SCOUNDREL MOVES

BLADES IN THE DARK

PURSUE YOUR GOALS ★

When your character does something, describe the **goal** they hope to achieve. This helps the GM determine what kind of **threat** (if any) might be a dangerous obstacle — leading to an **action roll** to resolve the situation.

PERFORM DARING ACTIONS ✕

Deal with a threat by performing a **daring action**. Say what your character does with one of the **actions** on your character sheet, including any details, advantages, and roleplay (this helps to set your **position** for the roll).

GET A BONUS DIE ✚

Get a bonus die for your roll by marking **2 stress** or asking for a **Devil's Bargain**.

HELP SOMEONE 👊

Say how you help someone and mark **1 stress** to give them **+1d**. Or lead a **Group Action**.

RESISTANCE ⛨

Roll Insight, Prowess, or Resolve to avoid a consequence. Take 6 stress, minus your highest die.

GREATER EFFECT ✸

Use a *fine* tool or weapon, push yourself, or trade position for effect.

FLASHBACK ↻

Invent a cool move that your character did in the past in order to help you out in the present. The GM will charge you 0-3 stress, depending on how complex or tricky it is. Make an action roll if it's dangerous.

PERFORM DARING ACTIONS Blades, p. 163

When the GM introduces a **threat** between you and your character's **goal**, they'll ask you how you want to approach it. Describe what your character does to address the dangerous obstacle — including one of the **actions** on your character sheet as the verb. Also include any details, advantages, and roleplay that you think is relevant. For example:

> *"I **Sway** her by bringing up all the times me and my crew have helped her out — especially that whole situation with the Billhooks. 'Who had your back when Coran came after you with his cleaver? You know you owe me...'"*

By describing your actions this way, you avoid the problem of trying to "use" an action as if it's a broader skill. You simply say that you're performing the action itself.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONS Blades, p. 20, 21, 32, 132

◆ To **get a bonus die** for your roll, you can either **push yourself** (mark **2 stress)** or ask for a **Devil's Bargain**.

◆ To **help someone**, mark **1 stress** to give them +1d to their roll. Say how you help.

◆ To **lead the group against an obstacle**, say how you're leading them, then everyone rolls the same action (including you). The person with the best roll counts for the whole group. But you, as the leader, mark 1 stress for each person who rolled a bad outcome (1-3). *You don't have to be the best at something to lead an action.*

◆ To **avoid something bad**, tell the GM you're **resisting** it. The GM will tell you what to roll. You'll take some stress, but you'll avoid the bad outcome. You might instead (or additionally) use your **armor**.

◆ To have **greater effect** on the obstacle when you roll, you can either **push yourself** (mark **2 stress)** or tell the GM you want to **trade position for effect** — you risk worse consequences but have a bigger impact. *You might also have a special tool or weapon that increases your effect.*

◆ If you're in a bad spot, you can invent a **flashback** to something your character did earlier, to set yourself up now. The GM will charge you 0-3 stress, depending on how involved or tricky the flashback is.

Sometimes, to overcome an obstacle, the crew will need to perform several actions, chipping away at the problem in multiple parts. The GM will start a **clock** to track your progress, so you'll know how much more you have left to do.

GM MOVES

INTRODUCE A THREAT ✕

When a scoundrel does something to achieve a **goal**, ask yourself if there's a **threat** in the way. If there is, describe the obstacle and the danger at hand and ask how they deal with it (i.e. which **action** they perform).

... OR LET THEM DO IT ➡

If there's no threat, the scoundrel simply does what they set out to do. **There's no action roll** — just describe their effect. If they want more, the situation might *become* dangerous as they take risks to achieve it.

... OR MAKE A FORTUNE ROLL USING AN ACTION ●●●

If you *really* want a roll without danger, use a scoundrel's action dots for a **fortune roll** to see *how well* they do it — they're supposed to be competent, after all. 1-3: bare bones, 4/5: good, 6: very well done, Critical: exceptional work.

DEVIL'S BARGAIN ✚

Bring in new twists, complications, surprises, and threats by offering **Devil's Bargains**.

GREATER EFFECT ✸

Offer a scoundrel **greater effect** for their action if they risk a **worse position** (or vice versa).

TICK THE CLOCKS ✖ ⊕

Often, a good consequence is a tick on a clock rather than an immediate new threat or harm. Introduce clocks to track impending trouble, broken relationships, new enemies, and other problems on the horizon.

ASK QUESTIONS—PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES—CUT TO THE ACTION—TELEGRAPH TROUBLE—FOLLOW THROUGH—INITIATE ACTION WITH AN NPC—TELL THEM THE CONSEQUENCES AND ASK—THINK OFF-SCREEN
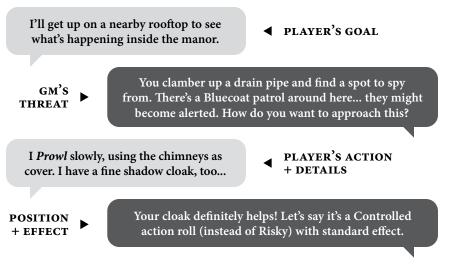
BLADES IN THE DARK

ACTION ROLLS RESOLVE THREATS

In *Blades*, you don't roll dice to resolve tasks, like standard "skill checks" in other games. You use the **action roll** only when there's a conflict between a scoundrel's **goal** and a **threat**: a dangerous obstacle that opposes them (usually an NPC). The roll determines how the action resolves for both sides. Here's how you do it in the flow of conversation:

◆ A player describes their scoundrel doing something to achieve a **goal**.

