenes involving Germans, displaced persons, or the Bureau.
2	Pacific MP / CID	+2 to LEAN against military or veteran sources.	Heat rises one extra in scenes involving Japanese-Americans (you worked the camps, or you didn't).
3	Marine, island campaigns	+2 to WALK at violent scenes (you've read worse rooms).	Heat rises one extra in the first scene of every case until you've eaten.
4	Army Air Corps, B-17 / B-24	+2 to anything done at night.	Heat rises one extra in confined spaces (a basement, a closet, the back of a Plymouth).
5	Navy / ONI	+2 to PULL against shipping, port, or financial records.	Heat rises one extra in any scene around water (Long Beach, San Pedro, the river, the lakes).
6	8th Army, Italy	+2 to LEAN against Italian sources, mob-adjacent and otherwise.	Heat rises one extra in churches.
7	Liberator (camp opener, ETO)	+2 to LEAN against any source attempting to dehumanize a victim by category.	Heat rises one extra in any case where the perpetrator's defense is institutional (it was policy, it was orders, it was the rule).
8	Stateside MP / Provost	+2 to WALK against any LAPD, Sheriff's, or military police installation.	Heat rises one extra in any scene where the LAPD is the subject's faction.

War Details apply automatically. They require no declaration. Liabilities apply automatically too – if a scene's content matches your trigger, mark Heat as written.

THE VICE

Every investigator has one. Roll D6 or pick.

D6	VICE	MECHANIC
1	Drink	Bourbon, gin, whichever. The first investigation roll in any after-sundown scene is at -1. Spend a Lead before that roll to negate it (you skipped the bar). Closing tight at any case grants 1 free Lead the next case (you held the line on this one).
2	Women	Specifically the wrong ones. Once per case, roll D6 at Stage 2: on 4-6 the femme fatale slot is filled. Declining her costs a Hard Fact. Accepting her gives a Lead and accelerates the Code Cross trigger by one tier (the next Code Cross is more likely).
3	The horses / the cards	Once per case, a source offers a tip in lieu of payment. Take it: +1 Lead, +1 Heat (the source now knows you owe).
4	Morphine	From the war. Suppressing pain costs nothing today and one Hard Fact next case (the come-down).
5	The grudge	A specific person from the war or a prior case. If their name surfaces, you cannot refuse to engage. The Code Cross trigger softens by one tier for cases involving them.
6	The wire	You record everything. Once per case you can replay a LEAN – reroll the Beat 3 result. If a source ever finds out (Heat 7+ involving them), they're done with you forever. Mark them as a permanent Closed Door.

INVESTIGATIVE SPECIALIZATIONS

Choose one at character creation. The specialization defines how you work. It is not a personality. It is a trained method.

New to the game? Pick The Closer. Its always-on bonus applies whenever the case's subject is at Shielded protection or below, which covers the majority of cases the Generator will hand you. There's nothing situational to remember in the first session.

THE CLOSER

You work people. Sources talk to you because not talking costs more.

Always-on: +2 to LEAN rolls when the case's subject is at Shielded protection or below. People talk before they feel the full weight of a faction coming around them. (Sources don't carry their own protection level — this bonus reads off the subject's tier on the index card.)

Once per case: Before declaring a LEAN roll, invoke the Closer. The source's LEAN threshold drops one tier for this roll. On a success, generate 1 Lead in addition to any Hard Fact produced.

Interview advantage: Beat 2 of the Interview is rolled at the lower of your NERVE target or 3+. The Closer never makes an easy source harder to work.

THE READER

You read spaces. Evidence tells you things that the people who cleaned the scene didn't think to hide.

Always-on: +2 to WALK rolls at crime scenes and locations that have been altered or cleaned after the incident.

Once per case: Before the first WALK roll at a location, attempt a free EYE Standard (3+) check. Success: generate 1 Lead in addition to any result produced by the WALK as normal. The bonus Lead and the always-on +2 are independent effects.

Target advantage: When you succeed on a WALK that hits the Place case target, generate 1 additional Lead beyond the standard Leverage Token.

THE GHOST

You work without being seen. The best evidence comes from sources who don't know they're sources.

Always-on: A successful Tail generates 1 Lead and 1 Hard Fact. A Natural 6 generates one additional Lead.

Once per case: Run a second Tail in the same session. Declare it after the first Tail resolves and before investigation actions begin.

Surveillance advantage: Tail Natural 1 does not activate the subject's defensive posture early. It produces no result instead.

THE FILER

You work paper. Records don't lie. Whoever built the record thought they buried it, but they built it first.

Always-on: +2 to PULL rolls against any institutional records system (LAPD, Sheriff's, Bureau, studio, City Hall, hospital, registries, banks).

Once per system encountered: When you first run an unfamiliar system, activate the Filer for +2 to the die roll on that PULL action.

Paper advantage: When the Crime Nature is Paper (Nature 8), start the case with the Record case target already revealed. You know where the data lives before the investigation begins.

CLARIFICATION // THE FILER STACKING

The Filer's always-on bonus and once-per-system bonus stack when both apply. A first PULL against an unfamiliar institutional system is +4 before Leads or equipment. This is intentional: the Filer is exceptional at getting into systems. Natural 1 still fails, still marks Heat, and still logs the inquiry under your name.

THE HANDLER

You work the interview room. Not always a room. But always a moment where someone has to decide whether telling you costs less than not telling you.

Always-on: Beat 1 of the Interview Sub-Sequence (Establish) drops one threshold tier for all named subjects.

Once per case: On a successful Beat 3 (Break or Connect), generate 1 Leverage Token in addition to any evidence produced.

Contact advantage: A Natural 6 on any LEAN roll creates a permanent contact: this source will answer one question in any future case, no roll required. Note them in your Case File.

STARTING EQUIPMENT / THE OFFICE

Each investigator starts with a small office kit. Equipment draws on the Reputation tier matching your current standing.

Walk-In (standard). Choose two: Camera (+1 to WALK at any physical scene, one use per case). Coded notebook (the client's first message arrives without Heat risk from interception). Source Credit (one source begins the case at one tier easier LEAN threshold, your choice). Press Card (forged or legitimate; +1 to first Cold Read roll if the case is in a territory already in your Case File).

Referred. All Walk-In items available. Choose one additional Referred item: Phone Company Friend (one phone-toll PULL per case at Standard regardless of source threshold). Sealed Lawyer's Brief (your standing cannot be formally challenged until Stage 4 of the file). Prior File Access (access one sealed prior PI file at no roll cost, one case).

By Name. All Walk-In and Referred items available. Choose one additional By Name item: Editor's Desk (one case target known at case open, no roll required). Black Book (the case complication is known before the investigation begins; see CH.03 Step 5). Direct Line (your client's intel quality increases one tier for this case; a Self-Client result becomes a Cop client).

THE CODE

Write one sentence that describes what your investigator will not do to close a case. Not a rule. A line. The state doesn't enforce it. The city will test it.

The Code is the line you wrote in a hotel room in Manila or Antwerp or Naples in 1945, when the war was over but the part of you the war made was still awake. Record it on your Case File card. When the case reaches Stage 4 and the sit-down hasn't gone cleanly, there will be a moment where crossing it produces a better outcome.

Crossing the Code. Once per sit-down, before any one roll, declare you are crossing your Code. +2 to that roll. Mark the Case File entry as Code Crossed.

What crossing looks like. Crossing the Code should be a concrete choice in the fiction, not a loose bonus. Crossing the Code means doing the thing the war taught you not to do. If your Code is "I don't burn a source to close a case," crossing it means naming them in the Open Record, using their statement without protection, or exposing their location to force the close. If your Code is "I don't hand a man over to people who'll work him with pliers," crossing it means doing exactly that.

Forcing the sit-down. If a second clock fire would force an Open File at Stage 4 or higher, cross your Code to force the sit-down now instead. Beat 2 is one tier harder. The Resolution Roll takes -1.

Stage 3 cases cannot force the sit-down. The Code Cross requires the file at Stage 4 or higher. A second clock fire at Stage 3 or below closes the case as Open File, regardless of how badly you want a different ending. The cases you can't push into the room you don't get to push.

