
The Independence Job

by Marty Runyon

An Entry in the 2013 Windhammer Prize for
Short Gamebook Fiction

Introduction

New York City, April 1958. The city is unusually warm. It's been a while since your last job and money is running as dry as the much needed rain. It's only a matter of time before you will need to work again. But that short stretch in prison has made you more cautious. So when you hear the knock on the door, you don't know if it is opportunity or mortality calling.

In *The Independence Job*, you play as a professional thief, preparing and executing a high-stakes heist. The decisions you make and the outcomes of your actions will determine the course of the adventure. At certain points, you will need to stake your fortune to achieve your goals. If you succeed, your fortunes will grow and you could end up rich beyond your wildest dreams. Otherwise, it will diminish, leaving you destitute, on the run, or even dead.

Tools Of The Trade

To play this gamebook, you will need two six-sided dice, a pencil or pen, and paper to make notes on. A Character Sheet is provided to makes notes about your character and your progress through the story.

Creating A Character

Although you will make all of the decisions for your character, not every action you take will be successful. Your character is defined by the Strengths and Weaknesses she or he has in various skills. To create your character, select two skills from the following list in which your character will be proficient and list them as Strengths on your Character Sheet. Then select one of the remaining skills and list it as a Weakness on your Character Sheet.

You will start with 7 Fortune points, which is already noted on the Character Sheet. Your Red, Green, and Blue scores start at zero.

Skills

- Driving
- Gunplay
- Negotiation
- Observation
- Persuasion
- Reasoning
- Seduction

Making A Wager

When you attempt an action, the book will direct you to make a wager. When it does, you must choose how many of your Fortune points you will place at stake on the outcome. Once your stake is chosen, you will roll number of dice determined by your skills. If the result is greater than your stake, you have won the wager and must add points to your Fortune equal to the stake. If the result is equal to or less than your stake, you have lost the wager and must subtract points from your Fortune equal to the stake.

Each wager will also list an ante. This number is the minimum amount you may choose when setting your stake. Most wagers will have an ante of one, but more difficult wagers will require a

greater ante. If you do not have enough Fortune points to cover the ante, you automatically lose the wager but do not subtract any points from your Fortune.

You may not choose a stake greater than your current Fortune. For example, if your Fortune is currently 3, you may not choose a stake of more than three, though you must choose a stake that at least covers the ante.

Most wagers will list a skill. If your character does not have the skill listed as a Strength or Weakness, you will roll one die to determine the result. If your character has the skill listed as a Strength, you will roll two dice and choose the higher roll as the result. If the skill is your character's Weakness, you will roll two dice and choose the lower roll as the result.

Some wagers will pay out more for wins. For instance, if you win a wager that states "pays 2-to-1," you will add two points to your Fortune for each point that you staked.

In the interest of fairness, any wager that could lead to your death will include the warning "This is a life-or-death wager!"

In some circumstances, the wager is not tied to a skill. In such a case, the book will direct you on how many dice to roll and whether to use the high or low result.

Examples

The current wager states "Gunplay Wager, ante 2." Since our character has Gunplay as a Strength, we will roll two dice and use the higher result. We must stake at least 2 Fortune due to the ante. For this example we have enough Fortune to choose 3 for our stake. We roll the dice and they come up 2 and 4. Since the higher result of 4 is greater than our stake of 3, we have won the wager and add 3 points to our Fortune.

The next wager is "Persuasion Wager, ante 1, pays 2-to-1." Persuasion is neither a Strength or Weakness, so we will roll just one die. We now have enough Fortune to choose any stake, so we will choose 2. The die comes up 2. Since the result is not greater than our stake, we lose the wager and subtract 2 from our Fortune. If we had won the wager, we would instead be adding 4 to our Fortune because it pays 2-to-1 on wins.

A Word About Sex

As you are reading a hard-boiled pulp crime story, you might assume that the main character is male by necessity. Don't. I have undertaken great effort to insure that this story can be read from both a female and male perspective.

Starting Your Adventure

Once you have chosen your Strengths and Weakness and you are familiar with the Wager rules, turn to section 1 and beginning.

When you come to the end of a section, there will be instructions written in italics. Some will ask you to make a decision. Depending on which option you choose, turn to the section listed for that choice and continue reading from there. In addition, when you are asked to make a Wager, roll for the Wager as instructed above, and then turn to the section listed for that result.

Wagers are the heart of this gamebook and are the only way to increase your Fortune. Your Fortune score will determine the outcome of the story. You can play it safe and reach an ending, or you can press your luck and possibly receive riches beyond your wildest dreams.

Now you are ready. Turn to section 1 and begin your adventure

Character Sheet

Strengths	_____	Red	0 _____
	_____	Green	0 _____
Weakness	_____	Blue	0 _____
Fortune	7 _____	Note	_____

1

Chapter 1. The Pitch

The windows are wide open, trying to catch an evening breeze off the Hudson. It's not working. Your apartment is an oven and you are the turkey. Only a glass of scotch and two ice cubes offer any respite. You lean against the sill and look across the rooftops and street lights. This is not the April you expected. But then, this wasn't the life you expected either.

You look at the spare furniture, the grungy carpet, the empty bottles on the bar. There is no joy in the place. There is barely anything to say you even live here. If the door wasn't locked, anyone walking in might think the place abandoned. It's like seeing the ugly reflection of your soul.

As you turn away from that black mirror, someone raps on the door. You don't move. You can't. All you want is to finish up that bottle and try to sleep off the heat. No one at the door is worth giving that up.

Whoever it is doesn't care for your plans. They knock again.

You set your tumbler on the bar, fish that dirty snub-nose from behind the cushions, and step up to the door. "Who is it?"

He clears his throat. "Edward Bailey. I got your name from Father. He sends his regards." Father. Is that old fixer still looking out for you?

You unlatch the door and step away. "Come on in."

The door opens hesitantly. The man who follows is dressed well. His jacket is fresh and his slacks are holding a tight crease against the heat. He holds his hands open and slightly forward. The smirk on his clean shaven face tells you a lot.

"Cautious, I see. Exactly what I like in a professional. Father said you would be." He glances around the room. "Do you mind if I take off my hat? This city is a sauna."

"Suit yourself. Can I offer you a drink?" you ask.

He removes the hat and sets it on an end table. "That would do the trick. And while you're at it, I'll explain why I'm here."

You set your pistol on the cracked Formica and pick out a clean glass. "I'm listening."

Bailey leans against your couch. "I've got a job coming up. A fat one. I've got a crew picked out, but we need a fourth." You hand him a glass, then take a drink yourself. "I've asked around. Everyone says you were good. Maybe even the best. That's why I'm here. To see if you're up for it."

A job. You look down at the melting cubes in your tumbler. Is this the one?

If you accept Edward's offer, turn to 31.

If you decline, turn to 72.

If you press for more details, turn to 14.

2

It had almost slipped away from you, but the job is behind you now. The car rolls down the road, making its way to the safehouse. It is almost over now.

George clears his throat. "So, what are you going to do with your share?"

"Oh, I don't know," you start to say, when you feel the barrel of a pistol pressed against your temple.

And then you feel nothing.

* * *

George stops by the side of the road, long enough to kick the body out of the car. Then he drives away to tell the others that it is done. He thinks about splitting the money four ways instead of five. A smile comes to his face and he whistles a happy tune.

THE END

3

"Looks like we have a Prisoner's Dilemma, Dorothy," you yell.

"What do you mean?" she yells back.

"Think about it. You don't have the drop on me anymore," you explain. "If it comes to shooting, who knows how it goes? Maybe you get me and you get all the money. Maybe I get you and I walk out with everything. Maybe we shoot each other and all that cash sits here until someone finds the bodies. do you like those odds?"

The house goes silent. Wherever she is, she's no longer trying to find you. You look behind you, but the hallway is clear.

"You want to split the money," she realizes.

You reply, "That's the only way to guarantee that we both get out of here alive. I know that you are a professional, Dorothy. And I know from this job that you are smart. Let's not do anything stupid now."

"Alright," she says.

Slowly, the two of you work together to split the cash. The tension never dissipates, but you get through it.

The sun is low to the horizon when you are done. Dorothy watches you warily as you back out the door. She stands silently at the door, her pistol at her side and you drive away.

Add ten points to your Fortune score and turn to 20.

4

You close your eyes and let out your breath. Your shoulders slump as you think about the situation. There is no way that this caper is going to come off.

There is no one to stop you as you turn the keys. You pull the car out onto the highway and head north. What is the cliché? Discretion is the better part of valor? That seems right.

This doesn't feel valorous. But neither does ending up dead outside a bank. There will be other jobs. Better jobs, you tell yourself. You just have to be alive to do them.

Your headlights sweep through the darkness. Trees lurch out of the night and sail by you. Miles roll away under your wheels with unending monotony.

The bitter taste of valor on your lips.

THE END

5

Chapter 6. The Job

At precisely 9:15 in the morning, a plain white van rolls up to the front door of the First National Bank in Independence, Missouri. The guard watches as four people exit the van. There is nothing that stands about the group, except that one is a black. Nonetheless, he knows that something is wrong. His hand drifts, absentmindedly, to his gun.

