

AFTER THEM!



Fight scenes are a staple in action films because they're exciting. But the neglected younger brother of action tropes is easily the chase scene, and—having grown from wargames—RPGs are more likely to have detailed fight mechanics than chase rules.

In the spirit of giving REIGN expanding optional mechanics, *After Them!* was built for games that skew more towards skullduggery, secrecy, and maneuvering behind the scenes. With it, I hope to combine tense and quiet games of cat-and-mouse with parkour-inspired bounding through cities.

THE LEAD

Much like combat, each character chooses how she's going to try to escape (if pursued) or close to capture distance (if in pursuit). Players roll. Widest sets go first, Height breaks ties. Eventually, one side triumphs.

Which side that is depends on one key factor: The **Lead**. (It rhymes with "bead" not "bed," just so you know.) The pursuer wants to reduce Lead to zero and get his hands on the prey. The quarry wants to increase Lead to ten. If a chase round ends with Lead at ten, the runner has escaped.

Lead often means physical space, but not always. It's possible to amass Lead ten in a tightly enclosed space simply by hiding so effectively that searching isn't going to uncover you. This has the disadvantage of trapping you until you act or he leaves, but it can be done.

Lead is changed by rolling dice and applying sets, just like everything else in the ORE. When Lead hits zero, either

party can initiate hand-to-hand combat. When it's one, the sides are close enough, with a sufficient view, to start shooting arrows or throwing dishes.

It's possible to have multiple leads, if more than one person is chasing a runner. If one person tries to chase two or more runners who've split up, the pursuer has to pick one to follow.

GAINING VS. OFFSETTING

Any action taken in a chase can be used in one of two ways. It can gain, or it can offset. Gain means you're changing the Lead. Offsetting means you're trying to prevent others from changing the Lead. Gain's like making an attack in combat: It's an active attempt to change the situation. Offsetting is like dodging or parrying. It makes the other fellow's attempt to gain into an opposed contest, with Gobble Dice, as described on pages 15-17 in *REIGN*.

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GANGING UP

Usually, you want to gain. In fact, if you don't explicitly say you're trying to counter what the other team is doing, it's assumed you're gaining. Offsetting prolongs the chase without the chance of improving your lot. On the other hand, when you do turn it into an opposed contest, you can use all your Gobble Dice even if your opponent rolled Wider.

Keeping someone in sight isn't as time-dependent as avoiding a kick to the shin. Indeed, many actions on both sides of the chase rely on reacting to an opponent's actions. So you may want to use some offsetting actions when pursued by many people, or as a multiple action with gain, as just one example. This is especially true when someone's getting a big equipment advantage (see page 8.). If you know that a set is going to net him W +2 Lead, it may be in your interest to offset. Assuming you both get pairs, spoiling his set keeps the +2 equipment bonus from kicking in, instead of putting you two to the bad when his great horse or whatever steamrolls your gain set.

In combat (the other big extended resolution mechanic in ORE) a Skill usually attacks *or* defends. You can't block with your Fight Skill or kick someone with Dodge. Pursuit is different. Any Skill you can bring to bear can either gain or offset your opponent.

When you get a set past your opponent with a gain maneuver, you can change the Lead by a number equal to the Width of your roll.

Sometimes you have multiple thieves running from one cop, or many people searching for one escapee, or you have a small group trying to escape the prison together. Lead works just fine for one-on-one, but what do you do with more?

The answer is, you have multiple leads. If there's a group that wants to stick together, there's a Lead between that collective and their competition. If many are chasing one in a big clump, it's one Lead.

Splitting up is where it's at with chases, though. If three people split up and there are only two pursuers, one escapee automatically gets away. Each chase group can only keep one Lead at a time. The hunter who pursues two rabbits probably loses both.

When two hunters separate to pursue one rabbit, they each have a Lead, and any sets the rabbit rolls apply to both Leads.

So what about hiding a whole group who flee together? Shouldn't that be harder than hiding one person? Yes it should and, yes, it is. A group only gets one action per turn, and they roll the lowest relevant pool possessed by anyone in the group. If you have two people fleeing together and only one is really stealthy, the klutz's Stealth pool comes into play. The blatant guy probably gives his

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sneaky friend away. It's the same with moving fast. A fast and a slow guy moving together are stuck at the slow guy's top speed.

There are some very important exceptions to this "Lowest Pool" rule, however, and they involve Sense and Knowledge. When a group uses a Sense or Knowledge Skill for their action, they roll the *highest* pool available from its members. Just because you're blind, it doesn't impair your eagle-eyed buddy. Similarly, your own stupidity isn't going to blunt his tactical excellence.

TRUMPING

If that was all there was to these pursuit rules, they'd be short, easy to use, and terribly stagnant. Every contest would devolve to "This is my best Skill. I use that" over and over. But it's a little more complicated. Sometimes you want to use a Skill with a lower pool because it might let you **trump** your opponent.