The Hostile cap. A sit-down in which the Code was crossed cannot end Blown Bad. Treat any failed-by-3+ Resolution as Blown.

Three crossings. After three Code Crossed entries on your Case File, your investigator opens an internal review. The next After-Case Event is treated as a Bad Year: the next case opens at -1 to all rolls until the first successful LEAN. The drink is back, the sleep is gone, the war is in the room with you.

The point is that you decided in advance what kind of investigator you are. The case will find out if you meant it.

EXAMPLES // THE CODE

"I don't hand a man over to people who'll work him with pliers."

"I don't lie to a widow."

"I don't burn a source to close a case."

"I don't shoot a man in the back."

"I don't take a contract on a Jew."

"I don't drink before noon."

"I don't work for the Bureau."

"I don't testify."

07/

THE FILE AND THE CAREER

The cops close their books. Yours stays open.

The cops close their books. Yours stays open.

THE CASE FILE

Your Case File is a physical record. One entry per closed case. It is the only evidence that what you did happened at all.

Record the following for each case:

- Case number (sequential).
- Territory.
- Case type.
- Subject's protection level.
- Close type (Closed Tight, Closed Clean, Open File, Blown, Blown Bad).
- Target hits (0–3).
- Leverage Tokens at sit-down (0–4).
- One line of field notes. Write it yourself. Not a summary. Something specific.

Territory familiarity. After three Case File entries in the same territory, start all future cases there with one case target already revealed. You know the city. The city knows you're looking.

Case-type familiarity. After three Case File entries of the same Case Type (any close result), start all future cases of that type with 1 Lead already in the pool. The pattern reads to you faster than the brief. If the Case Type shifts mid-investigation (CH.03 Step 5, result 7), this bonus and any other Case File bonus tied to the original Case Type stop applying for the rest of the case.

Connected cases. When the After-Case Events table reveals that two of your entries are connected (result 6), mark them in your Case File. The next case in either territory starts with 1 Hard Fact already in the pool. The thread was always there.

REPUTATION ADVANCEMENT

Reputation advances through case performance, not time served. The city is not interested in how long you have been working. It is interested in whether you close.

WALK-IN TO REFERRED

Requirements (all three): At least 4 closed cases total. At least 2 Closed Clean or better results. No more than 1 Blown Bad on record.

Advancement check: After meeting requirements, roll D6 on the next case close. On a 4+, your reputation advances. On a 1–3, the review is pending. Try again after the next case close.

REFERRED TO BY NAME

Requirements (all three): At least 8 closed cases total. At least 4 Closed Clean or Closed Tight results. At least 1 Closed Tight result. No more than 2 Blown Bad results on total record.

Advancement check: After meeting requirements, roll D6 on the next case close. On a 5+, reputation advances. On a 1–4, pending. The phone call comes when it comes.

PERSONAL EVOLUTIONS

Permanent improvements earned through case patterns. An evolution is not a reward. It is your investigator learning something the cases taught them.

Check for evolution eligibility after each case close. Earn the evolution if the stated condition is met. Each evolution can be earned once.

NO WITNESSES

Condition: Three successful Tail rolls without triggering a Suspicion token within any two consecutive cases.

Effect: Once per case, a failed Tail roll generates 1 Lead instead of a Suspicion token. The source or location noticed something, but not you specifically.

THE RECORD

Condition: Two cases closed (Closed Clean or better) where the subject held faction-Protected or higher status.

Effect: Once per case, invoke faction standing formally. One faction-affiliated source's LEAN threshold drops one tier. Declared before rolling. Can only be used against sources affiliated with the case's primary faction.

PATTERN RECOGNITION

Condition: Three cases closed of the same Case Type.

Effect: Once per case, before the Cold Read, declare the Crime Nature (D10). If correct, the Cold Read succeeds automatically (no roll required) and reveals two case targets. If wrong, proceed with the standard Cold Read roll.

HEAT RESISTANT

Condition: Advance to Referred reputation without a Blown Bad result on record.

Effect: Natural 1 on any investigation action marks 1 Heat instead of 2. The investigation has cost you something. Not as much.

LEVERAGE

Condition: A Closed Tight with 0 target hits. You closed clean with nothing but file work.

Effect: Enter every sit-down with 1 Leverage Token regardless of target hits. The record itself carries weight now.

CITY MEMORY

Condition: Five cases closed in the same territory.

Effect: In this territory, the Heat Counter's Soft Surveillance threshold moves to 4 (instead of 3). Sources in this territory who you've previously LEANed successfully start at one tier easier on all future cases. You know the city. It knows what you cost.

OFFICE REQUISITIONS

Case close rewards are drawn from the Office Requisition system. One requisition per closed case, at the tier matching your reputation.

Walk-In Requisition. Pick one: Extra Lead (start next case with 1 Lead already in pool). Resupply (swap entire equipment kit at no cost before case open). Territory Brief (one territory data entry for a location not yet in your Case File: treat it as one case entry for familiarity purposes).

Referred Requisition. Pick one: Source Network (one named contact from a prior case is available for the next case as a willing cooperating source at Good threshold). Sealed Brief (case complication is known at case open). Heat Suppression (Heat Counter starts next case at -2, minimum 0).

By Name Requisition. Pick one: Open File Reopen (one prior Open File case can be reopened with its file restored to Stage 3). Black Standing (your authority cannot be challenged at any protection level for one case). Pre-Read (all three case targets are known at case open; no Cold Read roll required).

THE LONG INVESTIGATION

Some cases don't close in one session. Some don't close in one career. The Case File tracks them. An Open File is still a Case File entry. A Blown is still a Case File entry. The record is the record.

When a prior Open File is reopened, the file restores to Stage 3 (Actor). Hard Facts and Leverage Tokens start at zero. The case targets revealed in the prior investigation are known. The clock state is determined by how much time has passed.

What changed while the case sat open? The subject's protection level may have shifted. The territory may have changed hands. A source may have come forward or gone silent. Reopen a prior case by rolling D6 on the Case Change table.

D6 CHANGE SINCE THE CASE WENT COLD

- 1** The subject's protection level increased one tier. They used the time.
- 2** One case target has changed. The Place was moved or the Record was further buried.
- 3** A source from the prior investigation makes contact. They have something new. Start with 1 Lead already in the pool.
- 4** The territory's faction presence has shifted. Re-roll the territory's investigative texture entry.
- 5** The subject overstepped. Their protection level dropped one tier. Something happened while you weren't looking.
- 6** New evidence surfaced independently. Reveal one case target immediately. Someone else was documenting this.

CLOSING NOTE // FROM A LICENSED PI'S DESK BLOTTER

"The cases you don't close stay open. That's not a failure condition. That's the job. Some of them will close eventually. Some of them won't, and the reason they won't is the same reason you took them. The file exists. The cops can close their books. Yours stays open. That's what you're building. Not justice. The record."

QUICK REFERENCE

One spread. Every table. Keep it open at the desk.

INVESTIGATION ACTIONS

ACTION	ATTRIBUTE	USE
WALK	LEGS (physical) or EYE (analytical)	Locations, scenes, physical evidence, on-site institutional inspection.
LEAN	NERVE	Witnesses, suspects, informants, contacts.
PULL	EYE	Records, archives, ledgers, files, phone logs, registries.

Verb → target: Person → LEAN. Place → WALK. Record → PULL.

THRESHOLDS

Lower is better. 3+ means a raw D6 of 3 or higher succeeds. 2+ is easier than 5+.

THRESHOLD	ROLL
Good	2+
Standard	3+
Hard	4+
Very Hard	5+
Extreme	6+

Use the stricter of the attribute target and the source threshold. Modifiers add to the die.

ROLL RESULTS

RESULT	EFFECT
Success	1 Hard Fact. Case target: +1 Leverage Token.
Natural 6 (raw die)	1 Hard Fact + 1 Lead. Targets: +1 Leverage Token also.
Failure	Mark 1 Heat.
Natural 1 (raw die)	Mark 2 Heat. Additional consequence per action type.