You push open the door and scan the lobby. Two tellers, one guard, and one customer. The count seems wrong but you keep moving. You lift your gun toward the guard. "Everybody on the ground. Do what you're told and no one has to get hurt."

The guard hesitates, but eventually joins the others on the floor. Edward collects his gun and stands over him. Now to execute your plan.

If you take the time to empty the cash drawers, turn to 29.

If you want to secure the back office, turn to 61.

If you rush to the vault, turn to 89.

6

The three of you spend the next couple of hours with shovels, a jug, and five corpses, trying to make them a new home in the Kentucky hillside.

George, his dark skin glistening with sweat, takes a handkerchief from his back pocket and his brow. "I appreciate you both helping me out here."

"Who are these goons, anyway?" you ask as you toss another shovelful of dirt from the grave.

He smiles with an impish twinkle in his eye. "Just some local folks who don't take kindly to a colored man doing business without their say so."

"What kind of business?" Edward inquires as he rests against his own shovel.

"What Mr. Bailey is asking is how much you took them for?" you joke.

"No more than what was owed to me," George answers. "It's what they get for trying to out hustle a hustler. I did them a favor, showing them the error of their ways. Well, not this lot," he says, gesturing, "but them other fellas. I should put their heads on pikes down by the drive, but I wouldn't want to upset any of my lady friends." George grins at you and you can't help but laugh.

"I don't know, George," you tell him. "I can think of a couple."

George chuckles. "Well, you should send them my way."

You all dig for several more minutes before George says, "You haven't mentioned what brings you my way. As long as we're here, you might as well say."

"Edward here is setting up a bank job," you tell him. "It's a daylight job, but they've got the angles covered. Only thing is we need a fifth to do things right. I can't think of anyone I'd rather have along with us. You get an even split and it's going to be a big one at that." You hold out your hand to him. "What do you say?"

Make a Negotiation wager, ante 1. If you win the wager, turn to 19. If you lose, turn to 82.

7

The safehouse comes into sight, in the shade of the green ash trees. You and George roll up to the house. There is another vehicle here that you don't recognize. Probably their escape car.

George gets out and heads to the house ahead of you. You open your door, stretch, and begin to follow.

Inside, Paul is standing in the kitchen, making a sandwich. He looks up as you walk in. "You made it. Great. You want one while I'm making?" You wave him off. "Sure. You know how hungry I get after one of these. They're already counting if you want to join in."

Dorothy and Edward are in the next room, counting bills into stacks. You join in and start making your way through a bag.

By nightfall, the money is counted, divided, and split between the five of you. By then, no one is very talkative. You are ready to be on your way, like the rest of them.

Edward is the last to leave. You see him light a cigarette on the front step as you pull away. The glowing ember retreats into the distance as you drive.

Turn to 20.

8

You jump into the driver's seat as George climbs in the opposite side. The car swings out onto the road, full of power. George could not have picked a better car.

"Police behind us," George announces. "Two of them."

You adjust the rear view mirror and smile. "Just two," you muse. "What kind of challenge is that?"

The car surges as you shift into high gear. The police struggle to keep up. You spot a turn ahead, down shift, and spin around the corner. You speed toward the next corner, turn quickly, and speed off again. Before long, there is no sight of the police.

"I think you lost them," George says.

"Just have to be sure." You turn down another road, then another. Eventually you will make your way toward the safehouse. But not yet. Not just yet.

Turn to 48.

9

"Tie them up?" The incredulity drips from your words. "This isn't a John Wayne film."

"What the hell does that mean?" Edward asks.

"I mean that we need as many people in that vault as we can get. And we need all the time we can get. And that means putting one more person in the lobby with a gun. Someone we trust to stay calm under pressure. Someone we trust not to hesitate when the shooting starts."

Dorothy speaks up then. "It's a valid point, Edward. I'd rather spend my time filling bags with money instead of tying my knots."

Edward looks from Dorothy to Paul. Then he replies, "Alright. We'll do it your way."

"I know the perfect guy for the job. If you let me bring him in, you will not be sorry," you promise.

Edward says, "We are trusting you here. I hope this guy is as good as you say."

"Don't worry," you tell him. "He's a professional."

Add a note stating "Gunman" to your character sheet, add one to your Red score, and turn to 43.

10

As you fill a bag, a single shot rings out from the lobby. Edward rushes in to the vault. "George just popped the guard while you were screwing around. Who knows how much time we've got?"

As the words escape his lips, you hear the roar of sirens in the distance. "Not that much time at all," you answer. You pack faster.

Make a Vault Looting wager (roll one die), ante 2, pays 5-to-1. No matter the outcome, add one to your Red Score and turn to 16.

11

"Look, I'm here for one reason, same as you," you tell her. "There is going to be a lot of money at the end of this and I can help you get it. Whatever time I did doesn't have anything to do with it."

Sullivan's eyebrows rise, questioning. "No, I think it has everything to do with it. If we can't trust you, what is the point of going forward? We might as well call it a night and go our separate ways."

Edward steps in to calm her. "I put this job together and I chose you all for a reason. I get that there's little trust here, but trust me. None of you would be here if there was no reason. Okay?"

Dorothy frowns. "Alright, Eddie. If you say so."

Edward claps his hands. "Well, if that's all done, let's move to the dining room so that we can talk about the plan."

Add one point to your Green score and turn to 27.

12

Edward dives out of the way as the guard shoots. Several shots ring through the lobby. You and Dorothy hide behind the counter with the tellers. The guard pauses, hopefully to reload.

You peak up, ready to kill him. But a bullet ricochets off the counter and you dive for cover again. "What is with this guy?" Dorothy asks through gritted teeth.

"He's wasting our time," you answer. You lift your gun over the counter and fire blindly in his direction. Dorothy follows your lead and starts firing.

Seconds pass. You reload and crawl to the end of the counter. You take a breath before peeking around the side. You can see the guard behind a desk in the corner of the room. He is scanning the

lobby, waiting for someone to present a target. You know you have to end it before the plan goes completely off the rails. Edward starts firing. The guard turns to return fire, but you lean out and shoot him in the chest.

"Come on," you tell everyone. "We don't have much time."

If George is a Linesman, turn immediately to 59.

If not, make an Observation wager, ante 4. If you win the wager, turn to 59. If you lose, turn to 84.

13

With the others out of the house, you and Dorothy focus on the plan. Timing, floor plans, measurements, escape routes. No detail is too small for you to consider. The number of police on the force. Where are they stationed? How many will be on duty on the day? Which roads will be blocked off?

You both go over the details again and again until you have it down. But is it enough? Did you cover everything?

Make a Reasoning wager, ante 1. If you win the wager, turn to 57. If you lose, turn to 94.

14

"Not so fast," you tell him. "I need a few more details before I commit to this venture."

Bailey chuckles. "I was told you would be a hard sell." He swishes the ice cubes in his glass.

"Alright, it's a bank job. A big one in Missouri. For one reason or another, they are going to be unusually flush for a day. I've got a plan to sweep it all up before anyone else in town is the wiser. Should be a hundred twenty easy." When you don't say anything, he adds, "I suppose you want to know your cut."

You take another drink. "I'm listening."

"After expenses and my finder's fee, you come away with twenty thousand easy. How does that sound?" he asks.

It sounds damn good, you have to admit. But is it good enough?

If you accept Bailey's offer, turn to 31.

If you decline, turn to 72.

If you want to press for a larger cut, make a Negotiation Wager, ante 1. If you win the wager, turn to 91. If you lose the wager, turn to 53.

15

You take a moment to ready yourself. You take a deep breath and try to focus. If you only get the one shot, you have to make it count.

"Where the hell are you?" Edward yells as he fires a couple more rounds through the open door.

You spin and aim through the window. The glass shatters as you fire twice. The shards are still falling as Edward tumbles over. You keep your pistol trained on him. He is still breathing, but he's not moving.

You head to the door and walk cautiously inside. You kneel next to Paul and Dorothy, checking each for signs of life. Edward was thorough. You were his only loose end.

Edward lies on the floor, with blood on his chest and in his mouth. He tries to speak, but he cannot manage it. The pistol in his hand twitches as though he is still trying to fight back. You finish him with one more shot to the forehead and move on to the money.

The sun is setting as you drive away from the safehouse. You press the accelerator to the floor as you leave their ghosts behind.

Add ten points to your Fortune score and turn to 20.

16

Chapter 7. The Getaway

You exit the vault clutching the last bag. You pass through the offices, around the counter, and into the lobby. The tellers have their heads down and are pointedly not looking at you. The guard lies motionless where you left him. George crouches beside the front door.

"Get down," he orders between clenched teeth as the sound of gunshots rattle the glass.

"What are you doing in here?" you ask as you duck down opposite him.

"Police," he replies. "The van is blocked in, but the other three are running with the money. All we've got to do is get out."

You nod your head. "What do you think?"

George gestures with his gun. "There's a car a block down. Should be easy to hotwire."

