

Chapter Four

PUMMELING THE BAD GUYS

Combat Begins

The dockside warehouse that Rose told Parker about certainly looks suspicious: two cars, one a pricey Misca Red Tez in crimson lacquer and golden manganese, are conspicuous in this sector of town. Through the well-lit windows in the warehouse office, Parker can see some figures in suits moving around. Parker edges closer, sliding between two stacks of pallets, but catches the aroma of burning 'nip too late. Less than ten feet away, a shadowed figure turns, revealing a glowing cigarette ember and a surprised expression before breaking for the office door.

Combat Time and Rounds

For combat and other occasions in which time must be marked in small increments, time is broken down into **rounds**. Rounds have a length defined by the setting—in primitive settings rounds may be very long, whereas in modern or futuristic combat rounds may be very brief. The actual length of a round is up to the needs of the GM. Almost all participants in a combat will act at least once per round. Note that character advancement cannot occur during any rounds or period described as combat time by the GM.

Actions during combat include attacking an opponent, performing a non-combat action total, and covering ground. In response to each attack, a targeted character may make one defensive total that does not count as an action; if a second defense total to a single attack is required, the defender must use an action to do so.

Combat Rounds and Actions

<i>Parker lashes out with a hand, trying to grab the sentry before his gets out of reach.</i>	<i>round 1—Parker: <u>brawl</u></i>
<i>The sentry darts out of range, grabs the top of a stack of pallets and pulls them over.</i>	<i>round 1—sentry: <u>heave</u></i>
<i>As Parker scrambles over this new obstacle, the sentry turns to run. Parker lengthens his stride and launches after him.</i>	<i>round 2—both: <u>move</u> (possibly chase)</i>

Extra actions during combat are conferred by fatiguing some trademarks. Any PC can also take an extra action by sacrificing 6 fatigue from any one fatigue pool. This action occurs when the fatigue is spent, interrupting actions by other participants. It may in turn be interrupted by the same tactic from another participant.

Occasionally a character will have an action he cannot use, either because he lacks an opening or is pinned by indecision. The PC can **wait**, reserving the action for a suitable opportunity, until the end of the round. At the end of any round, each unused action gains the PC 1 fatigue. Actions cannot be stored from round to round.

Quickness and Chases

The order of actions among the group of combatants is determined by each participant's **quickness**. A PC's quickness is equal to his highest hit pool, reduced a little by how much the PC wears and carries (see **burden** below) and increased by certain trademarks. All participants in a combat act in order from highest to lowest quickness.

Calculating Quickness

<p><i>Asterion's highest hit pool is in his physical facet, at 10. However, his quickness is not 10, because the quickness is reduced by the impedance of a little weight from his clothing and because of Parker's substantial mass.</i></p>	<p><i>Parker's physical hit pool: 10 outfit burden -1 trademark heavy -2 Parker's quickness =7</i></p>
<p><i>By comparison, the sentry is very slow.</i></p>	<p><i>Sentry's quickness =3</i></p>

Quickness also serves as a relative measure of the PC's **movement rate**, in distance units (up to the GM) per interval. Movement may be hampered if the ground is hazardous or the path is blocked by obstacles.

Each character in a **chase** starts with his position relative to a landmark noted in distance units (e.g., meters). Each character generates a move action total against a 0 difficulty, finds the rank of his total, and adds his quickness. Then the GM subtracts from each distance measure a terrain modifier reflecting the terrain or obstacles that might impede movement. Such terrain modifiers can be found by converting a chosen standard to a rank. The final result describes the change in each character's position relative to the reference point. For vehicles, follow the same technique, but use the drive (or pilot?) total instead of move to convert by Rank to distance. For cars, the distance unit might be 100s of meters; for spacecraft, it might be kilometers.

