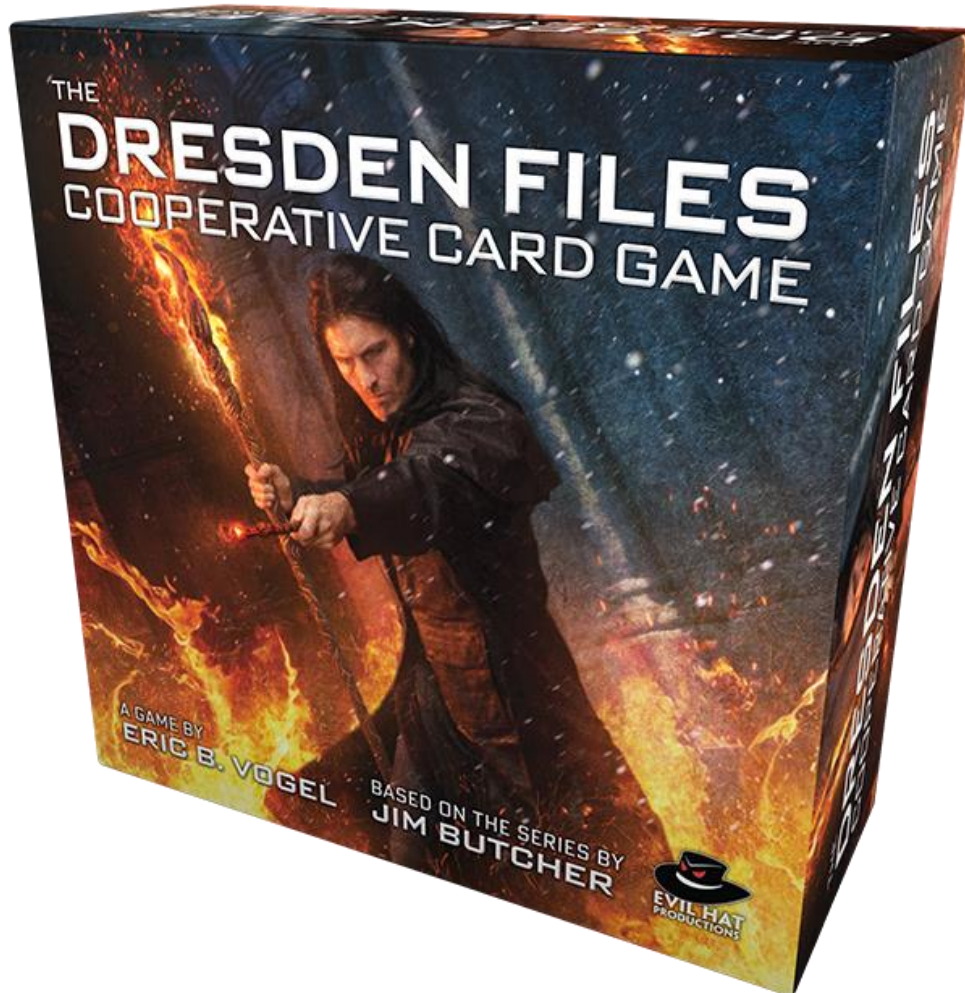


The Mechanics & Meeples DFCO Strategy Guide



Written By: Shannon Appelcline, Game Historian of [Designers & Dragons](#), Board Game Analyst of [Mechanics & Meeples](#)

Edited By: Karen Twelves

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I. The Three Resources

The core to successfully winning The Dresden Files Cooperative Card Game is to understand the three resources that form the heart of the game.

Turns Are the First Most Valuable Resource

In any game of *DFCO* your team of players has a limited number of turns: usually a bit more than 24 total. That's one turn for the players to spend each of their 4-7 cards, then one turn to use their Stunts. You might get a few more turns from Advantage-based card draws or from special powers, but that's it.

In those limited turns your team must remove enough Book cards from the game board to achieve a winning score. If you were trying to defeat all twelve Book cards, then you'd need to remove a Book card every other turn. Given that you'll be making Fate with half of the Player cards, you would actually need to beat one Book card *every* action-turn.

If you think that sounds impossible, you're right, but fortunately your team doesn't actually need to beat every Book card to win. You just need to take down *enough* Foes and to solve *enough* Cases. However you can't lollygag either. Harry would never lollygag. You'll barely have enough turns to do what's necessary — if you're lucky. So, you have to appreciate the value of every single turn and make the most of each one.

Corollary #1: Never waste a turn. Obviously, you should never waste a turn. If you successfully played a Player card or used a Stunt, that's great. If you generated Fate, that's great, especially if you used your Talent too. However, if you took an action, and it didn't do anything, that's horrible. If you took an action and it didn't advance you toward victory, that's horrible too. Heck, it's even horrible if you made Fate that your team can't use!

Corollary #2: Use your turns efficiently. Less obviously, you should never take turns that are inefficient — unless that's the only option. Don't play cards that are less efficient because they are being hampered by Obstacles. Don't waste the benefits of advantageous Book card interactions. Don't overfill the Fate pool when you discard. Every couple of wasted Fate, Clues, or Hits is the equivalent of a lost turn.

Player Cards Are the Second Most Valuable Resource

You have a limited hand of Player cards. They're the main timer for the game, but they're also your resource pool — both determining what actions you can take in the game and how you can power those actions. Without your cards, you are nothing.

The card draw certainly introduces randomness into the game. If you get all of your low-power cards, you're more likely to lose, and if you get all of your high-power cards, you're more likely to win. However,

even if you're dealt a truly bad hand, you can sometimes make a go of it. You just need to know your cards — to understand which cards are good and more importantly, how to use them optimally.

Corollary #1: Be aware of your Player deck. It's worth skimming through your Player deck before you play, so that you know what's in it. The character dividers help with this overview and are worth keeping out. If you know your deck (or at least can reference it from your divider), you'll know whether you got a good hand or a bad hand. More importantly, you'll know what you didn't draw and what you're likely to get if a draw effect occurs.

Corollary #2: Never take the chance of wasting your Player cards. Some Player cards have variable Range. You do not want to use them if there's any chance (no matter how small) that you could roll such a low Range that the card would be entirely wasted. If a bad roll might result in a card being used in a less efficient way, that's probably OK; that's the type of uncertainty you have to face in a co-op. However if a card might be unplayable, that's terrible. So don't play Harry's "Private Investigator" card (Range: 3+1dF) when all the Cases are at Range 3 or more. There's one exception to this rule: if you're in a desperate situation, and you would probably lose

otherwise, give it a try, but recognize that this is a desperation play!

Corollary #3: Use your Player cards efficiently. As with everything, you want to use your Player cards efficiently. That means don't play a card that has a higher Range than you need, that generates more Hits than you need, or that places more Clues than you need - unless it's *absolutely* necessary. Those unneeded higher values all cost more Fate, and you're effectively burning a turn for every couple of Fate you waste.

Fate is the Third Most Valuable Resource

The third key resource in *DFCO* is Fate, because it's what allows you to play cards and to take turns. Most of the strategic principles governing fate management have been discussed in the sections on turns and cards, but Fate is so central to the *DFCO* game that it will also be covered in a later segment "Managing Your Fate."

Corollary #1: Never waste your Fate. Don't spend Fate on turns that you don't need to take.

Corollary #2: Use your Fate efficiently. Don't spend Fate on Player cards that are more powerful than necessary.

II. Planning Your Actions

One of the interesting aspects of *DFCO* is that you get to see all of your team's challenges laid out at the very start of the game. This is pretty rare among cooperative games and gives you an opportunity to plan as a team in advance.

Examine the Playing Field

The first thing your team should do in any game of *DFCO* is examine all the Book cards. Read all of the Obstacles, so that you know what you're facing. Look at all the letters on the Book cards, which reveal their interactions. Finally, consider how the Book cards' placement in the two rows will affect your ability to manipulate them. This solid understanding of what all of the Book cards do and how they're positioned is the crucial basis for winning at any game of *DFCO*.

Corollary #1: Be aware of any implicit effects of Book-card limitations. Usually this means that you should know the Obstacles that are most likely to cause you problems. However, you should also be aware of Book cards that might have special relationships to certain characters and limitations created by the position of invulnerable Book cards.

Corollary #2: Be aware of any implicit value in Book-card benefits. Obviously, you should know what Advantages you might be able to take, but you should also look carefully at outbound interaction arrows and see how resolving those cards might make the rest of the Book cards easier to deal with.