"Okay. Let's do this." The two of you burst out of the bank, shooting as you run.

A car squeals its tires down the road. The police don't know who to fire at, you or the others. You duck behind a mailbox, a trash can, a street lamp. Whatever you can put between the bullets and yourself. You fire, reload, and keep moving.

George reaches the car first and pulls open a door. "Damn. The keys are right here." With luck like this, you might make it out after all.

If George is a Driver, turn immediately to 71.

If not, make a Driving wager, ante 2. If you win the wager, turn to 8. If you lose, turn to 35.

17

Chapter 5. The Night Before

The Great Western Motel sits on US 24, northeast of Independence. The crew drove down in ones and twos over the last few days. The five of you each have your own rooms. So you sit inside, try to stay cool, and be ready to go. Everything is ready, but for the waiting.

The weather has been fluctuating between amenable and uncomfortably hot. The job is tomorrow and you find yourself pacing your room, unable to rest. Your clothes are too sticky and the air cooler is struggling with the heat.

You throw open the door, hoping to find some respite outside. You see that Dorothy and Paul are still awake, their lights burning in the darkness. Maybe a little companionship would not be amiss.

If your Fortune score is zero, turn immediately to 4.

If you visit Dorothy's room, turn to 51.

If you visit Paul's room, turn to 75.

18

You give him your friendliest smile. "I know you can drive, Paul, but you're better on the inside. Remember, I worked with you before. If I was planning this job, I would want you on the inside."

Merrick steps back from the table and pauses to consider. "I get it. Okay."

"I know a guy," you continue. "He is hands down the best driver I've ever met. I've seen him make runs that you wouldn't believe if I told you. If you let me bring him in, you will not be sorry."

The others confer with glances and raise eyebrows. Dorothy shrugs and rolls her eyes. Paul nods his agreement.

"Okay, we'll do it your way," Edward says. "I hope this guy is as good as you say."

"Don't worry," you tell him. "He's a professional."

Add a note stating "Driver" to your character sheet and turn to 43.

19

George considers the hole and the men laying nearby. "It seems as though I need to get out of town anyway." He reaches out and takes your hand. "The trip might as well be profitable, right?"

"Good," you reply. "Now let's get these men planted and get out of here."

Turn to 99.

20

Chapter 9. Epilogue

If your Fortune score is from 0 to 29, turn to 40.

If your Fortune score is from 30 to 44, turn to 60.

If your Fortune score is from 45 to 59, turn to 80.

If your Fortune score is 60 or more, turn to 100.

21

"Is that how you remember it?" you challenge him. "Because it seems to me someone was supposed to have that alarm down before we got anywhere near the building. You remember whose job that was?"

Your grips tighten, but neither of you flinch. His eyes crease and he grits his teeth. "You want to say something to me?"

"Both of you calm down," says Bailey. He puts his hand on both of you. "It's all water under the bridge now. Let's not let the past get in the way of a big pay day, okay?"

Merrick releases your hand and backs away, slowly. "Sure, it's cool." He walks over to an arm chair near the fireplace and sits down heavily.

Add one point to your Blue score and turn to 77.

22

You enter the lobby and leap behind the counter with the tellers. Dorothy is there, keeping her head down. The guard pauses, hopefully to reload.

"Are you ready?" you call out as you lift your gun.

"After you," is the reply. You motion to Dorothy, and the two of you start firing over the counter. You hear the others shooting as well. The fusillade is deafening.

When the shooting is over, you stand up cautiously. The guard lays in a pool of blood against the far wall.

"Come on," you tell everyone. "We don't have much time."

Make a Vault Looting wager (roll one die), ante 1, pays 5-to-1. No matter the outcome, turn to 16.

23

You lean out the window and take aim. You squeeze off a shot. Another. A third. The car shakes and it's hard to keep your gun steady. But you have them in your sights now.

You snap two more shots at the lead car. The wind shield shatters and the car spins out of control. The second car is too close and the two slam into one another.

"Nice shooting," George says as you climb back in. You settle into the seat. You close your eyes and let him take you to the safehouse.

Turn to 48.

24

"If you hand me that drink, maybe I'll tell you," you answer.

"Alright," Dorothy says, handing you a glass. "Why don't you sit down and tell me little about yourself?" She takes the other chair, tucking her right leg under her left. She takes a sip and watches you intently.

"What do you want to know?" you ask as you take your seat.

Dorothy looks down at the table between you. "Tell me what prison was like?"

You take a moment to think. "Is that really what you want to know?"

"I'm curious," she says, looking you in the eyes. "It's okay if you don't want to say."

"No, I do want to talk about it." You tell her everything. Things you haven't told another person. When you eventually return to your room, you sleep better than you have in months.

Turn to 5.

25

You point to the trees to your right. "You draw their fire. I'll go around and hit them from the side."

You get to your feet and prepare run. Edward counts back from three and then starts firing randomly. Your attention is oddly focused on each step. One, two, three, four, five, six. How many steps until you reach the trees? Nine, ten. Bullets whiz by. Edward must be reloading. Fourteen, fifteen.

You dive behind a tree and catch your breath. Edward is watching, waiting for you to get ready. You lift your pistol and nod. Edward smiles and starts shooting again. You join in, catching the thugs in a crossfire. Even outnumbered, you cut them down quickly.

You finally take a moment to catch your breath. "Are you okay?" you ask.

Edward looks at his car. "I'm in better shape than the car."

"Maybe you should take one those Buicks?" calls a third voice. Standing on the porch, shotgun in hand, is George Cowles. "It would only be fair since you did help me out of my predicament."

Turn to 6.

26

As you fill a bag, gunfire erupts in the lobby. You keep your head down and keep packing. A shot, a stack of money. Another shot, another stack. Eventually, it stops.

Edward rushes in to the vault. "What are doing in here? The guard just gave us a hell of our time. Who knows how much time we've got now?" You don't answer. You just pack faster.

Make a Vault Looting wager (roll one die), ante 2, pays 5-to-1. No matter the outcome, add one to your Red Score and turn to 16.

27

Chapter 3. The Plan

The dining room is furnished with a large table, a tarnished chandelier, and a pair of chairs too rickety to support your weight. A map of a city and the blueprints for a bank are tacked down on the table. You circle it and lean over the plans.

Bailey motions to the map. "This is Independence, Missouri. The building I have marked is the First National Bank. That's the job."

Merrick seems confused. "What's so special about this bank that we have to drive all the way to Mississippi to knock it over?"

"Missouri," Bailey corrects him. "There are a couple of reasons why I selected this particular bank."

First, the bank will be holding a large number of deposits since a local holiday disrupts their armored car schedule. A holiday which also happens to coincide with the major payroll date for the town. There is going to be window of about two hours where they will be holding over a hundred thousand dollars. Maybe two if we're lucky."

As you look over the map, something catches your eye. "What's this red line here?" You point to a marked route that doesn't come any closer than five blocks from the bank. "No way that's your getaway route."

Dorothy smiles. Finally some emotion from her, you note. "That is the parade route."

You shoot a look at Edward, who is suddenly self-conscious. "Dorothy and I made the preliminary plans together," he explains. "That's the other reason. The town is having a parade in the morning. Every policeman in town will be in or watching the parade. As long as we move fast, there won't be more than a couple patrol cars rolling in the entire town."

"That's wild," says Paul Merrick.

"What's our plan inside?" you prompt.

Dorothy pushes the blueprint to the center of the table. "We run a car right up to the front door on the corner. Three man entry. There will be a couple tellers to babysit and a single guard. He's old and soft. Shouldn't be too much trouble. One watches the lobby while the other two strip the vault and carry out the bags. It'll be ten-- fifteen minutes tops."

Edward looks around the room at each of you. "Minimum risk, high payout. What do you say?"

Dorothy stands up straight. "You already know my answer."

Paul bobs his head excitedly. "This is exactly what I need. I can't wait."

Edward turns you. "And you? What do you think?"

"It's a good plan," you tell him. "But it's not right. I've done enough bank jobs to know this is bigger than you are planning. One outside and three inside won't be enough to pull it off? We need a fifth if this is going to work."

"A fifth for what?" Dorothy asks incredulously.

There are three options for your expert. Will you propose a skilled driver, a telephone linesman, or a sharp gunman?

If you want a driver, turn to 45.

If you want a linesman, turn to 63.

If you want a gunman, turn to 81.

28

"Paul, you got me sent to prison," you answer. "That's not easy to overlook."

"Are you going to hold that against me?" Paul asks.

You lean against the counter. "No, I'm not. That's all water under the bridge."

"Good, good." Paul takes another bite from his sandwich. "You know, when Edward brought you in, I was really disappointed that I would have to kill you too."

Your eyes drift to his pistol, sitting on the counter next to his plate. "And now?"

"Now I don't have to anymore." Paul sighs. "Come on. Let's get this money split up and get out of here."

The rest of the day passes surprisingly fast. Paul helps you load the bags in your car. You say your goodbyes and drive away into the sunset. He even waves as you go.

Add ten points to your Fortune score and turn to 20.