EVIDENCE TOKENS

TOKEN	FUNCTION
Hard Fact	2 in pool = advance the file one stage. Remove both. Excess from one roll is lost.
Lead	+1 to one investigation roll. Declare before rolling. Carries between sessions.
Leverage Token	Target hits only. Determines sit-down quality. Cap: 4.

THE FILE

STAGE	NAME	UNLOCKS
1	Incident	WALK and PULL available.
2	Pattern	LEAN drops to Standard for cooperative sources. Tail available.
3	Actor	Subject's defensive posture activates. Interview available.
4	Motive	Sit-Down available.
5	Proof	Sit-Down +1 and Closed Tight threshold drops one tier.

STAGE PROMPTS

STAGE	NEXT BEST QUESTION	DEFAULT MOVE
1	What proves something happened?	WALK scene / PULL obvious record
2	What connects this to a person, office, route, or system?	LEAN source / Tail first
3	Which case target can become leverage?	Interview / hit revealed target
4	Close now or risk one more session for Proof?	Sit down if Clock or Heat is high
5	What are you waiting for?	Sit down

HEAT

HEAT	CONSEQUENCE
3	Soft surveillance. While Heat 3+, sources +1 tier harder to LEAN.
5	Active surveillance. Defensive posture activates. Remove 1 Lead each session.
7	Direct action. Best source goes silent once; Clock ticks now and each later session.
9	Standing challenged. All LEAN +1 additional tier. Client under pressure.

Lay Low: at Heat 5+, full session, no Tail or investigation actions. Reduce Heat by 1 and skip start-of-session Heat consequences. Clock still ticks at session end. Not available at Heat 9+.

THE TAIL

Once per session, before investigation actions. Roll LEGS 3+.

Success: 1 Lead, no Heat. Natural 6: 1 Lead + 1 Hard Fact. Failure: Suspicion token (source's next LEAN +1 tier). Natural 1: Subject's defensive posture activates early.

THE SIT-DOWN

Code Cross: once per sit-down, +2 to any one roll. Code-crossed sit-downs cannot become Blown Bad. If used after second clock fire: Beat 2 +1 tier, Resolution -1.

LEVERAGE TOKENS	MODIFIER
0	-1 to all rolls
1	No modifier
2	+1 to all rolls
3	+2 to all rolls
4	+1 to all rolls; subject's protection drops one tier

Stage 5 bonus: +1 to Resolution Roll.

BEAT	ROLL	GOVERNS
1: Leverage Roll	D6 + Leverage modifier vs. Subject Protection	Beat 2 threshold
2: Pressure Roll	NERVE vs. threshold from Beat 1	Resolution access and modifiers
3: Resolution Roll	D6 + Leverage modifier vs. Protection (modified)	Close type

CLOSE TYPES

RESULT	CLOSE TYPE
Beat threshold by 2+ AND Stage 5	Closed Tight
Beat threshold by 2+ at Stage 4, OR beat by 1-2	Closed Clean
Met threshold exactly	Open File
Failed by 1-2	Blown
Failed by 3+	Blown Bad

THE COLD READ

One per case. Before first session. Roll EYE Standard (3+) or Hard (4+) in surveillance-heavy territories.

Success: Reveal 1 case target. Natural 6: Reveal 2. Natural 1: false target; first action on it fails, marks 1 Heat, then reveal a different target. Failure: Case opens cold.

SOLO TARGETS

Player knowledge is not investigator knowledge. Write Person / Place / Record at setup, but do not use a target until a rule reveals it or an action clearly lands on it. For more surprise, leave targets blank and roll them when revealed.

SPECIALIZATIONS AT A GLANCE

SPECIALIZATION	ALWAYS-ON	ONCE PER CASE
The Closer	+2 LEAN vs. sources below Protected status	Drop LEAN threshold one tier; bonus Lead on success
The Reader	+2 WALK at cleaned/ altered scenes	Free EYE 3+ check at first entry
The Ghost	Tail success = 1 Lead + 1 Hard Fact	Run a second Tail this session
The Filer	+2 PULL vs. institutional records	+2 to first PULL on any new system; stacks to +4 if both apply
The Handler	Interview Beat 1 drops one threshold tier	Beat 3 success = bonus Leverage Token

COOKBOOK

Content support. Roll when the case has a slot the Generator didn't fill.

HOW TO USE THIS

The Cookbook is content support, not new rules. Roll on these tables when the case has produced a slot the Generator didn't fill — a source you need to imagine, a record you haven't named, a moment at the sit-down where you need the subject to speak. Every table here is optional. If you already know what's in the slot, skip it.

Tables are organized by where they fire in the case loop: case open, middle game, climax, after.

**FIELD NOTE // FROM AN UNDATED CARBON IN A LICENSED PI'S
DESK**

"The investigator who walks in with a finished story closes nothing. The investigator who walks in with a question closes some of them. The investigator who walks in with the right question closes the rest. The Cookbook teaches you to stop bringing stories."

SOURCE ARCHETYPES

When the file has stalled and you don't know who to LEAN next. Roll D10 on the table matching your Case Type.

HOMICIDE

D10 SOURCE

- 1** The first responder who logged the scene before the detectives arrived.
 - 2** The morgue attendant who handled the body before the official autopsy.
 - 3** The dead person's doctor or pharmacist. Has a file. Doesn't volunteer it.
 - 4** The neighbor who heard nothing and won't say why.
 - 5** The night-shift janitor at the building, paid to forget.
 - 6** The dead person's last call — the operator's slip survives in a sub-archive.
 - 7** The detective who closed the case in 48 hours.
 - 8** The Cold Case PI whose name appears in an earlier filing.
 - 9** The dead person's enemy, who now seems too calm.
 - 10** A witness who isn't on any roster — the kind of person who isn't there until they decide to be.
-

DISAPPEARANCE

D10 SOURCE

- 1** The roommate who reported them missing — took a week to call it in.
 - 2** The desk clerk at the residential hotel who logged the "voluntary departure."
 - 3** The doctor holding their last appointment file.
 - 4** The cab dispatcher who saw them step off the grid.
 - 5** The black-market courier who specializes in moving people.
 - 6** The family member who isn't grieving the way you'd expect.
 - 7** The previous tenant of their unit, evicted suddenly the same week.
 - 8** The studio publicist who flagged them as "non-compliant" two months prior.
 - 9** The bartender, fixer, or café owner who handled their daily rituals.
 - 10** The voice on the phone they kept calling, and didn't call again.
-

VICE

D10 SOURCE

- 1 The clinic intake clerk who saw the file before it was reclassified.
- 2 A girl or boy who escaped the same operation last quarter.
- 3 The freight handler at the cross-county transfer point.
- 4 The studio physician who signed off on the "transfer for treatment."
- 5 The independent doctor who fixes what licensed clinics break.
- 6 The black-market broker who knew the price last month.
- 7 A relative of one of the moved who stopped getting calls.
- 8 The corridor attendant who saw the convoy and was paid not to log it.
- 9 The PI on the case before yours — they pulled out.
- 10 The buyer's representative, slumming in a place they shouldn't be.

CORRUPTION**D10 SOURCE**

- 1** The compliance auditor who flagged the discrepancy and got reassigned.
- 2** The internal affairs officer running parallel.
- 3** A junior accountant who keeps personal copies of everything.
- 4** The contractor whose invoices show up on the wrong supply chain.
- 5** The mid-level signatory whose name is on six documents they don't remember signing.
- 6** The retired officer who'd talk if approached carefully.
- 7** The whistleblower's lawyer, three jurisdictions away.
- 8** A faction security officer assigned to "protect" the records.
- 9** The data archivist who knows what was edited, when, and who has a copy.
- 10** The faction patron who benefits and would rather it stayed buried.