Often, card benefits create an optimal order in which to remove the Book cards.

Assess Your Resources

Having assessed the Book cards, the team should now examine its Player cards. Remember the "Normal Game Discussion Rules": the team can "discuss the types of cards in their hands and describe their effects in a general way, as long as they do not state any specific numbers or card names." This is a great time to figure out who will be able to Take Advantages and Overcome Obstacles and also who will be the most helpful in fighting Foes and solving Cases.

Corollary #1: Figure out who got bad draws. As discussed in "The Three Resources", you need to know if you got a bad draw of Player cards. This is the best time to figure that out. The average Player card in *DFCO* has a value of 3 Fate, so if your average is lower than that, you're off to a bad start. Fortunately, this lets your team identify you as a strong target for card draws from Advantages or from character abilities. At the same time, you should also see if you're low in cards of any type, as this is another critical issue when forming strategies.

Corollary #2: Talk about Stunts and Talents too. This is a good time to remind everyone on the team about your Stunt and your Talent, so that all players can move forward with a good idea of the *total* set of resources that your team has.

Plan Your Initial Targets

Once you know what cards everyone has, your team can plan how they're going to attack the starting game board. You should determine which Book cards you're going to initially remove, who will do so, and who will tread water until you clean up the initial board. This plan will typically center on getting rid of Obstacles that might be harming your efficiency. A good initial plan will get you to the point where you're ready to move into a simpler assault on Cases and Foes.

Corollary #1: Plan your first player. Harry Dresden gets to decide who goes first; so, when your team is making its initial plan, you should also decide who you want to start the game. It should be a critical element in the card plays, Fate generation, and Talent usage that you map out.

Corollary #2: Additionally, in most games there are a few plays that are best made with low cost cards, so try to give those to the players who started with weaker hands.

Plan a Few Plays Ahead

The game gets a little easier when you've cleared the first Obstacles, and you can play a little more casually. Still, continue planning a few turns ahead. You may not know exactly what cards people will play, but you should know who feels like they've got great cards in hand, who's going to need lots of Fate, and who's going to generate Fate for them.

Corollary #1: Transition to planning for the end. Eventually you'll get near the end of the game. That's when your team needs to start intensively planning again, so as not to waste your final moves - but this topic will be covered in a later segment, "Planning for the Win."

Coordinate Your Talents & Stunts

Finally, make sure that you're doing a good job of coordinating your Stunts and Talents. Many of these will interact with Stunts, Talents, and card plays by other players. Be aware of how the coordination of each players' Stunts and Talents might benefit the team and how you might accidentally limit the use of other players' Stunts and Talents.

III. Managing Your Actions

Now you're ready to play! Though *The Dresden Files Cooperative Card Game* is primarily about playing cards, you also have to think about managing three other things: Fate, Talents, and Stunts.

III-A. Managing Fate

Fate is one of the core resources of *DFCO* and managing it is the heart of the game.

Keep the Fate Pool Healthy

In general, your team should keep points in the Fate pool at all times. Try to maintain a minimum of five points. This ensures that a player can usually play his best card on his turn. If you must drop below that, try to keep two or three points in the pool, so that the next player can play something. Definitely don't drop down to zero.

However, don't think that a player must play his high-value Player card, just because he has the Fate to do so. The goal here is to maintain choice. By keeping the Fate pool half full most of the time, you ensure that each player can make a choice that maximizes the efficiency of the game, so that you never need to discard a card that could have been better used.

Corollary #1: Empty the pool if it's part of a plan. There's nothing wrong with dropping the Fate pool all the way down to zero if it's part of a plan. If you know when the pool is going to empty out, and if the next player says that he's OK with discarding a card to

keep things moving, then you're fine. But you have to plan it out, not empty the pool, and then hope things will be fine.

Generate Fate When You Want to Use a Talent

Usually, a player will generate Fate because the team needs Fate. Then you'll get to use a Talent as a nice bonus. However, sometimes the opposite will occur: you will want to use a Talent, and so you'll generate Fate as a nice bonus.

Make sure that both of these possibilities are part of your tactical decisions. In other words, act like you have four active choices on your turn, not three: you can generate Fate (and use your talent), you can use a Talent (and generate some Fate), you can use a Stunt, or you can play a Player card.

Vary Who Makes the Fate

Make sure that everyone at the table makes Fate part of the time. In large part, this is about good sportsmanship and having fun. Even if in some circumstances it might be slightly less efficient to have someone else generate Fate, go with the lesser level of efficiency. However, in general this is also the best strategy: everyone has unique abilities, and if your team cuts some of those out, you're making the game harder.

Never Take the Chance of Using Too Much Fate

Never, ever, ever, under any circumstances play a card with a variable Fate cost that *could* require more Fate than is in the pool. If you roll high, this will bring the game to a premature end and it will do it in a very inefficient way, because you'll lose the Fate *and* the card effect. There is pretty much no circumstance where it wouldn't be better to turn the card in for its Fate, and then hope to win in the Showdown.

III-B. Managing Talents

Talents are activated whenever you make Fate, so the two game elements are tightly intertwined.

Always Use Your Talent

Any Fate-making turn has two elements: making the Fate and using your Talent. If you can't use your Talent, then you've lost part of the efficiency of your turn, and, this is quite easy to do. If there are no Advantages or Obstacles left on the board, then Harry can't use "Wizard, P.I."; if there are no Cases with Clues, then Ramirez can't use "It Hurts To Be This Good!"; and if there are no Foes with Hits, then Waldo can't use "Forensic Pathologist". Similarly, the Talents that add tokens to specific Cases and Foes might be blocked by certain Obstacles.

If you have other options, don't generate Fate on turns when your Talent would be useless. Though Talents aren't as powerful as Player card plays, if you add together two

or three missed Talent uses, then you've again lost the equivalent of a turn.

Corollary #1: Don't use Talents wastefully. It's very easy to make inefficient use of the Talents that add Hits to Foes or Clues to Cases because they don't offer much control over which cards are affected. If you use these Talents to affect Cases (or Foes) that will *never* be removed, then you've wasted them just as much as if you weren't able to use the Talent at all. Other Talents could similarly be wasted. The best solution to this problem is to make the usage of these Talents efficient by incorporating them into your overall strategic plan. Otherwise, let someone else make the Fate.

Know How Talents Interact with Game Timing

Different Talents work better at different times during the game. For example, Harry is more likely to use his Talent early in the game, while the team is clearing initial Obstacles. Michael and Molly need to make Fate intermittently, as they toggle their Talents and use them. So, be thoughtful about how the timing of Talent usage interacts with Fate making; arrange it so characters will be making Fate when their Talents suggest that they should.

III-C. Managing Stunts

Though Stunts are much more powerful than Talents, many of the same rules apply: you want to make sure everyone uses them, and uses them well!

Don't Waste Your Stunt

Remember that you can only use Stunts when they actually have an effect. You don't want to get into situations where your Stunts can't have an effect, because this causes you not only to lose out on a powerful ability, but also to lose a turn of play. This likely puts your character out of sync with the rest of the team and will cost a Fate when you have to pass later in the game.

A number of characters have Stunts that can become unusable if you're not careful. Your team needs to work together to make sure that doesn't happen:

- **Harry:** Set up opportunities for Foes to have 3-4 Hits left, so that Harry can "Blasting Rod" them.
- **Michael:** Remember to use "Amoracchius" early, before all the Foes have Hits.
- **Molly:** Remember to use "Talented Holomancer" before the best Stunts get used.
- **Sanya:** Remember to use "Helping Hand" before all the Cases have Clues.
- **Thomas:** Be aware that legal plays for his randomly drawn card will probably tighten up later in the game.

Use Your Stunt Efficiently

A lot of Stunts are binary: they either work or not. However there are some Stunts that get better based on the board setup, especially Billy & Georgia (who Hit every Foe with Hits), Butters (who Clues every Case with Clues), and Murphy (who earns Fate based on cards with tokens). Try not to use these stunts when they produce little effect, but instead when they produce great effects.

Similarly, let Ramirez use "Got Your Back" for someone when they have a great card in their discard and let Mouse do a "Temple Dog Warning Bark" for someone with a Stunt that would be really great to reuse.