29

You point to Dorothy. "Let's clear these drawers."

One of the tellers whimpers as you move behind the counter and start emptying the drawers. The

others watch nervously as you do so.

No one is watching the old guard as he pulls a hidden pistol and takes an uneasy shot at Edward. "Damn punks," he growls.

If George is a Gunman, turn immediately to 37.

If not, make a Gunplay wager, ante 1. If you win the wager, turn to 37. If you lose, turn to 12.

30

You lay out the job for him. The Shark follows intently. He may never have pulled a heist, but he's bankrolled enough to know when one is a dud.

"That's a heck of a plan," he admits. "You can have your ten. I know you are good for it."

"Thank you," Edward says. "You can count on us."

"Of course, I can," the Shark retorts. "With that plan, you either come out with the money or don't come out. I'm paying just to see which way it goes."

Turn to 17.

31

"Okay, I'm in."

Edward's eyebrows go up. "It's a deal then. Truth be told, I thought you would say no."

You gesture with your glass. "It's a damned thing to give all this up, but if I must."

Bailey downs his drink then picks up his hat. "I'll call with details in a couple of days. I look forward to working with you." He extends his hand, which you shake out of habit. Without a good bye, he slips out the door.

You lock the door behind him. His handshake had been clammy, his exit awkward. Probably the heat. Or his nerves. Whatever it was, you would know in a couple of days.

Turn to 33.

32

You sit down on the far side of a table and settle in. "Do you still carry around a deck of cards on your jobs?"

Paul smiles slyly. "Of course I do." He hands you a glass before retrieving his deck. He sits across from you and shuffles the cards. "A few hands of rummy?"

"Like old times," you reply. You take a drink and pick up your cards.

Turn to 5.

33

Chapter 2. The Crew

As promised, the directions came two days later and you find yourself at a ramshackle farm house outside of Burkeville, Virginia. Your headlights scan over a pair of cars out front and you turn onto a gravel driveway. Lights inside and shadows moving across the curtains suggest that the meeting has already started. You brace yourself against the chill, a welcome change from the city, and hurry to the entrance.

Bailey welcomes you in and closes the door behind you. "Glad you could make it. I'll take your things and you can have a seat."

You round the corner, taking in the shabby wallpaper, the matted carpeting, and the musty air. A forlorn painting of waves lapping up on a beach hangs in the hallway. Something about the painting

brings you to a halt. You wonder about the people who looked at the painting. Was the beach their dream? Did they escape this farm and find their way to that beach? You wonder if there is a beach in your future.

There are two other people in the living room. One, a well-built man kneels in front of the fireplace, stoking the coals. The short brown hair and square jaw seem familiar to you, but you can't place him. The woman is sitting on the coach across from the hearth, with one leg crossed under the other. Waves of brunette hair catch highlights from the flames. She looks you over coolly before turning back to the fire.

Edward steps quickly into the room. "Let's go ahead and get the introductions out of the way." He gestures to the man at the fireplace. "This is Paul Merrick."

Merrick cross over to you and takes your hand. "We've met before. It was a few years ago. We did a job in Colorado Springs. Seem to remember you tripping an alarm that brought down a whole mess of trouble." His eyes catch yours, almost daring you to contradict him.

If you blow off his comment, turn to 42.

If you want to challenge his story, make Persuasion Wager, ante 1. If you win, turn to 65. If you lose, turn to 21.

34

Okay, there is one more thing. Before we can move on, you have to make one final wager. I won't mince words; it is looking pretty bad for you. But I also can't spoil what is coming.

Make a Sudden Death wager (roll two dice and use the lower result), ante 4. This is a life-or-death wager! If you win the wager, turn to 46. If you lose, turn to 2.

35

You jump into the driver's seat as George climbs in the opposite side. The car swings out onto the road, full of power. George could not have picked a better car.

"Police behind us," George announces. "Two of them."

You adjust the rear view mirror and smile. "Just two," you muse. "What kind of challenge is that?"

So you drive. You push the car hard and it bucks like an unruly bronco. You take each corner with as much speed as you can maintain, but each turn is a split second off. You maneuver and dodge, but you can't shake your pursuers.

Frustration creeps into George's voice. "Whatever you're doing isn't working."

"How about a little help then?" you ask.

"I've got an idea," he says. George takes his pistol and starts shooting at the police. Somewhere between his shooting and your driving, you finally lose them.

It's tense in the car, but you made it. You turn toward the safehouse and your split of the money.

Turn to 48.

36

"Again, you've landed on a great idea here," you say, trying to calm her. "I'm just saying that there is no reason to take chances. It's not the old days any more when you could just shoot your way out. I would rather the police find out we've been there long after we're gone."

Dorothy considers you for a minute. Then her fists uncurl and her shoulders relax. "Maybe you're right. No need to take chances."

"I know the perfect guy for the job. If you let me bring him in, you will not be sorry," you promise.

"Okay, we'll do it your way," Edward says. "I hope this guy is as good as you say."

"Don't worry," you tell him. "He's a professional."

Add a note stating "Linesman" to your character sheet and turn to 43.

37

Edward dives out of the way as the guard shoots. Several shots ring through the lobby. You and Dorothy hide behind the counter with the tellers. The guard pauses, hopefully to reload.

"Are you ready?" you call out.

"After you," is the reply. You motion to Dorothy, and the two of you start firing over the counter. You hear the others shooting as well. The fusillade is deafening.

When the shooting is over, you stand up cautiously. The guard lies in a pool of blood against the far wall.

"Come on," you tell everyone. "We don't have much time."

If George is a Linesman, turn immediately to 74.

If not, make an Observation wager, ante 2. If you win the wager, turn to 74. If you lose, turn to 95.

38

The days pass slowly. You spend several hours in the car. You become familiar with every stool and booth in the coffee shop. You get used to the too-soft beds at the motel.

You get used to the people. You start to recognize faces. There goes the young teller girl, always in fashionable clothing and too much makeup. There is the balding manager who always goes to work clean shaven but leaves with a dark five o'clock shadow. There is the older bank officer, dressed like your favorite grandmother, always carrying her lunch and an umbrella, even in the middle of summer.

You take meticulous notes. You and Paul spend the nights going over the observations and try to make some sense of them. He returns to his room to call Dorothy with the results before turning in. You shower and try to sleep.

Turn to 17.

39

"Of course, we're friends, Paul," you answer. "Why do you think I keep working with you?"

Paul laughs. "I knew there was a reason. Let's go count our money."

The next hour passes quickly. Paul is jovial, making jokes and reminiscing as you divide the cash. When everything is bagged, you start hauling them outside to your cars.

"You know it was really good seeing you again," he says.

"You too, Paul," you reply. "See you around."

"No. I don't think so," he says as he shoots you in the chest. You fall hard into the dirt. You can't speak. You can't breathe.

Paul wanders over to where you lie. He stands and watches as you die.

THE END

40

For three weeks now, you have not spent more than a single night in any one place. No matter where you lay your head, you always feel the police breathing down your neck. They almost had you back in Charlottesville, but you left town in the early hours, narrowly eluding their trap.

In the down time, you think back on the job. You don't know if Edward was mistaken or purposefully deceived you all. Either way, you walked away with far less money than you expected.

And you are going to burn it all running.

That doesn't matter. As long as it keeps you one step ahead of the authorities, it will be enough. As long as it keeps you out of prison, nothing else matters.

So you drive, you hide, you watch. And when you sleep, you dream of gray bars closing in.

THE END

41

Paul walks over and sits beside you. "How am I doing so far?" He asks with more confidence now. "You're getting warmer," you reply. You take another drink and set the glass aside.

Paul places his hand on your shoulder, much gentler than you imagined. "Warmer?"

"Warmer," you whisper.

Suddenly, Paul pushes you down onto the bed. In shock, a loud laugh escapes from you. "Not so loud," Paul says.

"Make me be quiet," you reply. And he does.

Add one point to each of your Red and Green scores and turn to 5.

42

All you can do is laugh. Merrick pulls away slightly, confused.

"Whatever you say, Paul. But that's the past. And I've got you to keep on me, right?" you ask in jest.

Merrick relaxes and laughs as well. "Yeah, you do at that." He crosses the room and sits heavily in the arm chair next to the fireplace.

Turn to 77.

43

Chapter 4. The Prep

There is less than three weeks before the job, but it still feels like there is not enough time to get everything done. But before anything else can be done, you have to make a short trip to the Appalachians.

Edward has his window rolled down and his elbow on the door. "I love the smell of pine. The closest I usually come to my dining room table, but I do love this smell."

You follow the winding road into the eastern Kentucky back country. You know the way so Edward let you drive this last leg. Your destination is not too far up the hill, but the road is too treacherous for you to rush. Slowly, steadily, you make your way through the trees to the cabin of George Cowles.

"I promise that you are going to like this guy," you tell Edward. "He's got a level head, he knows his stuff, and he knows how to stay out of trouble."

As the words leave your mouth, your car rounds the final bend and nearly drives into the middle of a fire fight.

