

Dark Companion

A Player & GM Resource for Mean Streets

Table of Contents

Chapter One	
Introduction	3
Chapter Two	
Player Resources	4
Chapter Three	
Character Resources	8
Chapter Four	
The Cast.....	11
Chapter Five	
Plots & Schemes	16
Chapter Six	
The 40s	22
Index	28

The Usual Suspects

Writers

Jack Norris
with Mark Bruno

Editors

Samantha Downing
Mark Bruno

Layout

Mark Bruno

Front Cover Illustration

D. Kowalski

Front Cover Layout

Todd Downing

XPG System Developer

Todd Downing

Mean Streets Line Producer

Mark Bruno

Dark Companion is a supplement for the roleplaying game *Mean Streets: The RPG of Classic Film Noir*. The stats and NPCs listed herein are specific to the XPG system, but can be adapted to any game. Visit www.deep7.com for more information on *Mean Streets* or any of our current and upcoming titles.

© Copyright 2002 Deep7,LLC and Mark Bruno. All Rights Reserved Worldwide

Permission granted to print (and/or reproduce portions of) this manual for non-commercial, personal use. Unauthorized duplication or distribution is strictly prohibited under international copyright law and violators will be prosecuted. Interior illustrations are

© Copyright 2002 by Gettyone and the Hulton Archive. Used under license or permission.

www.gettyone.com

Chapter Two

Player Resources

I REMEMBER THE DAY THOMAS MOONEY WALKED INTO THE SHOP. A lot of people remember that day, I guess, but not for the reasons I do. Smiling and laughing, Tom walked in. He asked for a shave and a cut in his usual chair. He didn't seem nervous or afraid. He just seemed like good old Tom Mooney.

"Make me look good, Jimmy," he said. I told him I always did. Tom nodded and said, "Yeah, but today's special, so do a special job."

I told him I would. And I'd like to think I did, because when the Moretti boys showed up outside, Tom Mooney looked like a movie star. He was shined, beamed, and maybe even sparkled. He even winked as he paid me. Then without another word, he drew his pistol and walked out into a leaden rain.

How he got three before they brought him down I'll never know, but I know one thing – on that one special day, Tom Mooney looked so good even death didn't ruin it.

Character Archetypes

Not all characters in films noir have to be private eyes just on the right side of the law, hiding social morality until the last instant, when social responsibility overcomes personal desire. As shown in the core rulebook, film noir protagonists are just as varied as the films themselves. Below are additional Character Archetypes that players can use as a guideline for creating their own characters. Likewise, GMs are free to use the Archetypes as a basis for NPCs.

Athlete

Much like today, the Athlete in 1940s America was something of a superstar – a demi-god even. They were powerful and wealthy individuals with superstar status and a penchant for getting into trouble. Perhaps the world heavyweight champion boxer is on the take with the mob, throwing fights for a little "extra cash." Or, perhaps he's a

baseball star who inadvertently got wrapped up in a scandal involving a controversial Hollywood starlet. Whatever the case, great Athletes are heroes on par with Superman, and everyone from kids to G.I.s follows the sports.

Beat Cop

Unlike the detective, the Beat Cop serves on the front line of the city's war against the Syndicate and crime in general. Whether they're hitting the pavement in the downtown districts or patrolling the sidewalks of suburban America, Beat Cops are expected by the community to deter criminal activity and anti-social behavior, offer information and advice, and provide for the reporting and investigation of offences. It's just that some are more willing than others to look the other way...for the right amount of payola.

Bodyguard

Wealthy Hollywood stars and powerful politicians often hire skilled men for protection. The bodyguard possesses good weapon skills, an observant eye and, most importantly, a willingness to take a bullet for the client. Bodyguards are trusted individuals and often become not only protectors for high-profile people, but confidants as well.

Businessman

This is somewhat of a catchall archetype. Businessmen run the gamut from corporate CEOs who embezzle millions of dollars into offshore accounts, to the small shop owner who has to pay protection money to the local racketeer. Sometimes, they get in way over their heads and are thrust into situations that they cannot control; such is the case with Fred MacMurray's character in *Double Indemnity*.

Coroner

The Coroner is an officer of the law whose principal duty is to hold an investigation and examination over the body of someone unfortunate enough to come to a violent or suspicious death. This duty is of the greatest consequence to society, both for the purpose of punishing murderers and other offenders against the lives of the citizens, and protecting innocent people from criminal accusations.