Corollary #1: Don't try to be too efficient. Because Stunts are one use and you know you won't get them back (except with Mouse's help), it's psychologically easy to delay using your stunt in the effort to over-maximize ... and as a result miss your window for optimal play. So, don't overdo it. Try to maximize the effect of your Stunt, but if you think things look pretty good, go ahead and pull the trigger.

Corollary #2: Use your stunt when your other options are bad. Sometimes you want to use your Stunt because your only other option is to waste a Fate by passing, make inefficient use of a good card, or empty the Fate pool at a bad time. Part of the value of Stunts is that they take up your turn, and cost no Fate to play.

IV. Playing Player Cards

Now you're ready to play your Player cards, which is the core of *DFCO* gameplay.

Don't Waste Your Range

Every Player card has a cost that's based on a combination of its strength and Range. For example, Harry's "It's Not My Fault" is a Range 1 Overcome that cost 1 Fate and his "Blue Beetle" is a Range 3+2dF Overcome that costs 3 Fate. If you don't need the extra Range, don't use the card, because you'll just be wasting Fate.

Corollary #1: It's not a waste if you really need the card. Obviously, if you need a Player card of a certain type, and your group's supplies are limited, then you might want to use that excessive Range anyways. But, it's inefficient. Once again, wasting a couple of Fate a couple of times is just like losing a turn. So, be aware of the extra cost you're paying, and do so judiciously.

Don't Waste Your Other Effects

A few Player cards have extra effects when played. For example Michael's "Fist of God" overcomes an Obstacle but also adds Clues and Hits to adjacent Cases and Foes; while Sanya's "Esperacchius" hits a Foe but also overcomes an adjacent Obstacle or takes an adjacent Advantage. Try not to waste these effects either, because their value is part of the card's cost too.

Corollary #1: Let Harry unleash your potential. Many of these bonus Player card powers depend on adjacency. This is a great

opportunity for Harry to step in with his Talent. By moving around Advantages and Obstacles he can usually create the adjacency that you're hoping for — whether you need adjacent Advantages and Obstacles or Cases and Foes.

Consider Your Card Costs

The advice about not wasting your Range or your other effects is part of a more general rule: you want to consider the cost of every card you're playing. If you can generate at least one hit/clue for every Fate that you spend, or if you can remove an Advantage or Obstacle at a cost of 1 Fate, then you're doing great. You shouldn't hesitate to play a card if it has that amount of impact.

However, if you're getting a less efficient ratio for Attacks and Investigations or paying more Fate for Take Advantage and Overcome cards, then you need to ask why. The additional cost is certainly due to some additional ability of the card, such as increased range or a special effect. Assess what it is and see if it's worth the cost.

Corollary #1: Use overpriced cards to generate Fate. If the extra Range or bonus abilities of a Player card aren't helpful in your current game, then you should set the card aside to generate Fate. You should also tell the rest of the team that you're a great candidate for generating Fate, because you have a card to burn. (Not literally; don't give Harry any ideas!)

Don't Waste Your Book Interactions

Some Book cards also have beneficial effects. They're marked with outbound interaction arrows, and they usually put Clues on Cases or Hits on Foes. For example, "Marcone's Goons" adds Hits to "Is Marcone Involved?" while "Victor is Missing" adds Clues to "Who is the Shadowman?" Try not to waste these effects either. You're not exactly paying for these Clues and Hits, but if you waste them, you'll impact your efficiency, which is the prime factor as to whether you succeed or fail in completing a book.

Corollary #1: Complete interactions in order. The easiest way to ensure that you

don't waste book interactions is to complete them in order: do the "A>" before the ">A". That way you won't generate Hits or Clues for a Book card that's already been removed from the board.

Corollary #2: Prioritize the Cases and Foes with inbound interactions. Once you've generated tokens on a Case or Foe through an interaction, you should prioritize completing that Case or Foe, otherwise you wasted those tokens just as badly as if you removed the cards in the wrong order. This is a specific case of the "Don't Throw Away Your Shot" rule for "Attacking Foes & Cases".

V-A. Removing Advantages & Obstacles

Advantages and Obstacles are best discussed together, because for both you aren't required to remove them in order to win, but it's usually still worth doing so.

Work on Advantages & Obstacles First

When you "Plan Your Initial Targets", you'll usually be going after Advantages and Obstacles. That's in part because they're very easy to resolve: you just play a single card, and the Advantage is taken or the Obstacle is overcome. This can help you to quickly reduce the Range to Cases and Foes. However, it's also useful to remove Obstacles early on because they'll be causing you problems and costing you efficiency, and it's helpful to remove Advantages early because they can give you more options and allow you to improve your strategy.

The catch is getting Advantages and Obstacles into Range so that you *can* deal with them. (But remember the most easily overlooked setup rule in *DFCO*: if an Advantage or Obstacle is at range 6, it gets swapped one closer.)

Corollary #1: Use Harry to move up Advantages and Obstacles. This is why Harry must be in every game of *DFCO* (c.f., the second easily overlooked rule in *DFCO*). He helps your team to clear Advantages and Obstacles by moving them 'to and 'fro with his Talent. Make use of that early in the game, so that you can clear these problem cards.

Corollary #2: Consider alternatives to Harry's Talent. You can also move Book cards closer by removing cards in front of them. Some Stunts or Book card effects can incidentally move cards behind their targets 1 closer when the move the target card to a higher range.

Corollary #3: Hide Advantages or Obstacles if you're not going to remove them. Conversely, use Harry to move Advantages and Obstacles out of the way if you don't plan to remove them, but think carefully about that decision.

Deal with Obstacles

You almost always want to overcome every Obstacle, and you almost always want to do it as quickly as possible. For example, consider the two obstacles in *Storm Front*: "Three-Eye Drug War" changes one blank die to a "-" on each roll, and "Morgan is Watching" increases the cost of attacks by +1 Fate. Each is likely to cost you a couple of turns of efficiency over the course of the game, so it's probably worth removing them. Keep in mind that Obstacles still on the board continue to be in effect during the Showdown!

Corollary #1: For long-Range Obstacles, think carefully about whether to remove them. If an Obstacle is at long Range, its effective removal price goes up, as you must spend turns and resources bringing it closer, and then must either pay higher Range costs to Overcome, or else must waste some other advantage like Michael's

Talent. In these cases *maybe* the cost-benefit ratio isn't high enough. The "Lunar Cycle" obstacle in *Fool Moon* offers an example of when you might not remove an Obstacle: it prevents your team from damaging the two "Loup Garou" Foes and you can *technically* win without killing them by solving all the Cases and killing all the other Foes. So if the "Lunar Cycle" and the two "Loup Garou" were all toward the back of the board setup, that might be a situation where you decide to try something else.

Consider Your Advantages

Similarly, you usually want to take all the Advantages, because they'll usually earn you more turns than you spend on them. Consider "Beer at Mac's" in *Storm Front*, which gives you three card draws (which is equivalent to three turns) for spending one turn of activity and perhaps as little as 1 Fate.

Corollary #1: For less-useful Advantages, think about it. More frequently than with Obstacles you might decide to ignore Advantages if they're inconvenient. "Speed Potion" is an example. At just +1 card draw, it may actually be a loss to take the card, especially since the other results (taking another turn and moving "Kalshazzak" to maximum range) *could* be negatives. So, you have to decide if it's worth removing the Advantage just to clear the spot on the board. If the results seem beneficial to your current situation do it, but if not, don't!

Spread Out Player Card Draws

Advantages frequently grant Players card draws. Card draws occasionally result from a few other sources, such as Ramirez's Stunt and Mouse's Talent, but Advantages are the main source of cards.

When you gain Player card draws, do your best to spread them out, so that players get them equally. This ensures that everyone can actually use their cards, without forcing other players to spend Fate passing.

Corollary #1: Start Player card draws with the starting player. For maximum efficiency, give the first card draw to the first player, the second card draw to the second player, etc. These should be the first players to run out of cards, so giving them card draws preferentially minimizes the amount of passing that will be required.

Corollary #2: Even out Player card draws after the fact. If you didn't spread out your card draws initially, try and do so later ... but be aware that there aren't a lot of options for doing so. Mouse's Talent is the best, because he can choose different people to discard and draw a card. This helps a lot if player hand sizes have gotten uneven for any reason.

