JAZZ AGE MYTHOS SOCIAL CONTACTS GUIDE

WHO ARE ALL THESE PEOPLE? FRIENDS AND FOES IN GURPS

Characters in the Northeast USA in the 1920s are not socially isolated. They have friends, family, contacts, possibly lovers, rivals, and even enemies. Under GURPS rules, such social networks are relatively easy to build, they are known collectively as 'associated NPCs'. Which of the following categories an associated NPC falls into depends on how useful they will be to the player character buying them:

ADVANTAGES (I.E. COSTS CHARACTER POINTS)

ALLIES (B36)

Allies are strong and capable NPCs who may offer tangible benefits within an investigation. They are generally loyal and reliable and may be built on anything from 25% to 150% of the Investigator's points total. Whilst usually on your side, Allies are (usually) not puppets and may disagree with your decisions on occasion. Allies may be single or part of a group, theoretically a player may buy as many Allies as he can afford. Allies are not necessarily available for any given scenario; they have a Frequency of Appearance (anything from 15- down to 6-) which modifies their cost.

A single NPC might qualify as both an Ally and a Dependent (see below) if built on fewer than 100% of the character's points total. Calculate each as normal and add the points for both Ally and Dependent together to see if the final cost for the NPC is positive or negative. The player buys the NPC at this final cost. Both Frequency of Appearance and the in-game circumstances will determine whether the NPC is being a useful ally or a hindering dependent in any given situation.

Do speak to the GM about Allies, particularly the more powerful ones. Remember that Allies will take damage, both physical and psychological, if they are put in danger.

CONTACTS AND CONTACT GROUPS (B44)

Contacts will not usually accompany their player character on an investigation but rather are sources of information and suppliers of small favours. Contact groups are entire organisations and networks which do the same job but have a wider remit; groups might include such entities as large corporations, police departments or local underworld gangs.

Contacts have an effective skill level (from 12 to 21) in a particular defined skill against which they roll to provide useful information. Contact groups also have effective skill levels but these are not assigned to a particular skill but left as a more abstract ability in a given field.

Contacts have a Frequency of Appearance which modifies their cost and defines whether or not they are available. They also have a Reliability level which also modifies their cost and defines how truthful the information might be.

PATRONS (B72)

Patrons are powerful individuals or organisations which act to support the character. They may be mentors, employers, advisors or act in any other capacity that enables the character to more successfully carry out their investigations.

The cost of patrons varies according to their power and likely impact on the game. Patrons usually carry an associated requirement of Duty (B133) or similar. Imagine, for example, playing a Police Patrolman and having the local Police Department as a Patron. They provide some protection, support and information, but also expect much in return.

DISADVANTAGES (I.E. CHARACTER GETS POINTS BACK)

DEPENDENTS (B131)

The Dependent is the flip side of the Ally (see above). Instead of being useful, the Dependent is often a hindrance. The Dependent might be a child, young sibling, girlfriend (or boyfriend), spouse, or anyone else who occasionally complicates the character's investigations by getting in the way or attracting trouble.

The points received for a Dependent varies according to their relative power (0 points up to 100% of the Investigator's points total), as well as the Frequency of Appearance. Each character may take no more than two unique Dependents, but a special rule applies to a Dependent Group where the points received are the same as double that of the average member of the group, as modified by Frequency of Appearance.

A single NPC might qualify as both an Ally (see above) and a Dependent if built on fewer than 100% of the character's points total. Calculate each as normal and add the points for both Ally and Dependent together to see if the final cost for the NPC is positive or negative. The player buys the NPC at this final cost. Both Frequency of Appearance and the in-game circumstances will determine whether the NPC is being a useful ally or a hindering dependent in any given situation.

DUTY (B133) AND SENSE OF DUTY (B153)

A Duty is an obligation that is imposed upon a character through their occupation or some social expectation. Often this may be linked to having Rank within an organisation or having a Patron, or may be socially imposed. Duties may involve trivial actions or might require the character to risk themselves, the final cost reflects the nature of the Duty as well as how often the character is expected to perform it.

A Sense of Duty differs from a Duty in that it represents a self-imposed obligation rather than one imposed upon the character. This might be a Sense of Duty to an individual or group, and is somewhat different from having Dependents in that it affects a character's ongoing behaviour rather than being sporadic (i.e. having a Frequency of Appearance). You cannot take a Sense of Duty towards your own character's Dependents, Allies, Patron or other social contacts; the bond represented by Sense of Duty is already assumed to exist in those cases. You *may* take one towards the other Investigators.

ENEMIES (B135)

Not everyone likes the Investigators! Enemies are NPCs who actively work against the character's goals and well-being. The points gained from having Enemies depends on their relative power and how often they appear, as well as exactly what their aims are towards the character (are they simply watching to collect information, are they non-lethal rivals or are they intending to kill or otherwise do violence to them).

Black or other non-Caucasian characters, especially those in the centre of industrial cities and the Deep South, will likely qualify for racist Enemies, sometimes of a more lethal nature. Women working in 'men's' jobs, wearing men's trousers or otherwise offending established social niceties might also attract non-lethal enemies who jeer and heckle. Known homosexuals and any political activist or religious preacher might also attract such non-lethal Enemies. Career criminals might also attract Enemies in the form of the police or rival gangsters, their intentions should depend on the nature of the crimes being committed.

It is recommended that characters be wary of casually taking Enemies, especially powerful ones which appear often and intend serious harm. Most scenarios will offer enough challenge to keep Investigators on their toes without bringing in additional threats.