

# Best of Friends

Principia  
Malefex

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Quick rules, three scenarios and  
Ready to play characters.  
For the Principia Malefex  
Horror Roleplay Game

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## Best of Friends

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### Disclaimer

This booklet contains strong language and mature themes. The Principia Malefex game is meant for the over 18 market only. The scenarios and material contained in the supplement have been chosen as they are more suitable for younger players, but discretion should still be exercised in deciding which groups these scenarios will be run for. The themes of crime, drug abuse and child abuse are touched upon, and do require mature handling if only from respect for real life victims. If you are not certain that your group can handle the topics, discuss it before you run it.

All materials contained within this booklet are **fictional**. We do not in any way shape or form endorse, suggest or support certain of the actions contained within this booklet, messing around with the occult, robbing banks, or petting rabid Alsatians. If you still think this book is in any way real life, then we suggest you avoid all forms of chocolate bars, bill boards, or any media advertising in general. **It is just a game.**

### About Best of Friends

Malefex is a horror game set in modern Britain focusing on psychological horror rather than gore. Best of Friends is designed to allow you to run Malefex scenarios without purchasing the main rulebook. All the scenarios contained in it are cut down versions of full games from other past or upcoming Malefex supplements:

**The Hostage Situation** - In Darkness, Dreaming

**A Friend in Need** - Limbus Fatuorum (for re-release as "Fools Paradise")

**Ghost in the Machine** - "Hollow Halloween"

The rules in this book do not cover the supernatural aspects of Malefex from the players' point of view, and offer no way for them to learn about them. No character creation or advancement is included. Other changes are the cut down combat system, a reduced range of skills for the pre-generated characters, and no insanity/derangement rules.

**Special Thanks to our long suffering playtesters:** Eric Lyon-Taylor, Russell Lyon-Taylor, Ian Lowe, Nicci Rawlinson, Kev Chadwick

### Copyright

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## Best of Friends

### Rules

If you have the main rulebook, we suggest ignoring this and using the full rules. Otherwise, this is a very cutdown version for quick play.

Malefex is based around D20 and D200. D200 is a D20 followed by a D10 for the units. e.g. A roll of 15 on the D20, and a roll of 9 on the D10 is 159. A roll of 20 counts as 0 e.g. 20 on D20, and 2 on D10 is 002, except if the D10 roll is a 0, in which case the total is 200.

#### The Stats

Each character has 12 Stats, (split into three categories, General, Psych, and Combat) and a number of skills. To use a character's stat the player must roll equal to or under it on D20. If they succeed then they accomplish whatever they were trying to do. If they are not under pressure, they pass if they roll under or equal to twice their stat.

#### General:

Ranged - The character's skill with a ranged weapon, used when throwing something in combat.

Perception - The character's skill at spotting details.

Studies - The character's knowledge of the supernatural.

Charisma - A character's attractiveness to others.

#### Psych:

Initiative - The character's intelligence and resourcefulness

Willpower - The character's strength of will.

Terror - How good the character is at handling fear.

Fear - The number of sudden shocks a character can stand.

#### Combat:

Strength - The character's strength and resilience.

Skill - The character's skill in combat.

Speed - How fast a character is.

Damage - How much physical damage a character can take.

#### Skills

Skills are abilities a character has learned. To use a character's skill successfully, the player needs to roll equal to or under it on D200. The more they succeed by, the more successful they have been. E.g. someone with an Art skill of 50, and someone with an Art skill of 120 both draw pictures. The character with 50 rolls a 23, while the character with 120 rolls 110. The character with a skill of 50 passed by slightly more (27, rather than 10) so their picture is slightly better.

#### Combat

Each character gets one attack each. The character with the highest Speed goes first, unless the group have been surprised in which case the person who surprised them goes first.

To attack a character rolls D20 under their skill to hit. If they hit, they roll a D6 add their strength, take the victim's strength away from the total, and then take this off the victim's Damage. When a character is on 0 they are unconscious, when they are on -5 they are dead. Characters heal damage back at the rate of 1 point per day. However, if they are reduced to negative damage, then each point back to zero requires 1 week of bed rest to recover.

#### Fear

When a character suffers a sudden shock, they must roll under their Terror score to react rationally. If they pass, they reduce their Fear stat by one. If they fail they reduce it by D6. When their Fear stat reaches 0, their nerve has broken, and the character collapses in a gibbering wreck who can no longer be played. (Rules for recovering Fear, the various derangements caused by losing it, and playing negative and zero Fear characters are not included in this booklet). In addition, should they fail a Terror roll, a PC will not react rationally, trying to get away or destroy the object of their fear. At the GM's discretion, the player may need to pass a Will roll for any rational reaction they want to take in the first few minutes after the shock that caused the failed roll.

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# A Friend In Need

### Background

Stephen Jenkins is a well known and well liked kind of guy, fairly shy, but with a winning way with life. Everything just seems to go right for him. However beneath the surface it isn't that simple. Unknown to his friends, most of his money was not coming from his job working at a local factory as a supervisor, but was in fact coming from dealing in drugs and stolen cars. He first got involved in this when a friend approached him and asked for a favour. The friend was out of money and asked Stephen for a loan so he could buy a fix. Stephen loaned him the money and then watched him buy the drugs. Realising it was a lucrative trade, he learned where he could get a supply and started to sell them on to people his friend knew who wanted them. The person his friend bought from, and who supplies Stephen, is a drug dealer called "Cliff" Walker. The car idea came about after Stephen had his car stolen. When the police were unable to help him he spoke to Cliff, who put him in touch with the man responsible, Dermot Clark. Stephen's car had been dismantled, and Stephen was furious but saw a way to turn it to his advantage. He recruited kids from the local area and uses them to steal cars for him. These cars are then taken to a local lockup owned by Dermot, where they are stripped, the parts taken, and the shells either dumped or welded together to make a new car with a false number plate.

He has nearly been caught once. One of the kids he used to steal cars, called David Perkins, was caught. Both the police and his father tried to get him to say who was in charge of the gang and to name the other members. When Stephen heard he made sure that the father had other problems to worry about by making sure he lost his job, the family was forced out of their house and his sister was attacked by a gang of youths. David was threatened by the other members of the gang. The harassment stopped when the boy decided to say nothing about Stephen's involvement and the case never made it to court.

As part of his deal with the garage he receives a cut for each stolen car. Unfortunately for Stephen most of the last payment came in the form of forged notes, which were used to pay Cliff Walker for a small supply. Action was taken when Cliff noticed the forgeries. Stephen has been given 24 hours in which to find the cash or take his punishment.

Brendan Sinclair is a loan shark who Stephen has been borrowing money off. Stephen has always managed to stay on top of any interest and was successfully repaying his initial debt. Brendan has heard about the forged notes, knows that Stephen is in deep trouble, and has decided to get all the money possible from Stephen before his life meets a dead end. The original money loaned to Stephen was to pay off Cliff. This time he knows that Stephen will attempt to borrow money off him and so he might as well end their business now, rather than leave it too late. He has hired an "Enforcer" to give Stephen the bad news and collect what little money Stephen has.

