

Save the Prom!

A Bubblegumshoe Demo Adventure

Save the Prom! is a short convention/game store adventure to introduce new players to Gumshoe and Bubblegumshoe.

Number of Players: 3 (can be done with 2).

Time: 1 to 1 ½ hours, with an investigation scene/phase and a confrontation scene/phase.

Modifications: By design, the adventure is stripped down and generic – you can add to it, make it the clues more complex, bolt on several of the Drifts, or set it in your own town.

In a Nutshell

Our heroes begin in the doghouse. They and four NPCs were working early one spring Saturday morning to decorate the gym for prom when Vice Principal Dean came in angrily. Someone has sabotaged her office, and the Decoration Committee are the only ones who have had access to the building since Friday. The culprit has one hour to fess up. If no one confesses, Ms. Dean cancels Prom – and it will be their fault!

Bubblegumshoe in a Page

There are no Statistics, just Abilities.

Abilities come in two types.

Investigative abilities always let you find clues if you use them. You can spend points from your ability pool to get more information or do something cool with the skill. *Academic abilities* are knowledge based. *Interpersonal abilities* get information out of people. You also use interpersonal abilities in social combat – each 1 pt of ability pool spent adds +2 to a social combat roll.

General abilities help you take action during the investigation. You'll roll 1d6 against a target difficulty number (Df) (2 to 8, usually 4). You can spend 1 point from your ability pool to add +1 per point. If you have no points at start, you can't use the ability under any kind of stress or contest. If you spent your pool down to zero, you can roll, and have a 50% chance to succeed on an average task.

Cool is a general ability and your social hit points. If you fail a test against *Cool*, you will take damage to your *Cool* pool.

Preparedness is a general ability and lets you declare that you have gear.

Cap abilities let you do stuff that normal teenagers don't know or can't do. Normally you would call on a *Relationship* to use that ability.

Relationships are the NPCs your character *Loves*, *Likes*, or *Hates*. They have pools too. Spend those points to use the relationship's abilities or position or to help you get into otherwise inaccessible locations.

Combat:

Physical combat is mostly just scuffling – cuts and bruises, but no serious damage. When a fight starts, make a *Cool* test (Df 3). Roll *Fighting*, target to hit is 3 (or 4 vs a skilled athlete) if you use a weapon, make a *Cool* test (5 Df). If you injure someone, you'll make another *Cool* test (5 Df). Running away costs 1d6+2 *Cool*.

Yes, there is social combat. Roll *Throwdown* (the social counterpart to *Fighting*), target difficulty is from 3 (a peer) to 5 or more (adults, for example). You can spend points from Interpersonal Abilities and Relationships for bonuses. If you've spent from a relationship pool, you can then spend your own *Cool* (1 *Cool* equals +2 if you spend after invoking a *Love*). If a *Hate* is involved, the GM can spend *Hate* points against you. Running away costs 1d6 *Cool*. Winning does 1d6 *Cool* to your foe, plus some situational bonuses (BGS 62-66) If you (or your foe) roll a 6, and (after expenditures) succeed by 5 over the Difficulty, do 2d6 *Cool* instead of 1d6.

You can throw a Relationship under the bus and deflect *Cool* damage from a *Throwdown* onto them. Loose 1 pt in a *Like* Relationship, 2 pts if a *Love*, for every *Cool* you inflict on them.

Clues

Core: Be in the right place with a relevant ability, and you get the clue. Or offer a clever or amusing idea about what you are trying to do. Spending investigative/interpersonal pool points might give you more information.

Leveraged: You can't get this clue without getting some earlier clue – confronting an adult having found evidence of misdeeds for example. You can, sometimes, bluff an NPC into thinking you have the earlier clue.

The Cast

The Player Characters

“Joe” (Josie/Joe) – the athlete with an ex-cop uncle.

