

The Veiled Curtain

A Game of Spirits & Spies

In this war, killing a man only guarantees he'll talk.

Ashcan Version

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Forward

I had an idea of what I was going to write for the contest this year, but just as I was about to start, there was a thread on RPG Geek about alliterative TTRPG names. I came up with Spirits & Spies and a few others. But instead of just coming up with names, I came up with premises. I was going to try my 24-hours, but my thoughts of what I was going to do fled, so I didn't start. I kept thinking about Spirits & Spies and what it could entail. I realized that I had to see what that looked like, and this is the result of those musings. There are a few things I'd like to add, but didn't have enough time. Examples of play. An advancement system. Fleshing out a few systems, especially on the supernatural side. And I'd love a chance to do some layout and art, as I had no time for such niceties. But what is here is playable. And I hope enjoyable.

Introduction

The year is 1996, but not the one you remember.

The Cold War never thawed. The Berlin Wall still stands. The USSR remains unbroken; wounded, paranoid, and more dangerous than ever. NATO and the Warsaw Pact grind against each other in a decades-long stalemate of espionage, proxy conflicts, and ideological brinkmanship.

But the true reason the war endures is whispered only in sealed bunkers, haunted safehouses, and the archives of agencies that officially do not exist.

In the final days of World War II, as the Third Reich collapsed, a cabal of occult scientists enacted a ritual meant to secure eternal victory. They failed. Catastrophically. The veil between the living world and the spirit world thinned, cracked, and finally tore. The dead no longer stay dead. Ghosts no longer remain ghosts. And the boundary between memory and manifestation is now porous enough for intelligence agencies to weaponize it.

Every nation learned the same lesson: You cannot bury a secret when the dead can speak.

Now, in the 90s, espionage is no longer just a game of dead drops, wiretaps, and double Operatives. It is a war fought across two planes of existence. Spirits spy on the living. The living bargain with the dead. And the most dangerous operatives are those who can cross the threshold between worlds — or those who never fully returned from the other side.

You are one of them.

Your Character

Operatives are members of a covert cell working along the Veiled Curtain, serving the interests of their nation while navigating a world fractured by politics, secrecy, and the thinning boundary between life and death. Each Operative brings a distinct specialty to the cell, forming a unit capable of confronting whatever threats or revelations the **Director** places in their path. Together, they undertake missions that push them deeper into the Cold War's shadow war as they struggle to survive, protect their cause, and uncover the hidden forces shaping the world beneath its surface.

Character Creation

Creating an Operative begins with defining who they are at their core and how they stand against the pressures of the Veiled Curtain. Follow these steps to shape the foundation of your character.

1. Build Your Operatives's Backstory and Traits

Every Operative has a story outside of the Agency, both before their recruitment, and then through the gruelling day to day of their life on the front lines.

Answer the following questions:

- Who were they before recruitment?
- What was their job, their daily life?
- What was their introduction to the world beyond the Veil?

From this, choose **three Traits** that reflect your Operative's personality and worldview. Traits should be fundamental, and ideally ambiguous. A trait like "*Relentless*" could be a strength or a flaw depending on context. Write a short paragraph describing these traits.

After stats are assigned, add **two more Traits** that reflect your Operative's transformation since joining the Agency. These should show how the dealing with the supernatural world has changed them.

1. Assign the Operative's Statistics Your Operative is defined by four core Statistics:

- **Stature (STA)** — Physical strength and durability
- **Speed (SPD)** — Reflexes, agility, and precision
- **Wits (WIT)** — Learning, analysis, and clarity of thought
- **Weird (WRD)** — Instinct, intuition, luck, and uncanny insight

You have **10d6** to distribute among these four Stats.

- Maximum: **4d6** in any **one** Stat
- Minimum: **2d6+1** in any Stat
- Any single die may be broken into **three +1 modifiers**
- No Stat may have a die with more than **+2**
- You may not add modifiers to a Stat already at **4d6**

3. Assign the Operative's Careers Choose the four Careers that define your Operative's training and professional background. You have 6d6 to distribute among them.

- Maximum: 3d6 in any Career
- Minimum: 0d6 (you know the basics)
- Careers **can not** receive modifiers.

4. **Assign the Operative's Specialty Skills** Finally, refine the Operative's expertise. You have 6d6 to allocate across Specialty Skills.

- Maximum: **3d6** in any Specialty
- No modifiers are allowed.

Occupations

Standard

Cleaner

Removes evidence, sanitizes scenes, and erases operational footprints.

Skills: Disguise Cleanup, Evidence Disposal, Scene Reconstruction, Chemical Handling, Silent Entry

Black-Bagger

Breaks into secure locations to steal, plant, or retrieve sensitive materials.

Skills: Lockpicking, Covert Entry, Alarm Bypass, Silent Movement, Close-Quarters Neutralization

Watcher

Conducts surveillance, tailing, and pattern analysis from the shadows.

Skills: Shadowing, Long-Watch Stamina, Optical Surveillance, Behavioral Reading, Counter-Surveillance

Investigator

Follows leads, interviews sources, and uncovers hidden truths.

Skills: Deduction, Evidence Analysis, Interview Technique, Paper Trail Tracking, Field Research

Wetworker

Executes lethal operations with precision and deniability. **Skills:** Silent Kill, Sniper Technique, Escape Routes, Target Study, Improvised Weapons

Handler

Manages assets, directs field operatives, and maintains operational stability.

Skills: Asset Management, Negotiation, Psychological Profiling, Mission Coordination, Crisis Control

Forger

Creates false identities, documents, and physical reproductions.

Skills: Document Crafting, Seal Replication, Signature Mimicry, Photo Manipulation, Identity Fabrication

Driver

Provides transport, evasive maneuvers, and rapid extraction.

Skills: High-Speed Driving, Evasive Maneuvers, Route Planning, Vehicle Maintenance, Pursuit Breaking

Analyst

Synthesizes intelligence into actionable insight.