Stephen has been in trouble before with Cliff. He was late on a payment and was given a few hours to make it up. He got out of it by going to Brendan, and then his own sister, Phillipa, and begging her for the money. He swore it would never happen again. But as time has gone on, he became complacent and the money he put by for just such an emergency has been spent on having a good time. When he was told about the forged notes his heart jumped. He is in trouble and it has happened again, but he thinks he should be able to get out of it. After all he did last time.

### The Police

The police will pay a small or large part in the game depending on the actions of the PCs. Stephen is doing his best to keep a low profile where the police are concerned. He is trying to distance himself from what he did to the Perkins family. The police are trying to gather enough evidence to arrest Stephen who they know is connected with many of the various crimes in the area but are unable to do anything about it.

For the moment the police are waiting for Stephen to make a mistake, so they can get a search warrant, but he hasn't made one so far. They do not know where he has hidden his drugs supply. Although they suspect the factory, they cannot move without more concrete evidence. They have staked out the park and listened in on his conversations hoping to gain some clues. They know he is responsible for setting up the car thefts and for selling drugs but do not have enough proof to convict him. There is an undercover policeman who has been set up to try and gather evidence on Stephen Jenkins. Although he is a bouncer at the club where Stephen deals, he has never been able to get close to him. He is watching to see which of the bouncers Stephen is paying to allow him to deal without any trouble.

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### Events

Stephen has 24 hours to pay off his debts. At the end of this time, he will turn up on the doorstep of one of his friends, having been beaten up, and told that he has another 24 hours or else he will wind up dead. Stephen never thought it would come to this and he is desperate to get the money. The message from Brendan means that he is in real trouble. He needs a lot of money and fast.

He will try any means in order to do this. His two main hopes are his sister Phillipa and Vicki Meadows, a junkie who owes him a lot. His sister will not listen to him at all. If the PCs are there then they will see Stephen go up and talk to his sister and beg her for help. She will ask what he has done wrong and when she finds out he needs a little bit of money to tide him over she will shut the door in his face saying it serves him right if he ends up screwed and he still owes her.

Vicki Meadows is one of Stephen's main debtors. She owes him enough so that he can get out of most of his trouble if he manages to get the money out of her. He will ask around looking for her on the estates but Vicki already knows what is going on and decides to hide. If Stephen finds her hiding in the house of a PC, he will use his kids to burgle it and get Vicki out at the same time so he can get her money. The goods stolen will then be sold on quickly so Stephen can pay off his creditors. Vicki will also steal off the PCs so she can pay off her debts.

After gathering the money he must then find his way to not just Brendan Sinclair, but to Cliff as well. In total he owes £2,000, £1,000 to each. If he pays Cliff £1,000, he will get his leg broken to punish him for trying to pass off the forged notes. To avoid this, he must part another £1000. Failure to get any money to Cliff will result in Stephen Jenkins winding up a messy example to others who try to avoid paying up.

If he pays Brendan, the £1000 then he will avoid any direct action, although he will still owe £300 in interest. Though this can be paid off the following night, the cost will have risen to £350. Failure to pay off his debts to the full amount will result in action being taken against Stephen's sister. When it is found out that this has no effect on Stephen, direct action will be taken against both of them.

Cliff Walker lives in a house in one of the rougher areas of the estates, alongside the kids that Stephen uses to steal cars with. Stephen will have to make his way there in order to pay off his debt. Then he has to go to another house in a different area of town to pay off Brendan. Getting the money is only half the problem, the other half is getting the money to the right people on time. People going into Cliff's area are likely to have stones thrown at them or be mugged if they look like they have any money.

Stephen will use the PC's in any way he can to get the money, either stealing it from them or asking for a loan from them, or ripping them off in some scam. He will then try to take them with him to both Cliff and Brendan, so that if he doesn't have enough money, then he can try and get it out of the PC's on the spot. If they refuse then both they and Stephen will be in trouble, although Stephen will most certainly bear the brunt of the punishment.

If they pay up then Stephen will be very grateful, although when they next try to find him he will start putting them off about repaying the loan. After a while Stephen disappears abroad with a large amount of the factory's money and moves to Greece. Not that the PCs will find that out.

### PC Plotooks

PCs can have several roles in this game. They could be friends of Stephen who he has turned to in his time of need. He might use them to find Vicki or help bail him out of trouble. They could be people concerned about Stephen and his illegal activities and have decided to do something about him. If they are in the police force, then they could be working on convicting him. They could be friends of Vicki and are helping her, either giving her money or keeping her out of trouble and Stephen's way. Alternatively, Vicki might be using them to stop Stephen finding her and getting any money.

Looking at the pavement I examine the most recent piece of art. Sketched in pastel shades it looks washed out and unhealthy in the yellow glow of the streetlight. A girl, flowing charcoal hair, the colour of her eyes run in recent rain, walks down the street nonchalantly. The challenge and confidence are belied only by the slight backwards glance. Beautifully rendered, if only too transient. It is a picture that captures a soul.

Standing I step carefully over the litter heaped in the gutter and walk on. At night this is not a town to be alone in. Too many predators. The inspired painter, whoever he was, was unusually talented and unusually brave to be out here. I am half way down the street before I realise the gutter is running red.

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### Locations

#### The Castle

The Castle is one of the local nightclubs in the town and by far the most popular. The club is large catering for about 2000 people. It is built on two levels with the noise permeating throughout most of the club. There are large areas for cooling off and relaxing, and there are several bars strategically placed throughout the club. There is a small area where fast food can be bought, with some bolted down tables and chairs nearby for those who want to sit down and eat. The place is usually packed even on a weekday night, being popular among not just the locals, but a lot of people from some distance away.

Sitting in the corner I look round. My friends will be here soon, but for the moment I am alone. It is loud, raucous and slightly scary, though it will soon enough become familiar when the others arrive. I lean back with what I hope is a sophisticated smile, flipping the ash from my cigarette and praying no one notices it is only herbal. The real stuff makes me choke, and my eyes sting. Last time the tears made my mascara run.

Safe enough to be seductive here as no one will notice, and I have the pillar to hide me until I choose to be seen. A bouncer scans the crowd and I duck out of sight. Eighteens only. Ha.

Stephen does most of his selling here to anyone who can afford his prices. He is not the only dealer in the club, but gets in by knowing the owner of the club, and has made a deal with one of the bouncers for protection inside. He will start selling his drugs here on the single night that he has in order to make money towards paying off his debt. He does not have much time, and will be selling cheaply in order to have some money by the end of the night. He will also find out where he has to go to pay off his debtors.

#### The Park

Stephen receives most of his tip-offs here, from his various contacts, including kids and junkies. He may be seen here most lunchtimes eating his

sandwiches and talking to many of the locals. He doesn't set up any deals here, despite what the police believe. However, he does use it to find out the local gossip and see what is happening on the estates. Anyone going close enough to hear him will find himself or herself listening to a fairly innocuous conversation between Stephen and someone else. If the PC's sit close enough, they may even find themselves being engaged in conversation by him.