Trumping means that even if you failed your roll, something about your tactical decision put you in a better position. If you can predict your opponent's action, it gives you the edge.

Trumping works just like Rock, Paper, Scissors. If you pick Rock and he picked Scissors, you trumped him. If you pick Rock and he picked Paper, you lost the advantage. If you both pick the same thing, neither one trumps.

Easy enough, right? The question is, what does "paper" mean in the context of a chase? Good question, and one I'll address right after I showcase the fabulous prizes that reward a successful Trump.

EFFECTS OF TRUMPING

If you trump your opponent, you get a choice. You can defer gratification, or take your benefit right away. The instant payoff is a point of Lead. Get a step closer or farther, your choice. (If it takes Lead to 10, the chase ends even before the roll!) If you wait, you can add a die to the next roll you make in the chase, or offset one die's worth of penalty. (Nice for those multiple actions.)

You can only pick one trump effect per round, even if you trump multiple opponents. If you choose the instant Lead change, you can change only the Lead between you and the trumped party. If you choose the next-turn die bonus, however, you get it to whatever you roll. (This makes the die bonus a lot nicer if you're facing many pursuers.) But if you Rock out and two opponents picked Scissors, you still *only* get the die bonus or the Lead change. You can't get one of each. Only one effect per round. That's simpler.

Furthermore, if Lead is already 0, trumping can't take it into negatives. In that case, just take the die bonus, if the chase even continues.

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WHAT TRUMPS WHAT?

Rock represents direct, forceful action, like trying to overcome through direct brute force. Paper is an attempt to change the circumstances of the chase, usually by falling back on authority, organization or planning ahead. Scissors is intuitive adaptation, trying to gauge, moment by moment, the optimum choice for the circumstances.

Abstract, isn't it? Here's a breakdown, tactic by tactic, with appropriate pools.

PURSUIT TACTICS

Rock—Physical Effort

Sometimes you can win a race just by running faster. In fact, you can win a *lot* of races that way. If you're quick enough, you may get your hands on your runner before he even has a chance to do anything cunning.

Body+Athletics: Dive in the moat and swim across instead of going all the way to the bridge. Shove heavy obstacles aside, or jump over them.

Body+Endurance: Keep jogging along effortlessly while he's gasping for air. Hold your breath and charge through a midden to get a shortcut.

Body+Run: This is obvious, right?

Coordination+Climb: Scramble over obstacles, bypass a lengthy staircase, follow when *he* climbs.

Coordination+Ride: Like Run, only you have a mount, which is the most common equipment advantage (see page 8).

SORCERY

There are any number of ways to bring magic power to bear on a chase including (but not limited to) flying away, creating a cloud of inky darkness, changing into an animal or whipping up an instant trap out of smoke and cunning. There are no listed sorcery moves listed because Sorcery could be Rock, or Paper, *or* Scissors, depending on how it's used. See also the boxed text "It... It's Not On the List!" on page 6.

Paper—Order, Reason and Force of Personality

If you're observant, you can find the hidden. If you're smart, you don't need to follow because you can figure out where he's headed. If you're commanding, you can get other people to do the sweaty work of chasing.

Charm+Lie: Confound the city watch into helping you search. Tell passers-by that he's a spy from a foreign land.

Charm+Plead: Implore someone to tell you which way he went or beg someone to stop him as he runs past.

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“RELEASE THE HOUNDS!”

The easiest way to handle it when someone has hunting animals (particularly dogs) is by having the trainer roll his Expert: Animal Trainer pool, typically with Knowledge or Charm or Command, depending on his method. The animals themselves can provide an equipment advantage, as described on page 8.

Command+Inspire: Motivate a crowd to seize him as he dashes by.

Command+Intimidate: Clear the area so that you can find him or get a straight line of pursuit. Strike such fear into his heart that he stumbles.

Knowledge+Tactics: If you have followers, instruct them to fan out and look for clues, or surround him, or clear the way before you.

Scissors—Perception and Intuition

Sometimes pursuit isn't about covering distance, it's about concealment and deception. The fastest horse in the kingdom is only going to carry you farther from success if you can't spot the runner for what he is.

Coordination+Stealth: Fade into the background and shadow him so that he thinks you've given up, or can't tell which direction to run from you.

Sense+Direction: Intuit where he's going and figure out a shortcut. Head him off at the pass.

Sense+Empathy: Determine which of the identically-masked revelers is acting furtive. Gauge the crowd to see who's acting startled by a sudden appearance or disappearance.

Sense+Hearing or Sight: Find his hiding place. Spot him in the shadows. Spy the tail of his cloak as he darts around a corner. See through his disguise. Hear his footsteps on the roof.

Sense+Scrutinize: Track his footprints. Figure out which window he went through. Notice the flaw in a disguise. Catch his scent.