Skills: Data Correlation, Pattern Recognition, Threat Assessment, Report Drafting, Signal Interpretation

Techie

Builds, repairs, and deploys gadgets, sensors, and analog electronics.

Skills: Circuit Repair, Bug Installation, Analog Systems, Field Improvisation, Signal Jamming

Monitor

Detects infiltration, leaks, and compromised personnel.

Skills: Counterintelligence, Interrogation, Pattern Disruption, Internal Surveillance, Security Auditing

Medic

Keeps operatives alive through trauma, field surgery, and emergency care.

Skills: Trauma Stabilization, Field Surgery, Triage, Pharmaceutical Knowledge, Pain Management

Fixer

Solves problems through connections, bribes, favors, and improvisation.

Skills: Networking, Procurement, Street Contacts, Fast Negotiation, Crisis Logistics

Mystical

Echo-Readers

Perceive spirits, spectral traces, and veil disturbances with heightened sensitivity.

Skills: Spirit Perception, Echo Tracking, Veil Mapping, Emotional Resonance, Whisper Interpretation

Conduits

Channel controlled bursts of spectral energy through Ghostwire implants.

Skills: Spirit Channeling, Psychokinetic Focus, Backflow Control, Energy Projection, Threshold Stabilization

Binders

Perform rituals that anchor, restrain, or shape spirits and veil forces.

Skills: Binding Runes, Ritual Circles, Spirit Negotiation, Anchor Construction, Veil Reinforcement

Invokers

Summon spirits into controlled manifestations for interrogation or combat.

Skills: Invocation Rites, Manifestation Control, Circle Casting, Spirit Bargaining, Containment Protocols

Pale-Ops

Operate tactically alongside spirits, using them for reconnaissance, disruption, or infiltration.

Skills: Spectral Coordination, Ghost Tactics, Dual-Plane Awareness, Whispernet Navigation, Possession Avoidance

Null Operatives

Neutralize, trap, or suppress hostile spirits and supernatural phenomena.

Skills: Warding, Spirit Trapping, Null Field Deployment, Anti-Possession Technique, Veil Sealing

Half-Returned

Liminal operatives who exist partially in both worlds, either through near death experiences or ghostwire implants that use their condition as an asset.

Skills: Threshold Walking, Partial Manifestation, Death-Sense, Liminal Reflexes, Possession Resistance

Finalizing Your Operative

Four final elements complete your Operative and prepare them for life along the Veiled Curtain.

1. **Fate** Fate represents the Operative's connection to the uncanny—fuel for supernatural abilities, their almost prescient ability to plan for the unplanned and a buffer against catastrophic harm. Your Fate equals the number of dice in WRD.
2. **Adrenaline** Adrenaline measures combat urgency: the sudden bursts of focus, fear, and instinct that shape violent encounters. It begins at 0 and rises or falls as the Operative acts under pressure.
3. **KGB Profile & NATO Profile** These profiles track how the great powers perceive your Operative—whether as an asset, a nuisance, or a threat. Actions in the field raise or lower these values, and crossing an unknown threshold may trigger intervention from either side. Both profiles start at 0.
4. **Consequences** Consequences represent the physical and mental trauma your Operative suffers in the field. They come in **Mild**, **Moderate**, and **Severe** tiers for both **Physical** and **Mental** damage. When all three tiers of either type are filled, any further Consequence of that same type ends the Operative's story.

Physical Consequences reduce **STA** or **SPD**:

- **Mild:** Remove **1 die** from either **STA** or **SPD** until healed.
- **Moderate:** Remove **1 die** from both **STA** and **SPD**.
- **Severe:** Remove **1 additional die** from each, plus **1 more** from either **STA** or **SPD**.

Mental Consequences reduce **WIT** or **WRD** in the same pattern:

- **Mild:** Remove **1 die** from either **WIT** or **WRD**.
- **Moderate:** Remove **1 die** from both **WIT** and **WRD**.
- **Severe:** Remove **1 additional die** from each, plus **1 more** from either **WIT** or **WRD**.

Record each Consequence and its associated Stat reductions on the character sheet.

Creating the Cell

When the Operatives are recruited, they do not stand alone. They are drawn into Cells. Cells are small, covert units bound together by trust, necessity, and shared missions given to them by the Agency, made to be self-sustaining and deniable. A Cell is more than a team; it is a lifeline. In a war where their very spirits are on the line, the Cell is the only constant.

Why This Matters

Ask yourselves:

- Why are these characters tied together?
- What makes them trust one another in a world built on lies?
- Why do they risk everything to watch each other's backs?

Your answers will define the Cell's cohesion, and its vulnerabilities.

Interwoven Traits

Each player must choose one Trait that ties their Operative to another member of the Cell. These connections form the lattice of trust that keeps the Cell intact.

- Go around the table. Each player selects a Trait and links it to the Operative on their right.
- By the end, every Operative should be connected to at least one other, forming an interconnected lattice of Traits.

These ties are fragile. They can be tested, exploited, or broken, but they are what keep the Cell from collapsing under pressure.

Cell Contacts

Together, the players define two external contacts who support the Cell.

- These contacts provide aid, resources, or cover for the Operatives.
- Crucially, they have no knowledge of the Cell's true missions.

Think of them as shadows on the periphery: a sympathetic handler, a fixer with access, a safehouse keeper. Their ignorance is their protection and yours.

Optional Rule: You may delay defining one or both contacts until the first sessions. This allows them to emerge naturally from play, strengthening the Cell's ties to the unfolding story.

The Cell as a Lattice

When complete, the Cell should feel like a lattice tying the Operatives together.

- Traits connect Operatives to one another.
- Contacts anchor the Cell in the wider world.
- Trust and secrecy bind it all together.

This lattice is your defense against the Opposition. It is also the first thing they will try to unravel.

Sketch or map the the **Trust Lattice** for your Cell.

- Draw each Operative as a circle.
- Connect them with lines representing shared Traits.
- Add contacts as external nodes.
- Mark fragile or suspicious ties with dashed lines.