#### Stephen's house

Stephen lives in a large detached house in one of the better areas of the town. The police have raided Stephen's house looking for drugs, although none were discovered. He runs his illegal activities from here mainly by word of mouth. He visits many of the families on the nearby local estates, not just those with who he has contacts. He is seen by many as a friend, although some families will not tolerate him, as they suspect him of the driving out of the Perkins after their son was caught stealing a car. His drugs are well hidden at his local factory where he has easy access to them, and the stench of the chemicals prevents the sniffer dogs from being able to find them.

#### The Kids

Used by Stephen Jenkins to steal cars and take them to one of the local garages, who strip them down and sell the parts on. They operate in gangs, usually with one or two attempting to take the car with more of them on lookout to see if trouble is coming. A few of his proteges have been caught in the act, but none have ever said anything about Stephen. Most are back on the streets after a caution, though some have been sent to a young offenders home. He has helped their family out afterwards and will continue to look after them if necessary. They come from several of the families on the estates and are recruited by those already working for Stephen. They all enjoy the thrill of stealing cars and evading the police and, after a while and a bit of practice, can all break into cars and joyride.

They are also his eyes and ears for gossip on the estates and he can be seen chatting in the park to those kids who are missing school.

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### NPCs

#### Stephen Jenkins

Happy-go-lucky Stephen Jenkins' world has collapsed when a deal he made went wrong, and he found that he could not pay off his creditors. He will do anything possible to keep himself afloat including sacrificing anyone else in order to get out of trouble. He works as a supervisor at a local factory where he is known as a fair person, although many on the shop floor suspect that he was directly responsible for the firing of Alan Perkins. His problem was that although the job paid , it didn't pay well enough for the lifestyle he wanted to lead. So he started into his illegal activities. This earned him the extra that he needed to enjoy himself. Soon he started to get into debt with Brendan just to afford the next set of drugs for him to sell off to the locals.

He doesn't have the money to pay his creditors off, as it has all gone on fast living, and he never thought this would happen to him. His store of drugs is at the factory and he needs access to it, in order to sell it

Profession: Factory Supervisor

Age: 28

R	P	S	C	I	W	T	F	ST	SK	SP	D
6	3	0	8	5	4	3	12	5	4	4	14

Skills: Bluff 150, Construction 120, Drive 100, Evaluate 70, Mathematics 50, Psychology 50

#### Phillipa Jenkins

Phillipa Jenkins is a long suffering woman. After getting her degree, she had to endure her younger brother going on about his job and his life as if she was stupid. She has struggled hard to get recognition as a photographer and is just beginning to break through. She knows what kind of person her younger brother is, and will do nothing to help him in any way. He still owes her £2,000 after this happened last time. She has already written off the money, it was supposed to be for her holiday with her boyfriend. She is the first person that he will turn to when his troubles begin. This time she will just turn away, thinking in the long run it is the best thing that she can do.

Profession: Photographer

Age: 31

R	P	S	C	I	W	T	F	ST	SK	SP	D
10	3	0	7	8	9	2	5	4	3	2	10

Skills: Art 150, Evaluate 120, Research 100, Chemistry 70, Construct 70, Write 50

#### Vicki Meadows

Vicki Meadows is a junkie and owes Stephen a small amount of money. She finds out from a few contacts of her own that Stephen has only 48 hours to pay. As she owes £700 she knows he will be coming round to see her. So she has decided to hide and hope that Stephen will not catch up with her. If Stephen cannot get the money together then he is likely to wind up dead and she will get away with it. She only has £400 of the money and cannot get hold of the rest. So she either has to hide or find the other half and pay up. Her other option is to make sure that Stephen cannot pay up at all. She knows a few tricks and will do this if she thinks she can get away with it.

What she doesn't realise is that Cliff, who supplied Stephen will also pick up all the people who owed him for drugs. In reality she has only gained herself a bit of time in which to get some more money, but if he does come to collect, then her money will have already gone on her next fix.

She will use the other PCs to hide her, to cover for her, to get money off, or to delay Stephen if at all possible. What she doesn't want to happen is for Stephen to find out what she is doing. If he did he would spread it around and she would quickly wind up a casualty of some of his friends for attempting it.

Profession: Unemployed

Age: 20

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R	P	S	C	I	W	T	F	ST	SK	SP	D
6	2	0	7	2	6	5	9	4	2	5	13

Skills : Hide 150, Begging 120, Bluff 100, First Aid 20

### Liz Kennedy

Liz has been hired by the people who Stephen owes money to. She has also been hired by Stephen's supplier to make sure that Stephen pays off the correct amount for the last amount of drugs that he purchased from them. A competent and business like female with several tricks, including using her gender to allow other people to underestimate her. They only do it once. Powerfully built, but hidden under loose clothing, her body is well trained and kept in good shape. She knows the job she does is not pleasant, but somebody has to do it, and the pay is good if erratic. It is supplemented by helping to find runaways on the street.

Liz knows where Stephen is and is the one to give him the bad news. Along with the news comes an address for both Brendan and Cliff and some friendly advice on how to stay alive before his time limit runs out. If Stephen does not pay up, then she will find him with some friends and do flatten him before dumping him at one of his friends. She will also beat up Phillipa if necessary. If Stephen is to be killed, she will not do it and someone else will be brought in.

Profession: Enforcer

Age: 27

R	P	S	C	I	W	T	F	ST	SK	SP	D
8	4	1	8	5	10	7	14	7	5	6	15

Skills: Disguise 150, Drive 140, Silent Move 100, Law 70, Hide 50, Bluff 50

### Dermot Clark (Mechanic)

Dermot runs one of the local garages near to the estates. His garage has a reputation for good work and is used by many of the locals. He does have a couple of sidelines. He helps Stephen with the stolen cars, and one of his lockups has the remains of a few scrap cars in it. These used to be two three cars around the estate, but after being stolen they were used to make one new car. He takes in the cars from the kids, and then has his workshop strip them down, and remove the parts before dumping the car shells elsewhere. For each car that he receives he pays the kids a certain amount, and then gives Stephen a cut of what he makes on each of the parts. However he also deals in forged notes although few people know this. He passed over one thousand pounds of almost perfect forged notes onto Stephen knowing that he would not spot the difference. He has denied all knowledge of the forged notes to Stephen.

### Brendan Sinclair (Loan Shark)

He is owed £1000 by Stephen and has slowly been squeezing the money out of him. However he now sees Stephen as a bad risk and has decided the time has come to collect what is his. He wants to do this before Stephen gets in too deep and gets himself killed by someone else or before he has had a chance to clear his debts with the correct people. To this end he hired Liz to get the money off Stephen or to break his legs. If Brendan feels threatened by anybody he will immediately start to use force to threaten other people.

### Cliff Walker (Drug Dealer)

Cliff normally supplies Stephen's drugs for him to sell. However in the last deal that took place between Stephen and himself, Stephen unwittingly gave him a thousand pounds in forged notes. He has given Stephen 24 hours in order to pay up before various nasty and rather permanent things are done to him.