Corollary #3: Ignore all these rules if someone has a bad hand. If someone has a bad hand, then that probably means they've got great Player cards in their draw pile. Especially if you're playing with fewer players (meaning there are fewer cards left in the draw piles), give those players preferential draws because of the increased odds of drawing a good card.

Dump Excess Overcome & Take Advantage Cards

In an average game of *DFCO*, you'll have more Overcome and Take Advantage cards than you need in order to remove Obstacles and Advantages (and, conversely you'll have fewer Attacks and Investigates than you need to remove Foes and Cases). Do your best to keep track of how many Overcomes and Take Advantages your team has (within the rules for "game

discussion", which forbids the naming of specific numbers), and use the excess as Fate fodder. It's helpful to do this from on, before you start spending cards you might actually need. When you've removed all the Obstacles and Advantages from the board that you plan to, then definitely burn through the rest of your Overcome and Take Advantage cards to generate Fate, in preference to anything else.

V-B Attacking Foes & Cases

Winning *DFCO* is ultimately about defeating sufficient Foes and solving sufficient Cases to win.

Plan for Your Showdown

Before you add Hits or Clues to *anything*, you should read over your Showdown card. In most Books it's easier to solve Cases in the Showdown than it is to kill Foes.

Take *Storm Front* as an example: you can pay the maximum Fate to get an average roll of +3 on a Case but you only get an average roll of +2 on a Foe. Clearly, it's slightly better to leave Cases unsolved until the Showdown than Foes. Some Books have even more difference between the two sorts of cards, such as *Fool Moon* with maxes out at 2+6dF for Foes, but only 4+5dF for Cases. Occasionally, the numbers are reversed, favoring Foes, such as *Summer Knight*, which has a maximum of 4+6dF for Foes and 3+6dF for Cases.

Corollary #1: Know your Book's Fate costs. Each of those rolls also has a Fate cost, and so you should know those too. However, these costs matter less than you'd think; as often as not, your Showdown will hinge on the roll against a single card, and you can usually afford the cost of one maximal roll. However, be especially aware of those Showdowns that have really high Fate costs, such as 5 or 6 for the maximal rolls.

Corollary #2: Be very mindful of the Showdown conditions in Proven Guilty and White Knight. *Proven Guilty* does not let

you Showdown against Foes! *White Knight* does not let you Showdown against Cases! In those Books, cards of those types *must* be completed before the Showdown, or it was all for naught. So, make sure you approach these Books carefully. And make sure you remember, because it's really easy to forget. (In fact, *this* author has forgotten, in a game with the *DFCO* designer; who also forgot.)

Defeat the Weak

Winning *DFCO* has nothing to do with the complexity of the Cases you solve or the ferocity of the Foes. It's just a numbers game: solve more Cases than Foes that you leave on the board and you win. So, go for the low-hanging fruit. Solve the Cases and defeat the Foes with the lowest numbers, if all other things are equal.

Of course all other things *won't* be equal, but this is nonetheless a good principle to keep in mind.

Corollary #1: Avoid the strongest Foes and the hardest Cases if you can. In fact you might want to move high-value cards to the back of the row, out of the way, using something like Michael's "Amoracchius" Stunt — provided that you "Don't Throw Away Your Shot". However, keep in mind that sometimes the highest value Case or Foe is also the one that is targeted by beneficial effects from other Book cards; it may not really be the most difficult to remove.

Don't Throw Away Your Shot

If you're going to damage a Foe or work on a Case, you want to make sure that your team can finish that card off; don't put tokens on a card if you don't think that's going to happen. Mind you, it's OK if your plan is to remove that card during the Showdown, but if you think you will never do so, you'd be much better off just generating Fate.

Corollary #1: Don't be seduced by powers that encourage you to spread out. Billy and Georgia's "Alpha Pack Attack" Stunt Hits every damaged Foe, but it's not worth maximizing it if you're just adding more Hits to Foes that are never going to be defeated. Ditto for Butters' "Eureka!" Stunt, which places additional Clues. Murphy's "Raw Determination" Stunt generates a Fate point for every card with tokens on it, but

it's not worth it if you spent more than 1 Fate point to place those tokens on a card that won't be solved.

Corollary #2: Move your wasted tokens. Some characters can help you make use of spread out tokens. Luccio can move a pile of tokens from one card to another with her Stunt, while Ramirez's Talent turns 1 Clue into 2 Hits and Butters' Talent similarly turns 1 Hit into 2 Clues. You can use these powers to clean up wasted tokens from Book cards you don't plan to remove. You can optimize even further by first spreading out to maximize effects, and then move or consume the wasted tokens; for example, it becomes more worthwhile to put a hit on a distant Foe to improve Murphy's Stunt if you can then reclaim some or all of those tokens for other purposes.

VI. Planning for the Win

Each game of *DFCO* starts out tactically, as you work to clear Obstacles and Advantages early in the game. However at some point, you need to do more strategic thinking, and plan how your team is going to ultimately win the game.

Play to Win by One Point

Your team's final score in *DFCO* will be the number of Cases you've solved minus the number of Foes still on the board. Around the halfway point of any game, your team should decide which combination of Cases solved and Foes defeated will sum to exactly +1 point. Talk it out. Because each player only has perfect knowledge of their own hand, it is important to hear from everyone. Then specifically identify which Book cards you're going to try to annihilate, and go for it!

Corollary #1: Foes or Cases matter not. You have to solve at least one Case to win a game, but after that it doesn't matter if the team eliminates Foes or Cases, as long as they sum +1 point.

Corollary #2: Remember the Showdown. You don't have to finish off those Book cards with your own cardplay. In fact, it's rare that normal gameplay will allow your team to remove all the Book cards that you need to earn your +1 point. That's OK, because you still have the Showdown; just make sure that your strategic plans include giving your team good odds on those final rolls.

Corollary #3: Go for more points if you can. Don't let this discourage you from working toward two or more points if it's possible. Just be aware, earning more points is really difficult: this author's last five games, working from *Stormfront* to *Death Masks*, resulted in four games won with +1 point and one game lost with -1 point. Especially, don't go for two or more points if it costs you the opportunity to win with one.

Coordinate Your Final Player Cards

As you near the end of the game, your team will be running out of Player cards. Do your best to figure out what types of cards your team has left and how to play to those strengths. This usually comes down to a question of Attack cards or Investigate cards. Your team must determine if it has enough Player cards to make a difference in either suit; often, you'll end up concentrating on just one of them. This will then help you to identify whether you'll be killing Foes or solving Cases.

Corollary #1: Make Fate with the losers. If you determine that one of your two suits won't do any good in the end game, use it as your prime fodder to generate Fate for your final rounds of play.

Coordinate Your Final Stunts

If you have any Stunts that you've been holding in reserve, then your team should definitely plan for how to use them now. If

a Stunt can help you in your goal of earning +1 point to win the game, that's optimal. However, even using a Stunt for very little gain is worthwhile, because it will (probably) keep the turn order balanced and keep you from spending Fate to pass. So, figure out how to make that happen, at a minimum, if it doesn't damage your efficiency in some other way.

At this point: *poor efficiency is better than no efficiency.*

Don't Try to Do It All

This is largely a corollary to "Play for One Point" but it nonetheless deserves its own rule of thumb. Do *not* try to clear the board. You won't be able to do, and you'll probably mess up your chances to actually win if you try to do too much. You need to pick your

battles. The object is simply to defeat *enough* Cases and Foes. Work toward that.

Corollary #1: Don't mess with Book cards you won't remove. Once you've figured out how to "Play for One Point", you should totally ignore the Foes and Cases that you're not going to finish. Definitely don't play Player cards whose main purpose is to put tokens on those Book cards, and try not to use overflow effects like Harry's "Pyrofuego!" against them. If you have any way to swap or move Book cards so that you can overflow onto a relevant Book card instead of an irrelevant one, do that! Remember, "Don't Throw Away Your Shot". If you need to remove 1 card during the showdown to win, it's better to have a shot at 1 card with good odds than to have a long shot at 3 different cards.

VII. Ending the Game

The fact that you can choose when to end your game of *DFCO* makes it surprisingly tricky.

Get Out in Time

Do not play to the bitter end. Remember that you can stop *DFCO* at any time and immediately move on the Showdown. If you've kept player-turns balanced, then your team will probably want to play all of its cards, but if your distribution of cards was uneven, then you may be forced to finish while someone still has cards in their hand.