A pair of black Buicks is parked sloppily in front of the cabin. You can count five thugs with pistols shooting it up like it had offended their parentage. As fast as you see them, they see you too. The windshield cracks as a pair of bullets whistle by your ears. You hit the brakes hard, spin the car sideways, and dive out the door as soon as possible. Edward pulls his gun and looks at you. "Are you ready to do this?"

"It looks like we don't have much choice," you reply.

Make a Gunplay wager, ante 1. If you win the wager, turn to 25. If you lose, turn to 62.

44

You creep through the office, trying to take everything in. As you cross the room, something catches your attention. Looking at the floor, you see a telephone cord running from the desk to the wall. A disguised door!

You pull it open and find a woman, sitting on a toilet, speaking it a phone. "Hello? Hello," she pleads into the receiver.

You take the phone from her and pull it out of the wall.

Shots ring through the bank. "What the hell?" You look around. "Stay here," you order the woman and rush back to the lobby.

If George is a Gunman, turn immediately to 79.

If not, make a Gunplay wager, ante 2. If you win the wager, turn to 79. If you lose, turn to 96.

45

You lean over the table. "I know you're pretty pleased with this plan, but there is going to be pursuit no matter what. We need the best driver behind the wheel that we can get. That lets the four of us take the bank. The more people in the vault, the more money we haul out."

Paul scowls. "I'm a good driver. Why do we need to split the haul with someone else?"

Make a Persuasion Wager, ante 1. If you win, turn to 18. If you lose, turn to 73.

46

It had almost slipped away from you, but the job is behind you now. The car rolls down the road, making its way to the safehouse. It is almost over now.

George clears his throat. "So, what are you going to do with your share?"

"Oh, I don't know," you start to say, when you feel the barrel of a pistol pressed against your temple.

You react violently, knocking the gun away as it goes off. Suddenly all you can hear it the ringing in your ears. You can't hear the car. You can't hear the wind. You can't even hear yourself shouting at George.

He tries to turn the gun on you again, but you grab his wrist. The car swerves as you struggle. The gun goes off again, shattering a window.

Desperately, you grab the steering wheel and turn into an oncoming tree.

When you come to, George is staring, glassy eyed. He can't move, but he knows you are awake now. And he knows he doesn't have long.

Everything is pain. But you can't say here. You have to get out. You push open the door and fall out into the grass. The world jumps and spins as you try to stand.

George just stares at you. "Why?" you ask.

"Just business," he croaks, through a blood-filled mouth. "We decided you had to go." They all decided.

You walk out to the road and start walking, with painful, halting steps. You can't go to the safehouse. You would be as good as dead there.

You don't know where you are going, but it's not here. You keep putting one foot in front of the other and let the road take you where it will.

THE END

47

You enter the lobby and leap behind the counter with the tellers. Dorothy is there, keeping her head down. The guard pauses, hopefully to reload.

You peak up, ready to kill him. But a bullet ricochets off the counter and you dive for cover again. "What is with this guy?" Dorothy asks through gritted teeth.

"He's wasting our time," you answer. You lift your gun over the counter and fire blindly in his direction. Dorothy follows your lead and starts firing.

Seconds pass. You reload and crawl to the end of the counter. You take a breath before peeking around the side. You can see the guard behind a desk in the corner of the room. He is scanning the lobby, waiting for someone to present a target. You know you have to end it before the plan goes completely off the rails. Edward starts firing. The guard turns to return fire, but you lean out and shoot him in the chest.

Sirens roar in the distance. "Come on," you tell everyone. "We don't have much time."

Make a Vault Looting wager (roll two dice and use the lower result), ante 1, pays 5-to-1. No matter the outcome, turn to 16.

48

Chapter 8. The Safehouse

Before we go on, we have to determine exactly where the story goes from here, based on your Red, Green, and Blue scores.

If your Red, Green, and Blue score are all zero, turn to 7.

If the sum of your Red, Green, and Blue scores is 7 or more, turn to 34.

If your scores meet neither of these conditions, you must determine which of the three scores is the highest. If the case of a tie, Red beats Green, and Green beats Blue.

If your Red score is the highest, turn to 66.

If your Green score is the highest, turn to 85.

If your Blue score is the highest, turn to 93.

49

"Hey Eddie," you yell in to him. "Why don't you come out and make this fair?" His answer is a pair of shots fired through the open doorway.

He is rattled now, firing blindly. All you have to do is catch him unaware. You take a breath, turn toward the window, and fire twice. The glass shatters and the bullets pass through and lodge harmlessly in the couch.

Edward fires back and you pour more bullets into the house. One catches you in the shoulder, but you keep shooting. You see that you have hit him now, but the pain is too intense.

It takes all you can manage to squeeze the trigger again. Another bullet hits you and you collapse.

The firing has stopped. You don't know if you got him. Is he coming for you even now? What happened to your gun?

You find the pistol on the ground where you dropped it and crawl to the house. You prop yourself against the wall. The blood pumping out of you now, but you won't go down without a fight. You hold the wound in your chest as hard you can to stop the bleeding. You are not going to go out like this. Edward won't get the satisfaction.

You lift the pistol, aim toward the doorway, and wait. No matter how long it takes, as long as there is one bullet in your gun, you are taking the next person through that door with you.

For as long as it takes.

THE END

50

When you and Paul pull up across the street from the bank, the excitement rises in you unbidden. Your target is a short walk away. You could walk in the front door, talk with a teller, and shake hands with the manager, and they would be none the wiser.

But that's not why you are here. Now is the time to watch. To learn their schedules. To run routes. To wait and note everything you see. But you must be careful not to be noticed. Careful not to miss anything.

Make an Observation wager, ante 1. If you win the wager, turn to 38. If you lose, turn to 76.

51

You knock on the door. Dorothy opens silently and looks you over. "Couldn't sleep?" she asks.

"No, I couldn't," you admit. "I saw your light on and guessed that you felt the same."

She is still thinking. "I was about to make myself a drink. Would you like one?"

"That sounds perfect," you tell her.

"Then come in," she says, stepping away from the door. "I'm not about to drink out there." You enter behind her and close the door.

"So what will it be?" Dorothy asks, glancing over her shoulder.

"What do you have?" you ask.

"I have whiskey," she says. "What I mean is are you here to talk? Or maybe you had something else in mind?"

If you tell her that you are here to talk, turn to 24. If you are looking for more than conversation, turn to 83.

52

As you fill a bag, gunfire erupts in the lobby. You keep your head down and keep packing. A shot, a stack of money. Another shot, another stack. Eventually, it stops.

Edward rushes in to the vault. "What are doing in here? The guard just gave us a hell of a time. Who knows how much time we've got now?"

As the words escape his lips, you hear the roar of sirens in the distance. "Not that much time at all," you answer. You pack faster.

Make a Vault Looting wager (roll two dice and use the lower result), ante 2, pays 5-to-1. No matter the outcome, add one to your Red Score and turn to 16.

53

"You're kidding me, right?" You take a long swallow from your drink. "That's practically an insult. If I don't clear thirty, I can't see leaving all this comfort behind."

"Is that so," he answers. "Don't get too full of yourself. You're supposed to be good, but there are other cages I could rattle without half the guff. The offer is twenty, take it or leave it."

Add one point to your Red score. If you accept the offer, turn to 31. If you decline, turn to 72.

54

"Tying people up is going to take time. Time we need to clear out the vault," you explain. "We can do that if you think it's best, but every second we waste on the employees is time we are not making money."

Edward ponders this for a minute. "One more person is one more split. Do you really think we can walk out with that much more money?"

You don't hesitate. "If you give me the time, I guarantee it."

Edward looks to the others. Then he replies, "Alright. We'll do it your way."

"I know the perfect guy for the job. If you let me bring him in, you will not be sorry," you promise. Edward says, "We are trusting you here. I hope this guy is as good as you say."
 "Don't worry," you tell him. "He's a professional."
Add a note stating "Gunman" to your character sheet and turn to 43.

55

You scan the map, marking each road, each landmark. "Turn here," you call out. George spins the wheel and shoots down the new road.

"Next left ahead," you order. George responds perfectly. You direct him through a series of turns, down dirt roads, and around any obstacle you can put between you and the police.

As you are about the call out another turn, George laughs and says, "Don't bother. They didn't make that last turn. They don't even know where we are any more."

You take a breath, lean back, and fold the map again. You take another breath, almost to remind you that you can. You made it. At least this far.

Turn to 48.

56

You take a deep breath and let it out slowly. "If I'm going to tell this story, I'm going to need a drink." You sit on the arm of the couch and Edward brings you a glass. You consider it for a moment before wetting your throat.

"My partner and I did a job in the LA Jewelry District. There was a delivery of diamonds we intercepted. We were on our way out the door when the cops show up. Out of the blue like they already knew we were there." You pause take another drink before going on. "My partner made a deal with this cop, see. They arrest us. I get thrown in jail. My partner walks with the diamonds. I was set up. Simple as that."

You fix your gaze on Dorothy. "When you say you want to know who you're working with, well, I think we see eye to eye on that." She nods, satisfied with your story.