Chapter Three

Character Resources

JOHN'S LEFT HAND TAPPED HIS FAKE LEG idly as Sam pulled the car over. It made a hollow thumping sound that was just loud enough to hear over the engine. In his right hand he carried a pistol, a British number he'd managed to sneak back home.

John gave Sam a half smile, the best he could do since shrapnel destroyed most of the nerves in the right side of his jaw. He checked the rounds in his scattergun for the tenth time and then tucked it into his coat.

"Are you ready, Sam?" John asked, already halfway out the door. He was anxious to finish it; we all were. Sam nodded and as an afterthought checked for the .38 in his pocket as he exited the Ford. Sam's good arm found it there while he checked the address with his good eye. This was the place.

Inside they would find the man who traded their eyes, their limbs, and their smiles for a treasure he didn't want to share. Inside they would find a man wholly intact save for whatever scar on the soul caused him to abandon them to an enemy patrol. Ultimately, inside they would find an end to a war that didn't stop when they were sent home in still-living pieces.

Sam felt a cold lump of anxiety and anger form in his throat as he whispered, "Yeah, I'm ready. Let's end this."

This chapter primarily deals with firearms and additional vehicles that players can use to outfit their characters.

The firearms listed below have two prices listed. The first is the price of the weapon itself and the second is the price of 100 rounds of ammunition for the weapon. Also, the country of origin and any notes or interesting bits of information are also listed below the game statistics for the weapon.

Several new automobiles are profiled in this chapter. While no cars had been produced during World War II, the late 1940s saw a huge rush in production as American car companies tried to fill the postwar demand for vehicles.

One of the most popular types of vehicles was the sports car. American soldiers in Europe during the war had seen Italian, German, French, and English sports cars and had brought some of these vehicles home with them. At the same time, interest in motor sports increased and car racing gained popularity.

Firearms

"When in doubt, have a man come through the door with a gun in his hand."

— *Raymond Chandler*

Browning Assault Rifle .30 cal.(Rifle)

WA: +1 WR: 5 DB: +3 Range: 250 Ammo: 20, \$200/\$6

Though primarily a U.S. military arm, some gangsters preferred this assault rifle to the Thompson.

M1903A1 Springfield .30 cal. (Rifle)

WA: 2* WR: 4 DB: +2 Range: 750 Ammo: 5, \$35/\$5

** An action must be taken between shots to ready and aim this weapon. If not, then the WA drops to 0.*

This older bolt-action rifle served the U.S. Army since 1903. During World War II many servicemen used this rifle for sniping. Stateside, this weapon or others like it may be used by hitmen to eliminate targets from long range. The sniper in the movie *Saving Private Ryan* uses one of these fitted with a scope (which adds 250 to the range and 1 to WA as long as time is taken to ready and aim).

Webley-Fosbery .45/.455 cal. (Revolver)

WA: 0 WR: 4 DB: +2 Range: 60 Ammo: 8/6 \$80/\$9T

This British pistol was the one used to plug Miles Archer in the *Maltese Falcon*. By 1943 it was no longer being made (which is reflected in the price above). The Webley mentioned in the *Maltese Falcon* is said to be a .45 caliber eight-shot revolver and Bogart pronounces the latter part of the name "Fors-Bee." The actual Webley was the irregular .455 caliber, held six shots, and was pronounced "Fos-Bury." Which version used is up to the GM (we suggest going with Bogey for no other reason than he's Humphrey Bogart). The World War I & II era superhero Union Jack and Dr. Watson of Sherlock Holmes fame also used

Chapter Four

The Cast

"I REALIZE MY FATHER THINKS YOU ARE A GREAT HELP, Mr. Jordan, but I for one cannot see what you've done so far other than drink his liquor and make smart remarks."

Joe Jordan gave the girl a wry smile as he slid the cigarette he had just rolled into his mouth. He started to speak, then stopped when he realized his silence was annoying her. He lit his smoke and took a few drags. Then when she opened her mouth to speak again he cut her off.

"Ms. Kingsworth, I'm sorry you don't think much of my skills," he said, making no attempt to mask his sarcasm. "If you like, I can give you the names of several people who agree with you. Maybe you can invite them all to a garden party and talk about what a waste of your father's money I am. You can even invite me if you'd like, I have a few things to say on the subject as well."

The girl's eyes flashed with anger and she began to speak up, but then seemed unsure of how to respond. Jordan waited a moment and then shrugged and continued.

"But regardless of what a rotten detective you and I seem to think I am, your father seems to think the opposite. And as long as he's paying for my services and your garden parties, I don't see how either of us have much say in the matter."

