



You can't quite call them heroes—their white hats are really more like gray hats. Still, they usually try to do the right thing, even if it's for their own reasons, and that's as close to heroic as it gets in the City.

They've all got full *M&M* statistics (customized for the *Noir* setting, of course), in case your players want to take a nighttime walk in their shoes, or in case the Gamemaster wants to use them for special guest appearances. Mostly though, they're here to illustrate how to mix *film noir* and comic book characters. If the Gamemaster has no plans to use them, feel free to let your players read them over for inspiration.

LA BÊTE NOIRE

"Hail Mary, full of grace," she whispered into the basement chill. Memories raced through her mind like the drops of water falling crimson from her hands. Therese was shaking uncontrollably now, causing the sweat and tears to cross her face like spider webs.

"Little whore!" he yelled, as his leather soles slid across the damp manicured lawn. Despite her torn evening gown, the crying young

girl was outrunning him, and when she finally reached the elm grove, became one with the darkness. From her high perch, Therese watched it all, holding in her rage, her doubt, and her fear.

"Hail Mary, full of grace," Therese said. She'd never imagined blood stains were this hard to scrub off, but no matter. If she kept at it, her hands would come clean.

"Tramp! Where'd you go to?" he yelled between gasps for breath. Therese watched him, delicately clutching the sharpened end of the crucifix until he grabbed a tree limb for support. There, she threw it, nailing his palm to the branch with one quick motion.

"Hail Mary, full of grace," Therese said through clenched teeth. There was still blood underneath her fingernails. She scrubbed underneath them until they broke, and the blood she washed away was her own.

"You—you—bitch!" he shouted as Therese landed next to him like a black cat. He looked so helpless...afraid...bleeding...crying... It looked familiar to Therese, and her hatred boiled over.

"Hail Mary! Full of grace!" The bright red stains were on her clothes now, so she tore at them. She hated her nakedness, but she had to make the blood go away.

"Crazy... dame. Look what you did!" he yelled.

THEY LIVE BY NIGHT: NOIR PERSONAS

"Au contraire, Monsieur Josephson. This is about what you did," Therese replied, "To Ruth, to Rebecca, to Mary, and how many more?" She drew her blade slowly, enjoying the metal-on-metal sound. The unsheathed saber caught the scattered moonlight falling between the branches, and Therese continued, "I have come to save them from you, and save you from yourself."

"Hail Mary! Full of grace!" Therese shouted, pleading, again and again. So much blood, in her hair, in her eyes—why won't it come out?

"Biiiiitch!" was all Josephson could howl as the saber struck him below the belt. When Therese realized the deed had been done, she drew back in horror, and wasn't ready when Josephson grabbed her blouse with his free hand.

"Don't touch me! I won't let you touch me!" she cried, and on pure instinct shattered his nose with a single kick. After that, Josephson rained blood from above and below, and the red drops fell on Therese and everything else.

"Hail... hail..." Therese began, but she was spent: body, mind, and soul. For a long time, she sat naked and afraid, until at last Mother Mary took the pain away. How impossible life would be, she thought, if she weren't doing God's work.

BACKGROUND

Therese St. Claire and her twin sister, Camille, were pious young girls, kept from the convent only by Hitler's armies. The Nazis changed a lot of Frenchmen's plans, and the sisters joined their desperate run to safety. Eventually, the St. Claires traded

everything they owned for passage on a cargo ship to America, but at sea the crewmen took Therese and Camille's innocence, too. Therese dealt with the abuse by clinging to her faith; Camille dealt with it by throwing herself overboard.

Therese lost everything before reaching the City, but in no time at all, she was living what, from the outside, looked like a normal life. She became the best-known vintner in the City, and spent more time in Church than the priest. Her faith still couldn't cure her pain, though, and eventually it broke her psyche like a china doll. All she saw was men, always taking whatever they wanted from women, with no fear of God's wrath. In that, Therese would find her new way to serve Him, by making herself into His instrument of vengeance.

She continues to live one life surrounded by the upper class, and when the wine loosens their tongues, she hears all men have done and all women have suffered. Therese's alter ego, *La Bête Noire*, then punishes the men for their sins, always in an Old Testament "eye for an eye" way that guarantees they won't commit the same transgression twice.