Edward claps his hands. "Well, if that's all done, let's move to the dining room so that we can talk about the plan."

Turn to 27.

57

Dorothy and you pour over the notes, the plans, the maps, everything. You review every angle. You check them again. You spot every potential for the plan to break down and work out every contingency.

The plan is good. You have to admit that it may even be great.

Dorothy drops a pen on the table and stretches her arms. "We've spent so much time on this plan, doing the job is going to feel anticlimactic."

"We can only hope," you answer.

Turn to 17.

58

"Oh," he says. "Oh." He seems even more confused now.

"Maybe this wasn't such a good idea," you say. "I should go."

Paul gives you plenty of room. "Right. Best to keep things professional. Especially tonight."

You finish your drink and hand the glass over before leaving. Your mind is a whirl. The walk back to your room is interminable.

Add two points to your Blue score and turn to 5.

59

As you pass through the offices, something makes you hesitate. The count was off. The others continue to the vault as investigate.

You creep through the office, trying to take everything in. As you cross the room, something catches your attention. Looking at the floor, you see a telephone cord running from the desk to the wall. A disguised door!

You pull it open and find a woman, sitting on a toilet, speaking it a phone. "Hello? Hello," she pleads into the receiver.

You take the phone from her and pull it out of the wall. "Stay here and be quiet," you order the woman as you head to the vault.

Make a Vault Looting wager (roll one die), ante 1, pays 5-to-1. No matter the outcome, turn to 16.

60

You stand at the window, holding a glass, looking out over the city. It's August now. And it is even hotter than that day Edward Bailey showed up at your door. So much has changed, and yet so little.

You look over your apartment and barely recognize it. The furniture is all new, as well as the carpet. You take a drink from your glass. Even the liquor is better.

The job was a good one. Not the huge score you were hoping for, but it left you comfortable. If you could not afford a new place, you would make the best of what you have.

You take another drink and try to catch the breeze off the Hudson. Maybe a year from now, you will need to work again. You look back over your new furnishings. Better make that six months.

THE END

61

As the others deal with the people in the lobby, you walk back to the offices. They are eerily still. Only the tap of your shoes on the polished tile breaks the silence.

The count was wrong, but there seems to be no one else here. You can't be too careful. Is there someone else here?

If George is a Linesman, turn immediately to 44.

If not, make an Observation wager, ante 1. If you win the wager, turn to 44. If you lose, turn to 67.

62

The two of you pull your pistols and get ready. "On three," you tell him. You count off slowly. One. Two. Three. You and Edward stand up and start shooting.

The thugs hunker down, trying to avoid your sudden attack. But you clip one and he hits the dirt hard. Your gun clicks and you duck back behind the car. Edward is reloading next to you. "Four left," he says.

You take a deep breath and start shooting again. One of the thugs tries to come around on you, but Edward drops him. Three more. You aim. Click.

You duck again and look at your pistol. Empty. "I'm all out," you tell him.

Edward kneels beside you. "Same. What now?"

You look at the road, the trees, an outhouse, weighing your options. "I say we..."

There is a boom from behind you. A second. You exchange glances with Edward. He cringes when a third boom sounds. You both wait silently. The gunfire does not resume. You poke your head up, looking for the thugs.

"Well, look here. The cavalry came to save little ol' me." Standing on the front porch of the cabin, holding a shotgun on his shoulder, is George Cowles.

Add one point to your Red score and turn to 6.

63

You lean over the map and point out the parade route and a nearby police station. "The plan is good, don't get me wrong. But as soon as someone picks up a phone, it's going to be raining policemen. We need someone to cut the phone lines before we go in."

You can feel Dorothy tense up from across the table. "We put a lot of work into this plan," she explains. "You think we haven't taken this into account?"

Make a Reasoning Wager, ante 1. If you win, turn to 36. If you lose, turn to 90.

64

"I'll try to scare them off," you tell George.

You roll down the window and lean out with your gun. One of the policemen is waving his pistol around, trying to shoot you down. You crack off a couple of shots wildly, getting used to firing from the car. You've just about got the hang of it now. You take aim and fire.

Make a Gunplay wager, ante 2. If you win the wager, turn to 23. If you lose, turn to 97.

65

You stare at him hard. You wonder what kind of game he's playing here. Is this a good natured ribbing or is he trying to cut your legs out from under you from the start? Either way, he can have his answer.

"I remember it a little differently, Paul," you say, eyes fixed on him. "Seems to me that line was supposed to be cut before we even go near an alarm."

His eyes narrow. They seem to ask whether you are really going to challenge him. You decide to let him off the hook, at least for now.

"Forget it," you tell him. "There was plenty of blame to go around on that job. And you can't say that we didn't come out okay on the other end."

The smile comes back to his face. "No, I can't. Good to have you on the job." He crosses the room and sits heavily in the arm chair next to the fireplace.

Turn to 77.

66

The safehouse comes into sight, in the shade of the green ash trees. You and George roll up to the house. There is another vehicle here that you don't recognize. Probably their escape car.

George gets out and heads to the house ahead of you. You open your door, stretch, and begin to follow. You are about halfway to the front door when a gunshot booms. George stumbles backwards and then tumbles to the ground.

You run to the house with your pistol in hand. Slowly, you edge along the wall to where George lies. He stares into the sky, his lifeless eyes unseeing.

You take a breath before peeking into the house. A pair of shots whistle by you. You reply with a pair of your own.

The house goes quiet. There is a window a few yards away. You fire a shot randomly into the house as a distraction and then sprint to the window.

Inside, Edward is crouching behind a sofa. The bodies of Dorothy and Paul are sprawled on the floor in front of him.

Make a Gunplay wager, ante 1. This is a life-or-death wager! If you win the wager, turn to 15. If you lose, turn to 49.

67

You creep through the office, trying to take everything in.

As you are about to give up, you hear a muffled voice. The words "First National Bank" come

through clearly. You cross the room to where you thought you heard it. Looking at the floor, you see a telephone cord running from the desk to the wall. A disguised door!

You pull it open and find a woman, sitting on a toilet, speaking it a phone. She looks up at you. "They're on their way," she says meekly.

You take the phone from her and pull it out of the wall.

Shots ring through the bank. "What the hell?" You look around. "Stay here," you order the woman and rush back to the lobby.

If George is a Gunman, turn immediately to 22.

If not, make a Gunplay wager, ante 4. If you win the wager, turn to 22. If you lose, turn to 47.

68

The Shark earned his name the hard way. Too many men had died at his behest for him to be called anything else. That never bothers you. He likes you. Maybe because you never failed to repay your obligations.

Edward is a bit nervous as you knock on the back door of the Lucky Lanes bowling alley. "You're sure this is the right guy?"

"Couldn't be surer." The door opens and a large man beckons you in.

Inside, a diminutive man with a bald head and thick spectacles sits behind a felt covered table. "So good to see you again. And you brought a friend. How nice." He motions for you to sit with long, bony fingers.

"We're looking to fund a little job we've got," you tell him. "It's a bank and it could be a good one. But we'll need ten to get everything down in time."

"Oh, my," he says, a big smile on his face. "Not so little then. Why don't you tell me about it?"

Make a Negotiation wager, ante 1. If you win the wager, turn to 30. If you lose turn to 87.

69

Dorothy leans into you. Her lips are close to yours. "Later," she whispers, her breath warm on your face. "I shouldn't, but I can't help myself."

You reach out for her. "Then don't."

Your lips meet hers and she welcomes you hungrily. And then the night doesn't feel so lonely.

Add one point to each of your Red and Blue scores and turn to 5.

70

"Think it through, Dorothy," you yell. "If this gets around, no one will work with you again. As long as you have me to vouch for you, this is just a job that went down bad."

"Let me guess," she says. "All it costs me is half the money."

"It's the only way to be fair," you reply. "What do you think? We put down our guns, we both walk out of here rich, and I back up anything you say?"

You wait, but there is no answer. "Dorothy?" you ask. "Come on, Dorothy. Don't leave me hanging here."

"Well, we wouldn't want that," answers the voice behind you. You spin to find Dorothy ten feet away. The first bullet enters your chest before you can even raise your gun. The second punches you again and you fall to the ground.

Dorothy walks over to where you lie on the ground. "I thought about your offer, but I'll do this my way. Don't worry about me. I will be just fine." She steps over as she leaves. It is the last thing you see.

THE END

71

George starts the engine as you scramble around to the passenger side. "Let's go!" you yell. He steps on the accelerator and the car shoots off.

You look back and see two police cars in pursuit. "How fast is this thing?" you ask.

George replies, "Fast enough. But a little help would not be remiss."

If you try to shoot it out with the police, turn to 64. If you search for an escape route, turn to 86.

72

You set your glass aside. "I would, but I've got something of my own coming up."

"Do you?" That smirk comes back as he looks around the room again. "I'm sorry I couldn't entice you to set it aside." Bailey waits for you to contradict him. When you don't, he finishes his drink and picks up his hat. "Next time I'm in town, we should compare notes. Good night." He tips the hat to you and leaves.