Chase

<p><i>Both Parker and the sentry are in the labyrinth of stacked pallets and crates. Parker is further from the door, and has a pile of pallets to scramble over before breaking into a full run.</i></p>	<p>Starting Positions: Parker 0; Sentry 5; Door 15</p> <p><i>Parker's move = 2 + ⑧ + ① = 11 → Rank 5 5 + 7 quickness - 10 obstacle = 2.</i></p> <p><i>Sentry's move = 2 + ⑦ + ⑧ = 17 → Rank 7 7 + 3 quickness - 5 labyrinth = 5.</i></p> <p>End Round 1 Positions: Parker 2; Sentry 10.</p>
<p><i>The sentry clears the maze and dashes for the office door. The thug's hand lands on the latch just as Parker sprints from the maze and crashes into him.</i></p>	<p><i>Parker's move = 26 → rank 11 + 7 - 5 = 13</i></p> <p><i>Sentry's move = 15 → rank 7 + 3 - 2 = 8</i></p> <p>End Round 2 Positions: Parker 15, Sentry 15 <i>(Sentry could have gone on to 18 if the door had been open.)</i></p>

Attack

The attacker picks his target and readies an **attack total** of skill base +roll +weapon speed. As with all actions, only one skill, one finesse, and one weapon (or trick) may add to the total.

Attack

The card game is in full swing, with Thorton winning and being obnoxious about it. His thumping of the tabletop makes the cash jump around, muddles the cards, and hides the fact that someone outside is banging on the door frantically. When the door crashes open, there is a minotaur silhouetted by dock lamps, holding Belham's inert body by the back of his neck. Parker lifts the sentry and antes up by hurling him onto the card table.

*Parker's throw 2 +⑥ +① +⑥ +⑧ =22
GM says sentry's body has edge VD6*

A character targeted by the attack can choose between several forms of resistance for his **defense total**. Using **evasion**, the defender simply tries to get out of the way. Using **bravery**, the defender steels himself against the incoming assault, making the attack land on harder anatomy or better armor in order to dissipate the impact. The target may also **parry**, interposing objects or cover between himself and the attacker's weapon. Finally, the well-trained defender may attempt a **counterattack**, turning the tables on his attacker. Each defense form will be covered in turn.

Evasion Defense

The easiest, best, and most common defense is to avoid being struck by an attack. Defending characters usually use evade for this action total, although other skills (such as sneak, concentrate, fly, or shift) may be appropriate under certain conditions. If the attack total is larger than the resistance total, the defender is struck by the attacker's weapon; otherwise, the defender is missed by the attack.

Evasion Defense

Parker lifts the sentry and hurls him bodily onto the card table. Riddle rolls out of his chair, trying not to be hit by the body as it corkscrews through the air.

*Parker's throw 2 +⑥ +① +⑥ +⑧ =22
Riddle's evade 2 +④ +① +② =9
attack > defense: Riddle is hit.*

How Bad is He Hit?

Once a character has been struck, the degree of injuries comes in the form of hits and wounding effects from two sources: the edge of the attacker's weapon or trick, and the **impact**, a measure of the quality of the strike. The quality of the strike comes from the difference between the attack and defense total (the **result**), and the impact comes from transforming this difference on the standards chart across to the **impact** column).

Distributing Injury

When a character has run out of ways to prevent injury, the effects the character is receiving from an attack may be reduced—traded for a combination of hits and fatigue. Each type of effect targets one or more specific pools, as described in the Effects sections. For each effect, the whole reduction cost must be exchanged or the effect cannot be reduced. In addition, once an effect has been taken, it cannot be reduced later; it must wear off naturally or be treated instead.

A number of hits usually accompanies injury effects. These cannot be reduced (they are the basic increment of injury) but they can be distributed to any hit pool.

Distributing Injury

<p><i>Riddle rolls out of his chair, trying not to be hit by Belham's body as it corkscrews through the air. He's not nearly fast enough and is struck by the sentry's shoulder and flailing arm. Partly through his own inertia, Riddle reels away and crashes into a pile of crates. Dazed, Riddle plays dead and watches for an opportunity.</i></p>	<p><i>Parker's throw =22, Riddle's evade =9 Difference =22-9 =13 impact of 13 =3 hits injury = edge VD6 +impact 3 =VD9 Riddle has hit pools P7 M5 E5 The GM subtracts the 9 hits first. Riddle has P3 M3 E2 left. Riddle takes the D.</i></p>
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Piercing Effects

Eventually, some form of defense fails completely, usually because of a crash on the roll, resulting in a defense total of 0. GMs can interpret this disaster as deer-in-the-headlights freezing, blindsiding, bad luck, or a dramatic and providential opening in an otherwise flawless fighting style. Either way, the victim usually gets very hurt, and the impact includes the asterisks next to the hits. For each **asterisk in the impact column**, one wounding effect (defender's choice) becomes **piercing**. A piercing effect bypasses armor and may not be reduced by exchanging with hits.