EVASION TACTICS

Rock—Physical Effort

Run. Climb. Jump. The uses of the body in putting distance between you and a tracker are obvious, right? Just in case though, here are some possibilities.

Body+Athletics: As you run, pull over obstacles behind you to trip him or make his mount shy. Jump chasms he dares not cross. Break down doors. Swim across a river to break your scent trail.

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Body+Endurance: Outlast him, plain and simple. Go through a scalding hot crematorium without getting scalded. Get down under the water and hold your breath until he runs past.

Body+Run: Oh, you know.

Coordination+Climb: Turn it into a rooftop chase. Scramble over a wall his horses have to go around. Get down into the sewers (if there are such a thing) and give his scent-hounds real fits.

Coordination+Dodge: Go through a hazard he can't pass. Start a brawl and then escape it as he crashes in.

Coordination+Ride: Steal a horse, a dunim or a biauchrus to escape.

Coordination+Stealth: Duck into the shadows momentarily to escape their gaze. Cover ground behind his back with ghostlike silence.

Paper—Knowledge and Planning

A chase is an ever-evolving conflict, and it's difficult to plan in advance. But if you can, you can set traps for those who pursue, or arrange other surprises to give you the advantage. Some examples follow.

Command+Perform (Theater): Adopt a practiced new persona—different posture, voice and mannerisms are easy. Costuming on the fly is harder, but not impossible. Better, of course, to have a disguise prepared beforehand (for that

IT... IT'S NOT ON THE LIST!

The Skill applications in these tidy categories aren't comprehensive and aren't meant to be. They're guidelines. Players who come up with novel ways to use a Skill to throw a pursuer off track or flush out a hiding enemy don't deserve a "No, you can't do that!" response, but rather "Cool! Roll it!" But when a player manages to justify rolling Coordination+Expert (Weaver), how does that mesh with trumping? Is it Paper, Scissors or Rock?

One approach is to simply judge whether it's operating through blunt physicality, presence and intellect, or quick-witted craft. The other is to simply make the unexpected trump-neutral—it neither give advantage nor gives advantage away. Pick whichever seems most reasonable and don't let the decision break the flow of play. Debating whether this particular application of Knowledge+Lore can qualify as a Rock move is not constructive for everyone's fun. So players, if you feel your GM has made a poor judgment, shrug and suck it up. One trump ain't everything.

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equipment advantage). It's especially amusing if you change your look and sound, then cry out, "He went that way!"

Coordination+Expert (Sailor): Get on a boat and take to the water.

Knowledge+Tactics: Command your followers to block him, or clear an avenue of escape, or clear a *false* route while you sneak the other way.

Knowledge+Student (Local Area): Exploit a little-known aspect of the geography to hide or avoid pursuit.

Sense+Direction: Go in circles to confuse him, then use your own superior sense of location to get past.

Scissors—Creativity and Adaptation

Not everyone anticipates a stalker, and not everyone has the speed to escape through pure physical competence. Some need to think on their feet, exploit any passing advantage, and generally think outside the cage.

Command+Intimidate: Make an Unworthy pursuer hesitate, flinch or momentarily dive for cover. (Probably won't work on more competent opposition.) Stampede cattle towards him. Create a civilian panic to let chaos disrupt him.

Command+Inspire: Get a crowd to resent him, hurling spittle and abuse as he runs by. (This requires a fairly good rationale, however.)

Coordination+Stealth: Find a hiding spot and burrow deep into it. Change your appearance in and fade into the crowd. Set a false trail to send him on a wild goose chase.

Charm+Lie: Convince bystanders that you're a legitimate authority who needs their assistance.

Charm+Plead: Play on the sympathies of nearby people to get them to hide you.

Knowledge+Tactics: Figure out his followers' search pattern and slip through its weak points.

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EQUIPMENT ADVANTAGE

Often, people in a chase think, “Oh, if only I had some rope!” (or a ten foot pole or a different cloak). They think this because people are tool-using animals and it’s instinct to look for something that helps you do the job. The rules for this are pretty simple. If you have some sort of object or situational advantage that relates to the Skill you’re using, it adds points of Width to the set (or sets) you use. It’s just like a weapon in combat. Typical equipment bonuses should be in the +1 range, while a really good one gives you +2. Examples follow.

- Set of hunting dogs: +1 to Width of Scrutinize sets.
- A horse: +1W to Ride sets (in addition to permitting the use of Ride at all).
- A simple prepared disguise: +1W to some Stealth or Perform rolls.
- A set of 10-15 obedient followers without any particular training: +1 to Width of Sight, Intimidate or Inspire. Permit some Tactics rolls.
- A racehorse: +2W to Ride sets.
- A crewed racing boat: +2W to Expert (Sailor) rolls.
- An elaborate prepared disguise: +2W to some Stealth or Perform rolls.