“Max” (Maxine/Maxwell) – the scholar/activist

“Sam” (Samantha/Samuel) – the artistic techy with a bad- boy/girlfriend

Your Fellow Prom Decorators

Amy Foley’s family is rich, connected, and powerful. She wants for nothing but to be able to do things for herself. She’s one half of Si&Amy, the hot couple since New Years’. Lead decorator.

Cathi Russo is quiet, reliable, hard-working, and gets along with everyone. Her family runs an organic farm supplying high-end products to various chefs. She’s a vegan, but rebels now and then with some chicken nuggets, fries, and Twinkies. Yearbook photographer.

Charlie Gaylon is a Youtube sensation – he plays games on his own channel, with scores of avid followers, and has a popular podcast about school life and gossip. Sound and lights guy.

Simon Dodson is an athletic fitness nerd, soccer star with a gold leg, and high hopes of getting out of this hick town on an athletic scholarship. He’s the other half of Si&Amy, the hot couple since New Years’. Mostly here to move stuff.

The Adversary

Ms. Dean is the hardcore vice principle who governs the school with a mailed fist. Rumor has it she’s next in line for the superintendent’s job, which will be a relief to the entire student body.

Relationships

Briony Beauleau – Amy and Sam’s Pal (Sam)

Darshan Markovich – Prosecutors’ Investigator (Joe’s Dad)

Eileen Haber – President of Students for Democracy (Max)

George Gaylon – School Custodian (Max)

Jamie Prince – Heir to the Soccer Throne (Joe)

Louis/Louise Paul – Community College Freshman and local bad boy/girl (Sam)

Ruby Lakoff – former Robotics Team Captain, quit after a big loss earlier this spring (Sam)

Name: Josie/Joseph
 Class: Aspiring Middle
 Clique: Jocks
 Club: Kickboxing

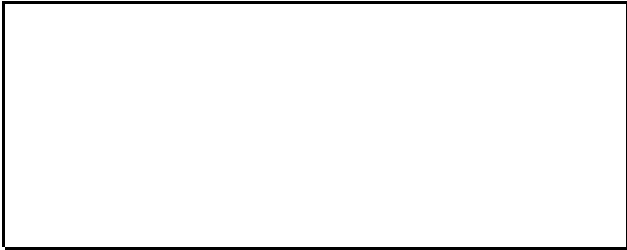
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Academic	Rating	Pool	General Abilities	Rating	Pool
Fashion	1		Athletics	8	
Notice	1		Computers		
Outdoors	2		Cool	5	
Photography			Driving	2	
Pop Culture			Fighting	4	
Research	1		Filch	3	
Scholarship	1		First Aid	2	
Town Lore	1		Intuition	5	
PLAYER HANDOUT			Preparedness	5	
Interpersonal	Rating	Pool	Repair	1	
BS Detector	1		Sneaking	3	
Flattery	1		Throwdown	3	
Flirting					
Gossip			Cap Skill	Rating	Pool
Grownup Face	2		Cop Talk	1	
Impersonate	1				
Intimidation	1		Relationships	Nature	Pts.
Negotiation			Darshen (Dad)	Love	3
Performance			Jamie (teammate)	Like	2
Reassurance					
Taunt	1				

Darshen Markovich (Dad) Loves me, and is terrified I'll screw up. He's a former big-city detective, working as the investigator for the town prosecutor's office. Trouble: Old Enemies. Ability: Crime Scene Investigation. Location: Court House.

Jamie Prince (Fellow Runner) Likes me, even though we're rivals on the track team. Trouble: Grades. Ability: Pop Culture. Location: Upscale Athletic Club.

