

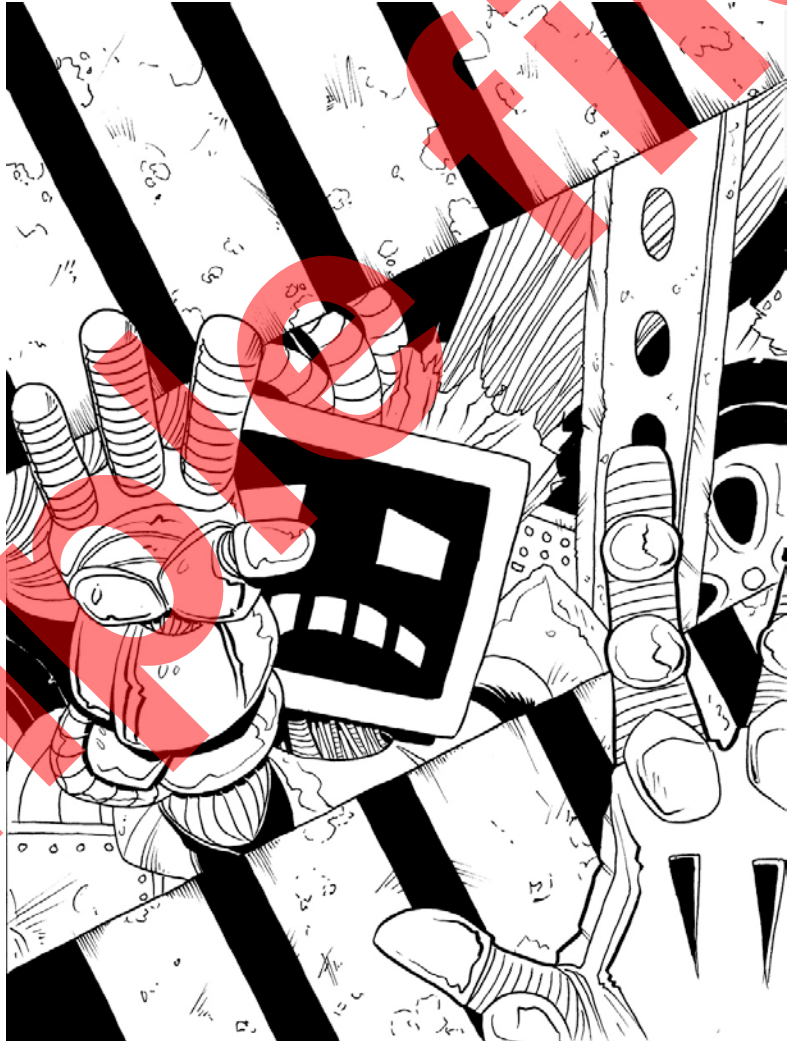
## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Non-Essential Personnel the game where your characters are disposable and death is entertaining. You'll be playing a band of goblins trying to survive in a dungeon, minions of a mad scientist, shock troopers of a galactic empire, the henchmen of a nefarious super villain or any one of the multitude of thankless people who are generally labeled "fodder." It's a simple game with simple rules that rewards a large measure of participation and creativity by all the players.

## NAMES

Let's start character creations with your name. Your characters are going to die. A lot. A lot a lot. There is really no reason to think too hard about your characters' name. And there's no need to name every one one of your characters. In fact, it would be a waste of your cognitive capacities to bother trying to think up a name for every one of your characters in a game of NEP. Instead, for each game, each player should generate one name and every one of that player's characters will have the same name. If you want to add a number or other identifier at the end to differentiate them, feel free. The Scenemaster should determine the method that will be used to generate these

names before the game. Here are a couple of suggestions: a single digit number that is the final digit of every character's serial number for games involving modern or high tech settings or having each player pick two consonants and a vowel and arranging them however he likes for older or more fantasy based settings. Of course if you're feeling really creative you can name each version of your character but no matter the naming convention, each of these characters will have the same stats.



## STATS

Which brings us to stats. There are four stats in Non-Essential Personnel. All checks are made against these stats and each Scene should be keyed to one of these stats (unless it is a Player's Choice Scene.) Each player is going to have a lot of characters in any one game but, simple as they are, there is little use in changing stats every time a new character is needed. So, each of a player's characters in a story will just use the same stats. It can be assumed the new character is enough like the old character that there's no apparent difference. Thus, when a player's character dies, rather than making a new one, he just plays the next Scene with one that is theoretically different but has the same name and the same abilities.