RESOLVING PURSUIT ROUNDS

Pursuit operates in rounds, just like combat, in order to simplify timing (just like combat) and, just like in combat, the round is a fuzzy unit of time that can bend and stretch to accommodate momentary needs.

Indeed, pursuit not only works a lot like combat, it can transition into combat seamlessly when Lead hits one or zero. To understand how this is done, let’s break it down phase by phase.

DECLARE

This is where the biggest difference arises. Trumping demands simultaneous declaration—otherwise, declaring last lets you trump your opponent into the ground without rolling. Besides, in hand-to-hand combat the ability to sense an opponent’s move in less than a second is far more critical than when you’re ten feet apart and you need to decide whether to jump the gap or climb down into it.

Therefore, the Declare phase works like this. You decide which pool you’re going to use, and how, and you put the appropriate number of dice in your hand. Then you play Rock, Paper, Scissors. (If you have a big pool, keeping them in hand may be tricky with Paper or Scissors. It’s your own lookout for being

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so buff. Oh fine, you can hold the dice in your other hand.) Trump effects go off as soon as everyone describes their action, before the dice even hit the table. Once those one-point Lead changes are dealt with, pools get rolled.

ROLL

Pools are rolled, sets are sorted—it's the typical ORE thing. Remember that some pools can be amped up by trumping.

RESOLVE

Again, it's bog standard ORE. Widest sets go first, Height breaks ties. Timing matters less in chases, so if you're using a Gobble Die maneuver, you can Gobble against sets that are timed quicker, as long as your Height is sufficient.

Example: Rahn is running and Juris is getting close. For whatever reason, Rahn decides to offset Juris' gain. He rolls and gets a 2x10. Juris gets 3x5. Neither trumps. If this was hand-to-hand combat, Rahn would be screwed, but since it's a chase, he can use his Gobble Dice immediately, ruining Juris' set and keeping the Lead static.



EXAMPLES

A SIMPLE PURSUIT

Agdala doesn't like it in the seraglio, and the certainty that her new master is going to "try out the new girl" when he gets back in port is enough to spur an escape. Agdala has the following relevant pools: 3d in Hearing, 4d Climb, 8d Stealth, 6d Run, and 4d in Plead. The master's right-hand man is named Nirim and in addition to collection of gardeners, maids and footmen who can be cajoled (or cudged) into service he has 6d Sight,

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3d Tactics, 6d Intimidate, 5d Direction, 6d in Run and 4d in Ride.

Agdala plans her escape carefully, pinning a silk sheet into something resembling the local robes and stashing another sheet (knotted to ease climbing) between the garden wall and some bushes. She slips away from the bath attendants: The GM rules that she just needs a simple Stealth success for that. In the garden, she throws her rope ladder to the top just as Nirim glances out a window.

Declaring at the same time, Nirim's player is going Paper: Nirim is bellowing that one of the harem girls is escaping. Get her! But Agdala's player anticipated a Paper move, because seeing the rope would so clearly lead him to think Rock. She went Scissors and uses her Stealth to ease around behind the bush, creeping back towards the interior door while letting them think she's already over the wall. Her Lead is now 1. They're both using Gain.

They roll: Nirim wants to use his 6d Intimidate, but the GM thinks that's a nonstarter. The staff are already terrified of him. He needs to direct them to where she actually is and tell them what to do about it. That's Tactics, 3d. Agdala gets to use her hefty 8d Stealth pool. Shockingly, Nirim gets a pair of tens. Less surprisingly, so does Agdala, in addition to 3x1. She asks the GM if the rope ladder gives her an equipment

advantage and he says sure, it's a persuasive piece of evidence that she's over the wall. Nirim's player curses.

The 3x1 goes off first and, with a +1 equipment bump, Agdala can crank her Lead to 5. When Nirim's 2x10 goes off, he cuts it back down to 3, but it's still a nice beginning for her.

Next round, Nirim goes Rock by running down the steps and heading towards the wall—which is, providentially, on the opposite side of the house from the stables. Agdala goes Scissors with more sneaking. He trumps, but instead of changing Lead right away, he says he's going to position himself for a +1d bonus next round. They roll.

Just as he got an unlikely good result with a bad pool, Nirim gets a bad result with a good pool—no sets! Agdala gets a 2x9 and a 2x4. She can only use one, picks the 2x9 and puts Lead back at 5.

Round three, Nirim has a bonus, so he falls back on Paper with a Tactics roll (now 4d), telling all the staff to drop what they're doing and fan out, and someone bring him a horse! He's hoping that Agdala stops sneaking after using it twice, but she's sticking to the Scissors she's good at. In fact, she declares a multiple action—two gains. She describes this as getting deeper into the house and trying to disguise herself as a servant. Having trumped him, she too decides for a bonus on the next round. She rolls her Stealth pool,

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penalized for trying to do two things at once, and gets only a 2x7. Nirim gets nothing. The GM decides that Nirim gets his horse next round or the round after, depending. Agdala's set goes, pushing Lead to 7.