TERRITORIAL INCIDENT

D10 SOURCE

- 1 The patrol officer who was on shift and isn't on shift anymore.
 - 2 The civilian witness on the wrong side of the line, now afraid to cross.
 - 3 The Sheriff's deputy who would file but his bureau won't allow it.
 - 4 The medical responder who treated the wound and recognized the weapon.
 - 5 The opposing-faction officer who'd cooperate off-record.
 - 6 A smuggler who works both sides and saw what happened.
 - 7 The night dispatcher who reviewed the patrol footage before deletion.
 - 8 The local fixer who knows whose silence is being paid for.
 - 9 A child or shift worker whose presence wasn't anticipated.
 - 10 The newspaper reporter who already wrote the story, and it didn't run.
-

COLD CASE**D10 SOURCE**

- 1** The original investigator, retired or quietly removed.
 - 2** The original client who routed the case.
 - 3** A source from the prior file who never gave it all up.
 - 4** The subject's faction security, who thought it was over.
 - 5** A new witness produced by recent technology — better photography, a clearer voice on a wire, an unsealed ledger.
 - 6** The family member who never accepted the close.
 - 7** The journalist who covered it then and never let it go.
 - 8** A criminal who's done their time and now wants something — pays in old information.
 - 9** The current holder of records the prior investigation didn't have access to.
 - 10** Someone who wasn't a witness then but became one in retrospect — they understand now.
-

FALSE TARGETS

When the Cold Read comes back Natural 1, one case target you think you know is wrong. The first action against it auto-fails (CH.04). Roll D6 here for why the target was false — the answer often becomes a thread of its own once the truth surfaces.

D6 THE FALSE REVEAL CAME FROM...

- 1 The brief was wrong by accident. Your client didn't catch the bad data before routing — an honest error, but not one they'll log.
 - 2 The subject's people planted disinformation, expecting an investigator. The plant survived their cleanup. They are watching to see if you take it.
 - 3 A faction security office salted the brief to protect their own ongoing case. They will not acknowledge it. The salt is good work.
 - 4 The original informant lied — knowingly to mislead, or because they themselves were misled. Track the lie back and you find the next thread.
 - 5 A witness named the wrong person in good faith. The resemblance was real. The right person looks enough like the wrong person that someone built the case on it.
 - 6 A second party — rival PI, journalist, fixer — is feeding the case false leads on purpose, steering you off their work.
-

THE CODE TEST

When the sit-down is in reach and the file hasn't gone cleanly, the moment to cross your Code presents itself. If you don't know what that moment looks like in this case, roll D8.

D8 THE MOMENT

- 1 The subject offers a name — bigger than yours — in exchange for the file you're holding. They mean it. The name is real. The file is the only thing keeping them in the chair.
- 2 The witness will only sign their statement if you sign first, with your name, in your handwriting. Standard procedure says witnesses sign alone. They will not.
- 3 Evidence sits on the floor. The lights cut for thirty-eight seconds. The faction officer in the room is checking the breaker. You are alone with what was left for you to find.
- 4 A source begs to be left out of the file. They've cooperated. The Open Record will name them and the city will read the name. You can omit them; nobody will know but you.
- 5 Your client sends an off-channel message: "We prefer an Open File here. Not for your reasons. For ours." They do not specify.
- 6 The subject is dying. Faction security is twenty minutes out. A confession in the next ten minutes would be admissible. After they die, it will not.
- 7 A second investigator — not licensed — offers to share evidence. Their evidence is real. Their employer is not the kind of party your client documents in cooperation with.
- 8 The subject's child, partner, or dependent — the kind of leverage you don't use — is in the next room and would talk if you asked. You did not ask. You could.

CLIMAX VARIABLES EXPANDED

When the Investigation Clock fires and you've rolled the Climax Variable, roll the matching D6 below for who or what.

RESULT 1 – SOURCE GOES SILENT: WHY?

D6 REASON

- 1 They've been pressured by someone with more leverage than you.
- 2 They saw what happened to the last person who talked.
- 3 Faction security took them in for "questioning."
- 4 They got paid.
- 5 Their family got threatened.
- 6 They realized you're not as protected as they thought.

RESULT 2 – EVIDENCE COMPROMISED: HOW?

D6 MANNER

- 1 Reclassified out of your access tier.
- 2 Physically destroyed in a "filing accident."
- 3 Re-tagged with a different chain of custody.
- 4 Quoted by a faction journalist before you can use it.
- 5 Discredited by a "new finding" filed against it.
- 6 Disappeared into a black-file system.

RESULT 3 – FACTION ESCALATES: HOW?**D6 FORM**

- 1 Visible surveillance — they want you to know.
- 2 A rival PI is suddenly assigned to "support" your case.
- 3 Your client is reassigned to a different theater.
- 4 Your standing is challenged in writing.
- 5 A faction press release names your investigation by file number.
- 6 A faction security team escorts you off a site, politely, with no charges.

RESULT 4 – A SECOND PARTY ENTERS: WHO?**D6 IDENTITY**

- 1 Rival PI working a parallel mandate.
- 2 Faction internal affairs, building their own case.
- 3 A freelance fixer paid by the subject's competitor.
- 4 A journalist deep enough to be useful, hostile enough to be dangerous.
- 5 A relative of the victim, no warrant, no patience.
- 6 A former associate of the subject who wants them gone for personal reasons.

RESULT 5 – NEW EVIDENCE SURFACES: WITH WHAT CONDITION?

D6 CONDITION

- 1 The source wants protection only the LAPD can provide (and won't).
- 2 The source wants payment in non-traceable currency.
- 3 The source wants the case closed in a specific way.
- 4 The source wants their name kept off the file.
- 5 The source wants you to also handle a separate matter.
- 6 The source wants you to leave the territory after closing.

RESULT 6 – WINDOW OPENS: WHAT TRIGGERED IT?

D6 TRIGGER

- 1 The subject made a public statement and contradicted their own cover.
- 2 The subject's faction is in internal dispute and stopped covering them.
- 3 A natural disaster or city event opened a corridor of access.
- 4 A subordinate of the subject defected.
- 5 The subject overspent and creditors are talking.
- 6 A piece of the subject's surveillance net malfunctioned and they don't know yet.

SUSPICION TOKENS

When a Tail failure marks a Suspicion token (CH.04), the source or location noticed something. Roll D6 for what. Their next direct contact's LEAN threshold goes up one tier as written; the table here tells you what the increase feels like in play.

D6 WHAT THEY NOTICED

- 1 They saw your face longer than they should have. They will recognize it next time.
- 2 They noticed the same vehicle, transit pattern, or face on three different days. It reads as deliberate.
- 3 A neighbor reported a stranger and the report was routed to them. They've read it.
- 4 Their security flagged a pattern they couldn't explain. The system kept the log.
- 5 A source they share with you mentioned someone asking similar questions. They've started comparing notes.
- 6 They didn't notice anything specific. They've felt watched. They've started lying.

SIT-DOWN VOICES

What the subject says when you put the file on the desk. Roll D6 on the table matching the subject's Protection tier.

EXPOSED (PROTECTION 2+)**D6 SAID**

- 1 "I'll cooperate. Give me a written assurance I won't be alone with them."
- 2 "Fine. I'll tell you what I know. Don't pretend you came here to listen."
- 3 "I did it. I want it on the record before they tell my version."
- 4 "What do you want? An apology? A name? I'll give you both."
- 5 "You don't understand. The people I'm afraid of will see this file."
- 6 "I'm tired. Close it."

SHIELDED (PROTECTION 4+)**D6 SAID**

- 1 "My counsel will be here in fifteen minutes. We can wait, or you can speak to them directly."
- 2 "What you have is a story. Stories don't survive faction review."
- 3 "You've been thorough. I'll grant you that. It changes nothing."
- 4 "Names. Specific names. Otherwise, you're describing a category."
- 5 "I want a closed-door discussion. Off-record. You first."
- 6 "Your license doesn't extend to what you think you've found."

PROTECTED (PROTECTION 5+)**D6 SAID**

- 1 "Your standing is being formally challenged as we speak. You should have been notified."
- 2 "I am not the subject of an investigation. I am cooperating with an inquiry."
- 3 "I'd like to know who routed this case. I'd like that on the record."
- 4 "Submit your file. Faction review takes ninety days. I'll send a response by courier."
- 5 "You should consider what kind of investigator you want to be. There's still time to choose."
- 6 "There is no documentation that survives this room. There hasn't been for years."