### *Agility*

Measures agility, dexterity and general puissance. This is the stat to check if you need to cross a tightrope suspended over a flaming pit of chainsaws or if you need to juggle rabid Tasmanian devils.

### *Vigor*

Measures your stamina, endurance and all around general toughness. Check against this stat if you need to do something like run 40 miles across a desert to get a drink of water or stay alert all night on watch so that the murderous clowns don't sneak up on you and kill you and your companions in your sleep.

### *Gear*

Measures your skill with various pieces of technology or the likelihood that you will have a necessary piece of equipment when needed and how good that equipment is. If you need a hydrosparner, sonic screwdriver or vorpal sword, or need to know how to properly use any one of those items, or if you have to figure out how to stop the countdown on the self destruct sequence of the secret lair this is the stat to check against.

### *Luck*

Measures how much fortune smiles upon you. Or perhaps the degree to which the fates frown upon you. Check against this stat if you need to avoid angering the hounds of hell or your evil overlord or if you need to wander across a minefield blindfolded.

## ASSIGNING STATS

There are two methods for assigning stats. The first is to assign each of the following four values to one stat: 3, 4, 5, 6. Each value can (and must) be used only once.

Remember that you will be trying to equal or exceed this stat on your roll so lower values are better.

The second method is to buy your stats. You have 6 points with which to buy your stats and each point below 6 that you buy for a stat costs one point. The following table shows how much it costs to buy each level for those of you who don't want to do math.

STAT COSTS	
Stat	Cost
6	0 (Free!)
5	1
4	2
3	3
2	4
1	IMPOSSIBLE! Failure is always an option

## **THE GORE FACTOR**

Before beginning play, the group should discuss just how gory and descriptive the game is should be, especially if you are playing with strangers or a relatively new group. This is a game of comedic death but what that means to each person can vary dramatically as can how much comedy they want. On one end of the spectrum is describing every gruesome, excruciating moment with detailed descriptions of the bodily harm done to a character when he or she dies. On the other end, characters don't die at all and never shed a drop of blood. Instead, anvils falling on their heads just squash them into flatter, but still mobile versions of themselves, blades cut them in half but the two parts still move and explosions simply cover them in soot. Most games will fall somewhere in between.

## **DICE**

All checks in Non-Essential Personnel are made with a single roll of a 6 sided die.

## SEQUENCE OF PLAY

### *Theme*

At the beginning of each Scene, the Scenemaster or SM (though DM and GM are also acceptable titles) will determine what sort of death is most appropriate for the coming Scene. This sets the theme for each death that is suffered in the Scene and should be kept in mind for the Deathflector vote at the end of the Scene. If the SM is unable to come up with a good theme, he can use one or both of the following tables.

TONE	
Roll	Result
1	Funniest
2	Most Disgusting
3	Most Pointless
4	Most Painful
5	Best (as defined by each person when they vote)
6	Best Survival (instead of voting on the deaths in the Scene to determine who gets the Deathflector, the people characters who survived are the candidates to earn it.)

ENVIRONMENT	
Roll	Result
1	Food
2	Fire
3	Animals
4	Sharp and/or Pointy Objects
5	Cold
6	Soft and/or Fluffy Objects

### *Scene*

The SM presents the first sequence of events that are going to dramatically endanger the lives of the characters. SM's are encouraged to come up with creative and amusing situations in which their player's characters are likely to die. The more absurd the better. Keep in mind that you are presenting a world where the characters' lives (and deaths) are all but meaningless. The idea is to present enough detail to interest the players and give them a good handle on the situation without defining everything to such a degree that they can't come up with creative ways to survive or die. It is also important that the Scene require only one roll to survive or die. While there could be multiple threats to life and limb, they should all be related and capable of being adjudicated by one stat check. This could be something as simple as dodging out of the way of rocks falling from the sky to as complex as performing maintenance on the master's cyborg sharks (the cyborging process makes them quite ill tempered.)

In addition to presenting the description of the Scene, the SM should provide the mechanical details of the Scene. This includes the stat that is being checked as well as any special rules that apply for the Scene.

### *Initiative*

Once the Scene is set all players roll a die. The highest roll gets to go first. In the case of a tie for highest, everyone who rolled the highest number gets to reroll. Alternatively, if two players are tied for the highest roll, one can offer a Pip Token, the Deathflector or a Survivor Token to the other to buy the right to go first. Of course, the other player can counter offer. If no agreement can be reached, then return to a roll off. No other results matter as this roll only determines who goes first, not the sequence of play.