CIA Profile & KGB Profile

Just like individual members of the Cell, the Cell itself has a **CIA Profile** and **KGB ProFile**. This rates their exposure as a group, and rises and falls as the group exposes themselves on operations. This will be covered more in playing the game.

Money and Gear

Acquisition of Gear

In the shadow war along the Veiled Curtain, gear is more than equipment; it is leverage, deniability, and survival. Operatives draw on a mix of official supply lines, covert procurement networks, and illicit markets to secure what their missions demand. Most tools of the trade are readily accessible to seasoned Operatives, but restricted or exotic items often require negotiation, favors, or dangerous arrangements that pull the Operative deeper into the web of Cold War intrigue. The game does not track money; obstacles arise only when they add tension, reveal character, or complicate the mission in meaningful ways. Every piece of high-grade or forbidden gear carries a price: acquiring it risks attracting attention from the very agencies the Operative may be trying to avoid. In a world where both the living and the dead are watching, even the tools you carry can become liabilities.

The Effects of Gear

The Veiled Curtain is not a gear-driven game. Operatives rely on equipment, but their success comes from skill, teamwork, and nerve; not from stockpiling specialized tools. Gear exists to support the story, sharpen an Operative's strengths, or give them a momentary edge when the mission demands it. Most items provide simple, predictable effects: a small bonus to a dice pool (usually **1–2d6**), a modest increase to Harm (**+1–3**), or a measure of **Armor** that helps prevent damage. These bonuses are intentionally limited; gear should enhance an Operative, not overshadow them.

The gear lists that follow offer a broad selection of common and restricted items used by agencies, cells, and covert operatives across the Veiled Curtain. They are **examples**, not a complete catalogue. Directors and players should feel free to introduce new tools, variants, or improvised equipment as the fiction demands. If a piece of gear adds tension, reveals character, or complicates the mission in an interesting way, it belongs in the story, whether or not it appears on the chart.

Common Gear

Gear	Effect	Notes
Service Pistol	+1 Harm	Standard issue sidearm
Silenced Pistol	+1 Harm, +1d6 Stealth	Quiet, concealable
Combat Knife	+1 Harm, +1d6 Close Quarters	Useful in tight spaces
Compact SMG	+2 Harm	High rate of fire
Standard Rifle	+2 Harm	Reliable at range
Sniper Rifle	+3 Harm, +1d6 Precision	Long-range engagement
Truncheon / Baton	+1 Harm, +1d6 Subdual	Non-lethal option

Gear	Effect	Notes
Kevlar Vest	Armor 1	Basic ballistic protection
Reinforced Vest	Armor 2	Heavier, more durable
Ballistic Helmet	+1d6 vs Head Trauma	Military-grade
Gas Mask	+1d6 vs Chemical Hazards	Filters airborne threats
Lockpick Set	+1d6 Covert Entry	Standard infiltration tool
Surveillance Kit	+1d6 Observation	Cameras, mics, sensors
Encrypted Radio	+1d6 Coordination	Secure comms
Miniature Camera	+1d6 Evidence Gathering	Covert documentation
Bugging Kit	+1d6 Planting Devices	Audio surveillance
Signal Scrambler	Armor 1 vs Detection	Disrupts tracking
Flashbang	+1 Harm (non-lethal), +1d6 Disorientation	Crowd control
Smoke Grenade	+1d6 Escape/Cover	Obscures vision
Field Medkit	Armor 1	Basic medical supplies
Trauma Kit	Armor 2	Stabilizes severe injuries
Stimulant Ampoule	+1d6 Speed (scene)	Short-term boost
Painkillers	+1d6 STA under injury	Reduces impairment
Forged Documents	+1d6 Identity Checks	Basic cover identity
Disguise Kit	+1d6 Social Infiltration	Appearance alteration
Dead Drop Capsule	+1d6 Secure Transfer	Hidden message storage
Micro-Recorder	+1d6 Interrogation/Surveillance	Captures audio
Silent Shoes	+1d6 Stealth Movement	Soft-soled footwear
Climbing Rig	+1d6 Mobility	Ropes, harnesses
Night-Vision Goggles	+1d6 Low-Light Observation	Enhanced visibility
Breaching Charge	+3 Harm to Barriers	Entry tool
Portable Toolkit	+1d6 Repairs/Sabotage	Mechanical tools
EMF Meter	+1d6 Weird Detection	Reads spectral anomalies
Thermal Scanner	+1d6 Anomaly Tracking	Detects heat signatures
Lead-Lined Case	Armor 1 vs Spectral Contamination	Safe storage
Analog Recorder	+1d6 Echo Capture	Records spectral traces
Salt & Chalk Kit	+1d6 Improvised Warding	Basic occult defense

Restricted Gear

Gear	Effect	Notes
Service Pistol	+1 Harm	Standard issue sidearm
Silenced Pistol	+1 Harm, +1d6 Stealth	Quiet, concealable
Combat Knife	+1 Harm, +1d6 Close Quarters	Useful in tight spaces
Compact SMG	+2 Harm	High rate of fire
Standard Rifle	+2 Harm	Reliable at range
Sniper Rifle	+3 Harm, +1d6 Precision	Long-range engagement
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Playing the Game

The Veiled Curtain is a player-facing game. the Operatives' choices, risks, and rolls belong to the players, not the Director. The Director presents the world, its dangers, and its shifting loyalties, but the dice that determine an Operative's success or survival are almost always in the players' hands. When the Director rolls, it is to advance the world's agenda, but never to seize control of an Operative's fate. That responsibility, and that power, rests with the players. Every decision they make, every pool they build, every risk they accept shapes the story of their cell as it moves through the Cold War's shadows and the Veil's deeper mysteries. The system is built to keep the focus on the Operatives: their agency, their danger, and the consequences they choose to face.