Name: Maxine/Maxwell
 Class: Comfortable Middle
 Clique: Grinds
 Club: Debate Club

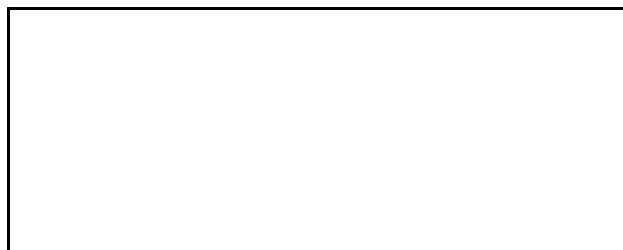


Academic	Rating	Pool	General Abilities	Rating	Pool
Fashion			Athletics	3	
Notice	1		Computers	4	
Outdoors			Cool	8	
Photography			Driving	5	
Pop Culture	1		Fighting	2	
Research	2		Filch		
Scholarship	2		First Aid	5	
Town Lore	1		Intuition	4	
			Preparedness	4	
Interpersonal	Rating	Pool	Repair		
BS Detector	1		Sneaking		
Flattery			Throwdown	4	
Flirting	1				
Gossip			Relationships	Nature	Pts.
Grownup Face	2		Eileen	Like	3
Impersonate	1		George	Like	2
Intimidation					
Negotiation	2				
Performance	1				
Reassurance	1				
Taunt	1				

Eileen Haber – (friend) Likes me because I help her with petitions, fundraisers, marches, and volunteering. President of Students for Democracy. Trouble: Online Troll. Ability: Politics. Location: Town Hall

George Gaylon (school custodian) Likes me because I stand up for his nephew Charlie even when he's being a jerk. Trouble: Buys beer for teens. Ability: Adult Gossip. Location: School Basement

Name: Samantha/Samuel
 Class: Upper Middle
 Clique: Makers
 Club: Radio Station



Academic	Rating	Pool	General Abilities	Rating	Pool
Fashion	1		Athletics		
Notice	2		Computers	8	
Outdoors	1		Cool	10	
Photography	1		Driving	2	
Pop Culture	2		Fighting		
Research			Filch		
Scholarship			First Aid		
Town Lore			Intuition	5	
			Preparedness	5	
Interpersonal	Rating	Pool	Repair	8	
BS Detector			Sneaking		
Flattery			Throwdown	5	
Flirting					
Gossip	2		Relationships	Nature	Pts.
Grownup Face	1		Briony	Like	2
Impersonate			Louis	Love	3
Intimidation			Ruby	Hate	3
Negotiation	2				
Performance	2				
Reassurance	3				
Taunt					

Briony Bealeau Likes me because lives next door to me and has been my friend since kindergarten.
 Trouble: Torn between friends (me and Amy) Ability: Architecture Location: Her Dad's Workshop

Louis/Louise Paul Loves me and is taking me to prom even though s/he graduated last year. Trouble:
 "Bad girl/boy" Ability: Motorcycles Location: The Biker Bar on Powell St.

Ruby Lakoff Hates me because I forced her off the Robotics Team for cheating. Trouble: Pushy Parents
 Ability: Robotics Location: Shop Class area

For the GM

You'll find a Clue®-style table below, with four possible suspects, and associated clues for each guilty party. This format lets you improv depending on which antagonist speaks most to you, which best fits your demo group, and makes it possible for you change the solution if the mystery is going in a different direction than you intended. (see below)

In a Nutshell

Our heroes begin in the doghouse. They were working early one spring Saturday morning to decorate the gym for prom when Vice Principal Dean came in angrily. Someone has sabotaged her office, and the Decoration Committee are the only ones who have had access to the building since Friday. The culprit has one hour to fess up. If no one fesses up, Dean calls the cops and cancels Prom – and it will be their fault!

Start them at the scene of the crime – Dean's Office. From there the PCs can investigate physical leads, talk to their fellow students, and use their Relationships to gather information that will reveal the culprit. This may lead to a *Throwdown* with one suspect (ideally an *Expose* (BGS 62-63, 258) social attack in front of Ms. Dean. If time permits, they might also be involved in a *Throwdown* with Vice-Principal Dean to force a fair resolution.

Remind them, if needed, of the Cast of Characters, and that the PCs, the suspects, and Dean were the only ones in the building that morning.

Rules Notes

PCs have been focused given the short span of the adventure to make it easier for novices to focus on skills and relationships most relevant to the game. Be aware that, since the adventure is short, PCs may spend pool points more rapidly than if they needed them to last several scenes before a *refresh* (an award of points to restore a pool for doing something interesting, smart, or nifty).