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“Stop screaming. For what it is worth, I don't particularly want to kill you, but I must. It will be quicker than what you would have granted me, but only if you stop struggling. You can't hurt me, regardless. Raise your power against me, and I'll drive it down your throat. Remember what I did to the demon-thing you married? What was left wasn't much, but her dying was...I am sorry, I must have better self control.”

“You think I am a fiend from hell? I certainly would have been if you and yours had had your way. Incidentally, I'm afraid the others are all dead, as you probably saw. Don't think you have a chance. The only reason you live still is because I like your fear. Understand me. I do not like what you were trying to do. I regard it as evil. And when the fire I set downstairs has caught firm hold I will kill you quickly and painfully and leave.”

“Why the shudder? Oh, I'm sorry, aren't I meant to cross that circle? It isn't quite the protection you thought it was. You can't scream, I've taken your voice. Your thoughts are all I need to hear. Did you really think to tame true magic to your purposes? You can't. I am proof of that. No, your summoning did not go wrong. The one that did was a long time ago, and I had almost forgotten about it. I've a little time before I have to go, so I'll answer your questions. I told you once I hated magic, that I'd had a bad experience. It was true enough, I suppose, though I never thought I'd wind up a candidate for possession.”

“Your mistake was in choosing me, a suburban nobody, as a victim. Had you stuck to the bodies you bred for the purpose your spell might almost have worked. Instead, when you started invoking whatever you'd put in them, calling up their other selves I heard their screams as you took their souls and you woke me up.”

“I don't want to think about what I was. I like what I am now much better. When you're dead and this house burns, I'll hide within the memories again and try to forget. Substance is so addictive, you see, a touch, to see sunlight through the leaves... It is better than the nothing that I was. I'm not human though I wear the form, and live the life, and truly wish I was. After all this time it was so hard to believe I wasn't, to make myself realise what is, after all, true. Until you started your damned spells, I didn't remember what it was like before, in the darkness... But enough, I digress. Very simply then, before you ever met me I dabbled in magic and a summoning went wrong. I was the creature called, and when the summoner was destroyed the warped protective spells forced me to become what is now me. I have his memories, personality and to an extent his soul. You really shouldn't choose the dabblers for your sacrifices, you know. They may have more power for your rites, but they are more prone to making fatal mistakes before you ever meet them.”

“Anyway, I don't know if I'm the only one like me, or if there are others. I don't honestly care. All I do know is that if this form is destroyed I go back to what I was. And I like being human, even if it is just a lie. You, on the other hand, have thrown it away. You had it all, senses, substance, reality, and you discarded it for nothing. Trying to make yourself all powerful - I suppose that is human nature, to crave that you do not have. In that, you take after us. I suppose it is only natural. What isn't natural is to wed whatever your wife was, though you should remember any creature physical enough to bear a human child has very little power.”

“Kicking me is rude, and you merely hurt yourself. Thank you for offering me your child's body, but I don't want him. Maybe I've spent too much time with your kind, but I'm not quite what I was. I was brought up... I have the memories of a generally moral being, and since your child is still mainly human, I shall give him his life back. The other children are dead, though I've given their essential selves a second chance at life, that humans usually do not get. My life is well-established, thank you. I have no desire to loose my friends and associates and have to start again. I acquired my humanity full grown, perhaps, but I have memories of childhood and it isn't really an experience I desire to repeat.”

“Hush.. The fire has caught well and I cannot dally longer. The authorities will be here soon and if I am to resume my interrupted existence, I shall have to leave. I am sorry, but you should never have awakened me. Your son, I wedge near the air above the cabinet, and I shall make sure he does not burn, nor smother. For yourself, a human neck is quick enough to break - you see? And now, I will take my life back, and forget you and this, and be human again. You are not dead yet? Never mind. The fire will be here soon, and a falling beam will strike your neck, and trap you beneath it while you burn. Did I said it would be quick? I lied. Good bye.”

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### Hostage

*“You are cold. Your knees ache from holding one position for too long. Slowly you become more aware of your surroundings, hear a whimper off to one side, quickly stifled. You are uncertain how much time has passed, but the shock that held you frozen is beginning to wear off. Cautiously you glance around, trying not to attract attention, and notice others doing the same. The objects of your fear are stood in the corners before you, uncertainty and desperation on their faces. The manager lies before you, his ragged breath and crimson shirt testimony to the severity of his condition. His efforts to free you lead to this. The smell of the shot is still in the air, after an hour. There are thirteen of you packed into the small strong room at the bank, three captors, ten prisoners. Altogether an unlucky number.”*

#### The Characters' View

You have been caught up in a botched bank raid. Two men wandered into the bank, loitered for a minute, then grabbed hostages and threatened to shoot them unless staff complied. The staff were in the process of paying when the police car pulled up outside. Panicking, the raiders pushed everyone into the bank's strong room. The manager attempted to protest, and managed to push the alarm, but was shot for his pains. They dragged him in anyway, leaving a sticky crimson smear on the ground. You can't tell how badly hurt he is, but he's bleeding badly, and the upper right of his torso is a bleeding mess. You aren't sure how long you've been here, but consulting watches shows it is between an hour and an hour and a half. The police have sent for a negotiator after their attempts to talk the robbers out failed. The robbers themselves seem young and inexperienced. Unfortunately, that just makes them more unpredictable, and they are terrified of losing a grip on the situation, to the point of refusing to let the manager have medical treatment. Two of them squash up into the corners on either side of the door, the third is moving around. They have made it clear that they will kill hostages if the police try anything, and ordered the hostages to kneel, stay still and say nothing, over an hour ago when you first came in.

#### GM Notes

This game is simply designed to get all the characters in one place at one time, under stress, and give them a chance to see the best, or worst, sides of each other. All the characters start with -2D6 to their Fear, as they have witnessed a shooting, and are being held at gunpoint. They may lose more as the situation gets worse, depending on their attitude and how well they handle it. The timeline below is how events will go unless the characters act to change them. You may wish to have a character be one of the robbers, but that character is likely to be jailed, and so will be unavailable for the later scenarios.

#### Timeline

Hours	Minutes	
0	00	The bank raid happens.
0	02	The police arrive outside, and the manager is shot.
0	05	Everyone is moved into the strong room.
0	10-30	Unsuccessful negotiations. The robbers are clearly out of their depth.
1	25	Game starts, shock wears off fully (all characters on -2D6 fear)
2	00	Police start negotiating again, but fail.
3	15	First of “Nature’s calls” to be dealt with.
4	00	The manager’s condition worsens, and his mild delirium makes the robbers even more edgy.
5	00	Captors negotiate for food and try it on hostages first in case it is drugged.
6	00	Captors finally eat
10	15	Manager collapses into coma.
10	45	Manager dies. Robbers panic as the situation deteriorates.
11	31	Robbers realise there is a swat team outside.
18	00	Captives are finally released after hours of circular argument, when the robbers realise it is their only way out.