When the first player has finished his Scene and all results from his Scene are determined, he decides who goes next. When his turn is finished, he picks who goes next and so on until everyone has taken his or her turn.

The holder of the Deathflector is the exception to this rule. The holder of the Deathflector always goes last. In fact, the person holding the Deathflector shouldn't even bother rolling for initiative.

### *Roll*

Once the SM has set the Scene and initiative is determined, the first player describes the details of his impending doom and how his character is trying to avoid it. He then makes his roll and explains how his character lives or dies according to the results of his check.

The player compares the results of his roll to the value of the stat that the SM has chosen for the test and if his roll equals or exceeds the character's stat then he lives. If not, he dies.

### *Results*

If the character survives the check, the player earns a Survivor token. If the character dies he earns a Death token. A player may have only one of these types of tokens at a time. He must sacrifice all tokens of one kind any time he earns one of the opposite type. If, for example, a player has earned 2 Death tokens and his character Survives a Scene, both his Death tokens would be forfeit and he would earn a single Survivor token.

Additionally, if the character survives, the player should determine how many points he succeeded by. The player receives a number of Pip tokens equal to the difference between his roll and his stat.



Once everyone has made their check and described their death or survival for each life imperiling situation in the Scene (including those caused by Revenge tokens and the Deathflector,) the SM presents a vote to determine who had the death which most closely matches the tone announced at the beginning of the Scene. The SM lists each death and each player gets one vote on which of the deaths was the best. If the vote is a tie then the SM makes the deciding vote. Whichever player wins the vote receives the Deathflector.

The SM should keep a running tally of how many times a character survives, dies and earns the Deathflector and how many Pip tokens each player spends on someone else's roll so that he can hand out titles at the end of the game.

## TOKENS

There are several types of tokens in NEP.

### *Pip*

Pip Tokens can be given to other players to use as bonuses or penalties to their rolls. Each Pip Token adds or subtracts 1 from the check roll of another player. The player using Pip Tokens must declare that he is going to use them, how many he is going to use and whether they're going to add or subtract from the roll at the beginning of the other player's turn and before the roll is made. Waiting to see the results and then spending Pip Tokens to get the results you want is not allowed. Each player begins the game with 3 Pip tokens.

A player can only use his own Pip Tokens on himself to counter Pip Tokens being spent on him by someone else. If no other players play Pip tokens on his roll, he may not spend Pip Tokens on the roll and if someone is playing Pip Tokens on his roll he may spend only enough of his own Pip Tokens to counter the influence.



### *Survivor*

Players earn a Survivor token each time their character survives a Scene. They can also be acquired by trading with other players. As previously mentioned any time someone earns a Death token he must sacrifice all Survivor tokens he currently possesses. When a player has acquired 3 Survivor tokens he must trade them in for a Victory token.

### *Death*

Players earn Death tokens each time their characters die during a Scene. They can also acquire Death tokens by trading them with other players. Players may only have Survivor tokens or Death tokens at any time, not both. If a character dies, the player must forfeit any Survivor tokens he's earned and gains a single Death token. When a player earns 3 Death tokens he must trade them in for a Revenge token.

### *Victory*

When a player has acquired 3 Survivor tokens, he trades them in for a single Victory token. As may be inferred by the name, Victory tokens are used to determine the winner of the game.

### *Revenge*

A player may trade in 3 Death tokens for a single Revenge token. At any point, either in the Scene where the Revenge token is earned or any later Scene, the player may trade in a Revenge token to force a player who has already made his stat check for the Scene to make another check. The player must once more describe how their character is placed in danger, make his roll and suffer all the consequences of those results, including earning a Survivor or Death token, and potentially, another candidate for the Deathflector.

### *Deathflector*

The player who earns the Deathflector does not have to make his roll for the next Scene. He automatically succeeds at the given task and survives the Scene. The holder of the Deathflector still describes the way he survives as normal as though he'd rolled a success on his check. Additionally, he gets to state how his survival places one of the other players in the Scene in danger again as though he were playign a Revenge token. That player must then make another check against the same stat with the usual results for success or failure. Additionally, when the results of this roll are determined, the player with the Deathflector gets to decide if he wants to steal the Survivor or Death token earned by the other player because of his check. If he does steal it, he claims it for himself and can add it to his pool. If he does not want it, it goes to the player who made the roll.

These Survivor and Death tokens follow the same rules as any other Survivor and Death tokens and if the one earned is opposite of the kind the person already owns, the ones that are already possessed are lost.