Nirim Papers by bellowing that if Agdala gives up now, no punishment—otherwise, the Excessive Beauty Treatment! (This, he explains in an aside, is a painful process of scraping and hot water to prevent blemishes and ensure a glowing skin tone.) He's hoping to Intimidate her so that she gives up or, at least, makes a mistake. Agdala also Papers: She's going to pause, listen and figure out where they're going so she knows which direction to run. No trump, time to roll.

She's got 4d in Hearing now and, with a squeal of delight, rolls up a pair of tens. Nirim, with no sound effects, gets a pair of threes. She can raise Lead to 9, but he can immediately drop it back to 7. His horse arrives, though.

Next round, both of them Rock. Nirim's is a Ride roll, intended to gain ground with a quick gallop around the perimeter to get the lay of the land. Agdala chooses Run and stresses that she's still in her harem gear—bangles and beads and wisps of gauze. The disguise sheet, she's holding to her stomach. Her plan (she explains) is to let them see her wearing the distinctive clothes before she tries to quick-change.

They roll, her 6d and his 4d. He gets nothing, while she gets a pair of eights. Lead's now 9. Almost there.

Next round she picks Rock, using Stealth to duck behind a door while Nirim rides past. Nirim thought for sure she'd do Scissors to get in costume, so he picked Rock with Ride again. No Trump, just a pretty desperate difference in pools. She

"THAT'S IT? IT'S OVER?"

As you can see from the Agdala/Nirim example, there can be a disconnect between what the rules say happened and what the narration seems to indicate. In this case, it could seem like Agdala still has lots of rolls to make to assemble her costume, fool Nirim, climb unseen and such. But the fact of the matter is, without a point where the mechanics say, "No, it's over, let it go!" it's possible for GM or player to extend a chase almost indefinitely. Rather than let one person sandbag the game (even with the best of intentions) the Lead gives you a way to resolve and be done. At 10, the runner gets to describe a fairly plausible way that he gets away. At zero, the chaser can initiate combat, or the runner can surrender.

gets 2x10, 2x3 and 2x2, while he pulls out a 2x6. She cranks Lead to 11, but his horse adds a point to his Width, so he can pull it back to 8. The GM decides that he

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hasn't seen her, he's just happened to put himself in a good position to block her.

Cursing, Agdala goes for a multiple action, double gain Scissors maneuver—one to change her look and one to move behind Nirim and get into the streets of the city. Nirim picked Paper too, using his Sight pool to scour the landscape for a sign of her.

He rolls his 6d, she rolls her 7d. *Neither* gets a set. He's got grit in his eyes. Her disguise is falling apart and she doesn't get a chance to bolt. Lead stays at 8.

Nirim opts for Scissors with a Direction roll. He wants to figure out a choke point and beat her there on horseback. Agdala picks Rock. She's going to Run back *into* the estate, slamming the gates behind her, then maybe make her way to the stables or find a better costume. Because she trumped, she decides to push Lead to 9.

They roll. Pair of sevens for her. Pair of ones for him. Lead stays perched at 9.

Nirim jumps off his horse, wrenches open the gate, and runs after her (Rock). She's going to ground in the house (Scissors). Wincing, he decides to use his Trump as a dice pool increase next turn. They roll.

Pair of threes and a pair of ones for her. Nothing for him. With a sigh of relief, Agdala sneaks to the laundry room and gets a great disguise while he hastily recalls the servants to seal up the grounds. When he deploys them to

search the house top to bottom, Agdala mingles in with them, goes along with the ones checking the perimeter and (making good and sure that no one's watching this time) actually uses her rope ladder to get over the wall and escape.

A GAME OF CAT AND MOUSE

Meckler the light-fingered has 6+MD in Stealth, 5d in Lie, 5d in Sorcery and 6d in Hearing. Bee the thief-taker has 7d in Sight, 4+MD in Scrutinize and 5d in Tactics. Her right-hand man Oamp has 7d in Run and Athletics, along with 5d in Climb. Meckler has infiltrated the duke's estate, walked past the rubies and coins (well... all right, he pocketed the rubies) and stolen the duke's greatest treasure, an enchanted walnut.

The GM has agreed to give Meckler one Stealth roll as a head start, because he prepared for this heist so carefully. He assembles only a lowly pair, so Lead starts at 2. He's making his discreet way out when Oamp checks the chamber, sees that the rubies are missing, and sounds the alarm.

Oamp and Bee are (it's established) working separately. Upon declaration, Oamp's doing Rock, racing around looking for a thief. Bee is using Sight to Scissors out anything unusual. Meckler is using Stealth to disappear (Scissors fashion). Oamp has trumped Meckler and chooses to drop his Lead to 1.