Every character has at least one Relationship that might be useful, depending on which suspect is guilty. The players are not expected to use all their relationships.

Remember that players always get core clues (what they need to solve the mystery) by being in the right place with the right skill. Ideally, the PC should explain how they are using the skill(s). If the PC needs to make an effort to get a clue (like *Filching* a cell phone), it is a *failsafe test* – the PC will get the clue, but with consequences depending on the degree of failure. No retries are allowed unless there's a good in-story reason to increase the odds of success and the character spends more pool points than she spent the first time.

Suggested:

1 copy of character sheet, rules summary, and who's who for each player. And a copy of everything for the GM

4d6 (1 per player, 1 for GM)

4 pencils

Index Cards or Notepad

Spending Investigative/Interpersonal skill points gets:

- * Extra Information
- * An Advantage Later
- * A Favorable Impact Now
- * Saving Time
- * Solving an Immediate Problem
- * Getting a Moment of Spotlight

The PCs got the Right Culprit Fast, now what?

Figuring out whodunnit is only the first step. They need to be able to either force a confession or prove it to Ms. Dean's satisfaction, and possibly negotiate a satisfactory resolution with Dean.

The PCs Have the Wrong Culprit, Help!

First, give them more clues to point them the right way. The PCs may be theorizing without all of the available information or have forgotten something. This is less of a problem in a short demo, but it can happen.

That didn't work – they are fixated on the wrong suspect.

This is tunnel vision in action. Once the PCs start making the facts fit the theory, the train may be irrevocably headed down the wrong track. You've got two choices, both valid depending on you, your players, and what's happening at the table:

(1) Change the culprit. If the PCs have a well-reasoned theory that fits the available facts, then maybe it makes sense, in the context of a demo, to quietly adopt their plan as if it was yours all along.

(2) Give them a consequence for it and then a chance to end on a high note. Have the genuine culprit confront them or Ms. Dean point out the error in their reasoning. Give them a *Cool* test, Df 5 or more for having socially hurt the wrong suspect, then let them *Throwdown* with Ms. Dean to reduce the punishment of the culprit, who at least wasn't willing to let someone else take the fall.

I want a stronger confrontation.

Make Ruby Lakoff, Sam's Hate, a more active co-conspirator. She was recruited by Charlie to build the Annoyitrons, but also saw the opportunity to do in Sam in the process. She's doctored the Maker Lab records to inculcate Sam, created fake text messages between Sam and Charlie, hidden incriminating materials in Sam's locker, and so on. Use the Bully template (BGS 116)

Ruby Lakoff. Cool 10, Computers 8, Repair 6, Find Weakness 2, Intimidation 3, Taunt 2, Throwdown 6. Alertness +0. Status +2 (students only), -1 (teachers). Stealth Mod. +1. (Don't forget her ability to use Sam's Hate relationship against her.)

Col. Mustard in the Library with a Garden Weasel

Pick **one and only one column for your adversary**. The other columns may give you ideas for at most 1 or 2 red herrings or for roleplaying the other suspects, but the clue columns are mutually incompatible.

	Amy	Cathi	Charlie	Simon
Why	Revenge on my Dad for Trying to Bust Us Up	Dean Betrayed My Trust	Dean won't let me Monetize Prom	Nobody gets Prom if Amy and I don't
The Entry (How)	That lock is pathetic	3D printed key from photo	Uncle George had a spare key	Climb into that Window? Easy!
Entry Clue	Dean mentions that her key didn't fit right. Highest <i>Repair</i> finds a broken bit of an improvised pick still in it.	Highest <i>Notice</i> hears a muffled chirp coming from inside a locked file cabinet. Dean has the only known key. Highest <i>Repair</i> finds bits of plastic in both locks.	Has same family name as the custodian.	Highest <i>Notice</i> spots some white sand on the floor between two file cabinets. Looks like the stuff in Dean's window cactus
Annoyitrons (Quarter-sized circuit board & watch battery, randomly beeps)	Bought online (higher end model)	Handmade in school maker-space; deft hand with a soldering iron.	Made by a buddy in the school maker-space; sloppy job, but works	Bought online (cheapest model)
Opportunity	Running around setting up the lights, nudging Charlie to work on the sound.	Carrying up decorations from the Art Room alone, stopping to touch up or adjust something	Slouching off to use his phone instead of setting up the sound system.	Carrying the heavy stuff from the Maker Space and Art Rooms