LA BÊTE NOIRE

PL 6; Init +4 (Dex); Defense 16 (12 flat-footed); Spd 30 ft.; Atk +5 melee (+4L, Sword), +5 ranged (+4L, Throwing Knives); SV Dmg +2 (+4 with Evasion), Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 16.

Skills: Acrobatics +9, Balance +9, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +7, Escape Artist +9, Hide +9, Language (English), Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Profession (vintner) +7, Sense Motive +7, Spot +7.

Feats: Attack Finesse, Attractive, Dodge, Evasion, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Power Attack.

Powers: Strike +2L [Source: Training; Cost: 2 pp; Total: 4 pp].

Equipment: Grappling Rope [Swinging +5; Source: Super-Science; Cost: 1 pp; Total: 5 pp], Sword [Weapon +3L; Source: Super-Science; Cost: 1 pp; Total: 3 pp], Throwing Knives [Weapon +3L; Extra: Mighty Ranged Weapon; Flaw: Uses; Source: Super-Science; Cost: 1 pp; Total: 3 pp].

Reputation: +3.

Fatal Flaws: Therese uses a well-practiced act in public. She's always outgoing, exotic, charming, sophisticated, and—combined with her natural allure—she attracts a lot of men, most of them good ones. Her mania no longer lets her tell good men from bad, however; by the time she realizes she's met someone special, she's driven them away for good.

Being grabbed or held by a man brings back memories of the rapes, and causes her to lose control. She might go berserk, catatonic, or amnesiac, but the consequences for her and those she cares about are never good.

There's still something of the girl who couldn't wait to put on a habit inside Therese, and that part is horrified by what she's doing. *La Bête Noire* is more than a match for most rapists, stalkers and wife-beaters, but the battles she fights with her old self end in nasty draws. Therese often winds up inflicting harsh penances on herself, hurting both her and those around her.



THE BLACK BOWMAN

Bathory flashed a smile, broad and phony, as he lowered his glass. "I'll get to the point, then, Mr. Dean," he growled charmingly, "Where are you hiding Miss Madsen?"

"At the bottom of this martini," Dean quipped, tipping back his glass, "When I get there, I'll let her know you called."

Bathory laughed loud and unhappily "Ah, Mr. Dean, your wit more than lives up to its reputation. Whatever shall I do with you?" Dean quickly polished off his drink, before the impending threat ruined a damn fine martini. "You know of course, I could simply have Tor and Rondo compel you to talk," said Bathory, still maintaining the charm.

"Yah, boss, let Tor fix Mr. Robin Hood. Tor fix Mr. Robin Hood good." The plea rumbled out of Bathory's goon with a simple malice that was refreshingly straightforward. He and his twin were like walking eclipses, with hands that could break a man in two as easily as their backsides could a toilet seat.

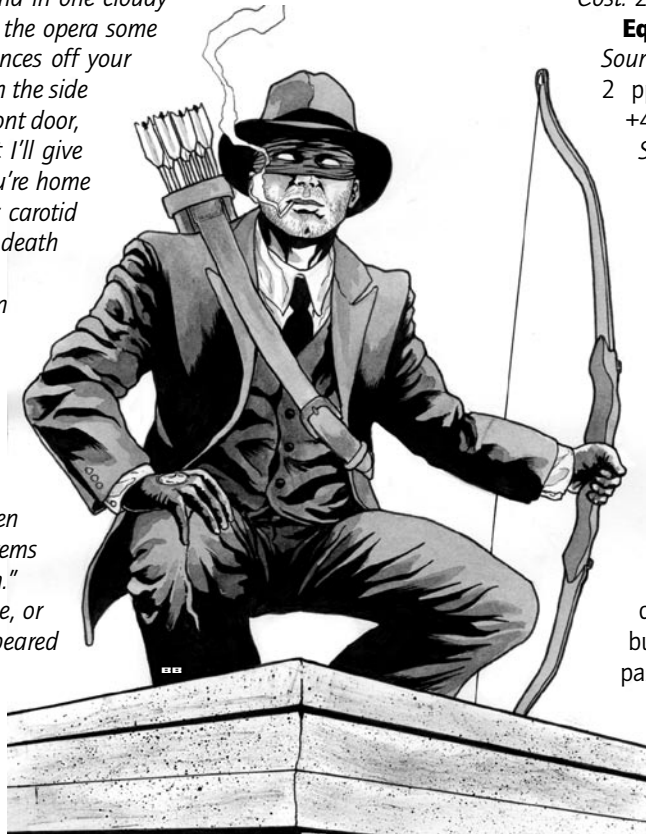
Dean exchanged his empty glass for a lit Chesterfield, inhaling deep. "You know I don't sell out clients. Not before they sell me out, at any rate." The room grew darker as Bathory's thugs got closer, but Dean's words hit them like a brick wall. "Take another step and one of you gorillas loses an eye. Which one's it gonna be?" Bathory's thugs stopped dead in their tracks