Piercing Effects

<p><i>Parker lifts the sentry and hurls him bodily onto the card table. Ungar instinctively reaches for the ante pool, realizing a moment too late that he is the only one still seated. Belham's buttocks and legs land squarely on the back of Ungar's head and shoulders, slamming him forward into the table, which shatters and dumps both of them onto the floor.</i></p>	<p><i>Parker's <u>throw</u> 2 +⑥ +① +⑥ +⑧ =22 Ungar's <u>evade</u> 2 +⑩ =0 result: 22-0 = 22 edge VD6 + impact 4* Ungar cannot reduce the D.</i></p>
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Bravery Defense

The tough guy, the hero, and the brute use brave (or possibly resolve or concentrate against a mental assault) to just stand there and take it. Naturally, the attack arrives and the edge of the weapon or trick is inflicted on the defender as injury. If the result goes in the attacker's favor, the impact enlarges the injury he inflicts. However, the defender's total is simultaneously translated into a separate impact; these hits reduce hits in the injury. For each asterisk associated with the defender's total, the defender may also reduce the injury by a wounding effect of his choice.

Bravery Defense

<p><i>Parker lifts the sentry and hurls him bodily at the card table. Wiley, behind the table, rises and tries to catch Belham's body, bracing for the collision. The flailing body spins at the last second, Belham and Wiley bang heads, and the card table collapses in a flutter of cards, coins, and splintering wood. Wiley emerges bruised but little the worse.</i></p>	<p><i>Parker's <u>throw</u> 2 +⑥ +① +⑥ +⑧ =22 Wiley's <u>brave</u> 3 +② +⑦ +⑧ =20 result = 22-20 =2 injury = edge VD6 + impact 1 =VD7 Wiley's defense 3* (reduces D3) final injury =1 hit</i></p>
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Parry Defense

The act of using weapons, cover, or commonplace objects as a defense is usually a specialization on specific weapons training, represented by finesses such as cut/parry or brawl/block. Professional martial training may allow the use of parry, the skill for blocking attacks with body parts, shields, or the nearest broom handle. Although parrying with firearms is unlikely, fantastical skills just as conjure, invoke, force, or animate usually occur at slow enough speeds that a defensive spell is possible. In this style of defense, the attacker's skill and his weapon are balanced by the defender and his shield.

If the attacker's total is higher, the defender is struck in spite of his parry; his effort slows down the attacker, and the resulting injury is resolved as if it were an evasion.

If the defender's total is higher, the attacker still strikes successfully (the defender is not trying to get out of the way, after all) but hits the parry instead of the defender. Injury is resolved as a bravery defense, with two added benefits. First, any object (a shield, sword, body, or broomstick) used to deflect a blow already has hits and effects (see Inanimate Objects section) in addition to those gained from the defender's (anti)impact. Second, given that parries are often used to create an opening against an opponent, the defender gains a bonus to his next attack on that opponent equal to his result converted to a Rank. If it is not used by the end of the combat round, this bonus fades.

Parry Defense

Parker lifts the sentry and hurls him bodily at the card table. Thorton, behind the table, backpedals and snatches up his chair to deflect Belham's whirling body. The chair splinters, but Thorton manages to smash Belham away and down, forcing him onto the tabletop in spite of his wildly flailing limbs, before his feeble barrier comes apart. Thorton uses the chaos of the table's collapse under Ungar and Belham to his advantage, snatching a pistol from under his coat.

Parker's throw 2 + ⑥ + ① + ⑥ + ③ = 22

Thorton's brawl/block

4 + ⑩ + ⑨ + ⑤ + ③ = 30

GM says "Chair has 2 hits."