The Basic Mechanic

When an Operative attempts something risky or contested, they make a skill roll consisting of a pool of d6s consisting of:

- The Applicable statistic
- The Applicable career
- Any applicable specialty

Add the three highest dice to determine the outcome. There are wrinkles to this system and exceptions to the way the dice are read, but this is the basic use of the system.

Operatives and Competency

Operatives are presumed competent. If your career covers a knowledgeskill, you gain basic information automatically — no roll required.

- **Automatic Success:** Routine investigation, professional expertise, or obvious deductions.
- **Roll Required:** Esoteric knowledge, dangerous actions, or situations where failure is meaningful.
- **Failure Still Reveals Something:** Even on a failed roll, you may gain partial or distorted information — though it may be compromised by disinformation.

When rolling a skill:

- Declare which Statistic you're using.
- Describe how your Operative attempts the action.

Negotiate with the Director what success and failure will mean before rolling.

Guiding Principle: Only roll when the situation is fluid, unpredictable, and when failure would be interesting.

Standard Difficulty Table

Difficulty	Target Number	Narrative Meaning
Trivial	7	Routine tasks, no real pressure. Failure is rare and usually narrative.
Basic	9	Everyday challenges for trained Operatives; success is expected but not guaranteed.
Standard	11	The baseline difficulty. Average rolls succeed; tension begins here.
Challenging	13	Requires competence, preparation, or advantage. Failure is common.
Difficult	15	Serious obstacles. Only strong pools or clever play reliably overcome these.
Severe	17	High-risk actions under pressure. Success is notable; failure is likely.
Extreme	19	Borderline impossible without gear, teamwork, or Weird intervention.
Mythic	21+	Beyond human capability; only Weird, fate, or extraordinary circumstances apply.

Unless the situation is strained, dangerous, or unfolding under pressure, Operatives should not be rolling for Trivial or Basic difficulties. These represent actions well within the capabilities of trained Operatives and should succeed automatically in normal circumstances.

Likewise, Standard difficulties generally do not require a roll when the Operative is acting within an area of training or expertise. A trained cell member can pick a lock, scale a wall, or navigate a tense conversation without calling for dice—unless something is actively working against them.

Rolls at the lower difficulty tiers only come into play when opposition, hazard, or extenuating circumstances complicate the action. Being under fire while climbing, racing a burning building's collapse while picking a lock, or working against a hostile observer are the kinds of pressures that elevate even simple tasks into moments of uncertainty.

If the action is routine, trained, and unopposed, the Operative succeeds. If the world pushes back, the dice come out.

Combat

Espionage may be the Operatives' trade, but violence is never far behind. Missions unravel, plans collapse, and sometimes the only way out of the shadows is through blood and fire. Combat in The Veiled Curtain is a focused series of skill tests that resolve these moments of ill intent, giving Operatives the tools to strike, survive, and shape the outcome when everything goes wrong.

Before stepping into combat, it's important to understand **Adrenaline**. Adrenaline is one of the Operative's core Stats, set during character creation, and it reflects the ebb and flow of danger. It keeps an Operative moving when they should be down, fuels extraordinary feats, and lets them seize momentum in the fight. **Adrenaline always begins at 0 at the start of each conflict**, rising as stress mounts and actions escalate.

The first step in combat is determining who acts first. Operatives may attempt to **seize the initiative** or choose to **hold action**. Holding action grants **1 Adrenaline** as the Operative steadies themselves and waits for an opening. Seizing the initiative requires a **Standard SPD check (target 11)**. **On a success**, the Operative gains **1 Adrenaline** and acts before the opposition. **On a failure**, they act after the opposition at the same time as those who held action, and gain no Adrenaline for the attempt.

Once initiative is set, each round, each Operative first gains 1 Adrenaline. Then operatives declare their intent, with the Operatives going last declaring first, then the Opposition, then those that successfully seized the initiative. An Operative may choose to **attack, defend, maneuver, or perform a stunt**. These choices define the rhythm of the fight, the risks they take, and the momentum they build as the conflict unfolds.

Attack

When an Operative makes an attack, they build a dice pool as normal based on their method of assault. The check is **Standard (difficulty 11)** and uses the appropriate Statistic: **SPD** for ranged attacks, **STA** for melee, and **WRD** for purely supernatural strikes. This can be increased or decreased based on many factors, including long range (+1 difficulty band), low light (+1 difficulty band), called shot (+2 difficulty band), though these are only examples. The Director adjusts difficulty to fit the fiction.

The player must roll **at least 3 dice**, but before rolling, the player may set aside any number of dice from their pool to reserve for their **Defense Pool**.

Defend

Defense is resolved differently from other checks. The Operative rolls their **Defense Pool** and looks for 4s. **Each 4 negates one incoming attack**, up to the number of d6 in SPD for ranged attacks, the number of d6 in STA for melee attacks or the d6 in WRD for supernatural attacks. Particularly dangerous strikes may raise this target number, up to a maximum of 6, representing attacks that are harder to evade or blunt.

If the defense fails to cancel all incoming attacks, the Operative takes **Harm** and gains **1 Adrenaline**, the surge of fear and urgency that comes with being hit. An Operative may defend multiple times in a round, up to the number of successes rolled in their Defense Pool.

Maneuver

A **Maneuver** is an action taken to gain advantage. This includes such actions as shifting position, improving footing, or studying an opponent to spot an opening. If the Operative is physically repositioning, the player makes a **Standard SPD check (Difficulty 11)**. If the Operative is analyzing the battlefield or reading their foe, they make a **Standard WIT check (Difficulty 11)** instead.

On a success, the Operative gains **2 Adrenaline** and an ally of their choice gains **1 Adrenaline**, reflecting the momentum created by smart movement or insight. On a failure, the Operative still gains **1 Adrenaline**, the surge of urgency that comes from a misjudged step or a moment of pressure.