Manage Your Passes Carefully

This is practically a corollary to “Get Out in Time”. In short: don't pass unless you absolutely have to. Remember that each pass costs you 1 Fate. So, if you have to pass twice to get back to a player that has a “2” Fate card in his hand, then you might as well have just stopped the game early. If you did the same to get back to someone with a “1” Fate card, then you lost ground.

Corollary #1: Manage your card draws so you never have to pass. This of course goes back to an earlier rule: “Spread Out Player Card Draws”. If you gave bonus cards to players equally, starting with the first player, then no players should need to pass at the end.

Make Fate at the End

At times, it is possible for your team to optimize all their card usage in *DFCO*. If your final Player cards are all Range 1 Attack and Investigate cards, and they're in the exact right combination to finish off the Foes and Cases on the board, then you can just keep playing them until you've emptied your hands. If you do so, then you may win the game ahead of the Showdown, because this is usually the most efficient way to play *DFCO*.

The problem is that you probably haven't optimized your card usage, and even if you have, you probably haven't been able to communicate that within your group. You also need some luck with your draw and dice rolls to make that kind of optimization happen. As a result, saving some Fate at the end of the game for the *known* (but random) rolls of a Showdown is often superior to the unknown results of playing the last few final cards

This is even more true in several special cases.

Corollary #1: Make Fate if you have the wrong Player cards. When you “Coordinate Your Final Player Cards” you might determine that you have a useless card or two. Converting them to Fate is a no-brainer.

Corollary #2: Make Fate if your Talent is more useful than your cards. Talents that add Hits and Clues are particularly useful in

the late game. If you have a choice between spending 2 Fate to add 2 Hits or making 2 Fate to add 1, you should probably do the latter.

Corollary #3: Make Fate if you have good opportunities for Showdown rolls. If a Showdown roll is particularly good, which tends to mean a 1:1 Fate:Token ratio, then go with the roll, because you usually won't do better with a Player card play. Spending 1 Fate or 2 Fate for Clues on *Storm Front* is thus a good choice, because they both generate the same number of tokens on average. Similarly, all of the Showdown rolls for Cases in *Fool Moon* are worthwhile because they're 1:1 ratios.

Corollary #3: Make Fate if you have inefficient Player cards. Many Player cards drop below the 1:1 ratio, most often because they have increased Range. You should be even more suspicious of these than usual toward the end of the game. If you don't need the extra Range, use them for Fate instead.

Corollary #4: Make Fate if you have a long shot to win. Finally, you should generate Fate if it's obvious that your cards just don't have any possibility to win the game. In this situation, generate as much Fate as you'll need to roll high on all the cards than have enough tokens to be worthwhile.

Know Your Showdown Odds

That last point suggests one final rule: your team should know the odds of your Showdown. To roughly calculate this, you need to have three things in hand: how many Book cards you're going to need to

roll on, how many you need to win, and how many tokens each of those Book cards needs to complete.

You're going to compare those facts to the base number of the Showdown roll. The number of dice you throw creates variance, and there's a slight difference in the variance between throwing four dice and six dice, but it's not worth calculating.

There are a large number of possibilities, so the best this article can offer is a few rules of thumb:

If you want to have above-average chances of completing a single Book card, make sure the base number on the Showdown is at least 1 higher than the number you need. For example, if you are trying to place 3 tokens on the Book card, for above-average odds, make sure you're rolling $4+XdF$.

You can still have above-average chances for completing a single needed Book card if you have two cards that will each get a Showdown whose base number is equal to the number of tokens you need. For example, if you need 3 tokens on one of two Book cards, rolling each at $3+XdF$ isn't bad.

You can still have above-average chances for completing a single needed Book card if you have three cards that will each get a Showdown whose base number is one less than the number of tokens you need. For example, if you need 3 tokens on one of three Book cards, rolling each at $2+XdF$ isn't bad.

If you increase your base numbers by +1 on any of these Showdown rolls, your odds go

up to very good. If you decrease them by -1 or -2, they drop to average or poor.

Corollary #1: If you need to complete more than one Book card in the Showdown, your

odds get worse quicker. This is true even if you have great Showdown rolls that are above the numbers suggested here.

VIII-A. Playing the Core Characters

Billy & Georgia

Billy & Georgia range far afield.

Cards of Note. Almost every one of the Billy and Georgia cards is notable because with just two exceptions they all have strong Range, without much additional Fate cost. Their Attacks range from 2 to 3 Range, with cost that's around a 1:1 Fate:Hits ratio and their Investigates are similar. If you need someone to place tokens on cards at Range, and you don't want to pay for it, these are your wolves. (The Alpha's long range Overcome and Take Advantage cards are more expensive.)

Best Suit [Attack: 13]. The wolves have a total of 4(!) Attack cards. The thing to watch is that one card ("Death Grip") restores Fate if used to defeat while another ("Savage") can't be used to defeat. So, play then early! You don't want to get stuck with an unplayable card nor do you want to waste the efficiency of that Fate restoration.

Talent: Leaders of the Pack [Any Time]. +1 Hit to furthest Foe. Make sure that you can eventually make these distant Hits useful — by getting the Foe into Range, using long-range Attacks, or transferring the damage. [See also *Murphy*: +1 Clue to furthest; *Thomas*: +1 Hit to nearest; *Susan*: +1 Clue to nearest]

Stunt: Alpha Pack Attack [Mid Game]. Add Hits to hit Foes. This is one of those Stunts that you should be very careful with. Don't keep waiting for the "ideal" usage and don't

put Hits on Foes that will be useless just to make this Stunt seem better. [See also *Butters*: Add Clues to investigated Cases; *Murphy*: Make Fate for tokened cards.]

Team Notes. Don't move invulnerable foes to the longest range, or Billy & Georgia won't be able to use their Talent. Meanwhile, spread out team damage early on (as long as it will be useful), but don't finish things off, so that they can maximize their Stunt.

Harry Dresden

Harry manages the Advantages and Obstacles.

Cards of Note. Harry's most notable cards are "Pyrofuego!" and "Consult with Bob", which add Hits or Clues to all the Foes or Cases in a row, respectively. They should be used with care, however: if there aren't enough Foes or Cases in a single row, they will be inefficient. They are clearly worthwhile if they add Hits or Clues to 3 cards, but may not be worthwhile if they hit just 2.

Best Suit [Investigate: 12]. Besides "Consult with Bob" there's also "Soulgaze" which adds an impressive 5+2dF Clues and "Private Investigator" — which will probably be used as a Fate generator unless you really need a 3+1dF Range!

Talent: Wizard, P.I. [Early Game]. Move Advantages or Obstacles. Harry's Talent is the heart of the game. It's a Talent

that should be used in the first few rounds to move Obstacles or Advantages to the front of the rows (or to the back). Burn Harry's less useful cards in order to help remove these early Book cards. Meanwhile, save the cards that seem most useful for later in the game, when the Fate generation will be turned over to others.

Stunt: Blasting Rod [Mid to Late Game]. +4 Hits to Foe if that will kill them. Optimally, get a Foe to exactly 4 Hits left, to maximize this Stunt's efficiency.

Team Notes. Depend on Harry for Fate generation early in the game, but expect to support him with Fate late in the game. Also, help to set up his Stunt by arranging it so that Foes have exactly 4 Hits left. Butters and Rodriguez can use their Talents to manage this precisely. If a player gets an opportunity to re-draw a card from discard, it is often best to let Harry re-draw "Pyrofuego!" or "Consult with Bob."

Karrin Murphy

Murphy is one of the top investigators.

Cards of Note. Note Murphy's several cards ("Deadeye Shot", "Detective Work", and "Interrogation") that all give bonuses if they finish off their Foe or Case; work to make sure they do — unless several players in the gamers have this same criteria on their cards, then consider using them for Fate generation.

Best Suit [Investigate: 15]. Murph's "Street Sense" has a great 1:1 Fate:Clue ratio, thanks to its Range of one. Meanwhile, "Detective Work" and "Interrogation", which pay for their Range of 3 with extra

Fate, are definitiely worthwhile as long as they close their Cases.