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They roll. Masterful Meckler gets 3x8. Bee gets nothing. Oamp gets 2x8. Meckler can therefore increase both leads by 3 points, getting to 5 with Bee and 4 with Oamp. Oamp can immediately drop that back down to 2, however.

They declare. Meckler uses Hearing (Scissors) to determine where the search is and where it's going. Oamp proceeds with Rock again, stomping up and down the stairs looking for the burglar. Bee goes Paper by using Tactics to deploy the guards. Because Meckler trumped Bee, he can either widen the gap or raise his pool next turn, and he opts for the bonus. Because Oamp trumped Meckler (again) he drops that Lead to 1 (again) and actually sees him—at least for a moment. The GM and players decide that Meckler's up on a widow's walk around the house, while Oamp is down below on the walkway to the carriage house.

They roll. Meckler gets two pair, nines and sevens. Oamp gets a pair of fives. Bee gets a pair of fours. Meckler uses only his nines (because he didn't do a multiple action) and raises his Leads to 7 and 3. Oamp and Bee both bump those down to 5 and 1 again.

Next round, Oamp picks up a rock and chucks it at Meckler. Since this is a combat action, it is neither Rock, nor Paper, nor Scissors (though it does use his Athletics pool). Meckler has a Scissors move: He uses his Lie pool to imitate Oamp shouting, "He just ran across the

throne room!" Bee is using Scrutinize to follow Meckler's tracks from the treasury. It's a Scissors move, so no one trumps.

They roll, Meckler using his trump bonus from the previous turn. He still gets nothing, though. Oamp gets a pair of eights, which probably explains Meckler's failure to impersonate. ("He just ran across—OW!") Bee's MD gives her a pair of eights as well.

In resolution, Meckler takes damage from that rock to the shoulder, but Oamp doesn't get any closer. Bee, however, cuts her personal Lead down to 3.

One more round. Meckler falls back on what he's good at—Stealth. But this time it's a Rock move, diving behind cover and then quickly sneaking to a new location so that Oamp can't aim. Oamp is throwing another rock. Bee is closing on the scene, her keen Sight peeled in a Scissors move. Meckler's Rock trumps Bee's Scissors, but since he's more concerned with Oamp right now, he chooses a bonus to his next round.

Meckler only gets a pair of tens, and that with 6+MD. Ouch. Oamp gets a pair of threes, which is sure to salve Meckler's pain. But Bee gets a 3x4.

Bee closes to touch distance, then Meckler raises his Lead with her to 2 and with Oamp to 3. Oamp draws back his arm, then furrows his brow and halts his throw when his target disappears, only to be replaced by his puzzled mentor.

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Next round, Meckler is using the Scissors of Stealth to do a multiple action, *with* his MD intact thanks to the trump bonus. Bee? Scissors to Scrutinize. Oamp? He's dropping the rock in his hand to Rock the wall with Climb. That trump lets Oamp decrease the Lead to 2 before anyone rolls.

With a grin, Meckler uses his Master Die to get 3x9 and 2x1. Bee has a pair of tens. Oamp has a pair of threes.

Going first, Meckler cranks both Leads to 5, where it stays after both chasers use their gains and Meckler uses his. Five rounds into it, the pursuers are falling behind, but it's still anybody's game as they dance around the duke's rooftops.

ESOTERIC DISCIPLINES

Naturally, something that absorbs as much human attention as getting away from danger (or getting close enough to provide it) merits attentive study, and studied techniques have emerged on both sides of the Lead.

Pickpocket's Failsafe

This set of techniques is exclusively urban in origin, and has spread to port towns on both sides of the sea, leading to speculation that the Ob-lob developed it. Those who've seen the Ob-lob Roloneepo fighters can describe many similarities.

The great Ob-lob families, of course, throw up their hands and suggest there's no way they can keep track of every sailor in every port, and that if the townsfolk are getting their purses snatched, that's *their* problem.

Wherever it came from, Pickpocket's Failsafe tactics involve great agility and athleticism, enabling those wise in its ways to climb nearly as quickly as they can walk. Pickpocket's Failsafe is used with Coordination+Climb.

Squirrel Scramble (1 Point): The crafty thief works in an area where he knows the way out. If the pickpocket has had a chance to circulate through the area and case it out, he can declare Climb actions as Paper, with no especial justification.

Straight Plunge (2 Points): When deliberately dropping from a high place, the character reduces the Area attack from the fall by 5d instead of 2d.

Up is Down (3 Points): One characteristic of these trained cutpurses is that they change direction instantly, effortlessly—often with a taunting jibe. The character can now use Climb actions with Scissors, similar to Squirrel Scramble.

Quickstop (4 Points): If the player rolls no sets when jumping, and would therefore start falling, the character instead stops short just at the edge. He doesn't make any gain, but he doesn't plunge to his doom, either.