Thorton's defense 4* + chair 2 = D6
body VD6

chair destroyed, no injury

Thorton's bonus against Parker

30 - 22 = 8 → Rank +5

Counterattack

The defender may try to reverse an incoming attack, wounding the original attacker. The defender makes an action total using an appropriate skill (usually combat, such as cut or shoot, best when matching the skill used by the attacker) against the attack total, including an 8-point handicap. A successful counter becomes an attack, and the injury is resolved as in evasion. The original attacker may attempt another counterattack or takes the result as injury. Since an exchange of counterattacks is rapid combat, no other types of defense may be used. In addition, the penalties escalate: the second counterattack in an exchange includes a 16-point handicap, the third a 24-point handicap (effectively buying the [C] effect multiple times for successive actions).

Counterattacks

Thorton brings his pistol to bear on Parker. Parker observes the sudden movement and tries to counter the threat, drawing Rose's pistol for a preemptive strike. Thorton stares down the barrel of Parker's weapon, and snaps off a wild shot, hearing Parker's shot a split-second before. The pellets from Parker's pistol splat wetly against Thorton's chest and neck; his own shot embeds itself harmlessly in the doorjamb near Parker's right ear. As the red-black grease that passes for blood in Thorton's veins spills down his shirt, Thorton hears an unpleasant shearing sound. The ghoul begins clawing at his wound, trying to kill the borers Parker just fired into his body.

*Thorton 9 +④ +⑦ +① +② =23
 Thorton gained +5 from his parry =28
 Parker 10 +② +⑩ +⑧ +④ +⑥ =40
 counter penalty -8 =32,
 Parker seizes the attack*

*Thorton 9 +⑩ +② +⑦ +⑦ +⑨ +① =35
 counter penalty -16 =19
 Thorton misses, 32 -19 =13*

*Parker's pistol FB2 increases result
 13 + 10 (from F effect) = 23
 injury B2 + impact 4* =B*6*

Non-lethal Combat

For contests in which the combat is not intended to be life-threatening (e.g., a game of cards, an argument, or a chase), the impact can be read as **fatigue** instead of hits. The contest will usually end when the targeted fatigue pool (for example, the emotional fatigue pool in the case of an argument) either runs to 0 or drops by/below a certain amount representing the defender's resistance.

COVERING YOUR SIX

Injury Location

To determine a body location for strikes or other purposes, take the last digit of the attack total and use the following guide.

1	head and neck	7-8	right arm, right hand
2-4	shoulders, chest	9	left hip, leg, foot
5-6	left arm, left hand	0	right hip, leg, foot

For some types of attacks, location may be irrelevant. For example, psychological attacks target the mind and insults target the ego and hence require a specialized protection from either genre abilities or tricks. These locations are included on the character sheet in the event that your PC prepares special defenses for mind and will. As an additional example, volume-filling attacks (those with the [V] effect built into the weapon or trick) may eliminate protection provided by armor or clothing (see Outfit), rendering the actual location struck unimportant.

Hit Location

Thorton's pistol moves, Parker sees it and succeeds in shooting Thorton first. Parker is initially surprised by the paint-like splatter the rounds make on Thorton's upper torso, until he notices with disgust the setting on Rose's pistol.

*Parker's last attack total is a 32.
→ hit location 2 = throat and chest*

Adding Effects to Attacks and Defenses

Like ordinary action totals, attacks and defenses may have effects added to them in exchange for a reduced total. The cost for each effect is the number of that type of effect in the action times that effect's power. So, an extra [D] effect could be added to an attack of 34 DRR3 by reducing the total by 4 (30 DRR3), whereas a [C] could be added to an evasion of 35 for an 8-point reduction (to 27 C). Any addition of effects must occur before the competing (probably attack) total is known, and the PC's modified total must beat that competing total for the assembled effects to function. If the PC's total does not beat the competing total, the action is unsuccessful and the PC's carefully wrought maneuver (attack or defense) doesn't do any good.

Outfit

Injury from an attack may be blocked by various forms of protection, usually clothing or armor, collectively called the **outfit** in **CYCHOSYS**. Like weapons, outfits possess two characteristics, but **weight** and **shield** reflect the mass and protection afforded by the clothing. Outfit shield uses the same effects as weapons; in the case of outfits, these are the effects and hits absorbed by the apparel whenever it is struck.