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### Character Actions

This timeline can be changed by the characters' actions. If they manage to persuade the robbers to let the manager receive medical treatment he may pull through. (25% if on the spot, 90% if in hospital) First Aid will also lengthen his life. Sorting out things like toilets will also cause problems the characters need to solve, as the robbers are simply too worked up to think straight. They may talk the robbers into having food and water sent in (under no circumstances will another person be let in) or alter the course of negotiations. They may also speed the robbers into giving themselves up.

If, as a result of the characters' actions, things degenerate to the point of shooting the hostages, roll D10 and assign all the hostages (including the characters) numbers. The one whose number comes up (if any) is shot through the head. This is an instant kill.

### The Action Option

In order to rush one of the guys with guns, the PC needs to use one action to close and a second to hit. In the confined space, all shots count as point blank - i.e. they automatically hit and all damage is doubled. The shot is also likely to pass straight through the victim and out the other side, possibly striking someone else. Remember you cannot dodge a bullet, and shotguns have area effect.

The Terror roll for seeing someone shot in front of you is made at -5, or -8 if you get touched by the effects - blood, gore and the like. The Fear loss is D6+3 if you fail. Remember that there are three guys with guns. Most sensible characters should realise that force simply won't work in these circumstances.

### The Robbers

The robbers are all in their teens and early twenties. They did not intend for the police to be called and are completely out of their depth. Desperate to avoid the situation getting more out of control, they are cornered, panicked and unpredictable. Since they have the guns, the characters will need to be careful how they interact with them.

How you roleplay the robbers is up to you. One of them is slightly more in charge than the other two, and also slightly more stressed, as they keep looking to him for answers. It is possible that one of them has been pulled into this by the others and provides a weak spot for the characters. The more your players work to solve this, the more slack you can give them.

### The Aftermath

The hostages will eventually be released. De-hydrated and hungry, they will swiftly be removed to a hospital. After a check-up, they will be asked to give statements, about the event and whether they are prepared to give evidence. Unless they are injured, they will then be taken home.

The next day the newspapers will carry front-page articles about this. Even some of the nationals will give it a few inches of column space. All the hostages are likely to have reporters attempting to question them, although the police have recommended they do not talk to the press in case it could be taken to be prejudicial at the trial. If anyone was killed, the fuss will be much greater, but the police have still moved to stop names being published.

Counselling will be available for the hostages. Hopefully after this traumatic start, the characters will choose to stay in touch, if only to support each other through the media circus.

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### Ghost in the Machine

This scenario is designed to be run on characters that already have some experience with the supernatural. It begins with one character who is already involved with the supernatural, possibly even beginning the path to be a mage or scholar. When they are checking their email, they find a single message reading "Help me." The sender is marked as unknown, and there is no email address. Tracking the message (requires a Hacking or Computing skill roll) will reveal several message points it passed through, but ends at one at which the email appears to have arrived full formed from nowhere.

Over the next few days more messages appear still without any email address. There is no way the character can reply directly. The best way is for the character to post to a newsgroup (Usenet) or put a message on their website if they have one, saying that they have received the message but cannot respond without an address. The next email will have an email address that they can reply to. If they try to track it there will be no data available on the person it is registered to.

The emails will not be very clear about what the problem is, simply that the sender is in trouble and needs the PC's help. They will never go over 2 or three sentences, and are never signed. The sender wants to meet the PC urgently and, if at all possible, alone. Though nothing definite will be said, the PC should get the idea that the person is in severe trouble, and rather young.

If the PC agrees to meet the message sender they will state that they would prefer somewhere private. They will not specify that the PC isn't to tell anyone where they are, only that they should not bring anyone with them. Once location is sorted out, the PC will arrive there first, even if they are late because their contact is waiting outside looking out for them. The other party will make a low-key entrance - a shy knock at the door, or cautious step into the meeting place looking around nervously. Once they spot the PC they will head for them directly, and if the PC hasn't agreed to meet them in private, the message sender will keep looking around nervously and suggest they go somewhere out of sight.

The PC's contact is blond and skinny, about 14 years old, below average height and dressed in jeans and T-shirt. The girl's face is as pretty and bland as a magazine cover, but the slight unease on it is obvious. She gives her name as Alythra. Once they are somewhere private and she has settled down the PC is likely to ask her what the problem is. Hesitantly she starts:

"It's not me, it's my friend. Her mother moved away and left her, and her father just keeps hitting her." If asked about the email she will pause and then say that she's a good hacker. Any requests for the software she used or wrote will be deflected, as will requests for a demonstration.

If the character is a mage they will sense the unmistakable aura of magic from her. A Studies roll will reveal it to be unaligned, though leaning toward the Malefex. If they are a mage and have a creature bound to them she will stay as far away from them as possible, hovering on the other side of rooms, and appears to be terrified. Nonetheless she will say her piece and then get as far away from the PC as possible. The reason for this reaction is simple. Alythra isn't human. She's a Lwqmr.

Her friend is quite human. Marianne is ten. Both her parents were on benefits and moved in together because it was easier to get housing benefits that way. About two years ago her mother trained as a computer programmer and discovered a flair for it. She now lives in the U.S, and has never looked back, although she has sent occasional letters to her daughter. Marianne's father took it badly. Always possessed of a hot temper, he has hit Marianne on several occasions. Out of misplaced loyalty, and a child's belief that she earned it, Marianne lies about the bruises, saying she had accidents. More importantly, she does not know that other families are any different. So far as she is concerned, all fathers hit their children and all children are meant to tell the teachers it was accidents. What happens in a family is private, and only bad girls tell on their parents.

The Lwqmr stumbled on her when Marianne was very young, and bought a ring from a car boot sale. The family that had owned it had had several years of bad luck and was now selling anything they could blame it on, including the ring the Lwqmr had possessed. Weakened by the activities of the ghost hunters and would-be exorcists the family had hired to deal with their bane, the spirit was quiescent while it recovered. Some time later it became Marianne's "invisible friend". When her mother walked out it was the shoulder she cried on, drawing strength from her distress. A cheap computer, given to Marianne by her mother, was left in Marianne's bedroom, and as she began to spend increasing amounts of time on it, the Lwqmr moved its host from the ring to the computer, which had an Internet connection. Once the Lwqmr understood what it was all about, one of the first things it did was to tamper with the ISP computers to register Marianne's account as permanently paid for. As Marianne outgrew invisible friends, it started to use email and direct messaging to talk to her, claiming to be a girl who lives on the other side of Britain. It has learned about the web from her, and though initially slow to grasp the idea, it now uses it

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as a resource for information. It can also track the electrical impulses of the telephone network to find any physical location quickly and easily. When Marianne asked for a picture of the Lwqmr it created a composite image from photographs and sent it to her as an email (the same face it wears when meeting the PC).

It has grown quite protective of Marianne, and when her father started hitting her, attempted to help her. Uncertain of what to do the Lwqmr sorted through various underground websites and when it came across references to the PC's past record it selected them as the person to approach for aid. The messages were created when it expended power to generate the email spontaneously at the point of the net the PC traced them to.