It should be noted that the holder of the Deathflector always goes last in a Scene and that he can use his Deathflector to place in jeopardy a player who has already had one character die in that Scene. Also, if the player dies both on their original check and due to a Deathflection, both of his deaths are put up for for the next Deathflector vote.

## *OTHER KINDS OF CHECKS*

### *Harder and Easier Checks*

While most checks will be set at the same difficulty for every player in a Scene, the SM may want to provide the option for easier and harder checks. A Scene with an Easier check and a Harder check will have exactly one Easier check and exactly one Harder check. All other checks will be made at the standard difficulty. While the SM does not have to outright say which actions will lead to an Easier check and which will lead to a Harder check, they can if they like and they should make it very obvious in their descriptions if they do not lay it out explicitly. There should be no ambushing the players with a Harder check just for the fun of it. For example the SM might say: "It is time to feed the boss's pet wolves. Most of these wolves are your average, giant, savage beasts that would just as soon eat you as pee on you. However, of them all, Nadshredder is, the biggest, most savage and most dangerous of them all. On the other hand there is Fluffchaser, a very docile, affectionate and toothless old wolf who's seen better days and has been the bottom dog for as long as anyone can remember."

Harder check's impose a -1 penalty to the related die roll, meaning that the highest possible result is a 5 and, by the same token, meaning that anyone with a stat of 6 will automatically fail. Conversely, an Easier check adds a +1 bonus to the die roll. This means that the lowest possible result is a 2.

The player who wins initiative can choose to try the harder check (feeding Nadshredder,) the easier check (feeding Fluffchaser,) or neither, simply making a straight check (feeding one of the nameless wolves.) The same is true of the person that he or she passes the Scene on to. The exception to this rule is that if the last two players' before the holder of the Deathflector's turn comes up and no one has taken either the harder or easier check, these two players MUST choose the harder and easier checks. The first player gets to pick whichever he or she likes and the next player must take whichever one is left. Likewise, if either the harder or easier check has already been made then the last person in the Scene before the holder of the Deathflector must try whichever of the two checks remains. Basically, in a Scene with harder and easier checks, the harder and easier checks must be taken by someone other than the holder of the Deathflector and it falls on the



last player or two, not including the holder of the Deathflector to make these checks, if necessary.

But why would anyone volunteer to take a Harder check? As incentive for accepting a Harder check, the person performing it gains an extra survivor token if they succeed. They receive the normal number of Pip tokens, but take into account the -1 penalty imposed on the check. For example, if a person rolled a 5 on a harder check, his or her total result would be 4. If her related stat were a 3 she would only receive 1 Pip token rather than 2.

Conversely, if someone takes an Easier check they receive no Pip tokens, no matter how much they succeed by, though they still receive their Survivor token assuming they make their check. Players should not be rewarded for taking an Easier check; rather it is a way for a player to improve his chances of making it through a Scene and getting another Survivor token.

### *Player's Choice*

Generally, the SM will determine which stat to check against in a Scene. However, there is more than one way to skin a cat (a task that your characters might be demanded to do in Non-Essential Personnel. Of course, that cat will likely be a sabretooth tiger, but I digress.) To that end, the SM will sometimes allow the Scene to be played as a Player's Choice. Rather than declaring the stat that will be checked against, the SM will allow each player to decide which stat to use. Of course, the players will be required to justify how their characters are using the stat to attempt the action and explain how it is used in the Scene. Player's Choice checks can also include Easier and Harder checks.

### *Scenemaster's Choice*

Sometimes, there are several ways for the cat to skin you. Instead of declaring the stat that will be tested against before hand, the SM can set up a Scene where he picks the stat to be tested against on a player by player basis. Being the cruel people that they are, SM's will usually pick each player's worst stat. And if they want to be devious as well as cruel, they will space Scenemaster's Choice Scenes just far enough apart that they will likely wipe out a player's collection of Survivor Tokens. Of course, the SM has to describe the Scene in such a way that any stat can be tested. He cannot set up a Scene that should obviously be a Agility check and challenge one player's Gear and another player's Vigor. If your SM is very kind, he might select everyone's best stat, instead, ensuring that a lot of Survivor and Pip tokens are generated. This is good to do at the beginning of the game so plenty of these tokens will be floating around to be traded.

SM's should not pick one player's best stat and another player's worst. This is just mean and shows favoritism that is unbecoming of one who is in such a lofty and honorable position as Scenemaster.