Talent: S.I. Detective [Any Time]. +1 Clue to furthest Case. Just as with Billy & Georgia: make sure it counts. There's no point in adding Clues to a Case that you're never going to get to! [See also *Billy & Georgia: +1 Hit to furthest*; *Thomas: +1 Hit to nearest*; *Susan: +1 Clue to nearest*]

Stunt: Raw Determination [Mid to Late game]. Make +1 Fate for each tokened Book card. Again, the strategy for Billy & Georgia's Stunt is mirrored here: don't wait too long on this, or you'll start hitting diminishing returns. [See also *Billy & Georgia: Add Hits to hit Foes*; *Butters: Add Clues to investigated Cases*]

Team Notes. A mirror to the suggestions for Billy & Georgia: don't move a Case to the longest range that can't have tokens placed on it; and early on spread out your tokens without removing Cases or Foes - until Murphy uses her Stunt.

Michael Carpenter

Michael is a problem solver who deals with Advantages and Obstacles.

Cards of Note. Michael can dump a pile of tokens with "Dragonslayer" and "Divine Revelation", each of which averages a 1:1 Fate:Token ratio and drops down 5 tokens.

Best Suit [Balanced]. All of Michael's suits total either 7 or 8 Fate. This makes the Overcome and Take Advantage suits notable; at three cards each, they're most of his deck. "Kevlar Helps" and "Prayer" are pretty standard cards that remove an

Advantage or Obstacle at range 1 for 1 Fate. It's "Family Man" and "Fist of God" that are amazing. They have a range of 2 and cost 4 Fate, but they also drop two tokens on Foes and Cases on either side. If they can be used for maximum efficiency then the Overcome or Take Advantage power is pretty much free.

Talent: Holy Knight of the Cross [Intermittently, Early to Mid Game]. Later, extend Range by 2. Michael's Talent is pretty great because extended Range usually costs extra Fate. Instead Michael has six different cards with a 1 Range that all average a 1:1 Fate:Token ratio, but which he can actually use at Range 3 with his Talent. So, power up Michael on his first turn, use as necessary, then power up again. Just be sure not to power him up toward the end of the game when the power will likely be wasted. [See also *Molly: Ready for die change.*]

Stunt: Amorcchius [Early Game]. +3 Hits to a Foe with no hits and push him to back of row. Michael's Stunt is one of the hardest to use well in the game. First, it's easy to mess up and realize that you can't use it because all the remaining Foes have already taken Hits. This is horrible: not only do you lose a great power, but you also lose a turn of play. Wasting a Stunt is the quickest way toward loss in *DFCO*. But beyond that, you push the Foe to the back of the row. In order to use it effectively, you thus need to go after a weak Foe (who will die in the Showdown, even with no more Hits) or someone that other Stunts or Talents can hit. There's one other option: attack someone in a row that's become short, leaving him accessible. This will let Michael

double-up on his Stunt and Talent. If he only knocks someone back to a Range of 3, he can then hit them with his Talent and either of his Attacks. [See also *Sanya: +3 hits to Uninvestigated Case & pull.*]

Team Notes. Have Harry move around cards to maximize Michael's use of "Family Man" and "First of God". This is a fair trade-off because you may need to worry less about moving those Advantages and Obstacles to closer Ranges because of Michael's Talent. Make sure that you're aware of Michael's need to have a Foe empty of Hits, so that you don't accidentally spoil his use of his Stunt.

Susan Rodriguez

Susan may be an even better investigator than Murphy.

Cards of Note. The "Expose" Investigate Hits a Foe if it solves a Case and the "The Pen is Mightier ..." Attack Investigates a Case if it *does not* defeat a Foe (which is much easier to do). Try to always use these for their maximum efficiency.

Best Suit [Investigate: 14]. Susan's 14 Fate of investigation is concentrated into just three cards. That means her *worst* Investigate, "Play a Hunch", delivers 4 Clues for 4 Fate. And it just gets better from there.

Talent: Arcane Reporter [Any Time]. +1 Clue to nearest Case. Susan's Talent is a lot easier to use than Billy & Georgia's and Murphy's, because it adds tokens to a nearby card instead of a faraway one. You still have to make the tokens count, of course, but it's a lot easier to do so. [See

also *Billy & Georgia*: +1 Hit to furthest; *Murphy*: +1 Clue to furthest; *Thomas*: +1 Hit to nearest.]

Stunt: Timely Assist [Mid to Late Game].
Choose a player to draw a Player card and take the next turn. Susan's Stunt can help with turn order, but it may not be immediately obvious how that works because of the combo of the card draw and the turn. Effectively she's both giving a player an extra card/turn and moving them to the start of the turn order. So, if a few players near the end of the original turn order have extra cards, Susan can give the player *just before them* the card draw and play, and that will balance things out. If the cards are roughly equal, Susan can

instead help out a player who didn't draw their best cards. Remember that the average Fate value of a card is 3. So, have each player count up their cards in hand and played. If someone averages way less than 3, then they're a great candidate for some assistance. Absent either of these situations, it's often best for Susan to give the draw to herself.

Team Notes. If a Case that can't have tokens placed on it ends up at the front of a row, work to get a Case to the front of the *other* row too, so that Susan can use her Talent. Meanwhile, if you're one of those people who got a really bad card draw, particularly if you know one of your great cards is in your draw pile, *tell Susan*.

VIII-B. Playing Expansion #1: Fan Favorites

Thomas Raith

Thomas can deal lots of Hits, and Overcomes Obstacles well.

Cards of Note. Thomas has the best Overcome in the whole game: “Family Power” removes every Obstacle in a row. Yes, it costs 5 Fate, but if you can hit two or three Obstacles in a single turn, that's a phenomenal time saver.

Best Suit [Attack: 14]. Thomas' Attack cards are a relatively normal set, doing medium to good damage with a bit of extra Range on “Quick Lunge”. And then there's “Two Blades Slash”, which hits a Foe in each row *at any Range*. Add that on to its 6 Hits total, and it's obviously a great card ... as long as there's a Foe in each row.

Talent: Sawed Off Shotgun [Any Time]. +1 Hit to nearest Foe. Like Susan's similar Talent, this one is almost always useful, because Hits to a nearby Foe *should* be something you can always build on. Just make sure you do! [See also *Billy & Georgia: +1 Hit to furthest; Murphy: +1 Clue to furthest; Susan: +1 Clue to nearest.*]

Stunt: Inner Demon [Early Game]. Draw and play a Player card. This is one of the tough Stunts to use, because it's easy to waste it if you draw a card that's impossible to use. That's why it's usually best to play early, before all the Advantages and Obstacles disappear. If you manage to have all four types of cards at near Range (1 or 2), that's when you're most likely to be successful. A

Case *and* a Foe at Range 1 may be the absolutely best setup. You can improve your odds of success with this Stunt if you assess what's still in your deck. Remember that the deck divider lists how many you have of all four types of cards. Keep it out and refer to it to see what you might draw. This card counting means that Thomas works better in a game with more players: he'll have fewer cards left in his deck, and so he'll know more about what he's got left.

Team Notes. Similar to Susan's team strategy, try not to put an invulnerable Foe to the front of a row, and if you do, get another Foe to the head of the other row. Consider giving Thomas card draws, or even better discards-and-draws, because this decreases the number of cards left in his deck, increasing his ability to assess what he'll draw with his Stunt.

Waldo Butters

Butters can deal lots of Clues but he's also great at taking Advantages and Obstacles at long Range.

Cards of Note. The “Research Party!” Take Advantage is quite expensive, at 5 Fate for 2 Range, but if you can let someone take a 5 Fate card back from their discard, it's free.

Best Suit [Investigate: 14; Take Advantage: 11]. If you need Investigating, Butters is your pathologist. His “Science!” is notable because for 5 Fate it can deal a total of 6 Clues to two Cases in different rows at any range, which is the mirror of Thomas' “Two

Blades Slash". His "Medical Examiner" also can deal piles of Clues. Butters also has a shockingly strong Take Advantage hand, which is useful if you're in a bad situation where you *must* Take Advantages that are far away.

Talent: Forensic Pathologist [Any Time]. Change 1 Hit to 2 Clues. Obviously, you're increasing the number of tokens with this Talent. Be sure to also use it to even out tokens usefully, either by getting them off a Foe you're not going to kill or onto a Case that could be solved. [See also *Ramirez*: 1 Clue to 2 Hits.]

Stunt: Eureka! [Mid Game]. Add Clues to investigated Cases. As with Billy & Georgia's Stunt, don't wait too long. If a situation looks good, it probably is. [See also *Billy & Georgia*: Add Hits to hit Foes; *Murphy*: Make Fate for tokened cards.]