The Lwqmr has been drawing Life from Marianne's father for some time now. Feeding off his anger and the rage in the house, when he sleeps it has been harvesting Life points and storing them in the computer. During the process he suffers dreadful nightmares, and when he wakes up he has a dreadful headache, that takes most of the morning to clear up. The Lwqmr usually draws only one Life point from him per night, unless it knows he is going to be out of the house for some days, when it may take 2 or 3. Treat these stored Life points as extra power points that the Lwqmr cannot replace once they are gone. Unless there is no other alternative, it will not draw from Marianne.

The Lwqmr's drives are many and complex. At the simplest level, it appears to have developed an attachment to Marianne, but at the same time wants her father to itself. At the same time as acting to end his violence, its very presence makes it worse. While staying close to the girl it lusts after her father, drawn like a moth to flame to the complex tangle of guilt, self-hate and rage that drives him. Though it is in its interests to provoke the violence, by draining his life it ensures he is not awake until after Marianne has left for school.

By the time the PC encounters it, the Lwqmr will have almost 300 Life points stored in the computer which, not surprisingly, it will vigorously defend. Treat these as power points, with the exception that the only way the Lwqmr can replace them is to steal more of beings. The computer gives off a definite feeling of unaligned power. If the Lwqmr is forced to abandon the computer, the stored life will be lost. The creature is unable to move them.

Simply leaving the computer will not disrupt it - it would have to be forced to leave it entirely, for example to escape a Banish spell. Also if a PC meets up with Alythra alone, any record or tape of the meeting will show no sign of her presence. This is because the Lwqmr finds taking human form (done by use of its haunt ability) hard, and has taken the easier option of possessing the PC and controlling their senses to make them hallucinate Alythra's presence and voice. (If a creature is bound to the mage she cannot take this option and tapes will not show her, but will record items she interacts with). Its large resources of Life mean that it can possess several items at once, and the entire encounter with the PC will cost it only one or two of its stash. If it is unable to possess the PC, manifesting as a human will cost it 10 or 12.

Should the PC refuse to help it is quite likely that they will hear of strange goings on at Marianne's house. Her father, drunk out of his mind has slammed her around, and then chased her into her room wielding a knife. The Lwqmr's reaction is a full-scale poltergeist fit, hitting him with anything available (books, bookcases, beds, wardrobes...) Not surprisingly he is likely to end up in hospital, more from shock than damage, as the Lwqmr knows Marianne would not forgive if it killed her father.

### Marianne

Precocious and intelligent, Marianne is subdued and very much a loner. She will not "betray" her father by telling anyone what goes on at home, but to anyone with experience of children it should be obvious. If her trust can be one Marianne can tell the players about how her mother taught her and her invisible friend about computers, and of how her friend was slow and Marianne had to go over her mother's lessons repeatedly with it. However Marianne will be very reluctant, as admitting to something that childish is embarrassing for a ten-year-old. Her invisible friend was a monster that lived under the bed and scared away all the other monsters. She will be far more forthcoming on the subject of Alythra, who she knows a lot about, including her GCSE subjects and a bit about her family, and will shyly confide the Alythra is her only real friend who she met on the net. None of Alythra's background details will check out when confirmed by investigative PCs.

### Rich, Marianne's father

Rich is about 28 - with a ten year old daughter. He has 3 GCSE's and has lived all his life on benefit. He stayed with Jessamy, his partner, when she became pregnant for the extra benefits they received. Now, Jessamy's pay covers the rent, but Rich still claims for it "out of habit". He can't

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understand why Jessamy walked out, but he hates Marianne since because of her he can't go out drinking. He's started again now since "she's old enough to be at home alone". It is quite common for him to come home with a woman, dead drunk and indulge regardless of Marianne's presence in the house. After these nights it is quite common for both partners to wake up feeling ill, for the Lwqmr, out of spite, drains him of 2 points and his partner of 4. Not surprisingly his love life has suffered, and so has his temper.

Rich is a thug and Jessamy - originally a deadbeat like him - took the computer course as much to get out of the house as for the grant. When she discovered she could make enough to live very comfortably on, she never looked back. Rich is unfortunately one of those who conforms to the stereotypes of the abused becoming the abuser. No one in his family works, and none of them intend to while they can live well off benefits. He won't dump Marianne on them, as he sees her as a possession he doesn't want to give up after Jess, "his" woman, walked out.

Except for meals, Marianne's home life is restricted to her bedroom. She isn't allowed friends home, and has very few acquaintances. She isn't allowed to go round friend's houses because Rich thinks she'll say something to get him in trouble. As a result, she spends a lot of time on her computer (and thinks that her mother paid for her Internet access), talking to various friends, including Alythra.

### Jess, Marianne's mother

Jess is on the other side of the Atlantic to Marianne, so is unlikely to feature much in the scenario, although she is one possible solution. Marianne definitely takes after Jess, and is beginning to look like her, one reason why Rich has turned nasty.

Jess never married Rich; she just stayed with him when she got pregnant. At first Rich liked having her around for the status it gave him with his mates. Despite what Rich has told Marianne, Jess didn't just walk out on her. She found it much harder to get work with a child in tow, and didn't want to disturb Marianne's schooling. . Since getting a job and moving out, she has grown up a great deal, and will not accept being walked over by her ex-partner.

One reason Jess walked out was because Rich turned violent when she began to earn money. He hated the fact that she was bringing in more money than him, but didn't see why he should have to get off benefit and work to earn more than she was. She went back to her parents for a couple of nights, and then the job in the states was confirmed and she headed off, not thinking very clearly under that much pressure. When she calmed down, it didn't occur to her that Rich would ever hit their daughter. If it can be proved that he is, she will be furious.

### Alythra

The Lwqmr's actions are very contradictory simply because the creature itself is unsure what it wants - not that it would admit that to the PCs. Usually a creature of unshakeable drives and instinct, the rationality it has picked up from Marianne has taught it subtlety, intelligence and confusion. It may well turn violent if pressed on what it is like to be a Lwqmr or what is really "out there" as its new intelligence cannot cope with the knowledge and it temporarily reverts to type. It is still instinctively aware that Marianne is not someone it should hurt. Cunning even for one of its kind, it acts in a strangely childlike manner around humans, for all it knows of interaction it learned from Marianne.

If a mage should try to banish or destroy Alythra they are in for a shock. The Lwqmr will drop its illusion (its true form is invisible and incorporeal) and return to the computer. If it thinks it will gain an advantage, the Lwqmr will feign banishment when it vanishes to make the mage think they have succeeded. Only one of its Power points is in the Alythra form, while the other remains in the computer. If both its power points leave the computer at once, the possession breaks and the Life it has stored is lost.

If the players don't immediately realise what Alythra is (and there is no reason why any PC who is not a mage should), she will encourage the PC to take on the problem. She will also attempt to extricate herself from the situation, to leave the PCs to deal with Marianne and her father. After all, if the PCs do anything to Marianne's father she does not want to be blamed. The Lwqmr may give away its supernatural nature with a number of slips, which mean little unless added up.