### *Other Player's Choice*

Sometimes, Fate can be a cruel mistress. She decides on almost a random basis what skills are required to overcome the obstacles that fall in a person's path. Sometimes this is beneficial to a person, sometimes it is detrimental. To reflect this there is the Other Player's Choice option. In this type of Scene, the SM sets up a Scene with many options for which stat will be checked just as in the other two types of Choice scenarios but instead of the SM or player making the check deciding which stat to check against, the player to the player's left makes that decision. The player making the choice can choose the checking player's best stat, worse stat or any other stat. Keep this in mind when deciding whether or not you're going to mess around the person to your left.

### *Gauntlet*

While there will normally be only one check per Scene, the SM can sometimes call for a Gauntlet. In a Gauntlet Scene, every player makes a check against every Stat for a total of four checks. The player does not make every check at once, rather, the SM sets the portion of the Scene that will require a particular check and the first player (as determined by a normal initiative roll) makes their check and describes that portion of the Scene before passing it on to the next player, who will then make their check. This continues until every player has made their first check. Then the SM sets up the next portion of the Scene with the next stat to be checked against. Initiative is rolled and the process begins again.

Two things should be clarified for a Gauntlet Scene. The first is that the person holding the Deathflector does have to make rolls in this kind of Scene. The first time that he fails a roll, he then turns in his Deathflector and it operates normally (namely, his character survives the check and the harmful situation is turned toward another character.) The remaining rolls (if there are any left) are made as normal and the character can die if the player misses a roll. Of course, if a player holding the Deathflector manages to get through the first 3 checks without dying, he or she must use the Deathflector for the last Gauntlet check. At the end of the Scene, the normal vote is held using every death in the Scene to determine who gets the Deathflector for the next Scene.

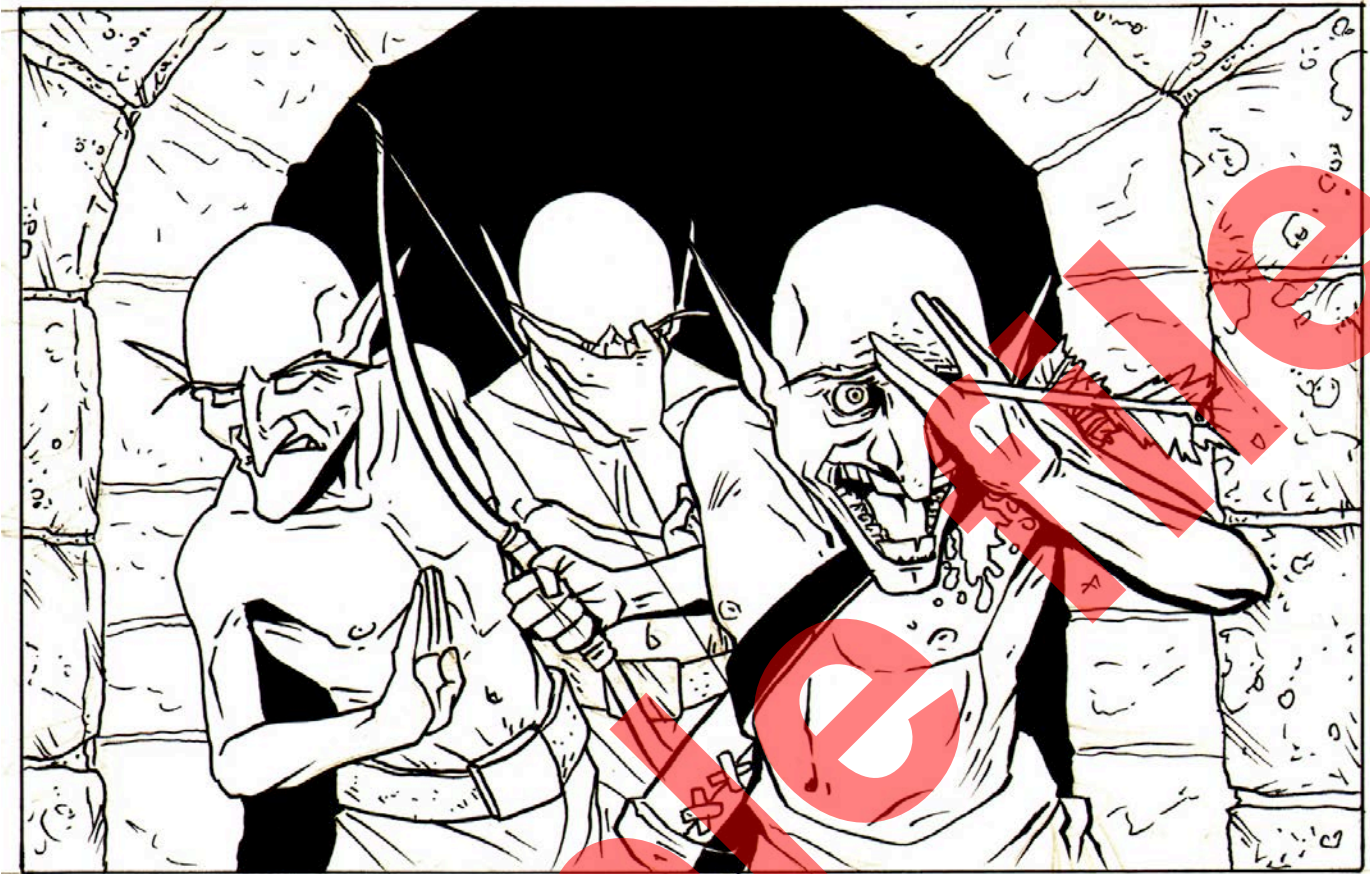
The other clarification that should be made is in regard to Survivor and Death Tokens. Survivor and Death tokens for a Gauntlet Scene should be tracked separately from each player's normal set of tokens. A player does not forfeit his Gauntlet Survivor tokens when he dies during a Gauntlet and does not forfeit his Gauntlet Death tokens when he