Outfit Table

<u>Natural</u>			<u>Historic</u>		
	weight	shield		weight	shield
normal human skin	0	1	cloth, heavy	1	RH1
bark or wicker	3	BH1	cloth, light	0	1
bone	3	BP2	hide, studded	2	BR2
fur	2	DR2	mail, chain	4	BP2
hide, soft	1	R1	mail, ring	3	BR1
hide, tough/thick	2	PH2	mail, scale	5	OB3
padding	1	DR1	plate, bronze	6	SBR4
mineral	5	SO8	plate, steel	7	SOB6
wood	3	OB3	silk	0	B (edges)
<u>Modern</u>			<u>Futuristic</u>		
	weight	shield		weight	shield
asbestos	2	X	absorptive	2	X (heat)
BPV, flak vest	4	SBR3	ceramic	6	SXB8
canvas/denim	1	B1	ablative	4	SDRH2
hard rubber	4	OBR3	energy field	1	XP2
Kevlar fiber	2	SB1	sheet titanium	2	SBP3
plastic	2	OP3	force field	0	S5
heavy synthetic	1	BP1	re-emission	2	X (light)
light synthetic	0	2	white noise	1	P2
<u>Industrial</u>					
	weight	shield		weight	shield
brick, cinderblock	5	SO8			
cement	8	SOBP12			
cured wood	5	OBP4			
drywall	3	BH1			
fiberglass	1	O4			
hull plating	10	SXOBH10			
safety glass	4	SH2			
sheet steel	4	SB4			

Outfit

<p><i>Distracted by Thorton's thrashing self-destruction, Parker misses Wiley's subtler movement, lost behind the settling body of the sentry. Parker sees Wiley's knife at the last moment, lurching aside as Wiley throws. The blade lances into Parker's shoulder as he seeks cover. The fabric of his coat tears (again!) but the blade slows more as it bites through Parker's natural leathery hide.</i></p>	<p><i>Wiley's <u>throw</u> = 34 BR3 Parker's <u>evade</u> = 29 Result is 5, Parker is hit for BR3+2</i></p> <p><i>Suit coat 1 RH1 Skin 2 BBDD2</i></p>
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Outfit Protection

When an attack lands on a specific part of the PC's body, the PC's outfit at that location reduces the impact of a successful attack.

Each outfit gets a **soak step** in which to diffuse an impact. Each effect in the outfit shield cancels a matching wounding effect in the impact. Some trademarks or very good outfits give an opportunity to repeat the soak step, while space-filling attacks (with the volume [V] effect) and armor-piercing attacks (any 1 wounding effect matched with a targeting [T] effect) each bypass one soak step. Afterward, apply any effects left over to the PC.

The Soak Step

<i>The blade lances into Parker's shoulder as he seeks cover. The fabric of his coat tears (again!) but does not slow the blade down as much as Parker's natural leathery hide. In spite of the protection, Parker feels the blade bite deep. This wound stings, a reminder to Parker to focus on his functional opponents.</i>	<i>Parker is hit for BR5 Suit coat soaks R1 Skin soaks B2 Parker is injured for 2 hits</i>
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Burden

Each piece of a PC's outfit covers one or more of the six hit locations. Outfit weight and shield are totaled for each hit location to describe the function of the whole outfit.

The weight of all that equipage slows a PC down; however, the more the PC wears the better protected he is. **Burden**, a measure of the PC's load due to his outfit, is equal to the most common weight in the total outfit, increased by 1 for each extra layer covering the most heavily covered body part. Burden is subtracted from the PC's quickness.

Skin

Some very tough humans and many types of animals, monsters, and aliens may have a rigid natural integument that is a vast improvement on naked human skin (but note from the list—naked skin does offer a defense!). Players may wish to advance the lowest layer of the outfit, the **skin**, both for the defense and advantage that the skin layer usually doesn't have a burden greater than 0. Advancement of the skin as part of the outfit takes training and/or inhuman genes, usually gained through trademarks.