Social Clue	<i>Gossip.</i> Amy called her friends, they're going together to the prom. She's weirdly cool about it.	<i>Town Lore.</i> That guy in the photo. He ran against Cathi's mom and won, didn't he?	<i>Pop Culture.</i> Charlie's got a ton of followers despite all the ads. He was talking about doing a show from prom.	<i>Athletics.</i> Simon's been in the doghouse with Coach Dee all week. His mind just isn't on the game.
Can I Look at Your Phone?	<i>Flattery</i> – all about my ego	<i>Reassurance</i> – everyone else agreed	<i>Flattery</i> or <i>Flirting</i> – can I see your latest upload?	<i>Intimidation</i> – Dean's serious, might cost you that scholarship.
Filch/Notice Df	Df 4	Df 4	Df 4 +1 Alertness	Df 4 +2 Alertness
Phone Clue	Cache cleared, but text confirming overnight purchase from Geek-Tron	Photo Album includes pictures of Dean and her office, including her desk and her keys. Lots of 3D printer specs.	Latest game video is playing with Ruby, who left/got cut from the Robotics Team	Cache not yet cleared, text confirming a purchase from Ebay.
Hiding Place		3D Printed Key inside hollow table decoration	Custodian's spare key in magnetic box under stage	
Throwdown	Df 4 (higher class) Cool 7, add 5 Cool if Simon present, Throwdown 7	Df 3, Cool 6, Throwdown 3	Df 3, Cool 9 (thick skin from being on-line), Throwdown 5	Df 5 (soccer star) (4 for jock), Cool 8, add 5 Cool if Amy present, Throwdown 5
Most Useful Relationship	Briony knows how angry she is at Dean and her Dad for blackmailing Simon	Eileen volunteered on Cathi's Mom's campaign and heard rumors of a scandal	Ruby did a favor for Charlie to get to play ZombieFashion Hunter 6 (Maul of American expansion) in the last episode	Jamie knows that Coach Roi has been pushing Simon

The Drawing Room Explanation

Amy: Pissed off at her Dad for asking Ms. Dean to break up her and Simon. Her parents have always swept in to protect her from the consequences of her choices, and she expects them to sweep this under the rug too, but it will embarrass them.

Cathi: Just found out that Ms. Dean forced her Mother to throw the State Representative Election by using a secret Cathi told her when Cathi got called into the office. (That her Dad has a problem abusing his pain meds.)

Charlie: Pissed at Dean for not letting him do a live webcast from the Prom. He already promoted it and is afraid he'll lose followers if he doesn't have something. Pranking Dean and forcing her to either lose face or piss off parents and students alike by cancelling Prom, now that's revenge (and if video'd eyeballs!).

Throwing Ruby under the Bus. In playtesting, the PCs often considered blaming Ruby entirely for the mess, given Sam's Hate towards her. With at least a 1 pt Social Ability spend, Charlie will reluctantly go along.

Simon: Coach Roi told him to stop dating Amy or he's off the team, with or without Dean's knowledge, your choice.