"You could have your cut-rate Frankensteins kill me," he resumed, "but that won't get you the dame, will it? They could just put me in a hospital instead, but since I know they won't kill me, I still won't talk. And let me tell you happens next," Dean snarled.

He paused for a long last drag, and in one cloudy exhale said, "You'll come home from the opera some night, and when the streetlight bounces off your rosy red cheek, I'll have a dead aim on the side of your neck. Before you reach your front door, I'll have corrected for the breeze, but I'll give you a second to think about how you're home safe now. Then an arrow slices your carotid artery wide open, and you bleed to death in a minute, tops. Time it."

Tight-lipped and steely eyed, Dean leveled his cigarette at Bathory's neck, as if he were drawing a bead with it. Nervously, Bathory began to rub the phantom wound it inflicted. The silence deepened uncomfortably before a chastened Bathory said, "This isn't over between us, Mr. Dean. I want the girl and the items in her possession, and I will have them."

Dean shot back, "Lay off the dame, or I play William Tell." A faint smile appeared as he rose and muttered to Bathory, "And guess who gets to be the apple, pallie?"



BACKGROUND

The book on P.I. Jack Dean reads that he's tenacious as a pit bull, cunning as a fox, and tougher than nails. He's willing to stick his neck out for clients, and that makes him the P.I. of choice for people in the worst kinds of trouble. Dean's never above bending the law when it suits him, but when it's all on the line, he throws out the rulebook and does whatever it takes to keep himself and his client breathing. Lucky for Dean, working in a City where he's got as many enemies as allies on the police force, he knows how to cover his tracks.

Whenever Dean needs to do some dirty work, he disguises himself in night-dark clothes and settles accounts with his deadly aim and a longbow. Those he's helped nicknamed him "the Black Bowman." Those who've crossed him don't say much at all anymore.

THE BLACK BOWMAN

PL 6; Init +4 (Dex); Defense 15 (11 flat-footed); Spd 30 ft.; Atk +3 melee (+3S, Strike), +7 ranged (+4S/L, Bow); SV Dmg +2, Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 13, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +5, Climb +5, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +5, Drive +9, Escape Artist +9, Gather Information +5, Hide +9, Intimidate +5, Jump +5, Move Silently +9, Profession (private investigator) +7, Search +5, Sense Motive +7, Spot +7, Swim +5.

Feats: Accurate Attack, Attack Focus (bows), Far Shot, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Surprise Strike.

Powers: Strike +2S [Source: Training; Cost: 2 pp; Total: 4 pp].

Equipment: Flak Jacket [Armor +2; Source: Super-Science; Cost: 1 pp; Total: 2 pp], Longbow & Arrows [Weapon +4S/L; Power Stunt: Dual Damage; Source: Super-Science; Cost: 1 pp; Total: 5 pp] or .44 Magnum revolver [Weapon +5L; Extra: Multishot; Flaw: Magazine 6; Source: Super-Science; Cost: 1 pp; Total: 5 pp].

Reputation: +3.

Fatal Flaws: Like "the Black Bowman," Jack Dean is just another alias of one Edward Bennett. Before the war, Bennett was framed for murdering his fiancée Diane Glass, and framed so good he's got no chance in hell of escaping the chair if he's caught. He's covered his tracks well, but Fate won't let him hide from the past. It keeps crossing his path with people from his old life, looking for revenge or blackmail, and always tearing open a wound that won't heal.