◆ **If there's a threat in the way**, the GM introduces it and asks how the scoundrel approaches it (i.e. which action they're performing).

◆ The player describes the **action** their scoundrel performs to deal with the threat, adding details like style and roleplay, plus any relevant advantages they may have.

◆ The GM considers the details of the situation, the action being performed, the player's description, and the strength of the threat to choose the **position** and **effect** level of the roll.

> I'll get up on a nearby rooftop to see what's happening inside the manor.

◄ PLAYER'S GOAL

GM'S THREAT ▶
> You clamber up a drain pipe and find a spot to spy from. There's a Bluecoat patrol around here... they might become alerted. How do you want to approach this?

> I *Prowl* slowly, using the chimneys as cover. I have a fine shadow cloak, too...

◄ PLAYER'S ACTION + DETAILS

POSITION + EFFECT ▶
> Your cloak definitely helps! Let's say it's a Controlled action roll (instead of Risky) with standard effect.

◆ **If there isn't a threat in the way**, the GM describes the effect of the scoundrel's action, and moves the scene along to the next opportunity for action and danger.

"You clamber up a drain pipe and find a spot to spy from. The manor is dark, except for a single servant with a candle, making the rounds, probably checking the locks and such before bed. Do you want to make your move and break in?"

THREATS

Here's a list of threats for GMs to use, arranged by situation, ordered from least to most impact. Threats listed in *italics* are especially good as **clocks**.

CHARGED THREATS

◆ Losing the initiative
◆ Losing your opportunity
◆ *Running out of time*
◆ Being outmaneuvered
◆ Failing to notice trouble

STRANGE THREATS

◆ Attracting a ghost's attention
◆ Electroplasmic backlash
◆ Fear, panic, freezing up
◆ *Hunted by the Spirit Wardens*
◆ Tormented by a Forgotten God

SECURITY THREATS

◆ *Raising the alert level*
◆ Being hunted, searched for
◆ *Bluecoats / Spirit Wardens arrive*
◆ Being spotted or chased
◆ *Getting cornered or captured*

TRICKY THREATS

◆ *Causing suspicion, distrust*
◆ Getting confused or distracted
◆ Falling for lies and deceptions
◆ Falsely accused, set up
◆ Being lured into an ambush

SOCIAL THREATS

◆ Losing someone's respect
◆ *Straining a relationship*
◆ Making an awkward blunder
◆ Being barred or thrown out
◆ *Making an enemy*

VIOLENT THREATS

◆ Getting disarmed
◆ Attracting more Heat
◆ Minor or moderate harm
◆ Surrounded or captured
◆ Severe harm, death

BLADES IN THE DARK

ONE ROLL, USUALLY

Most threats are resolved with one roll. However, if the scoundrel is outclassed, they may have **limited effect** — meaning the threat remains or they don't achieve everything they hoped for. They'll have to risk danger again if they want to win fully.

"He's a great swordfighter — you'll need to get past his defenses first, then take another action to inflict harm. And you'll be risking harm both times."

A TICKING CLOCK

It's good to have a **danger clock** on the table for an overriding threat (the Bluecoats are called, the scoundrels are exposed, they're caught in the act, driven off, etc.).

Ticking a clock is a "softer" threat than harm or immediate trouble. It shows the competence of the scoundrels — they don't ruin everything with one bad roll.

For instance, a Lurk is Prowling past a Bluecoat patrol, and the threat is "raising the alert level." The player rolls a 3, so you say: *"One of the Bluecoats looks up toward the rooftop — 'Did you hear that?' he says. I'll put 2 ticks on the Alert clock. You haven't made it past the patrol yet. Do you want to keep Prowling, or try something else?"*

THE CONTROLLED POSITION IS SPECIAL

When a scoundrel has a **Controlled** position, they're not directly exposed to the threat yet. To reflect this, the outcomes of a 4/5 or 1-3 roll are less severe than the other positions — the threat doesn't immediately manifest the way it does with Risky and Desperate rolls. The scoundrel has a chance to back off or try again — for reference, see the Controlled action roll outcomes, below.

CONTROLLED

CRITICAL: You do it with **increased effect**.

6: You do it.

4/5: You hesitate. Withdraw and try a different approach, or else do it with a minor consequence: a minor **complication** occurs, you have **reduced effect**, you suffer **lesser harm**, or you end up in a **risky** position.

1-3: You falter. Press on by seizing a **risky** opportunity, or withdraw and try a different approach.