Team Notes. Add some Hits to a Foe early on, so that Butters can use his Talent to heal them and get clues from them. As with Billy & Georgia and Murphy, consider spreading out your Clue tokens, without finishing Cases, until Butters Stunts.

VIII-C. Playing Expansion #2: Helping Hands

Molly Carpenter

Molly has subtle magic: she's an investigator, Advantage-taker and manipulator.

Cards of Note. Though “Neru!” is a ghastly expensive Take Advantage with a 5 Fate cost, it has great Range, and it can partially repay for itself with a card draw. “One-Woman Rave” is one of the stronger Attacks since it does 2-6 Hits ... and Molly is exactly the woman to make sure the answer is 6.

Best Suit [Investigate: 13]. Of Molly's Investigates, “Hireki!” is notable for its 5 Fate/4+1dF Clues, and “Sensitive Trance” is notable for its parallel to “One-Woman Rave”: it delivers 2-6 Clues.

Talent: Apprentice Wizard [Intermittently, Any Time]. Later, change a die roll. Molly's ability to flip one die to a “-” or “+” is particularly notable because every one of her cards except “Veil” has a die roll on it. As a result, she should probably never take an action without having her Talent ready. This Talent is particularly important for “Sensitive Trance” and “One-Woman Rave”, where the die-roll can mean the difference between a horrible action and a great action. Molly also has the advantage of being the only character to date in *DFCO* who can guarantee herself the longer Range of a card like “Neru!”, which has a die roll in its Range (3+1dF). Usually, you would *never* use that card if you *had* to get to 4 Range, but Molly can. [See also *Michael*: Ready for range.]

Stunt: Talented Holomancer [Early Game]. Copy an unused Stunt. Obviously, this needs to be used quickly before you start losing options. Harry's “Blasting Rod” is a popular choice, because it's one of the best Stunts in the game. Using Ramirez's ability to retrieve a card is pretty nice too: both to reclaim a high-value card and to further adjust player card counts. Generally, just be sure that you're planning for its use, because being able to use *anyone's* Stun is pretty powerful strategically.

Team Notes. The players should talk before using their Stunts to be sure that they don't undercut Molly from doing the same. Instead, plan a strategy for what Stunt can effectively be used twice.

Sanya

Sanya is quite multi-talented, delivering good value for all four types of cards. As thematic as it might be to put Michael and Sanya in the same game, it may not be good strategy unless you are playing a Book with a high proportion of Advantage and Obstacle cards.

Cards of Note. Sanya has another of the adjacency card sets, just like fellow knight Michael: “Esperacchius” delivers Hits but also resolves an adjacent Advantage or Obstacle and “Unswayed by Temptation” does the same with Clues. They're both *great* cards because they deliver 4 tokens at 3 Range for just 5 Fate. Even if you just wanted to place the tokens at Range 3, these would be good cards, but of

course you *always* want to maximize efficiency, so make sure you use the adjacency ability too. Note that the way the card works, you can stretch Sanya's Range to 4 for that Advantage or Obstacle, which can help hit a card that would usually be out of range.

Best Suit [Attack: 11, Investigate: 11]. Sanya isn't quite as balanced as Michael, but what do you expect from an agnostic Knight of the Cross? His Attacks and Investigates all have good Range, of at least 2, without much extra cost.

Talent: Agnostic Knight [Any Time]. +1 Fate. Santa's Talent is useful, but not very interesting to play. Don't make the Sanya player generate more than his share of Fate because of his simple, pragmatic Talent. Not only will you make the character less fun to play, but you'll miss out on his cards, which are well worth playing.

Stunt: Hand of Hope [Early to Mid Game]. +3 Clues to an uninvestigated Case & pull it to front of row. As with Michael, be sure not to waste this: you need to use it before too many Clues go down. Also be aware that it can be very helpful not just for its token placement, but also to move up a Case that's currently lost at the back of its row. [See also *Michael: +3 Hits to a Foe without hits & push.*]

Team Notes. Remember to have Harry use his Talent to help Sanya optimize "Esperacchius" and "Unswayed by Temptation" if Sanya is holding them. This costs turns, but as with Michael's Talent, it may save you from the usual rigamarole of Harry having to pull an Advantage or Obstacle all the way to the front. Also, as with Michael, make sure you're aware of the limitations on Sanya's Stunt, and that you don't accidentally place Clues on a Case that he wanted to use Hand of Hope on.

VIII-D. Playing Expansion #3: Wardens Attack

Anastasia Luccio

Luccio is a combat beast who can tactically consolidate Hits and Clues.

Cards of Note. Luccio has one of the more expensive Take Advantages in the game: “Council Access”, which costs due to its Range of 4. Besides that, her “Strategy” and “Pyromantic Precision” are of note, because they respectively allow the division of five Clues or Hits among Cases or Foes in Range.

Best Suit [Attack: 12]. Besides “Pyromantic Precision”, Luccio's Attacks also also “Silver Scimitar” and a “Flame Ribbon” that's overpriced due to its greater Range.

Talent: Captain of the Wardens [Any Time]. +1 Clue to Hardest Case or +1 Hit to Toughest Foe. Do damage to a high-value Foe or Case. Ideally, you want to go after a highest-value Case of Foe that's near the head of a row: it'll help clear the row and it'll make sure the tokens you place aren't wasted.

Stunt: Focus Our Efforts! [Mid to Late Game]. Move Clues or Hits among Cases or Foes. This is probably one of the more underrated Stunts because it doesn't improve the count of tokens as you move them nor does it guarantee a kill. Instead, you have to use the Stunt carefully and subtly. Its power is that it removes inefficiency. If you were stacking tokens on a few different Foes (or Cases) that you aren't likely to solve with an average Showdown, then you can instead consolidate them. Instead of two cards you

weren't going to finish, you hopefully end up with one you will. This can increase the efficiency of your Showdown.

Team Notes. Work with Luccio to make sure that the toughest Foe or hardest Case is something that will accept tokens and can eventually be solved. Also talk with Luccio about how her Stunt empowers everyone else's abilities — like Billy & Georgia, Murphy, and Butters, whose Stunts power up when there are more tokens out, and Ramirez and (again) Butters, whose Talents move tokens around.

Carlos Ramirez

Ramirez is another combat beast, but with surprising ability to Overcome too.

Cards of Note. “Entropic Blast” and “Steadfast Ally” are high cost Attack and Investigate cards with a special power: they also hit either an adjacent Foe or Case. They offer great versatility, possibly allowing you to finish other Foes or Cases or just to spread out the tokens. The “Regional Commander” Overcome card is also of note. Though it's a high cost Overcome at 4 Fate, it basically pays for itself because it lets you draw a card. Play it if you're early in the turn order or if you know that you have high-cost cards in your draw pile.

Best Suit [Attack: 14, Overcome: 7]. Ramirez's Attack suit totals four cards. Besides “Entropic Blast” there are “Emerald Light” and “Disintegrator Screen” which do nice short-range damage. Ramirez also gets

a reduced version of Harry's "Pyrofuego!": "Grenades" adds 1 Hit to all Foes in a row. Meanwhile, don't overlook Ramirez's Overcomes, which total three cards; it's one of the stronger Overcome sets in the game. If you're having problems with Obstacles, and you have a card draw, Ramirez is your goto warden.

Talent: It Hurts to Be This Good! [Any Time]. Change 1 Clue to 2 Hits. The strategy is the same as Butters' Talent strategy: increase token count; bail on Cases you won't solve; and increase Hits on vulnerable Foes. [See Also *Butters*: change 1 Hit to 2 Clues.]

Stunt: Got Your Back [Mid to Late Game]. Return a discarded card. The most

obvious use of this Stunt is to give someone a "5" Fate card back. Try not to use it unless you can do that. However, you can also recover a type of card that your group needs more of. Perhaps most importantly, you can use it to even out card counts among the players, to minimize passing at the end of the game.

Team Notes. Harry and Ramirez work so well together! Imagine a Pyrofuego from Harry followed by a Grenades from Ramirez, and then Ramirez giving Harry his Pyrofuego back. You've done 5 Hits to every Foe in a row! Meanwhile, to allow use of Ramirez's Talent, be sure that you have Clues sitting out.

VIII-E. Playing Promo Characters

Hank Walker, alias: Ra

Do you play the non-Dresden Files deck?