Perform a Stunt

A **Stunt** is an action that hinders the opposition or meaningfully aids an ally. The player describes what the Operative is attempting, and the Director sets the difficulty and determines which Statistic and relevant Skill and/or Specialization applies. When a stunt succeeds, it can produce a wide range of effects: increasing a target's Vulnerability (adding +1 Harm to all attacks), forcing movement, applying subdual damage, initiating a grapple, or any other maneuver that fits the fiction. Stunts are intentionally flexible; creativity is encouraged.

Because stunts push the Operative into risky, improvisational territory, failure carries a cost. The player and Director should agree on the potential consequence when planning the stunt. This can include, but is not limited to lost position, exposure to fire, dropped gear, or any setback appropriate to the moment. If the stunt fails, the Operative also gains **1 Adrenaline**, reflecting the surge of danger and urgency that comes with a misstep under pressure.

Adrenaline & Specials

Adrenaline is the spark that turns an Operative from a skilled agent into something far more dangerous. It's the pulse of fear, focus, and fury that rises as the fight tightens around them. It defines the moment when training sharpens, instincts ignite, and the world seems to slow just enough for them to do the impossible. Every close call, every missed strike, every brush with harm feeds that rising current.

When Adrenaline peaks, Operatives can unleash Specials: signature maneuvers, uncanny techniques, and decisive actions that define who they are in the field. Specials are the reason these individuals stand apart from ordinary agents and foot soldiers. They bend the flow of combat, break the rhythm of the enemy, and turn hopeless situations into sudden victories.

The maximum Adrenaline any Operative can have is 6. This maximum is decreased by injury (-1 per Condition), fear (-1), or other statuses at the Director's discretion. Any accumulated Adrenaline beyond 6 is ignored. When Adrenaline is used, all excess Adrenaline is lost.

An Operative can trigger a Special as an action on their turn, or as a reaction to an opponent's move. When using it as a reaction, the first move in the Special has to be the counterattack. The Operative can string together as many moves as exhausts their current Adrenaline.

Specials

All Specials are placed in one of four categories: power, speed, defense, and utility.

Category	Adrenaline Cost	Name	Effect
Power	1 Adrenaline	Stronger Attack	Successful attack inflicts +2 Vulnerable on the target.
Power	2 Adrenaline	Weak Auto Hit	Automatically hit; damage is set to 1 Harm .

Category	Adrenaline Cost	Name	Effect
Power	4 Adrenaline	Precise Hit	Automatically hit; damage is as normal .
Power	6 Adrenaline	Critical Hit	Automatically hit; add +1d6 damage and gain advantage on the damage roll.
Speed	1 Adrenaline	Counterattack	Make an attack against a foe attacking you this round; resolves simultaneously even if you are disabled.
Speed	2 Adrenaline	Stunt	Gain +1d6 on a Perform a Stunt roll.
Speed	4 Adrenaline	Extra Action	Take one additional action by splitting your Attack pool. Adrenaline gained from this action does not add to the current special.
Speed	6 Adrenaline	Two Extra Actions	Take two additional actions by splitting your Attack pool; Adrenaline gained from these actions does not add to the current special.
Defense	1 Adrenaline	Tough It Out	Reduce incoming damage by 1 Harm ; may be used multiple times; applies to any attack this round.
Defense	2 Adrenaline	Auto-Defend	Automatically succeed on a Defend roll this round; may be used as a reaction.
Defense	4 Adrenaline	Withdraw	Negate all attacks this round; cannot attack; may reposition; gain no Adrenaline from attacks this round.
Defense	6 Adrenaline	Draw Aggression	Cannot attack; may defend against every attack this round with entire Pool; may force foes to target you with a standard INT check (difficulty 12) .
Utility	1 Adrenaline	Quick Draw	Ready an item immediately for use.
Utility	1 Adrenaline	Change Initiative	Tag an ally to act after you; they do not gain 1 Adrenaline for starting their turn.
Utility	2 Adrenaline	Assist	Give a nearby ally 1 Adrenaline and +1d6 on their next roll.
Utility	4 Adrenaline	Recover	Remove a status condition that normally requires an action (trip, stun, etc.).
Utility	6 Adrenaline	Teamwork	All nearby allies gain 2 Adrenaline ; one ally gains +1d6 on a roll or +2 Harm on damage this round.

Running the Opposition

Opposing forces act in response to the Operatives. In an ambush, they strike first, but otherwise they follow the Operatives' lead. Because they are not the protagonists of the fight, their options are simpler. Their attacks always land unless an Operative actively defends, and they never roll to defend themselves. Smarter enemies

will seek cover, reposition, or use maneuvers to hinder the Operatives, but they do not possess Adrenaline and cannot perform stunts beyond what their equipment allows.

Opposition is presented in three broad tiers to help Directors gauge threat and escalation. These categories are examples, not limits; the world behind the Curtain is vast, and its dangers are rarely tidy. Use these tiers as guidance, then shape the opposition to fit the mission, the moment, and the story you want to tell.

Assets

Assets are low-level grunts, functionaries, and background personnel. They're competent enough at their assigned duties, but they exist to slow Operatives down, not to stand toe-to-toe with them. Individually, they pose little threat; only in numbers do they become dangerous. A single point of Harm removes an Asset from the fight, and unless they're equipped with heavier weapons, Operatives defend against them normally. Their attacks are considered to always hit unless Operatives take precautions such as full cover, and they never Defend.

When an Asset group suffers over 50% casualties (75% if they're fanatical) they must make a morale check. Roll 3d6 against Challenging (13) or the group breaks and flees. Each additional round of casualties increases the difficulty until they finally break.

Agents

Agents are trained operatives of the KGB or lesser spirits acting with purpose and discipline. They're better equipped than Assets and carry gear that makes them meaningfully harder to neutralize, typically requiring 2–3 Harm to remove from the fight, often with 1 point of Armor to blunt incoming damage. Agents don't make Morale checks; they think tactically, press advantages, and withdraw when the situation turns against them. They're not disposable grunts. They're professionals, and they fight like it.