UNREACHABLE (PROTECTION 6+)**D6 SAID**

- 1 "I'm aware of who you are. I am also aware of who you were."
- 2 "Your client sent you because they wanted plausible deniability when this didn't work."
- 3 "Consider what closing this case actually accomplishes. The structure remains."
- 4 "You will be reassigned to a different theater within the week. This is not a threat."
- 5 "I have read your prior case files. You've done good work. I'd hate to see it wasted."
- 6 "There is no one to whom this documentation matters. Test that, if you like."

CRIME NATURE TELLS

What the player should look for at the scene. Reference your Nature roll (CH.03 Step 2) for the matching tell.

NATURE	TELL
1 Premeditated	Cleanup is too clean. The scene reads "expected." Look for the staging artifact: a chair angle, a closed window in a hot room, a missing detail nobody else notices missing.
2 Opportunistic	The cover story has a contradiction the cover-story-writer didn't notice. Some piece of timing doesn't add up by ten minutes.
3 Institutional	The paperwork is real and signed. The signatures are real. The person who signed didn't know they were signing this. Audit the access trail.
4 Covered	The scene was visited twice: once by the perpetrator, once by the cleanup team. The cleanup team always misses something. Look for the second-team trace — hair, fiber, a fingerprint where there shouldn't be one.
5 Ongoing	A new instance occurs during the investigation. You will hear about it before you can act on it. The time you have is the time the next victim is losing.
6 Political	The crime is the message. Read who benefits from it being read. Then read who benefits from it being misread.
7 Studio	The scene reads like a publicity setup that went wrong, not a crime that happened in a place. Look for the casting decision: who was supposed to be there, who actually was.
8 Paper	Physical evidence is incidental, fabricated, or absent. The evidence is in the records: signatures, edit trails, ledger lines, registration timestamps.
9 Factional	Two factions are watching. Each will try to steer you. Read whose intelligence reaches you first and whose reaches you slowest. The slower party often has the answer.
10 Personal	The crime references your own record. You were supposed to recognize something. The scene was set, in part, for you.

FIELD NOTES

The Case File asks for one line of field notes per close. Not a summary. Something specific. Roll D20 if you don't know what to write.

D20 WHAT YOU WRITE

- 1 The smell of the river in October.
- 2 What the witness's hands were doing while they lied.
- 3 The dead person's last appointment, missed by twenty minutes.
- 4 What the subject said at the door, before the recorder was on.
- 5 The specific kind of silence in a precinct house at hour 14.
- 6 The hour the corridor monitor's footage skipped.
- 7 The dent in the desk you couldn't account for.
- 8 The phrase the source repeated three times, never once asked.
- 9 What the client didn't ask you when you filed.
- 10 The way the file in your safe reads with this case in it now.
- 11 The thing your client did not say in your last call.
- 12 The sound the building made before the witness arrived.
- 13 The first lie. The second lie. The lie that mattered.
- 14 The kind of light in a clean room after a body is removed.
- 15 What the subject was reading when you walked in.
- 16 The detail you didn't include in your filing because it would have made you sound certain.
- 17 The witness who never gave their full name and you never pressed.
- 18 The hour your Heat first hit 5.
- 19 The thing you didn't do because of your Code.
- 20 The exact configuration of the chair in the room where it was decided.

SIT-DOWN ROOMS BY FACTION

CH.05 says: decide the room before you roll. The room is part of the leverage. Roll D6 on the table matching the subject's Faction Affiliation (Step 4) when you don't have a room in mind.

LAPD

D6 ROOM

- 1 A back booth at Cole's, well after the lunch rush, the radiator clicking.
- 2 An interview room at Central, no recorder, a uniformed man in the hall.
- 3 A parked car under the Fourth Street Bridge at dusk.
- 4 The corner of the Hat Squad's break room, after shift, the coffee an hour old.
- 5 A bench at MacArthur Park, both of you pretending not to know each other.
- 6 The captain's office, after-hours, the captain not present but somebody has the key.

THE BUREAU

D6 ROOM

- 1 A suite at the Biltmore that has no name on the door.
- 2 A third-floor office on Wilshire with a view of nothing.
- 3 The back of a sedan parked outside the federal building.
- 4 A windowless conference room at the LA field office, two attorneys in the corner not speaking.
- 5 A booth at Musso & Frank, the agent ordering nothing.
- 6 A house in Hancock Park rented under a name that does not exist.

THE STUDIOS

D6 ROOM

- 1 A fixer's office on the lot, blinds drawn at three in the afternoon.
- 2 A corner banquette at Romanoff's before the dinner crowd.
- 3 A bungalow at the Garden of Allah, by the pool.
- 4 The publicity vice-president's office, the door open, the secretary a witness.
- 5 A trailer on a stage that's between productions, the dust on the makeup mirror.
- 6 The contract executive's home in Bel-Air, the wife elsewhere for the afternoon.

THE MOB

D6 ROOM

- 1 A private dining room at an Italian place in San Pedro, two bodyguards at the door.
- 2 A back booth at the Brown Derby that nobody else sits at.
- 3 An office above a haberdashery on Spring, two flights up, no sign.
- 4 The bar at Slapsy Maxie's, after closing, the chairs already on the tables.
- 5 A cabana at the Ambassador, the pool empty, a towel boy paid to leave.
- 6 A linen room at a hotel laundry in East LA, the boiler running for cover.

CITY HALL / DA'S OFFICE

D6 ROOM

- 1 A private dining room on the third floor at the Biltmore.
- 2 A corner office at City Hall with the door locked, the secretary sent for coffee.
- 3 The back of a Cadillac parked outside the Hall of Justice.
- 4 A private booth at the Town House, the curtains drawn, no menus.
- 5 A study in a house off Wilshire, three deputies elsewhere in the building.
- 6 The deputy DA's chambers, after-hours, the stenographer dismissed.

THE PRESS

D6 ROOM

- 1 A corner table at the Pantry at two in the morning.
- 2 The column editor's office at the Times, the night-desk lights on.
- 3 A payphone in the lobby of the Roosevelt Hotel.
- 4 The stringer's apartment in Echo Park, the typewriter on the kitchen table.
- 5 A booth at Musso & Frank, the columnist ordering for both of you.
- 6 The morgue at the Examiner, dust on the boxes, nobody on the floor.

HEAT MANIFESTS AS

The Heat thresholds in CH.04 describe mechanical effects. This is what those effects look like at the desk. Roll D6 on the matching tier when you want the city's pressure to land as a scene instead of a number.

HEAT 3 – SOFT SURVEILLANCE

D6 WHAT YOU NOTICE

- 1 A second car has been parked on your block both mornings this week. Same model. Different driver.
- 2 The doorman at your building remembers a man who asked about you. He didn't leave a name.
- 3 Your secretary mentions a call she fielded that didn't ask for anything in particular. The voice didn't say goodbye.
- 4 A friend at the LAPD records office is suddenly unable to take your call.
- 5 The waitress at your usual diner is friendlier than yesterday, the way somebody is friendly when somebody else is watching.
- 6 You find the corner of your office door scuffed where it wasn't scuffed last week.

HEAT 5 – ACTIVE SURVEILLANCE

D6 WHAT YOU NOTICE

- 1 You make a tail at Fifth and Olive. He doesn't pretend not to be there.
- 2 The hat-check girl at Cole's gives you a look that wasn't friendly.
- 3 A patrolman you don't know nods at you by name as you walk past his beat.
- 4 Your phone clicks once before it rings. Then it rings normally.
- 5 A clerk at a records office you've never visited recognizes you and doesn't say so.
- 6 A car pulls in three doors behind you and stays there for the whole drive home.