With that he let out a wry chuckle. He was still laughing when she stormed out.

Guys & Dolls

This chapter exists to provide GMs with a collection of pre-made, ready-to-use NPCs. Each character's game statistics and background are given. Also included are quotes, tips on role-playing the NPC, and a few ideas on how to use the character as part of your *Mean Streets* game.

Henrik Kills, Hitman

Quote: "I have a haircut in an hour, so please die quickly."

AGL: 4 DEX: 4 PER: 4 STR: 3 INT: 4 WIL: 4
INITIATIVE 8 SAVE 6 SHRUG 3

Skills: Awareness 3, Brawling 2, Cool 6, Disguise 2, Dodge 4, Drive 2, Firearms 6, Intimidation 4, Melee 3, Stealth 4, Streetwise 3

Assets: Contact (Underworld), Courage

Liabilities: Bloodlust, Age (mid-40s)

Behavior Tags: Collects shell casings after a hit, Dislikes using American firearms, Works to keep his Dutch accent.

Henrik Kills started out as a soldier in the Dutch Schultz mob during prohibition. Unlike his boss, Henrik was Dutch-born, having come to America at the end of WWI. He started out doing small jobs for Schultz, but quickly graduated from numbers runner and lookout to full-time soldier.

Henrik showed a flair for the bloodier aspects of the job and quickly found his way into doing hits. Before he'd passed his 30th birthday he'd done twelve successful jobs. In particular, he liked to kill people in a bloody and public way. He also began collecting the shell casings from his jobs. He considers it a testament to his skill that this little habit has never gotten him caught.

His dramatic style caught on and some of the locals took to calling him "Kills the Killer." Henrik himself preferred "the Ferryman" (a play on words, Kills means river in Dutch), but after he shot a man for making a joke about "the fairy man," he decided to stop using that alias.

Henrik was luckily nowhere near Schultz when he was killed in 1935. Luckier still, as that many of his old bosses' rivals wanted Kills' services more than they wanted him dead. So, for nearly a decade now, Kills has been doing hits for a number of New York crime families.

Playing Kills: You are very cold, very precise, and very good at what you do. You are not much of a ladies man or very friendly. Still, you do have a sense of humor and like to make plays on words and dry witticisms. You take pleasure in your work but are no sadist. Quite the contrary, the best and most professional kill is a fast one.

Using Henrik Kills: A freelance assassin, Henrik makes a great heavy for an adventure. Either the PCs need to stop Kills from eliminating his target or they are themselves his target. He could also be a rival for a PC hitman or gangster.

Chapter Five

Plots & Schemes

GARRET SQUINTED AS THE BARE BULB shined hard white light into his eyes. He wasn't sure how long he'd been in this room, but he was positive it wasn't nearly as long as it seemed. He knew the drill. He was a cop once. The isolation, the bright lights, the two gorillas with badges there to keep him company were all part of a game designed to get him to spill what he knew. Unfortunately, he didn't know anything. Worse, he knew they'd never believe that.

"Tell us what you know, Garret," Hobbes said, a fake tone of polite exasperation in his voice. Hobbes was the "good cop" in this little drama. He would let his partner – a walking road bump named Hotchkins – play the heavy.

Garret smiled and nodded. He looked at Hobbes with just the right degree of deference and asked as meekly as he could manage, "Think I could have one of those cigarettes first?"

Hotchkins growled on cue, but Hobbes played the good cop and gave Garret a cigarette and a light.

"Okay," said Garret, taking a long drag off the cigarette and blowing the smoke in the general direction of Hotchkins. "Here's what I know. Two plus two is four, gravity makes things fall down, and your mother was real upset when she found out she'd given birth to a monkey..."

The cigarette came lose when Hotchkins fist slammed into the side of his head. The cops were shouting and the whole thing played out in shadow puppets cast on the walk from the light overhead.

Garrett laughed in spite of the pain. It was going to be a long night.

This chapter provides a number of basic plotlines and story ideas for use in *Mean Streets*. These aren't full

adventures, just some suggestions and ideas for a GM. Not all of these ideas may work for every group of PCs, but with a little work most of these will fit even the most eclectic group.

Each adventure seed is divided up into five parts: Title, Credits (Staring), Script, Casting, and Twists and Turns. Title is just that: the title of the adventure. Credits list important characters other than the PCs who are central to the story as it is presented. Script is a basic description of the plot, any complications, and what sort of resolutions the characters seek. Casting suggests how to work the PCs into the story, whether they are gangsters or g-men. Finally, Twists & Turns presents options to make the basic plot more convoluted, complex, and interesting if the GM so desires.