Coordinator

Coordinators are high-tier adversaries such as senior intelligence officers, elite operatives, or powerful spirits directing operations from above. They possess superior training, resources, and insight, and their presence signals a major escalation in threat. Coordinators are equipped to withstand serious punishment, often requiring 4–5 Harm to remove from the fight, with 2–3 Armor to blunt incoming attacks. They don't break, and they don't panic; they adapt, reposition, and counterstrike with precision. A Coordinator rarely engages alone. Agents and Assets move at their command, and defeating one often means dismantling the structure they control. They are not obstacles or opponents; they are the architects of danger, and confronting them is a mission unto itself.

Special Rules for Spirits

Many spirits require a minimum amount of Harm to be inflicted in a single attack to bring them down. This is referred to as their **Damage Threshold**. Anything less is ignored or rapidly regenerated, leaving the Operative with nothing but a momentary advantage. To counter this, such spirits typically have a vulnerability that must be identified and exploited.

Whenever an attack fails to meet the Damage Threshold but still inflicts Harm, the spirit gains a Vulnerability status. Each point of Harm increases the Vulnerability by +1, making future attacks more effective and steadily

eroding the spirit's defenses. This escalation works much like performing a stunt: pressure builds, weaknesses widen, and the Operatives close in.

If an Operative uses a stunt specifically to assess the spirit's vulnerability, the Vulnerability increases by +2 instead of +1, reflecting the time and focus spent uncovering its hidden flaw. As Vulnerability rises, even the most resilient spirits become susceptible, until finally, a single decisive strike meets the Threshold and ends them.

Fate, Damage and Consequences

When an Operative strikes an opponent, **Harm** is applied normally; once a target is reduced to **0 Harm**, they are removed from the fight. When Harm is inflicted on an Operative, the process is more layered.

An Operative's first buffer against injury is **Fate**. This is the mix of instinct, luck, and training that keeps real damage at bay. Harm is taken from Fate until it reaches 0. After Fate is exhausted, the Operative may spend **Adrenaline** in its place, burning momentum to stave off injury for a moment longer.

Once both Fate and Adrenaline are gone, the next Harm suffered inflicts a **Mild Consequence**. The Director and player should describe what this looks like in the fiction. Mild Consequences heal naturally after a day.

If the Mild slot is already filled, the Operative instead suffers a **Moderate Consequence**, again described based on the cause. Moderate Consequences heal in a matter of weeks, or in half that time with proper care.

If both Mild and Moderate slots are filled, the next Harm inflicts a **Severe Consequence**. Severe Consequences have immediate, serious effects, and without medical attention they become fatal after a number of days equal to the Operative's **STA** dice.

If an Operative with a Severe Consequence takes Harm again, they are **downed**. They must immediately make a **Standard STA check (Difficulty 11)** or expire. Each round they remain unstabilized, they must repeat the check with **increasing difficulty**, until they are stabilized or they die.

The Mission

The Veiled Curtain is a story of uncovering terrifying lies hidden in plain sight. Operatives work backwards from fractured clues to expose the source of corruption and decide how and *if* this should be revealed to their agency and whether *they are the bad guys*. It is not a game of black and white, but one played in the grays, where even their own agency might decide that prudence outweighs any sense of right and wrong in order to win this decades long Cold War.

Every mission reveals more of the influences behind the scenes and the conspiracies that the Agencies try to hid, and each discovery threads into the **Shadow Lattice**: a player-facing web of connections that charts the unfolding conspiracy. The lattice is both map and trap, guiding Operatives deeper into the mystery while threatening to collapse under the weight of disinformation.

The Shadow Lattice

Three operations define how players interact with the lattice:

- **The Lattice**: A geometric web of interlocking nodes. Each node represents a clue, contact, or anomaly. Placement matters: the path through the lattice determines which layers of the conspiracy are exposed.

- **Thread Linking:** When Operatives connect two seemingly unrelated clues, the lattice snaps into place, unlocking new missions or insights. These links are breakthroughs — but also risks, as they may reveal dangerous connections.
- **Disinformation Rolls:** Every clue carries uncertainty. Operatives roll to determine if intel is genuine, planted, or distorted by rival agencies, or even their own. Integrating false nodes destabilizes the lattice, leading to dead ends, paranoia spirals, or traps laid by enemies.

Remember that clues laid by prior operations might start the Operatives out at an advantage or a disadvantage depending on the veracity of the information, so be careful when integrating things into the lattice.

Mission Briefings

Each operation begins with some sort of **Mission Briefing** which may arrive from their Handler, their local Station, or from their own investigations. Examples include:

- Encrypted communiqués from rival agencies.
- Recovered diaries or intercepted broadcasts.
- Handler reports at dead drops.
- Communications from Station to come in from the cold.

Briefing packets generally include:

- **Local targets** (a museum, politician, tech firm, etc.)
- **Objectives and Parameters** and **Rules of Engagement**.
- **Supernatural involvement** destabilizing the situation.
- **Link(s) to Prior Evidence in the Lattice**

This last bit is highly important. It is the piece of the puzzle that links the entire operation together, and gives clues and context for the mission parameters. There may be stand-alone missions, but one thing Operatives should come to realize is that there are no such things as a coincidence, and all things are connected.

Operative Investigations

Operatives must act with precision. Overexposure risks alerting their opposition and jeopardizing the mission. Intel gathered may reveal new lattice nodes or forge Thread Links, pushing the investigation forward.

Once enough evidence points toward being able to resolve the mission, Operatives face a critical choice:

- **Follow through on their mission objectives** — If the cell determines that the mission is viable and they can complete the objectives, they proceed with the operation.
- **Abort the Operation** — If the cell cannot complete the operation, they can abort in many cases. There are some missions that will state that an abort is not an option. In these cases, that means going against the Agency.
- **Coopt the Operation** — This path is risky, and could put the cell at odds with their Agency, but in the case that the cell cannot follow through with the objectives for moral or other reasons, or there are objectives of their own that supercede what the Agency wants, they can attempt to take the mission their own way.