HEAT 7 – DIRECT ACTION

D6 WHAT YOU NOTICE

- 1 Your best source called this morning. "I can't talk anymore. Don't come by."
 - 2 A clerk you talked to last week was reassigned. Her new desk is three buildings away.
 - 3 The lock on your office door turns wrong when you arrive. Somebody has been inside.
 - 4 A man you used to drink with at Cole's won't make eye contact at the bar.
 - 5 A note slid under your door in the night. No envelope. One sentence.
 - 6 The driver of the car that's been on you brakes hard, gets out, and walks toward your driver-side window. He doesn't speak. He doesn't have to.
-

HEAT 9 – STANDING CHALLENGED

D6 WHAT YOU NOTICE

- 1 Your client called. Their lawyer was on the line. They want the file.
 - 2 The licensing board has a letter for you. Certified. Signed for at the door.
 - 3 A faction columnist names your investigation by file number in the morning paper.
 - 4 Your bank calls. Two of your accounts have holds on them, "pending a review."
 - 5 The deputy DA you usually call doesn't pick up. Their secretary says they're in a meeting that hasn't ended in three days.
 - 6 A formal challenge to your standing arrives by courier. The signatory is somebody whose name you have just learned, this case, that you didn't want to learn.
-

ACTION RESULT VOICES

What an action result sounds like at the desk. Three tables — one per verb. Roll D6 on the row matching your result (success, failure, Natural 6, Natural 1) when you want a sentence to write down instead of just a token movement.

WALK RESULTS

D6	SUCCESS	FAILURE	NATURAL 6	NATURAL 1
1	The room hasn't been opened in a week. Dust on the desk lamp. The cleaners missed a corner.	The scene is too clean. Either nothing happened here, or you don't have time to find what did.	You see what the second team missed: a name in pencil on the underside of a desk drawer.	The building manager catches you. He has the keys and a face that says go.
2	You walk it the way you walked rooms in '44. The corners read.	You spend an hour in a room that's already given up everything it has.	A train ticket in the wastebasket. Unpunched. Departure three days out. Somebody had plans.	You knock something loose putting a drawer back. By tonight, somebody who matters will know.
3	The scene tells you what the report didn't. A frame at the wrong angle. A drawer that closes wrong.	You don't get past the super before he's on the phone.	The angle of the lamp is wrong for somebody right-handed. The cleaners didn't know.	A neighbor sees you through the doorframe. You'll be on a description by morning.
4	You read the body the way you read a sentence. The punctuation is wrong.	The witnesses on this hallway aren't home. Or they are, and they aren't answering.	A second set of fingerprints under the first. They didn't dust deep enough.	You walk through a piece of evidence you didn't see. The shoe print is yours now.
5	The body of the room tells you the order. Who entered first. Who closed up.	You spend the afternoon on a scene that's been three weeks dead.	A telephone in a back room with a number written on the cradle in marker. Not the building's number.	The site is wired. You don't know that yet. You will.

D6	SUCCESS	FAILURE	NATURAL 6	NATURAL 1
6	Twenty minutes in a room that didn't want to be read. It reads anyway.	The scene was worked before. By somebody who knew what they were doing.	The lock on the back door was forced from the inside. You weren't supposed to look there.	You leave a glove on a sill. Two days from now somebody will find it.

LEAN RESULTS

D6	SUCCESS	FAILURE	NATURAL 6	NATURAL 1
1	She lights a cigarette, looks past you, and says it.	She shows you the door. Polite about it.	"Here's what I'll tell you. And one other thing because you didn't ask." That other thing is the case.	She smiles when she says good-bye. By the time you're on the street, she's on the phone.
2	He doesn't look at you when he says it. He says it.	The widow looks at you a long moment. Then she goes back to her ironing.	She slides the photograph across the table. You weren't expecting it. Neither was she, an hour ago.	"Tell whoever sent you to send somebody better." You're still parsing it when the door closes.
3	They talk. Not for free. The price is something you can pay.	A long silence. Then: "I think you should leave."	He writes a number on a matchbook. "Don't say I gave it to you. It'll answer once."	You misread the room. You'll see how badly in two days.
4	They give you the name. They give you the date. The name and the date are enough.	The source gives you a fact you already have. They won't extend it.	"He was in the building that night. I saw him. I'll say so on the record if you find the second man."	The source asks you who else you've talked to. You tell them. They write it down.
5	The source confirms what you came in suspecting. They confirm it sideways. It's enough.	"That's the company line. I gave it to the Department twice. I'll give it to you."	A name you didn't ask for. A name from before. A name that connects two of your other cases.	The source says they'll meet you again. They don't show. The street outside their building is too quiet.

D6	SUCCESS	FAILURE	NATURAL 6	NATURAL 1
6	They tell you something you didn't bring. You take it home and try to fit it into the file.	The source weeps. Not because of you. They tell you nothing the tears didn't already tell you.	"I have what you want. It's in a box. The box is in a place I can take you tonight."	The source's face changes when you say a particular word. They never come back to the conversation.

PULL RESULTS

D6	SUCCESS	FAILURE	NATURAL 6	NATURAL 1
1	The clerk pulls the jacket. Neither of you looks at the other. The transaction is over before it started.	The file isn't where it should be. The clerk shrugs.	The clerk slides the jacket across and lets her finger rest a second longer than she needs to. "Page four. I didn't see anything."	The clerk writes your real name in the log. Your license number. By tomorrow somebody is reading it.
2	You sign with a name that isn't yours. The file comes up. Most of it is there.	"That one's been pulled." She won't say by whom.	A misfiled duplicate from '46. It tells you what the cleaned copy was hiding.	You take the file home. The pages don't match the cover. The cover was the bait.
3	You join the records office's routine. You don't break it. You leave with what you came for.	You wait at the counter for forty minutes. You leave with nothing.	The carbon is lighter than the top sheet. Different typist. Same date. Different content.	The signature on the slip is yours. The faction that owns this office will read it inside a week.
4	The ledger reads. The dates align with the body.	The right page is missing. The binding has been re-stitched once.	A second ledger, kept by hand, in a desk drawer. Names the top ledger doesn't have.	You misfile the original on the way out. A clerk you don't know finds it tomorrow.
5	The phone toll record has the call. The duration. The exchange.	The record exists. The portion you need has been "lost in transit between archives."	The original handwriting on the form. Not the typed version. The form was changed after.	You leave a fingerprint on a page you didn't want to be associated with.

D6	SUCCESS	FAILURE	NATURAL 6	NATURAL 1
6	The file's there. It reads the way you thought it would.	The file's been re-tagged with a different chain of custody. Yours is no longer accessible to outside requests.	The microfilm of the destroyed original. A clerk in 1947 made it without authorization. It's still in the box.	You sign for a file that wasn't supposed to leave the building. They notice tomorrow.

CLOSING NOTE // FROM AN UNDATED CARBON

"Tables are scaffolding. The case is what you build on them. If you remember the table you rolled, you didn't roll well enough. If you remember the source, the room, the line the subject said when the file landed — you closed it."

WORKED EXAMPLE

One case. Start to close.

One case. Start to close.

WORKED EXAMPLE: CASE 001 — DISAPPEARANCE, HOLLYWOOD

This example walks through a complete case to show the generator, investigation, and sit-down in motion. All rolls are stated. All results are applied as written. The investigator is a Walk-In PI named Eli Bauer — OSS, ETO during the war, now licensed and working out of a single-room office on Ivar Avenue. Specialization: The Filer. Code: "I don't lie to a widow." Vice: Drink. War Detail: OSS, European Theater (+2 to PULL against institutional records; Heat rises one extra in scenes involving Germans, displaced persons, or the Bureau).

GENERATOR

Step 1 (Case Type): Roll D6 = 2. Disappearance.

Step 2 (The Crime): Nature D10 = 7 (Studio — the crime exists in the publicity machine). Scale D6 = 2 (Cluster — three to five connected). Wrinkle D8 = 5 (a prior PI worked this and went dark; their last file is in a lawyer's safe and contains one case target).

Step 3 (Territory): Roll D8 = 1. Hollywood. Every source is performing. PULL against any studio system is Hard or worse.

Step 4 (Subject): Protection D6 = 4 (Shielded, Hard 4+). Affiliation D6 = 3 (the Studios). Defensive Posture D6 = 1 (Buried: on activation, next PULL threshold increases one tier).

Step 5 (Case Complication): Roll D10 = 3. The clock was already running: start with 2 Clock ticks marked.

Step 6 (Client): Roll D6 = 4. The Family. A woman named Ruth Halloran walked in this morning. Her sister, Connie, was a contract player at one of the studios. Connie has not called home in three weeks. The studio publicity office told Ruth that Connie went to Phoenix to dry out. Ruth has been to Phoenix. Connie isn't there.