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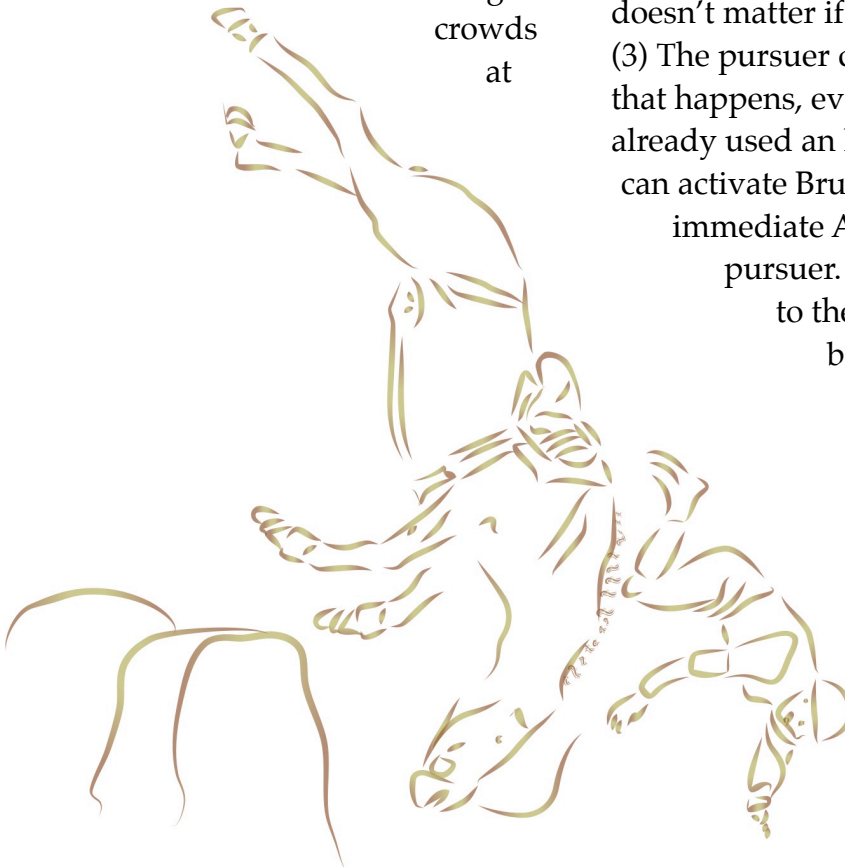


Roof Flight (5 Points): The character's ability to jump over, squeeze under and dive *through* obstructions is now so great that even a flying opponent has trouble keeping up with him. Any time the character declares a Rock action with Climb, success gives him +2 Width.

Brute Racing

Foot racing is popular in Opetka, as it is everywhere, but where most runs are straight contests of speed, the Opetkan assumption is that the race is a bit more... tactical. Tripping the fellow ahead of you, or body-checking a close pursuer are common and expected behaviors. Those who compete at a higher level, in front of

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yearly festivals, have a bigger bag of dirtier tricks. The inclusion of obstacles in many races only offers more opportunities to make trouble.

Brute Racing modifies Body+Run.

Bruising Block (1 Point): When being chased, the brute runner slows, pretending to flag, and when his pursuer gets close enough, the brute stops short and throws an elbow or heel backwards into whatever part of his rival he can reach.

Bruising Block doesn't have to be declared: Instead, it kicks in any time the following criteria are met. (1) The brute is being chased. (2) He made a Run roll—doesn't matter if it failed or succeeded. (3) The pursuer closes Lead to 0. When that happens, even if the bruiser has already used an Esoteric Discipline, he can activate Bruising Block. This does an immediate Area Shock attack to the pursuer. The Area Attack is equal to the combined Widths of the brute's sets (if any) and the pursuer's (if any).

Rear Leg Trip (2 Points): It's not just for tripping, of course. All kinds of nasty attacks to the back can be enhanced with the Rear Leg Trip. When the character is

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pursuing and closes the Lead to 0, he can combine Run with any attack the next turn, and take no penalty for doing so.

Neck and Neckbreak (3 Points): This cannot be used on the first round of a pursuit, and it can only be declared when the round starts with Lead at 0. In other words, the people involved must both be moving, but close enough to touch one another. The brute can make an attack without penalty, as with Rear Leg Trip. If it succeeds, its Height is promoted to 10 immediately.

Runner's Dare (4 Points): At the highest levels, this sort of competition is about guts as much as legs. Willingness to risk harm is often a feature of race winners—as are scars from times when risks were misjudged.

When being chased and declaring a Run action, the brute can voluntarily take a Difficulty as high as he wishes on his Run roll. If he beats the Difficulty, he can change Lead by the Difficulty instead of the roll's Width. If he fails the roll, he takes an Area Killing attack equal to the Difficulty.