Planning the Operation

Once the Operatives make a decision as to what approach they will take, the operation must be planned. However the players don't have this knowledge, so the system assumes that the fine details are done by the Operatives; the players only have to decide on the methodology they will use.

The Methodologies

There are six different methodologies, each with a missing detail that needs to be provided. To “plan an operation,” simply choose the methodology and supply the detail. Then the Director will cut to the action as the first moments of the operation unfold.

Methodology	Description	Detail
Assault	Do violence to a target.	The point of attack.
Deception	Lure, trick, or manipulate.	The method of deception.
Stealth	Trespass unseen.	The point of infiltration.
Social	Negotiate, bargain, or persuade.	The social connection.
Transport	Carry cargo or people through danger.	The route & means.

The Detail

When you choose a methodology, you provide a missing detail, like the point of attack, social connection, etc. If you don't know the detail, you can gather information in some way to discover it.

The Operation Challenge

Once the players choose a plan and provide its detail, the Director cuts to the action, describing the scene as the crew starts the operation and encounters their first obstacle. But how is this established? The way the Director describes the starting situation can have a huge impact on how simple or troublesome the operation turns out to be. Rather than expecting the Director to simply “get it right” each time, we use dice rolls and progress clocks instead. This is the called the operation challenge.

Each Operative chooses a skill that will be applicable to the methodology and detail chosen. The Director creates the progress clock and describes the starting situation and what obstacle the progress clock represents. The operation might require multiple progress clocks to bypass multiple obstacles.

Each skill roll is modified by situational advantages based in the situation. Some examples that might apply include:

- Is this operation particularly bold or daring?
- Is this operation overly complex or contingent on many factors?
- Does the plan's detail expose a vulnerability of the target or hit them where they're weakest?
- Is the target strongest against this approach, or do they have particular defenses or special preparations?
- Can any of your friends or contacts provide aid or insight for this operation?
- Are any enemies or rivals interfering in the operation?
- Are there any other elements that you want to consider? Maybe a lower-Tier target will give you an advantage, or a higher-Tier target will give you

Preparedness

The Operatives are always presumed to be competent and intelligent, and approaching the target with this in mind, given the methodology and detail they provided. However, even with this taken into account in the Operation Challenge, there can be things that the players forget that the Operatives would not, or situations where the Operatives would have taken mishaps into account that the players would not have done the same. For this reason we have preparedness actions.

When an operation is underway, the Operative can invoke a preparedness action to roll for an action in the past that impacts your current situation. When performing a preparedness action, the rules don't differentiate between actions being taken in the present and actions that were taken in the past. It is a scene that plays out that affects the present situation.

The Director sets a **Fate** cost when an Operative invokes a preparedness action.

- 0 Fate: An ordinary action for which the Operative had easy opportunity.
- 1 Fate: A complex action or unlikely opportunity.
- 2 (or more) Fate: An elaborate action that involved special opportunities or contingencies.

After the fate cost is paid, a preparedness action is handled just like any other action. Sometimes it will entail a skill roll, because there's some danger or trouble involved. Sometimes a preparedness action will entail a fortune roll, because we just need to find out how well (or how much, or how long, etc.). Sometimes a preparedness action won't call for a roll at all because you can just pay the fate and it's accomplished.

One of the best uses for a preparedness action is when the operation challenge goes badly. After the Director describes the trouble you're in, you can call for a preparedness action to a special preparation you made, "just in case" something like this happened. This way, your "preparedness planning" will be focused on the problems that do happen, not the problems that might happen.

Using the CIA Profile & KGB Profile

Other agencies are not likely to suffer interference lightly. Any threat to their operations trigger retaliation, often devastating in scope. This may include:

- **Attacks on Support:** Framing or discrediting Operatives, targeting allies, severing bonds, or undermining financial and logistical lifelines.
- **Moves Against the World:** Rewriting public records, manipulating legislation, or embedding obstacles within government agencies to hinder Operative activity.
- **Activation of Sleeper Agents** — Opposition agents embedded in positions of power may be unleashed. These assets are reserved for catastrophic contingencies, but if the Cell is successful enough, they will be deployed.

The KGB Profile measures how visible the Cell is to the KGB and to mundane authorities. The CIA Profile measures how useful a Cell is viewed by the CIA, affection resources and missions.

These profiles fluctuate when the Cell leaves traces, draws attention, or disrupts the timeline.

Affecting Profiles

1. Catastrophic Failures

Whenever any Operative rolls doubles on a failure, the Cell gains +1 KGB Profile.

Why: The KGB has assets embedded everywhere and analysts poring over briefs continually.

2. Loud or Illegal Actions

The Director may assign +1 to +3 KGB Profile for:

- Shootouts
- High-speed chases
- Breaking into secured facilities
- Public anomalies
- Leaving bodies or evidence

This is the "trouble with the law" side of the profile. This also reduces the CIA Profile by a similar amount.

3. Revelatory Successes

Whenever an Operative rolls an 18 on a Skill check, the Cell gains +1 KGB Profile unless the Operative spends 1 Fate to suppress the anomaly.

Why: Seeing too much leaves a metaphysical footprint that spirits can relay.

4. Narrative Triggers

KGB Profile rises when:

- A KGB Operative becomes aware of the Cell
- The Cell interacts with an unbound spirit and do not deal with the situation.
- The Cell interacts with anomalous artifacts
- A cover identity is compromised

CIA Profile rises when:

- The Operatives complete a mission successfully with minimal fuss.
- The Operatives bring information to the Agency
- The Operatives recover anomalous artifacts
- The Operatives bring assets to the Agency (spirits or mundane)

Intentionally Affecting Profiles

Profiles can also be affected intentionally through operations and actions by the operatives.

1. Cover Operations

A successful operation designed to erase traces, forge records, or misdirect surveillance reduces KGB Profile by 1–2. This does not affect CIA Profile.

2. Laying Low

If the Cell spends an entire session avoiding illegal or anomalous activity, KGB Profile and CIA Profile drop by 1.