Cards of Note. Ra has some unique Overcomes and Take Advantages. “The Staff of Ra” lets him take an Advantage and keep this Player card if he discards something else, which is handy if your group has ended up short on the card type, while “Scorched Earth” is expensive at 4 Fate, but overcomes the nearest Obstacle, which is useful if something is hanging out at the back of the row.

Best Suit [Attack: 14]. “Blazing Tornado” is of note because it's one of those rare cards that *can* do 6 Hits for 5 Fate, in this case if there's a second Foe adjacent. Otherwise, Ra has some nice Range.

Talent: Sun God for Hire. +1 Hit to a wounded Foe, with 2 Hits or more. The requirement of two Hits is a slight limit on Ra's Talent. Try and make that happen quickly, so that he always has a target if he needs to make Fate.

Stunt: Imbued Fire. Take a discarded non-∞ Attack card from another player. Obviously, Ra's Stunt is dependent on other players having Attack cards. Do your best to retrieve one worth 4 or 5 Fate, but remember that non-infinite limitation, so that you don't have a rude surprise when you go to grab the card and your resident Rules Lawyer says, “No!”

Team Notes. Make sure to wound a character early on, so that Ra can use his Talent at will.

Mouse

Mouse is the best support character in the game.

Cards of Note. “Eat Mister's Food” is a Take Advantage with a shocking range of 4+2dF, for a reasonable cost of 3 Fate. If you need a hail-Harry to clear an Advantage at Range 5 or 6, this is your card (just be sure you also have an Advantage to take as near as 2, in case you roll badly). Mister isn't fond of the card, though.

Best Suits [Attack: 11, Investigate: 11]. Unsurprisingly, Mouse's deck is balanced like a Knight of the Cross. The Attack and Investigate are both strong suits. Especially note his “The Nose Knows” Investigate and “Claw, Claw, Bite” Attack, each of which can swap cards between the rows besides delivering their normal count of token — something that can be used to help out other characters with cards that affect an entire row.

Talent: Foo Dog [Any Time]. Choose a player to discard a card, choose a player to draw a card. Mouse is the ultimate card equalizer, who can make sure that all of your players have the same number of cards, minimizing passes at the end. If you have any large inequity of cards among the players, equalizing it should be Mouse's first priority: have a player with too many cards

discard one of them and have a player with too few cards draw one. If the cards are roughly equal, Mouse can instead help out players who didn't draw their best cards, as is discussed in Susan's Stunt strategy.

Stunt: Temple Dog Warning Bark [Mid to Late Game]. Choose a player to flip over a used Stunt. This is like Molly's talent (which lets her use a Stunt), but it gives that additional use to the original player. As with Molly, you can use this very tactically to ensure that you get an extra use of the most appropriate Stunt for you game. If you think it's useful to reuse a Stunt that works best in early game (like Michael's), be sure

that Stunt gets used very quickly and that Mouse gives his warning shortly thereafter. Be aware that a player who gets their Stunt back will have an extra turn, just as if he'd drawn an extra card. So, you can also use Mouse's Stunt to balance player-turn inequities (or if you create an inequity with the Stunt, you may need to balance it with his Talent).

Team Notes. Mouse is the ultimate team player. Coordinate with him to decide who is going to reuse Stunts, which should be part of your big-picture strategy, and who could benefit from card draws and/or card equalization.

IX. Picking Your Characters

So which of those characters do you use in your *DFCO* game? There are a few ways to pick.

One way to pick your characters is to look at their cards, Stunts, and Talents and see which would work best for the current book. In particular, if a book is Foe-heavy or Case-heavy, pick the stars in that suit.

IX-A. Picking by Stunts or Talents

Character	Talent	Stunt	Suit
Billy & Georgia	+1 Hit to Furthest	Add Hits to Hit Foes	Att
Butters	1 Hit → 2 Clues	Add Clues to Investigated Cases	Adv/Inv
Harry	Move Adv or Obs	+4 Hits to Kill Foe	Inv
Luccio	+1 Clue or Hit to Toughest	Move Clues or Hits	Att
Michael	Ready for Range	+3 Hits to Unhit Foe & Push	Balanced
Molly	Ready for Die Change	Copy Unused Stunt	Inv
Mouse	Choose to Discard & Draw	Choose to Return a Used Stunt	Att/Inv
Murphy	+1 Clue to Furthest	Make Fate for Tokened Cards	Inv
Ra	+1 Hit to Wounded	Take a Discarded Attack	Att
Ramirez	1 Clue → 2 Hits	Return a Discarded Card	Att/Ov
Sanya	+1 Fate	+3 Clues to Untouched Case & Pull	Att/Inv
Susan	+1 Clue to Nearest	Choose to Draw & Take Turn	Inv
Thomas	+1 Hit to Nearest	Draw & Play	Att

IX-B. Picking by Combos

You can also try to pick characters that work well together. The following list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but instead offers eleven ideas for sets of characters that are fun to play together.

Billy & Georgia + Butters: “Looking at Wolf Bites”. Billy & Georgia have a Talent that can be inefficient, if their Hits on a distant Foe don't ever kill it. If that's the case, just have Butters translate those Hits into Clues somewhere closer.

Billy & Georgia + Luccio: “Concentrating the Wolf Bites”. Luccio can also help focus those distant wolf-bite Hits. She does it all in one fell swoop, with her Stunt.

Butters + Ramirez: “Building a Pyramid Scheme”. Butters can turn 1 Hit to 2 Clues and Ramirez can turn 1 Clue to 2 Hits. Put them together and you have an ever-increasing token count with very precise control over where they go.

Luccio + Billy & Georgia or Butters or Murphy: “Peppering the Cards”. Luccio has two different cards (“Pyromantic Precision” and “Strategy”) that add tokens to all appropriate cards within Range 3. This works well with the three Stunts that benefit from having more cards with tokens — but be sure not to waste tokens on cards that will never finish!

Luccio + Michael or Sanya: “Restoring to Mint Condition”. Michael and Sanya can accidentally end up with an unusable Stunt ... but not if Luccio is around. She can clear all the tokens off of any one card.

Michael + Billy & Georgia: “Keeping at Arm's Reach”. Michael's Stunt allows him to deal damage to a Foe, but it knocks the Foe to the back of the row where he's hard to hit. Billy & Georgia can help with that, because every time they use their Talent, they can apply another hit to the Foe. Their Stunt can also hit him.

Michael + Billy & Georgia + Ra: “Adding Insult to Injury”. Michael's Stunt puts three Hits on that distant Foe, making Ra's Talent immediately effective against the Foe at the farthest range. This also ensures there is a legal Foe at the farthest range for Billy & Georgia's talent to hit. Between the two of them, they can whittle down a very powerful Foe over the course of the game just by using their talents.

Molly + Mouse: “Triple Stunting”. Molly can use someone else's Stunt, Mouse can let them reuse it. Together that means that you can use a Stunt three times in a game! (Often, that means that you can use Harry's Blasting Rod three times.) However, the two characters are even more complementary than that: Molly usually has to be careful, lest someone else use a Stunt before she does, but Mouse can just flip the Stunt back over, allowing Molly to use it.

Mouse + Harry or Sanya: “Lining Them Up”. Mouse has two cards (“Claw, Claw, Bite” and “The Nose Knows”) that allow him to swap any two cards at the same range. This nicely lines things up for Harry (who can Hit all the Foes in a row with his “Pyrofuego!” card and who can Investigate all the Cases in a row with his “Consult with Bob” card) or Sanya (who can Hit all the Foes in a row with his “Grenades”). Yeah,

Harry is always in the game, but keep an eye out for this combo.

Sanya + Susan: "Keeping it Close". This is the flip side of the Michael + Billy & Georgia combo. Sanya can Stunt to bring a Case in close and apply Clues, then Susan can keep adding to it every time she uses her Talent. It's not quite as important, because it's easy to add tokens to a nearby Case (whereas it was hard to add tokens to a faraway Foe), but it's still a nice bit of synergy.

Thomas + Mouse: "Balancing the Demon". Thomas' Stunt is hard to use well. One way to decrease its variability is to decrease the number of cards in Thomas' deck, letting him have a better idea of what's left. Mouse can cycle Thomas' cards, causing him to discard and draw a few times, which will give him a pretty precise understanding of what's left, particularly in a game with fewer players.