On the next round, pursuers have the option of taking the same risk: If they run, they can face the exact same Difficulty and either take the Area Killing attack or gain Lead equivalent to the Difficulty. Unless, of course, the brute has hit Lead 10 with his daring maneuver.

Batter and Break (5 Points): This technique can be used any time a round starts with Lead at zero, including the first round of a chase. The character can declare a multiple action between Run and an attack, with no penalty. If the attack set is timed first, the character can add its Width to his Run set. If the Run set is timed first, the character can add its Width to his Attack set. (Thus, Batter and Break only does any good if both actions succeed.)

Elder Eyes

In Upunzi, it is said that the Elders see all. This is not literally true, as there are only eleven of them and they often have better things to do than spy on your particular street. Their reputation for omniscience lies at least as heavily on their network of observers, informers and spies. Many of these 'eyes' operate right out in the open, wearing tabards embroidered with the eye-in-the-mouth sigil of the city. Just their presence is often sufficient to quell trouble before it really starts. But when trouble does come, the servants of the Elders are highly trained to watch it—often watching unobserved.

These techniques are used with Sense +Sight.

The Lidded Eye (1 Point): A heavy lidded eye may look fully closed, leading people to believe they're not observed when they are. Similarly, the secret police

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of Upunzi do their most comfortable watching unseen. When combining Sight and Stealth rolls, the watcher takes the normal penalty but uses the *better* of the two pools. If only one set is rolled, it must be assigned to the skill whose pool was rolled.

Heavy Stenching (2 Points): The name's something of a joke. The goal is to have an invisible tail that lingers for a while after the quarry moves on. Thus, the advice is "you want to follow him like a heavy stench." To 'heavy stench' a target requires at least two people, though more are desirable. They have to be following in a group, so that there's only one Lead. Each one must know Heavy Stenching. Each pursuer follows for a while, then drops out of sight, passing off the tail to another while either racing in front or falling back and keeping the new follower in view.

For each person using Heavy Stench to enhance Sense+Sight, the person rolling can add +1 to the Width of his Sight rolls, up to a maximum of +3.

Know Your Zone (3 Points): If the character has been in this area at least once before, he can use Sight as a Paper maneuver without any extra justification.

Shadow Ignored (4 Points): As a Scissors maneuver in a pursuit, the character can roll Sight+Stealth instead of Sense+Sight or Coordination+Stealth.

Unnoticed, See All (5 Points): This technique can be declared any round immediately after a round when the observer got a successful Stealth set. If the character rolls a success with a Sight roll, he can change Lead by a number equal to his Stealth Skill (instead of changing it by the Width of his Sight roll).

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DISCIPLINES ALREADY PUBLISHED

The simplest way to handle these is by working them as equipment bonuses. Fulfill the conditions for use and add +1 or +2 to the Width of your set.

Autumn Warfare

Quickstep Grace gives a +1 Width bonus for Scissors sets. The other disciplines just work as described (and if you can't use Stalker Foot in a chase, you're not trying).

Dancing Unseen

Dance of the Burglar, Shadows Haze and Undergrowth and **Assassin's Dance** all work as written. When **Dancing Without an Audience** the character can pick a number of individuals equal to the Width of a Scissors maneuver and gain an extra +2 Width against them for the purposes of changing Lead. However, that set does not give *any* Lead against anyone else. (Normally, a set gives Lead against all pursuers.) Those shadowing others can also use this. This lets **Instinct for Distraction** work normally as well.

Eyes of the Crown of Salch

Only **Painter of the Mind** and **Reliving Sight** impact chases. **Painter of the Mind** gives a -1d penalty to anyone who tries to get escape through disguise after the Salckite has sealed the fugitive's image in his brain. **Reliving Sight** gives

a +2 bonus to Lead gains when using a Scrutinize roll to chase someone.

One With the Land

Cloak of the Land lets the character, when chased, use Direction for a Paper or a Scissors whenever he wishes. When pursuing, **Cloak of the Land** gives no particular benefit. As for the rest of the techniques, they have no especial impact on chase scenes.

Relentless Pursuit

Pursuer's Eye, Tireless Tracking, Follow Even the Breeze and **Omniscient Pursuit** all work as written. When tracking with **The Second Set of Clues**, the chaser gets a +2 Width bonus to his Scrutinize sets, but only when the quarry chooses a Scissors Stealth move.

The School of Perpetual Readiness

Master Mobility gives a +1 Width bonus to Tactics sets organizing Paper chases.

Svrana Run

Instant Start gives a +2 Width bonus on the first round of a pursuit only. **With the Wind** gives a +1 Width bonus to Run rolls for Rock tactics. **Tireless Step** and **Inexorable Tread** both work fine as is. **Unsurpassed Fleetness** gives a +2 Width bonus to Run rolls.