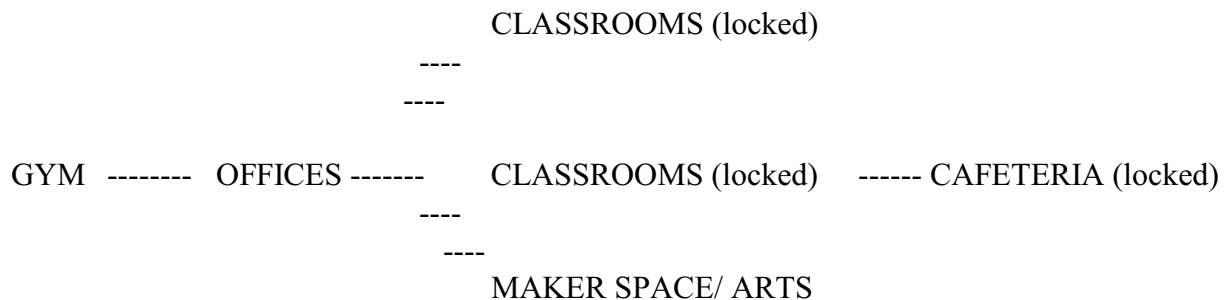
Locations

The High School

As Bubblegumshoe suggests, ask each player to tell you one thing about the high school—what’s its mascot or its best/worst team or club, and see if you can work it into the adventure.

By default, Gael High was built in the 1980s and is still being held together with duct tape and spackle. When it rains, buckets line the open stairwells under the leaky skylights, and woe to the student who knocks one over on the students below. The Decorations Committee has been running between the Maker Space (Shop)/Arts area and the gym, which goes past the administration offices and down a flight of stairs. (The school is built into a hill. The gym is on the ground floor, as are the front of the offices and main entrance, the front 1st floor offices, and the cafeteria,. The Maker Space/Arts is in the back of the school, so one story down. Ms. Dean’s office overlooks the Maker Space/Arts and fields, so one floor up from the ground. Classrooms are on two floors above the maker space/arts.)

So the default layout is:



This is a cozy-style mystery – it has a confined space and confined list of suspects to make it playable within two hours. Assume that the doors to the rest of the building are locked. Exterior doors are locked and alarmed, except for one exterior door in the gym – someone on the Decorations Committee would have seen anyone entering or leaving. The administration offices are also locked with key needed for access to that area. Ms. Dean is here to baby-sit the school while the students work, she’s been in her office or checking up the Committee in the building, but for when she briefly went out for coffee.

Cameras: There are no internal cameras. There are external cameras on the doors, which can confirm that no one has come in other than through the gym door. If checked, the cameras show Ms. Dean walking across the parking lot to the local coffee shop an hour before the first Annoytron goes off. She returns about ½ hour later. If Simon is the culprit, he leaves by the gym door, but doesn’t come back that way. (Having climbed through the window into Dean’s office and left by the door so he can close the window behind him.)

The Vice Principal’s Office

The first thing that you see when entering Vice-Principal Dean’s office is a large wall of

photographs, certificates, framed business “thank you”s, and diplomas. Dean shaking hands with a lot of middle aged men (mostly) wearing suits. Highest *Town Lore* recognizes one as that guy elected State Representative last fall with the goofy name and the weird billboard on the state highway headed north.

The wall behind you has a low bookcase with various stiff-spined leather bound tomes about education and civic engagement. On it are worn plastic binders of school policies, procedures, regulations, and rules. There are file cabinets (locked) and a computer table with a desktop that must be 10 years old. The window overlooks the athletic fields. There’s a small cactus on a pair of low file cabinets under the window.

Every minute or so, at random intervals, you hear the soft “chirp” of a smoke alarm low battery warning. Dean flinches at it, angrily pulls some books out of the bookcase, and tosses them to the floor until she triumphantly pulls out a tiny circuitboard and watch battery. “Another one!” There are three already in the wastebasket.

Clues: DO NOT READ TO PCs!

The obvious question is how did the culprit get into the Admin. Offices. If the PCs don’t think of this, Dean can rhetorically ask/demand an answer.

The offices are in their own section facing to the rear of the building (one story up from the ground) with three possible doors to/from the building – the office door, the school counselor’s door, and a fire exit. After hours, the doors are locked – use a key to enter. It’s been a warm spring but the HVAC air conditioner is not on yet, so windows have been left cracked open.