The tumbler leaves a ring of moisture on the bar when you pick it up. Beads of water run down the glass and drop to the floor. Maybe you don't really have a job coming up, but you were not going to take this one. Not from this guy.

You walk back to the window. There would be other jobs. The right job. You just have to wait.

You stare into the night and night stares back at you. Together you wait for the breeze to come.

THE END

73

You give him your friendliest smile. "I'm sure you're a good driver, Paul. But you have to see this guy to believe him. The things he can do with a car..."

"How to you know I can't?" Paul shouts.

Edward steps in. "Okay, calm down, Paul. This might not be a bad idea. You're not the type to wait in a car while the action is going down, right?"

"Yeah, I suppose," Merrick replies.

You calm your nerves and try again. "I promise you all. If you let me bring him in, you will not be sorry."

The others confer with glances and raise eyebrows. Dorothy shrugs and rolls her eyes. Paul nods his agreement.

"Okay, we'll do it your way," Edward says. "I hope this guy is as good as you say."

"Don't worry," you tell him. "He's a professional."

Add a note stating "Driver" to your character sheet, add one to your Blue score, and turn to 43.

74

As you pass through the offices, something makes you hesitate. The count was off. The others continue to the vault as investigate.

You creep through the office, trying to take everything in. As you cross the room, something catches your attention. Looking at the floor, you see a telephone cord running from the desk to the wall. A disguised door!

You pull it open and find a woman, sitting on a toilet, speaking it a phone. "Hello? Hello," she pleads into the receiver.

You take the phone from her and pull it out of the wall. "Stay here and be quiet," you order the woman as you head to the vault.

Make a Vault Looting wager (roll two dice and use the higher result), ante 1, pays 5-to-1. No matter the outcome, turn to 16.

75

You knock on Paul's door, waiting for him to stir. A shadow crosses the window, and then he is at the door.

"Well, what have we here?" he says.

"I might ask the same," you tell him, indicating the towel around his waist.

Embarrassed, he apologizes. "Sorry, yes, I just got out of the shower. I hoped it would cool me down. Do you mind waiting for me to change?"

"I'll just stay out here," you say.

After a moment, he returns to the door. He flashes a smile to you. "Come in. I was thinking about having a drink? Will you have one too?"

"I wouldn't mind," you admit.

Paul pours a couple of glasses and hands one over to you. His hand lingers, as though he's hesitant to let go. "Can I... ask... why you stopped by?"

If you are just looking to relax, turn to 32. If you have something more in mind, turn to 98.

76

There are few days to get the job done, but the waiting quickly begins to grate. You go about your business as best you can. But when the week has passed, you and Paul are barely speaking.

It's a job, you tell yourself. You're not here to make friends. You just have to get through it. So you watch, you make observations, and you take copious notes. You each report in. The work gets done.

Add one point to your Blue score and turn to 17.

77

Bailey continues. "And over on the couch is Dorothy Sullivan."

She doesn't move. She measured you up and was already bored with you. Her left hand toys carelessly with her long, wavy curls. The reflection of flames dance in her eyes.

If that's how it's going to be, so be it. "Nice working with you."

The hair drops from her fingers and she turns a side-long glance on you. "Edward says you did time not long ago. Sounds like you've been careless more than just the once."

"What are you getting at?" you ask.

Her expression doesn't waiver. "I like to know who I'm working with."

If you answer honestly, turn to 56.

If you want to dodge the question, make Persuasion Wager, ante 1. If you win, turn to 88. If you lose, turn to 11.

78

You look at the map, trying to get your bearing. "Take this next turn," you tell him. George spins the car to the right and sprints down the road.

"Okay, what's next?" he asks.

"Give me a moment," you tell him as you weigh the options.

"They're right on us. You don't have a moment," he shouts.

"Here, here!" You point to the next turn. George skids into the turn, only to come face-to-face with a road closure.

"Damn it," George yells and he hits the steering. "I might as well do this myself." And he does. Eventually the police disappear and you are both alone.

You try not to say another word. You fold up the map and put it away. You will arrive at the safehouse soon enough. That's all the matters.

Turn to 48.

79

You enter the lobby and leap behind the counter with the tellers. Dorothy is there, keeping her head down. The guard pauses, hopefully to reload.

"Are you ready?" you call out as you lift your gun.

"After you," is the reply. You motion to Dorothy, and the two of you start firing over the counter. You hear the others shooting as well. The fusillade is deafening.

When the shooting is over, you stand up cautiously. The guard lays in a pool of blood against the far wall.

"Come on," you tell everyone. "We don't have much time."

Make a Vault Looting wager (roll two dice and use the higher result), ante 1, pays 5-to-1. No matter the outcome, turn to 16.

80

The highway shimmers under the heat of the desert sun. Miles stretch out ahead of you as you race the sun to the horizon. Eighty miles per hour and not a cop in sight. The only thing that can stop you now is your fuel tank, which is treacherously dipping toward the low end.

Signs warn you that the next gas station is the last for several miles, so you pull over and roll up to the pump. The shade of the heavy awning overhead is delightful.

An attendant saunters out of the store. "You need a fill up?"

"I sure do," you reply. The man does everything slowly, as though the heat has sapped any energy he might have possessed.

As the fuel pumps into your car, he takes interest in you again. "Are you heading to Hollywood?"

The question takes you aback. "No. Why do you ask?"

"We don't see many fancy cars like this. And you sure do look like a movie star." He smiles at his own compliment. "I put two and two together and came up with three, it looks like."

"No, I'm not a movie star. Just very lucky."

"So, are you heading to California?" he continues.

"I don't much care for California," you tell him. "I'll be heading up the coast to Oregon or maybe Washington. I've heard that Portland is nice this time of year."

He nods, satisfied by your answer. He extracts the hose from your fuel tank and goes to collect his payment. "I wish you continued luck on your trip, then. \$3.65, please."

You hand the man a twenty dollar bill. "Thanks, but I have money. I don't need luck any more."

The car accelerates hard as you step on the pedal. The bag in your truck will see you comfortable for a few years. Maybe more if you are careful. But care is the last thing on your mind.

You look up at the afternoon sun making its westward journey. You push the pedal harder, racing faster now. That distant star is relentless, but it has nothing on you.

THE END

81

You stare at the map for the moment. "Look, this is an audacious plan. I like it a lot. But you can't pull off a daylight job like we have all the time in the world. We don't want more, but we will need an extra gun while the rest of us load and haul bags."

Edward steps in, clearly offended. "We'll tie up the employees. No need to watch them."

Make a Negotiation Wager, ante 1. If you win, turn to 54. If you lose, turn to 9.

82

George recoils as though you held a viper. "That's a nice offer and all, but I'm pretty happy with my little cabin."

"And with your little jobs?" Edward steps in. "I was led to believe you are the best. Can you really

be satisfied with taking down these rubes?"

George hesitates. "I..."

"Of course not," Edward finished for him. He points to the corpses. "And you don't want to be here where their friends come looking for them. Come with us."

"Alright. Since you put it that way," George responds.

"Good," you say. "Now let's get these men planted and get out of here."

Add one point to your Red score and turn to 99.

83

"Conversation is the farthest thing from my mind, Dorothy."

She hands you one glass and takes a sip from her own. But she doesn't step away from you. "Is that so?"

You inch closer to her. "I do want to get to know you better. But there is time for words later. Don't you think?"

Make a Seduction wager, ante 3, pays 2-to-1. If you win the wager, turn to 69. If you lose, turn to 92.

84

As you pass through the offices, something makes you hesitate. The count was off. The others continue to the vault as investigate. You creep through the office, trying to take everything in.

As you are about to give up, you hear a muffled voice. The words "First National Bank" come through clearly. You cross the room to where you thought you heard it. Looking at the floor, you see a telephone cord running from the desk to the wall. A disguised door!

You pull it open and find a woman, sitting on a toilet, speaking it a phone. She looks up at you. "They're on their way," she says meekly.

You take the phone from her and pull it out of the wall.

Sirens roar in the distance. "Stay here and be quiet," you order the woman as you head to the vault.

Make a Vault Looting wager (roll two dice and use the lower result), ante 1, pays 5-to-1. No matter the outcome, turn to 16.

85

The safehouse comes into sight, in the shade of the green ash trees. You and George roll up to the house. There is another vehicle here that you don't recognize. Probably their escape car.

George gets out and heads to the house ahead of you. You open your door, stretch, and to follow him inside. Dorothy greets you as you enter. "I see you made it."

"It was touch and go for a while there," Oscar says right before Dorothy shoots him. She turns and fires at you too, but you're already around a corner.

"What's going on, Dorothy?" you yell. You squeeze the pistol's grip to reassure yourself. You didn't take the time to reload, but it feels heavy enough.

"Simple math," she answers. You can hear her steps on the wood flooring. "Divided five ways is fine. But divided one way? Well, that's so much better, don't you think."

Simple math, you think. You have a couple of bullets left. Is that all it comes down to? Simple math.

But maybe that is your opening?

Make a Reasoning wager, ante 1. This is a life-or-death wager! If you win the wager, turn to 3. If you lose, turn to 70.