- 1) It has an instinctive awareness of the presence of other creatures and magic. It will know if anyone in its presence has dabbled in magic, if they have gained Helicae or lost Encroachment, and may bring this up before the PCs mention it.
- 2) It will almost certainly give away it knows more than it is letting on at the first meeting if it mentions the other PCs by name as associates of the PC. If this is commented on it will, quite truthfully, answer that it found the names on the net.
- 3) She will not be around during any fits of supernature at Marianne's house as the Lwqmr finds it difficult to manifest as Alythra and use its other abilities simultaneously.

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- 4) If the players get violently agitated or angry while she (or the computer) is near by, she will look refreshed. Once the PCs calm down, by contrast, they will feel drained and exhausted. The Lwqmr will use its life drain ability on such tempting targets to steal one life from each. Remember the PCs have to be violently agitated and not entirely rational for this to work.

Although it is far subtler than some of its kind, the Lwqmr still lacks human understanding. The idea that evidence builds up is alien to it, so the same excuse will be used repeatedly. Lwqmr do not forget, but it doesn't understand the majority of what it learns on the web. The fact that evidence materialises once the characters have asked Alythra why it is missing is not something a Lwqmr considers suspicious. It is quite possible to set a trap and catch it out. Initially at least, the human manifest will not take damage as it should, though once the players make it aware of this it will study human anatomy carefully and correct the problem.

Alythra is also quite smart enough to play at being a spontaneously generated AI, ghost of one of Marianne's relatives or anything else which will make the characters have a better attitude towards it. It has two unique abilities, the Life Draining ability covered previously, and a variation on its haunt ability that it uses to control the web:

**Datastream Manipulation** - 1 POW. The Lwqmr has adapted its haunt ability to allow it to manipulate data streams and electronic data sources. As long as they are connected to the Internet the Lwqmr can alter or create data without having to stop possessing the computer. This power can be used to create electronic faxes, emails, web sites, telephone conversations and sounds through electronic speakers, change computer records and locate data on the net.

If you are using the cutdown rules and do not have a copy of the main rulebook, treat the Lwqmr as an extremely vicious ghost with poltergeist abilities, given to subtle and malevolent action.

In addition to the usual haunting and poltergeist abilities, which it is quite capable of manifesting, the Lwqmr in "Ghost" is able to create phone calls, faxes, electronic documents and anything else covered by datastream manipulation.

## The Solutions

It is up to the GM where and what type of location they decide to set this scenario in. With a few adjustments it can fit into most urban areas in Britain. Lower class suburbs or a council estate will require the fewest adjustments.

The ideal way to run this scenario is to approach it from the mundane angle. A PC is approached by a girl (who appears to be good with the net, but not with people) to help a friend who is in trouble. They have to attempt to deal with the problem. There are two levels of success in this. The players can "win" the scenario quite adequately by stopping Marianne's father hitting her.

If they tell Jessamy what is happening at home she will initially not believe it. Rich has told Marianne that "nice girls don't worry their mothers" so Marianne will deny everything if asked across the phone. However Marianne is not a good liar, and if Jess is in the same room she will tell her mother everything. Once convinced Jess will be absolutely furious, not least because it is obvious the money she sent Rich to pay for Marianne's upkeep has gone on cigarettes and alcohol. At this point, the best thing the players can do is stay out of the way of an irate mother. Then one of two possibilities will occur. Jessamy will take Marianne back to the US with her, accompanied by an old and out-of-date computer that Marianne refuses to leave. Her mother's objections stopped rather abruptly and she too began to insist on taking it. A Lwqmr's haunt ability has many uses. Alternatively Jessamy may take a job in Britain as her US experience allows her to get a good position. Jessamy isn't an ideal parent by any means, but she is not violent and will spend time with Marianne. If the PCs tell Social Services nothing will really be accomplished. Marianne and Rich will deny everything, and once the social worker has gone, Rich will give Marianne the beating of her life for "telling".

The second level of success is if they discover Alythra's nature, leaving them with a dilemma. If your players do not have supernatural experience, it is unlikely they will solve or suspect this part of the scenario. If they are powerful enough to Banish/Dispel the Lwqmr, they must consider Marianne's attachment to it, and the fact that it has not yet apparently acted against them. It is also obvious to the players that an aggressive Lwqmr at full strength could, and usually would, have killed them all easily.

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The blush on Sandra's cheek has not yet darkened to the bruise it will become. She walks across the cafe and sits down opposite me, dropping the heavy pile of books onto a clean spot on the table. Stretching, she catches the barman's eye easily, and he catches the waitress by the arm, jerking her attention from the magazine she was reading, and sends her across to take our orders. I've never managed that trick. Once our drinks are in front of us, I stir mine absentmindedly and look across at her.

"How was your day?"

"Dreadful. Just for once I'd like a student who can spell their own name." I laugh, thinking she's joking, and then with a sly grin she flips open the top exercise book and shows me. As I cringe she chuckles.

A group of kids wander in and sprawl around the tables on the other side of the cafe. Their gazes flicker disinterestedly across the cafe, across me, and then settle on Sandy, as they always do. I have grown used to being ignored by now. One of the boys wolf-whistles, and she smiles at him, then murmurs an aside to me.

"Yeah, I know, I shouldn't encourage them, but frankly without the attention I don't know what I'd do. At least I know I'm still attractive." She smiles guilelessly at me. For a moment I almost ask about her husband, and then I catch myself as I remember. She and Rob were the brightest of the school year. Together through school, university, and out into the world as a team, it seemed only natural they would marry. The perfect fairytale, except in the fairytale the prince doesn't turn out to be a wife beater.

"Those kids are in your sixth form."

"No fraternising with the enemy?" She grins as I put on my sternest face, imitating a teacher we both remember, and glower at her across the table.

"Of course not. It is most unseemly for young lady." She laughs and then chokes it off, for it stretches the sore skin on her cheek. I look at her, concerned.

"Are you alright?" Sandra grimaces awkwardly as she realises I am looking at her face, and nods.

"Rob got a promotion. It's a stressful job." I squeeze her hand in comfort and regret, and she smiles a little in appreciation of the implied sympathy and continues in a lower tone. "If one of the kids in my class was getting this, I'd be telling them to prosecute."

"When he comes home, he says I'm an unfaithful slut like I was at school." There isn't really much I can say to that. The confusion in her face makes it hard to speak, but I remember what she was like at school, and it makes it hard to refute the charges as entirely false. A serial heart breaker, Sandra seemed for a time to want a collection of other's boyfriends. I can remember her talking with the others over "the sick look in their puppy dog eyes" as she broke up with them, protected by her beauty and charm from any consequences. Real life must have come as a shock. I look at the long-suffering expression on the perfect, damaged, face and shake my head.

"You shouldn't let him do this to you?" On the unmarked side, her face curves in an odd half smile.

"What can I do? Leave him?"

"Yes." I have to remind myself that, as I know from sad experience, if I say he is wicked she will leap to his defence. Terrible as what he does to her is, it is a known quantity. To strike out alone would take courage and strength, the qualities



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he is slowly beating out of her.