Step 7 (Clock State): Roll D6 = 3 (Active: 1 tick). Plus 2 ticks from Case Complication = 3 ticks at case open.

Index card: Disappearance / Studio / Cluster / Wrinkle 5 / Hollywood / Studios / Shielded / Buried / Complication 3 (clock pre-loaded) / Client: Family (Ruth Halloran) / Clock: 3 / Targets: [] [] []

THE COLD READ

Eli is licensed Walk-In tier. Cold Read threshold is Standard (3+) since Hollywood doesn't have biometric surveillance — but the studio publicity office is its own kind of monitoring. Eli's EYE rating is 3+. Roll D6 = 5. The roll meets the EYE target and clears Standard. **Success.** Reveal one case target: The Record. Pre-investigation files at the Hall of Records show Connie Halloran was checked into a Pasadena clinic three days before her last contact with Ruth. The intake form was filed under a different name. That name is the Record target, now face-up.

SESSION 1

Action 1 – WALK (analytical) the Pasadena clinic intake office. EYE 3+. Studio territory but no studio system here yet. Roll D6 = 4. Success. Generate 1 Hard Fact. The intake nurse confirmed the false name and mentioned a chauffeur who waited outside — not studio livery. File at 1 Hard Fact.

Action 2 – PULL the studio publicity records on Connie Halloran. Hollywood territory says studio systems are Hard (4+) to PULL. Eli is The Filer (+2 to PULL against institutional systems) and gets +2 from his War Detail (OSS, ETO — he's read worse). EYE 3+. Roll D6 = 2. With +4, modified result is 6. Meets Hard threshold. **Success.** Generate 1 Hard Fact (case target hit on Record? Yes — the publicity record names Connie's "Phoenix" cover as a studio document; this is a clear hit on the Record case target). Target hit: also generate 1 Leverage Token. Pool: 2 Hard Facts, 1 Leverage Token.

File advances. 2 Hard Facts in pool: file moves Stage 1 (Incident) to Stage 2 (Pattern). Remove both tokens. LEAN drops to Standard for cooperative sources. Tail available.

Action 3 – LEAN on Connie's roommate at the Studio Club, the residential hotel for contract players. Standard threshold (chain at Stage 2, cooperative source). NERVE 3+. Roll D6 = 5. Success. Generate 1 Hard Fact. The roommate confirmed Connie was scared, packed in a hurry, and was picked up by a man in a gray suit who wasn't her usual driver. File at 1 Hard Fact.

End of session: clock ticks once. Clock: 3 + 1 = 4 ticks.

SESSION 2

Tail. Eli runs a Tail on the Studio Club to see if anyone comes looking for the roommate. Roll LEGS 3+. Roll D6 = 6 (Natural 6). Generate 1 Lead and 1 Hard Fact. A studio publicity man arrived at noon and pressured the roommate to "amend" her statement. Eli now has photographs. Pool: 2 Hard Facts, 1 Leverage Token (carried from prior session? No — Leverage carries; tokens already counted). Pool: 2 Hard Facts.

File advances. Stage 2 (Pattern) to Stage 3 (Actor). Subject's defensive posture activates: Buried. The studio is moving evidence deeper. Eli's next PULL threshold goes up one tier. Interview Sub-Sequence is now available.

Action 1 — LEAN on the Studio Club's house manager. NERVE 3+. The chain is at Stage 3, but this source is operationally cooperative (he likes Eli). Standard. Roll D6 = 1. Natural 1. Always fails, always marks 2 Heat. The source warns the studio — this manager has been on the studio's side longer than Eli has been on his. Heat: 2. Subject's defensive posture activates if not already — it's already active.

Action 2 — PULL the chauffeur's license registry through County DMV. Buried posture pushed PULL up one tier; in Hollywood territory studio systems are Hard, but County DMV isn't a studio system. Standard +1 = Hard (4+). Eli's Filer always-on is +2. EYE 3+. Roll D6 = 4. With +2 = 6. Meets Hard. Success. Generate 1 Hard Fact (the gray-suit driver is a known studio "transportation specialist" with three priors for false-pretense kidnapping that never went to trial). Pool: 1 Hard Fact.

Action 3 — WALK the Studios' transportation pool lot at night. LEGS 4+. Eli runs surveillance on the lot through the wire fence. Hard threshold (Hollywood territory + buried posture). Roll D6 = 5. Meets Hard. Success. Generate 1 Hard Fact. The driver's sedan is here. The trunk is hosed-down. Case target reveal? This is a clear hit on The Place — the lot is where Connie was transferred. Flip Place face-up. Generate 1 Hard Fact + 1 Leverage Token. Pool: 2 Hard Facts, 2 Leverage Tokens.

File advances. Stage 3 (Actor) to Stage 4 (Motive). Sit-Down available. Pool: 0 Hard Facts, 2 Leverage Tokens.

End of session: clock ticks once. Clock: $4 + 1 = 5$ ticks. **Clock fires.**

Climax Variables. Roll D6 = 4. A second party enters. Roll D6 = 1 (odd: active obstruction). A rival PI — one Eli knows, named Wexler — has been hired by the studio to "support" the Halloran case. Wexler's standing is being used to file motions to challenge Eli's license. Clock resets to 2 ticks.

SESSION 3

Eli could push for Stage 5 (Proof). The clock will fire again at 5 ticks. He has the file at Stage 4, 2 Leverage Tokens, and a second clock fire pending. He decides: one more session for Proof, then the sit-down before the clock fires twice.

Action 1 – Interview Sub-Sequence on the chauffeur (named in the DMV PULL).

The chauffeur is the Person case target, suspected. Eli traces him to a bar in Burbank.

Beat 1: LEAN to establish. Threshold Standard (3+) since Eli has the photographs and the registry. NERVE 3+. Roll D6 = 4. Success. Move to Beat 2.

Beat 2: NERVE 3+ (source is cooperative under pressure). Roll D6 = 3. Meets exactly. Success. Move to Beat 3 with +1 modifier (result = threshold exactly).

Beat 3: $D6 + 1 = \text{roll } D6 = 5, +1 = 6$. Full truth. Generate 1 Hard Fact and 1 Leverage Token. The chauffeur was paid by the studio publicity office to deliver Connie to a "rest house" in the Verdugo hills, where she still is. He gives Eli the address. The chauffeur is the Person case target — this is also an target hit. Generate 2 Hard Facts and 1 Leverage Token (the Full truth + case target rule). Pool: 2 Hard Facts, 4 Leverage Tokens. Leverage cap (4) is met.

File advances. Stage 4 (Motive) to Stage 5 (Proof). Pool: 0 Hard Facts, 4 Leverage Tokens.

Eli has reached Proof. He can sit down. He chooses to.

THE SIT-DOWN

Eli arranges a meeting with the studio publicity head — the man who signed off on Connie's "Phoenix" cover. The location is the publicity office on the lot at six in the evening. Eli brings a copy of the file. The original is in a safe his lawyer holds.

File at Stage 5 (Proof). 4 Leverage Tokens. Sit-Down modifier: +1 to all rolls AND subject's protection threshold drops one tier (Shielded Hard 4+ becomes Standard 3+). Stage 5 bonus: +1 to Resolution Roll.

Beat 1: Leverage Roll. $D6 + \text{Leverage modifier} = D6 + 1$. Roll $D6 = 4$. $4 + 1 = 5$. Standard threshold (3+). Beat by 2. Subject is off-balance. Beat 2 Pressure Roll at Good (2+).

Beat 2: Pressure Roll. NERVE 3+ at Good threshold (2+). The publicity head opens with a smooth question about Eli's license. Eli does not answer it. Roll $D6 = 3$. Success. Move to Resolution Roll.

Beat 3: Resolution Roll. $D6 + 1$ (Leverage modifier) + 1 (Stage 5 bonus) = $D6 + 2$. Roll $D6 = 5$. $5 + 2 = 7$. Threshold Standard (3+). Beat by 4. **Beat by 2+ AND Stage 5: Closed Tight.**

Result: Closed Tight. The studio agrees to release Connie quietly to a doctor of Ruth's choosing. The publicity head signs a written acknowledgment that the Phoenix cover was fabricated. Eli's file in his safe holds. Career credit: Closed Tight. Payout at full tier. Reputation advancement check available.