The next obvious clue to is to examine the Annoyitrons themselves with *Computers or Repair*. Unless interrupted by the PCs (use *Grownup Face*), Dean will twist out the battery and toss both board and battery into the basket as she finds them.

Gossip on Dean: Very concerned about the school’s appearance.

If Amy: close to Amy’s Dad, who’s a big booster for the school.

If Cathi: Close friends with that State Representative who just won election.

If Charlie: Had a terse conversation with Charlie this morning, after which Charlie has been angry and not very helpful

If Simon: rumor is she had Coach Dee (the soccer coach) in her office on Friday morning and there was a heated discussion

The Gym

There are few clues in the gym. It is, instead, the place where the PCs are most likely to interview and confront the suspects, obtain cell phones, and otherwise try to puzzle things out. Everyone has been hard at work on the decorations. The theme is A Night in Ancient Greece – decorations are classical Greek with a Percy Jackson-ish flair. Think painted plywood statues and classical columns, 3D printed busts on the tables (which resemble various students and faculty – Coach Roi as Hercules; Custodian Gaylon as Hephaestus, Ms. Dean as Hera, etc). Everyone is still working, each assuming either Ms. Dean is bluffing, or the actual culprit will confess in time. There are plenty of places where the PCs can talk to someone out of sight/earshot of the others.

Maker Space/Arts

There will be a sign-in/sign-out sheet that lists Sam, Amy, Cathi, and Ruby as having been in and out during the week. (This is normal for all of them.) This room gives +1 to Computers, Repair, or Preparedness (if relevant).

If the culprit is anyone but Simon, there may be clues here:

For Amy: broken remainder of the lockpick in the metals recycling bin

For Cathi: pattern for the keys in the 3D printer memory (a few items back, but there)

For Charlie: parts for Ruby's Annoyitrons came from here.

Interviewing the Suspects

Everybody, including the PCs, was alone at some point in the morning. Emphasize the guilty student's opportunity. Everybody has some reason to dislike Dean. Again, emphasize the guilty student's motive and associated clues.

The suspect's cell phone has clues, if the sleuths think to try to look at it. The PCs will either need a social skill to persuade the owner to let them examine it, or steal it (*Filch*) and some way to get past the password. Perhaps use *Notice* to have caught a glimpse of the password at some point or *Intuition* (Df 6 or less depending on what clues the PCs have gathered) to guess right.

Keeping things Moving

Ms. Dean's has set a time limit of one hour. Keep this alive with periodic updates on Dean's search – sounds of things being dropped, moved, tossed about, interspersed with "Another one!"

Throwdown

There are two possible confrontations here – keep an eye on the time and the mood of the table. The first is with the suspect(s) to get them to break down and confess to the sleuths. Use the Expose ("If not for these meddling kids...") rules. (BGS 62-63, 258)

An Expose must happen in the presence of an adult and include clues found during the investigation. This is a *Throwdown*, but adds +3 Cool damage to the target if successful, as well as Dean's punishment. If failed, sleuth takes 1d6+2 Cool damage, and a -2 penalty to all rolls by that sleuth in the next contest between him/her and the target of the failed Expose.

The second is with Dean to affect the punishment. Most of the possible culprits are not bad kids; most think Dean provoked them and deserves it. The PCs can *Throwdown* with Dean if they want to force it her to be lenient. (The result of reducing an adult's *Cool* to zero is typically grudging agreement to the sleuth's proposal). Dean's biggest concern is avoiding a scandal, which gives them leverage.

Ms. Dean – Hardcore Vice Principal. BS Detector 3, Bureaucracy 3, Cool 10, Intimidation 4, Throwdown 8. Alertness +2 (the NPC counterpart to *Notice*, used to modify the Df of PC attempts to use *Filch*), Status +3 (school), +1 (town) (used to modify Df of PC *Throwdown* attacks). Stealth Mod. +2 (used to modify Df of PC *Sneaking*).