3. Agency Intervention

At Director discretion, the CIA may burn resources to reduce Exposure by 1–3, but this always comes with a cost:

- a favor owed
- a handler compromised
- an anomaly is introduced

In addition, there is a cost in CIA Profile equal to half the amount reduced from KGB Profile.

Effects of CIA Profile and KGB Profile

The effects of the CIA Profile and KGB Profile are intentionally left abstract and up to the Director to keep these details from prying eyes. Examples will be given below, but the Director is urged to change them for their campaign.

At KGB Profile 3, 6, and 9, the Director should trigger a complication. Cell-level Profile changes and can affect individuals, and individual profile changes can affect the Cell.

KGB Profile 3 — Surveillance

The KGB or local authorities begin passive monitoring.

Examples:

- A drone appears in the background
- A police cruiser lingers too long
- A KGB analyst flags a data anomaly

KGB Profile 6 — Pursuit

The Cell is actively hunted.

Examples:

- A KGB Agent begins tracking them
- A warrant is issued
- A safehouse is compromised
- A contact is inconvenienced or becomes recalcitrant

KGB Profile 9 — Action

The KGB moves directly against the Cell.

Examples:

- A coordinated strike
- A false operation is given to the CIA as a trap

- A major NPC asset is taken or flipped

KGB Profile 10 should trigger a session-defining crisis.

Timeline of Events (Condensed Alternate History)

1945 — The Veil Shatters

- A Nazi occult division, Schattenwissenschaft, performs the Ritual of the Thousandfold Gate beneath the ruins of Königsberg.
 - **Intended effect:** bind ancestral spirits to the Aryan cause.
 - **Actual effect:** catastrophic thinning of the veil between worlds.
- Ghosts manifest spontaneously across Europe. Some are mindless echoes; others are fully aware.

1946–1950 — Operation Quiet Storm

- Allied and Soviet forces scramble to contain supernatural fallout.
- Joint research begins, but cooperation collapses as both sides realize the strategic potential of spirits.
- The Cold War begins two years early and with a supernatural arms race baked in.

1950s — The First Spirit Weapons

- The CIA's Project LANTERN develops "Echo Interrogation," extracting intel from battlefield ghosts.
- The KGB's Department V pioneers "Spectral Embedding," binding spirits to Operatives as advisors or parasites.
- Incidents of possession spike worldwide.

1960s — The Proxy Hauntings

- Spirits are deployed covertly in Vietnam, Korea, and various African conflicts.
- Reports of "ghost storms" — mass spectral manifestations triggered by trauma — become classified phenomena.
- NATO establishes The Veil Charter, regulating supernatural engagement (on paper).

1970s — The Shadow Treaties

- The USSR and NATO sign the Spectral Non-Proliferation Accord, banning spirit-enhanced assassinations.
- Both sides immediately violate it.
- Civilian cults emerge, worshipping or weaponizing spirits.

1980s — The Ghostwire Era

- Technology advances enough to detect, record, and sometimes trap spirits.
- The Berlin Wall becomes a metaphysical barrier as well as a physical one — reinforced with rituals and psychic dampeners.
- The CIA and MI6 begin training Half-Returned: Operatives who can partially cross into the spirit world. This becomes possible due to the development of Ghostwire, runic enscribed circuitry that is an advancement of Spectral Embedding to reduce the negative effects while making the operatives more viable.

1990s — The Cold War Drags On

- The USSR survives economic collapse thanks to spectral labor and occult energy sources.
- The US develops Spectral Encryption, making dead-drop messages literally dead.
- The veil continues to thin. Spirits grow stronger. Some begin forming their own agendas.

Major Factions

The Veil Charter (NATO Supernatural Intelligence Coalition)

Public Face: Paranormal research and containment.

True Purpose: Maintain Western dominance by controlling spirit-based espionage.

Internal Conflict: Do spirits still maintain their rights as citizens?

Department V (KGB Occult Directorate)

Public Face: Nonexistent.

True Purpose: Harness spirits to preserve the Soviet state.

Internal Conflict: Spirits remember the ways of the proletariat and the workers and they are organizing.

The Schattenwissenschaft Remnant

Public Face: Dissolved Nazi occult division.

True Purpose: Complete the original ritual and reshape reality.

Internal Conflict: They have created true hybrid spirit-humans through their advanced research, but these are few, and they are rebelling.

Corporate Paranormal Interests

Public Face: Tech and energy companies.

True Purpose: Monetize the supernatural.

Internal Conflict: Some executives are possessed. Some know it. Some don't.

The Umbral Covenant

Public Face: A religious preservation movement dedicated to protecting sacred sites, stabilizing veil-thin regions, and preventing further desecration caused by Western and Soviet occult experimentation.

True Purpose: To restore the veil completely — even if it means dismantling every supernatural infrastructure on Earth.

Internal Conflict: The Covenant is not unified. It is a movement held together by belief, trauma, and urgency, and those forces pull it in different directions.

Terminology

Whispernet: the clandestine, veil-threaded communication lattice used by intelligence agencies to transmit messages through the dead. It's not a single system; it's a patchwork of spectral corridors, ritual anchors, and bound spirits that carry information across the thinning veil.

Half-Returned: Operatives who can operate in both the physical world and the spirit world, either through training, trauma, or supernatural augmentation. They are the Cold War's most valuable, and unstable assets.

The thinning veil created people who were “half-returned” from near-death experiences, ritual exposure, or ghost contact. First, intelligence agencies realized they could be trained. Then they realized they could be created through the use of Ghostwire.

Spectral Encryption: A cryptographic method that uses spirits as part of the encryption process, making messages readable only by those who possess the correct ritual key, or the correct ghost.

Ghostwire: Runic implants carved into bone, muscle, or dermal layers that allow an operative to channel a specific spirit’s abilities, memories, or perceptions without surrendering their body to possession. Ghostwire is the cornerstone of modern supernatural espionage, giving a controlled interface between the living and the dead.