survives. Rather, he keeps a running total of both. At the end of the Gauntlet, each player decides whether he or she will keep his Survivor tokens or Death tokens from the Scene. Once this decision is made, these tokens are added to the players normal total and influences it normally. This means that if a player had Survivor or Death tokens before the Gauntlet started and chooses to keep the same type of token from the Gauntlet round then they add to his normal pool. If he chooses to keep the opposite type of token from the Gauntlet round then he keeps only those and forfeits those he'd won previously.

For example: A Gauntlet Scene is called and Roy's character miraculously survives 3 of the 4 checks. His Gauntlet Survivor token total would be 3 while his Gauntlet Death token total would be 1. He already has 2 Death tokens in his normal pool and is left with the difficult decision of keeping his 3 Survivor tokens from the Gauntlet (thus earning a Victory token) and forfeiting the 2 Death tokens he earned prior to the Gauntlet or adding the single Death token he earned in the Gauntlet to his normal pool for a total of 3 and earning a Revenge token.

### *Trading*

Every commodity in Non-Essential Personnel can be traded. This includes everything from places in the initiative order, to Pip Tokens, Survivor Tokens, the Deathflector and even votes for best death (to get the Deathflector for the next Scene.) Players are encouraged to haggle, barter, wheedle, cajole and otherwise do whatever is necessary to get what they want out of other players. However, nagging and bullying are annoying and should be discouraged. Trading can be done at any point during anyone's turn. In fact, two people can work out a deal even if it is not their turn, though they should try not to interrupt or interfere with the ongoing Scene with their haggling. The only limitation is that a player cannot trade for Pip Tokens after they've made their roll. Pip Tokens must be spent to influence a roll before that roll is made.



## **VICTORY!**

Once the last Scene has been run, everyone tallies up their victory points and the person with the most is the winner. If there is a tie, and one of the people involved in the tie earned the Deathflector in the last Scene then he or she is the winner. If there is a tie and neither player has the Deathflector then whoever has the most pip tokens left is the winner. If it is still a tie then play Paper, Rock, Scissors for the title.

The winner is promoted and leaves the life of a nameless minion behind. Of course, he or she is not the new leader or mastermind, but may be lucky enough to become the leader's right hand man (or woman,) body guard or even double. Whatever the new role is, it will probably take 10 whole minutes before the character's life is placed in mortal danger.

## TITLES

After the Victor is determined, the SM should tally up all the stats he's been keeping track of throughout the game. He then hands out titles based on the following criteria:

### *Survivor*

The person who survived the most Scenes.

### *Victim*

The person who died in the most Scenes

### *Martyr*

The person who earned the Deathflector the most times.

### *Meddler*

The person who spent the most Pip tokens on other people's rolls.

### *Participation*

This reward only goes out to someone if they did not win the game or any of the other titles. Thanks for playing! Try harder next time.

Note that the Victor may or may not earn any or all of these titles as well and a person can earn more than one title. If two or more people are tied for any of these titles then everyone who is tied earns them.