86

"You drive, I'll try to find us a way to lose them," you tell George.

You pop open the glove box and fish out the map you knew would be there. It was almost as if this car was left for you.

You pour over the details as the car bumps and swerves. You know what you're looking for, but can you find it in time?

Make an Observation wager, ante 2. If you win the wager, turn to 55. If you lose, turn to 78.

87

You lay out the job for him. The Shark follows intently. He may never have pulled a heist, but he's bankrolled enough to know when one is a dud.

"That's a heck of a plan," he admits. "But I can't do it, not this time."

"You know me," you tell the Shark. "Have I ever been a risk?"

He shrugs. It's a comic expression from the little man. "Things are tight. It's nothing against you, but I can't go backing every crazy plan that comes through my door."

You glance at Edward. His anger is evident. This was your play and you are blowing it. You have to make it right.

"How about we double your fee?" you say. Before Edward can say it anything, you tell him, "Take it out of my cut. This is too important."

"Well, okay," says the Shark. "How can I say no to an offer like that?"

Add one point to your Red score and turn to 17.

88

"As soon as I figure that out, I'll be happy to tell you," you reply. Before she can object, you say, "Look, that has no bearing on this. I am good at my job. There have been missteps, but only because of whom I chose to work with. As long as you don't let me down, I won't let you down."

For the first time, something other than complete boredom touches Sullivan's face. "Okay, we can play it your way. For now."

Edward claps his hands. "Well, if that's all done, let's move to the dining room so that we can talk about the plan."

Turn to 27.

89

Turning your back on the others, you march straight into the vault. Grey metal deposit boxes line the walls. But your eyes are drawn to the table at the center of the room. The money is stacked so high, you can't even imagine how much it is. You open a bag and start filling.

Everything will work itself out on its own, right?

If George is a Gunman, turn to 10.

If George is a Linesman, turn to 26.

If George is a Driver, turn to 52.

90

"I'm sure you took a lot of things into account," you answer. "That doesn't mean you didn't overlook something."

"Overlook?" Dorothy slams her hand on the table.

Edward steps in. "Okay, calm down, Dorothy. This might not be a bad idea. You have to admit that

it won't hurt."

Dorothy takes a breath and tries to relax. "No, it won't."

"I know the perfect guy for the job. If you let me bring him in, you will not be sorry," you promise.

"Okay, we'll do it your way," Edward says. "I hope this guy is as good as you say."

"Don't worry," you tell him. "He's a professional."

Add a note stating "Linesman" to your character sheet, add one to your Green score, and turn to 43.

91

You stand up a little straighter. "They told you I was good, right?"

Bailey's eyes narrow. "They also told me you did time."

"Time doesn't make you soft. If you came to me, it's because you need me." You reach for the liquor and refill your glasses. "I'm not saying that I'm the best, but I'm not leaving all this for twenty."

"What do you have in mind?" he asks.

He's on the ropes and you can see it. Time for the knockout. "For what I'm bringing to this job, I'm going to need thirty. Take it or leave it."

"Is that all?" Bailey smiles. "Shame on me for trying to small time you. Thirty it is, and an even split of the rest." He extends his hand and you shake. It's a clammy thing and you get rid of it as soon as you can.

"I'll call you in a couple of days with the details," he says from the door. "Good night." Edward steps out and disappears into the night.

"A couple days." You finish off your drink and set it aside. You think about his hands. What did he have to be so nervous about?

Turn to 33.

92

Dorothy reaches out and puts her hand on your chest, but not gently. Her look brooks no nonsense.

You step back and drain your glass. "Maybe this wasn't the best idea." You hand the glass back to her and open the door. "Thanks for the drink."

"Don't mention it," she says as the door shuts behind you. You listen as the lock falls into place before returning to your room.

Add two points to your Blue score and turn to 5.

93

The safehouse comes into sight, in the shade of the green ash trees. You and George roll up to the house. There is another vehicle here that you don't recognize. Probably their escape car.

George gets out and heads to the house ahead of you. You open your door, stretch, and begin to follow.

You see Paul in the kitchen, making a sandwich. George is there too. Something seems off. George can feel it too. "What's going on?" you ask.

"I always get hungry after a job," he says. "You remember. Usually I hit a restaurant on the way out of town, but I couldn't wait. You know what I mean?"

"Sure, I do," George says. "Awful quiet in here. They already counting?"

Paul takes a large bite. He chews, shallows, and wipes his mouth on his sleeve. "I'm sure they are. Why don't you go help?"

George looks at you and again at Paul. "Okay. See you in a bit." As he walks into the other room, Paul shoots him in the back. You don't even have time to flinch before the gun is pointed at you.

"I always liked you," Paul says. He takes another bite, but his eyes are on you. "What about you?"

Make a Persuasion wager, ante 1. This is a life-or-death wager! If you win the wager, turn to 28. If you lose, turn to 39.

94

You and Dorothy begin butting heads almost immediately. It seems as though, if there are two ways to go about something, you will each champion the opposite. So you argue. Your arguments inform later decisions. Those decisions eventually form a plan.

Neither of you are happy. But it's a plan and it's going to work. You have to give her that much credit.

Add one point to your Green score and turn to 17.

95

As you pass through the offices, something makes you hesitate. The count was off. The others continue to the vault as investigate. You creep through the office, trying to take everything in.

As you are about to give up, you hear a muffled voice. The words "First National Bank" come through clearly. You cross the room to where you thought you heard it. Looking at the floor, you see a telephone cord running from the desk to the wall. A disguised door!

You pull it open and find a woman, sitting on a toilet, speaking it a phone. She looks up at you. "They're on their way," she says meekly.

You take the phone from her and pull it out of the wall. "Stay here and be quiet," you order the woman as you head to the vault.

Make a Vault Looting wager (roll one die), ante 1, pays 5-to-1. No matter the outcome, turn to 16.

96

You enter the lobby and leap behind the counter with the tellers. Dorothy is there, keeping her head down. The guard pauses, hopefully to reload.

You peak up, ready to kill him. But a bullet ricochets off the counter and you dive for cover again. "What is with this guy?" Dorothy asks through gritted teeth.

"He's wasting our time," you answer. You lift your gun over the counter and fire blindly in his direction. Dorothy follows your lead and starts firing.

Seconds pass. You reload and crawl to the end of the counter. You take a breath before peaking around the side. You can see the guard behind a desk in the corner of the room. He is scanning the lobby, waiting for someone to present a target. You know you have to end it before the plan goes completely off the rails. Edward starts firing. The guard turns to return fire, but you lean out and shoot him in the chest.

"Come on," you tell everyone. "We don't have much time."

Make a Vault Looting wager (roll one die), ante 1, pays 5-to-1. No matter the outcome, turn to 16.

97

You aim at the police and start firing. You rattle off several shots, but can't seem to hit the mark. Your hands shake as you reload and start firing.

George shouts over the noise. "I think you're just annoying them."

The police stay with you as long as they can. Eventually, though, George gets the best of them and the cars fade into the distance.

You lean back in the seat and try to shut everything out. Maybe this day will turn out after all.

Turn to 48.

98

You take a glass from him and say, "It wasn't for drinks. Though I appreciate this." You take a sip. "And it wasn't to play cards."

Paul stands still, slightly tense. He is smiling, but it's an uneasy expression. "Then what are you here for?"

"You need a hint, I see." You turn and look around the room. "A hint." You walk over to the bed and sit down on the edge. "What do you think? Can you guess now?"

Make a Seduction wager, ante 3, pays 2-to-1. If you win the wager, turn to 41. If you lose, turn to 58.

99

Morning light streams through the farmhouse window. You sip from a cup of black coffee and try to gather your thoughts. George fit in with your crew perfectly. But now that you are all together, it's time to make your preparations.

With the day fast approaching, you have to split everyone up and cover several tasks at once. You leave the guns up to George and his myriad of contacts. Dorothy will finalize the plans. Paul is put in charge of surveillance. And Edward is to secure financing for the job.

That leaves you to backup one of them, depending on which job is most important. You sip your coffee and consider your options.

If you assist Dorothy with the planning, turn to 13.

If you join Paul in casing the bank, turn to 50.

If you introduce Edward to your financier, turn to 68.

100

You startle awake with a book bent haphazardly across your chest. You glance up at the window and see that the horizon has gone purple. You must have fallen asleep reading and now it is evening.

You set the book aside, stand up, and stretch. You consider heading into town for dinner, but decide you would rather take a walk first. You slip on a pair of shoes, open the door, and step out onto the sand.

The shadows are long on the beach already. Waves crash on the sand and the water rushes toward you. The smell is intoxicating. Even though you have been here for a few months, your senses have not dulled to the experience.

You turn south and walk across the sand, not stopping until the stars appear. You stare out over the ocean and take it all in.

The world is perfectly quiet. And you are perfectly content. There are no more jobs, no more shooting, no more being scared. No more seedy motels and no more filthy apartments. That life is over now.

The stars are filling the sky now, more than you could ever count. Your past is behind you and your future stretches out into the infinite.

THE END