Before getting to the adventure seeds themselves, it should be noted that all of this is flexible. Titles can be changed, NPCs can be swapped out for existing characters in the campaigns, and plot twists conjured up by the GM can be added. It's all malleable and what seems like a great idea here might not work in the reality of a GM's own game. Change whatever you need to make it work and don't look back. Just remember, *Casablanca* was originally supposed to star Ronald Reagan and end with Rick and Ilsa getting on the plane. Luckily, some people realized that didn't work. In *Mean Streets*, those people need to be the GM and the PCs.

Mists of the Past

Staring Henry Sherman, New York Congressman; Helen Sherman, a.k.a. Misty LaRue, wife of Congressman Sherman and star of Two-Way Street; Arvin Ludd, a.k.a. Thom Long, two-bit blackmailer and pornographer

Script

Before she was the respected wife of Congressman Henry Sherman, Helen Sherman was a woman of little status. A small time singer and actress, she never made it beyond nightclubs and the occasionally off-Broadway number. She also dated a few shady characters and ran with what her high society friends would no doubt refer to as "a bad crowd." When she met and married her husband, she

Chapter Six

The 40s

SHE WAS WEARING THAT SAME DRESS SHE WORE WHEN SHE LEFT. The gun was new.

“I’m sorry, Frank,” she said, though the gleam in her eyes told me she wasn’t. She had the money she’d convinced me to steal, the keys to my car, and enough gas to make it to the border. She didn’t need me.

I’d like to think her hand shook a bit as she raised the .38 to my head as I sat there. I’d like to think the thought of killing me hurt her, if only a little bit. I’d like to think that, but I know she was slow and steady as she aimed between my eyes.

“Goodnight, darling,” she whispered. Then the air exploded in fire and thunder.

After a second I stood up. My coat pocket smoldered where my shot had torn through the woolen fabric and into her. Then I pulled the revolver out, wiped it down, and dropped in next to her still warm body. Then I found the suitcase with the cash and retrieved my car keys.

As I left I turned out the lights. Maybe it was the lapsed Catholic in me, but I felt I should say a few words. But all I could think to say was “Goodnight, sweetheart.”

Living in 1940s America was very different than what it is now, not the least of which includes what kind of an impact WWII had on those still living home. For those unfamiliar with 1940s America or who would prefer to add a little more flavor and color to their campaigns, this chapter has compiled additional information on the era, which you can use to more accurately portray the time frame your campaigns are set within. The information that follows is a supplement to what is included in the *Mean Streets* core rules beginning on page 19.

Batter Up!

Baseball is a lot more popular in the 1940s than it is today. In fact, baseball is *the* American sport. Football, bas-

ketball, and other activities are more secular and less respected. Baseball greats are heroes on par with Superman, everyone from kids to G.I.s follows the sport, and if you don’t know at least a little bit about baseball, many see this as downright unpatriotic.

Anyone who’s seen enough war movies knows that the best way to spot a Nazi spy is to ask them about who won the World Series, since “those rotten Krauts don’t know nothin’ about baseball.” In truth, this “trick” has snared more than a few Americans as well. So that characters in *Mean Streets* won’t be caught unawares, below are the winners and losers of every World Series from 1936 to 1943.

Year	Winner	Loser	Games
1936	Yankees	Giants	4 to 2
1937	Yankees	Giants	4 to 1
1938	Yankees	Chicago Cubs	4 to 0
1939	Yankees	Cincinnati	4 to 0
1940	Cincinnati	Detroit	4 to 3
1941	Yankees	Dodgers	4 to 1
1942	Cardinals	Yankees	4 to 1
1943	Yankees	Cardinals	4 to 1

Discerning *Mean Streets* players and GMs will no doubt notice that New York is the capital of baseball greats during this period. As a result, games using baseball as a hook or backdrop would be very appropriate. Also, Yankees fans should enjoy it; they won’t see another series until 1950.

And the Oscar goes to...

Though movie awards aren’t the extravagant affairs they are now, they were around in the 1940s. Many of these Academy Award winning films are now timeless classics, though more than a few have faded in obscurity. Below are the big Oscar winners of the 1940s, along with a few other notable films of the period.

Best Pictures 1939-1943

Gone with the Wind (1939)
Rebecca (1940)