“I love him. He loves me.”

“Look at your damn reflection and say that!” It comes out with more force than I'd intended, and for a horrible moment I think she is going to cry. I suddenly realise we are being watched, and look round to see the kids staring avidly at this sign of their teacher potentially involved in tomorrow's gossip. The other patrons are glowering disapprovingly at such a public row. I look back at Sandy and lower my voice, and slowly the tension in the cafe fades. Her voice is quiet when she speaks, trying to avoid the ears of her students.

“Rob doesn't like you.” I'm not surprised. He knows I know what he does to his wife, and knows that if I could I would have him in court so fast his head would spin. There is nothing I can say that will not push her into defending him, so I settle for a neutral response. He has a champion in her that he does not deserve.

“Rest assured, its mutual.” Realising she is on touchy ground, and could spark another row, Sandy flips open a book and begins marking. We sit with our drinks for a while, the silence broken only by the soft whisper of her pen.

She is still one of the most beautiful women I have seen in real-life. She should have been one of the shining people; the chattering classes whom real life never really touches. All the way through school it seemed life would be good to her, and love sweet.

Her smile is gay, but no longer carefree. I drink my coffee, to allow me to look away from her wasted promise. For a moment I wonder about her future and then, in a flash, I know. For a time she will have her job to hide behind, out of the house, earning a little for she is not permitted a promotion for “family reasons”. Then the children will come, born from the screams and violence of drunken force, and she will lose the little freedom of her employment. She will devote herself to the children, and raise them and love them and shield them, and hate them for stealing her life away, and lie awake at nights wondering where it all went wrong. Then the children will grow up and leave home and she will be alone, too old for a job even if she is allowed one, and she will crawl back to him for he is all she has. Crying out that she loves him as he hits her. Eventually, she will die.

Looking at her carefully I can see the start of the ruin of her beauty, where the fists have damaged the skin, and realise it will never recover its unviolated purity. The start of the lines of care, for now hidden behind the light makeup, and the tiny scars of past violence that show on her face. In a year, perhaps two, her looks will have faded and she will be like everyone else, a drab, forgotten, victim. Staring into the night I consider that I could try to intervene, report him, talk her out of going back to him. As she pushes her chair back I look round to meet her gaze. She can read in my eyes that she should leave him, I can see in hers that she will not. It takes a strange type of strength to martyr yourself to a man who does not deserve you. Sandra stretches, drawing the gaze of everyone in the café and answers my unspoken question.

“It's better than being alone.” She gathers her books, gives me a sad, brave smile and walks off, back to her personal hell. I watch her, knowing what she is returning to. I let her go anyway. She is well beyond hearing when I speak.

“If you won't help yourself, why should I? Bitch.”

## Best of Friends

### Player Characters

#### Sara North

Sara is the wayward scion of a well-off family. She dropped out of her art degree in the first year, moving to a flat in Islington determined to make her fortune as an artist. So far fame has escaped her, and she supplements her income with graphic design work and contracts, as well as money borrowed from her family. Her work is in too classical a style to attract much media attention so far, and often has dark themes, taken from her dreams.

Profession: Artist

Age: 23

Annual Income: £26,000

Savings: £130,000

R	P	S	C	I	W	T	F	ST	SK	SP	D
3	6	2	7	2	8	7	6	5	3	5	16

#### Skills:

Art (Sketch)	156
Art (Paint)	172
Co-ordination	92
Drive	33
Linguistics(French)	52
Evaluate (Art)	60
Mythology	20
Research	30

**Derangement:** Nightmares (level 1): Occasionally (GM's choice) Sara suffers dreadful nightmares. When she wakes up her player must make a Terror roll. If they fail, Sara loses one Fear point. This is why she has such a low starting Fear.

#### Vivien Kent

Vivien recently completed her accountancy exams, after passing a joint honours degree in Business and Accountancy, and is in her first accountancy job with the company that sponsored her. Interested in everything, she settled on accountancy as a career because she heard it paid well, and is determined to climb the corporate ladder over or through anyone above her. This determination to get ahead can be quite intimidating, and she is learning to use this to her advantage. Currently staying in a small flat with three football mad accountancy students, she is gaining a background in it despite herself

Profession: Accountant

Age: 26

Annual Income: £30,000

Savings: £1,000

R	P	S	C	I	W	T	F	ST	SK	SP	D
4	1	1	11	5	7	9	15	5	1	3	13

#### Skills:

Accountancy	120
Evaluate (money value)	50
Football Trivia	65
Intimidation	60
Law (Business)	50
Law (Fiscal)	130
Numerate	70
Psychology	40
Research	60

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### Player Characters

#### Alan Haining

Alan dropped out of school at 16 and started building up his own business. He has run a succession of companies, all self started, and with mixed success though he tries to act honourably. His current venture, an IT support business, is expanding rapidly. After being taken on a corporate paintballing trip, he has taken to it with great enthusiasm. In the rest of his scarce spare time he enjoys making model aeroplanes, watching (and quoting from) corny movies, and planning future business ventures.

Profession: Self-employed

Age: 42

Annual Income: £35,000 Savings: £35,000

R	P	S	C	I	W	T	F	ST	SK	SP	D
12	1	0	9	9	9	4	9	6	5	4	15

#### Skills:

Bluff	150
Computing	50
Construction	92
Drive	10
Electronics	164
Law (Business)	80
Numerate	42
Psychology	120
Research	85

#### Sam Whitaker

Sam drifted into history teaching at a local school after he finished his degree. He has been there for eight years and still regards it as "the day job", saving his commitment for the jazz band he plays with in the evenings. A skilled player of both the saxophone, and electric guitar Sam practices often, occasionally at most ungodly hours, and has performed with support acts for several touring rock and roll bands. He has been in trouble several times with the head for wearing clothes considered to be unsuitable for teaching and is quite determined that if he can't be an inspiration to the kids he'll be a really bad example. At the same time, as someone who really has done it all, he is usually a good person to turn to for advice when they are in trouble.

Profession: Teacher

Age: 31

Annual Income: £27,000 Savings: £54,000

R	P	S	C	I	W	T	F	ST	SK	SP	D
8	2	1	10	3	5	6	15	4	5	5	14

#### Skills:

Art(Saxophone)	170
Art (Electric guitar)	120
Art (General Music)	50
Bluff	110
History	92
Numerate	10
Pharmacy	65
Psychology	85
Teach	10

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**The End**  
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**More Resources:**

If you have enjoyed playing “Best of Friends”, more scenarios for the game can be obtained free from our website, or purchased in game books. To create customised characters for your players, we have two free computer programs available:

- A downloadable character creator, designed to run on Windows machines,
- A Javascript powered online version which will save characters to your PC in .txt or .html format

There is also a character sheet available to download in PDF format. Other resources are added on a regular basis.

**Discussion:**

If you would like to learn more about the game, discuss the rules or swap ideas with other players, please use our discussion list at <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/groups/malefex>

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