AFTER-CASE EVENTS

Heat was 2 at close. Heat resets to 0 (Closed Tight). After-Case Event roll: $D8 = 7$. Quiet period. Start next case with 1 free Lead.

WHAT THIS EXAMPLE DEMONSTRATED

Token flow. Hard Facts pool until 2 are present, then the file advances and both are removed. Leverage Tokens accumulate separately and carry into the sit-down. They are not spent on file advancement.

Heat escalation. Heat accumulates from failures and Natural 1s. At Heat 3, sources stay harder to LEAN until Heat resets. The Heat Counter creates compounding pressure: the more you fail, the harder the next attempt becomes.

Natural 1 is always a failure. Session 2's first LEAN rolled a Natural 1. The 2 Heat was marked and the action failed regardless of any modifier that might have brought the modified total above the threshold.

Clock fires complications, not endings. The clock reached 5 ticks at the end of Session 2. The fire applied a Climax Variable (a second party enters) and reset to 2 ticks. The investigation continued. A second fire before Stage 4 would have forced an Open File close; at Stage 4 or higher, crossing the Code can force the sit-down under penalty.

Case targets produce Leverage. Succeeding against the Record, Place, and Person case targets generated Leverage Tokens in addition to Hard Facts. Those Leverage Tokens directly improved the sit-down result: 4 tokens meant +1 to all rolls and the subject's protection threshold dropped one tier.

Closed Tight requires Stage 5. The Beat 3 roll beat the threshold by 4, but Closed Tight was available only because the file was at Stage 5 (Proof). The same roll at Stage 4 would have been a Closed Clean.

CASE CLOSED // FROM ELI BAUER'S CASE FILE, ENTRY 001

"Case 001. Hollywood. Disappearance. Subject protection: Shielded. Close type: Closed Tight. Target hits: 3. Leverage at sit-down: 4. Field note: Connie was in a house in the Verdugos the whole time. Someone just had to keep asking. Ruth paid the retainer in cash and didn't ask what it cost me to get there."

PLAYER AIDS

Printable cards. Tear out. Use a pencil. Cases change.

CASE INDEX CARD FILE NO. _____

Case Type: _____

Crime - Nature: _____ Scale: _____ Wrinkle: _____

Territory: _____

Subject - Protection: _____ Faction: _____ Posture: _____

Complication: _____

Client: _____ Angle: _____

Target - Person: _____

Target - Place: _____

Target - Record: _____

LIVE TRACK File Hard Leads Lev Heat Clock

CLOSE TYPE: Tight Clean Open Blown Blown Bad

Field Note: _____

- cut here -

CASE INDEX CARD FILE NO. _____

Case Type: _____

Crime - Nature: _____ Scale: _____ Wrinkle: _____

Territory: _____

Subject - Protection: _____ Faction: _____ Posture: _____

Complication: _____

Client: _____ Angle: _____

Target - Person: _____

Target - Place: _____

Target - Record: _____

LIVE TRACK File Hard Leads Lev Heat Clock

CLOSE TYPE: Tight Clean Open Blown Blown Bad

Field Note: _____

INVESTIGATOR SHEET

LICENSED // STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Name: _____ Office: _____

ATTRIBUTES

EYE
__+

LEGS
__+

NERVE
__+

GUN
__+

FISTS
__+

SPECIALIZATION

- The Closer The Reader The Ghost The Filer The Handler

WAR DETAIL

Advantage: _____

Liability: _____

VICE

- Drink Women Horses/Cards Morphine Grudge Wire

THE CODE

"I don't... _____"

REPUTATION

- Walk-In Referred By Name

OFFICE / EQUIPMENT

CODE CROSSED

- 1st 2nd 3rd (next After-Case = Bad Year)

PERSONAL EVOLUTIONS EARNED

- No Witnesses The Record Pattern Recognition
 Heat Resistant Leverage City Memory

CASE FILE LOG

#	TERRITORY	TYPE	CLOSE	HITS	LEV	FIELD NOTE
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						

SESSION QUICK REFERENCE

KEEP AT THE DESK

PER SESSION

- 1 Tail (LEGS 3+) before actions
- 3 Investigation actions
- Clock ticks +1 at session end
- Apply Heat consequences at start of next

VERBS

- **WALK** — LEGS or EYE — scenes, on-site
- **LEAN** — NERVE — people
- **PULL** — EYE — records

RESULTS

- Hit threshold: +1 Hard Fact
- Target hit: +1 Leverage
- Natural 6: +1 Lead
- Failure: +1 Heat, source +1 tier
- Natural 1: +2 Heat + verb consequence

FILE STAGES

- 1 Incident — WALK / PULL
- 2 Pattern — LEAN Std, Tail unlocks
- 3 Actor — Posture activates, Interview
- 4 Motive — Sit-Down available
- 5 Proof — +1 Resolution, Closed Tight available

HEAT

- 3: Soft surveillance — LEAN +1 tier
- 5: Active — posture, lose 1 Lead/session
- 7: Direct — source goes silent, clock ticks
- 9: Standing — LEAN +1 again

CLOCK

- Ticks +1 each session end
- At 5: fires — roll Climax Variable, reset to 2
- 2nd fire before sit-down: forces Open File or Code Cross

SIT-DOWN

- Beat 1: D6+Lev vs Protection → sets Beat 2
- Beat 2: NERVE at Beat 1 threshold
- Beat 3: D6+Lev (+Stage5) vs Protection
- Beat by 2+ AND Stage 5 = Closed Tight
- Code Cross: +2, no Blown Bad possible

IF YOU FREEZE

- Stage 1: WALK / PULL the obvious
- Stage 2: LEAN cooperative / Tail
- Stage 3: Interview named subject
- Stage 4–5: Sit down

LA DICK

Edition 01 · A solo detective game set in Los Angeles, 1947–1953

A solo investigation engine. Build a private investigator. Generate a case. Work the city. Walk into the sit-down with documentation that holds — or doesn't.

Case types: Homicide, Disappearance, Vice, Corruption, Territorial Incident, Cold Case. Five investigative specializations. Three reputation tiers. Six personal evolutions earned across cases.

Territories: Hollywood · Bunker Hill · Central Avenue · Long Beach / San Pedro · The Valley · Pasadena / San Marino · East LA / Boyle Heights · Downtown.

Typography: Archivo Narrow (display) · IBM Plex Sans (body) · IBM Plex Mono (codes) · Newsreader (italic)

// THE FILE STAYS OPEN. //

// SOLO INVESTIGATION |

LA DICK / LOS ANGELES 1947

| REP: WALK-IN

01

BRIEF

L.A.

THE COPS CAN CLOSE THEIR BOOKS. YOURS STAYS OPEN.

LA Dick is a solo detective game set in Los Angeles between V-J Day and the early fifties. You play a licensed private investigator — a veteran working out of a downtown walk-up or a Hollywood office, taking studio money and police money and family money and the case nobody's paying for.

Generate a case in seven steps. Walk the city. Lean on sources. Pull records. Build the file through five stages. Walk into the sit-down before the clock fires twice. Close it tight, close it clean, leave it open, or blow it.

Five specializations. Three reputation tiers. A war-forged Code, a personal Vice, and a city that remembers everything you do in it.

02

SPECS

SOLO

PLAYERS 1 SOLO ENGINE	FILE 5 EVIDENCE STAGES	REP 3 REPUTATION TIERS	ENGINE D6 CORE
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03

CONTENTS

A5 FORMAT

CH.01	INTRODUCTION	CH.05	THE SIT-DOWN
CH.02	THE OFFICE	CH.06	THE INVESTIGATOR
CH.03	CASE GENERATOR	CH.07	THE FILE
CH.04	MECHANICS	BACK	QUICK REFERENCE

FILE OPEN
LOS ANGELES

TERRITORIES

- HOLLYWOOD
- BUNKER HILL
- CENTRAL AVE
- THE VALLEY
- DOWNTOWN

ONE FILE AT A TIME