Burden and Skin

<i>Concealed behind a stack of crates, Parker pulls the knife from his shoulder, irritated by the damage to his suit. The wound will heal, but the suit, shot through twice in one day, will have to be replaced. Parker wishes he were faster on his feet, but the combination of the Red Plague and genetics left him at the mercy of his own mass and inflexibility. He laments the absence of his denim coat, but he felt it would slow him down even more. He's sure when, from the other side of a crates, comes the unmistakable sound of the ammo drum latch for a Howler Autocannon.</i>	<i>Burden of suit = 1 RH1 Burden of skin = 2 DDBB2 Total Burden = 3 (Quickness = 10 - 3 = 7) Coat Burden = 1 B1+ Extra layer = 1 0 Total Burden with coat = 5 (Quickness = 10 - 5 = 5)</i>
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Will

Just like the natural armor provided by tough hides, well-trained or very stable characters may (through the application of certain trademarks) advance a psychological “outfit” called the **will**. It usually has no burden and usually does not have a physical reality, but it offers protection against certain types of concerted attacks directed solely at the mind or ego. The GM should allow development of this outfit to specialists, only with a trademark, and only use it against certain types of threat.

Virtual Outfit

Some types of artifacts, usually arcane or futuristic, can add effects without adding layers or weight. These are applied just like normal outfit layers and may cover some or all of the hit locations.

Virtual Outfit

The darkness behind the speakeasy ripples for a moment and something in it moves, making Aiken Byrne tense fractionally—but the loping gait of the figure the ally disgorged is familiar.

“What do you want, old man?” Byrne drawls.

“Respect,” Vedevilich grates, “but in your case I’ll settle for two minutes. I bring you a gift to help you find the minotaur, who is even now depriving you of some of your hirelings.”

Byrne smiles as he withdraws a cigarette from the pack in his pocket. “I know. They’re worthless, really. It’s so hard to hire good ghouls these days. A calculated expense.”

Vedevilich gazes at him impassively. “It’s your money. Here.” He holds out an amulet. “It’s a 14th century protective charm some of my agents located this afternoon. It should level the playing field.”

“I think I can handle him,” Byrne says, but he takes the jeweled relic anyway. “What’s it do?”

“Increases your overall toughness, keeps you awake and focused, keeps you from getting burnt—”

“Like I need that,” says Byrne, grinning. The cigarette held between his lips flares at the tip, and he puffs on it. Then he puts the pendant in his pocket. “Looks like I’ll have a double surprise for the bovine behemoth,” Byrne says. He grins again. “Thanks, old man,” he says, and walks away.

“You’re welcome,” says Vedevilich to his back.

*Jeweled relic 0 WUXR3
covers all hit locations*

Size

The [V] is automatically included in the outfit for monsters, machines, and structures. The GM should decide how many [V] effects are needed, but I recommend [V] for a modest car, [VV] for a dump truck or *Triceratops*, [VVV] for a small jet or locomotive, [VVVV] for a DC10, dragon, or space shuttle, [VVVVV] for a battleship or space station, and [VVVVVV] for an aircraft carrier or small starship. Remember to repeat the outfit soak step one time for each [V].

For small size, use [T] instead of [V], simulating the need for improved targeting to hit a small-sized object. I recommend [T] for an object or creature of half man size or volume, such as a large dog, [TT] for something less than a quarter human size, like a cat, [TTT] for a tiny object like a frog, [TTTT] for an insect, etc. An attacker must match [T]s in his attack with [T]s in the defenders outfit in order to strike, or use a volume-filling attack [V] to bypass the small-size penalty.

Improving Weapons and Outfit

A PC may advance a weapon's edge or an outfit's shield. These advancements may be lost if that special weapon or piece of clothing is lost or if the PC spends a great deal of time using other equipment. The modification costs experience points equal to the power of the added effects; in the case of outfit, effects are added to specific pieces of clothing, not hit locations. These modifications require time and practice, and so cannot be added during combat.

Extended Injury Example

Riddle sprays the crates with Howler fire and watches as the flaming pellets sear their way through the wood. The crates shift, causing Riddle to back up and see Parker, who has climbed over the barrier. Riddle manages to squeeze off a burst before Parker leaps down. Parker feels the incendiary pellets rip across his shoulder and chest before landing both feet on Riddle and crushing him to the ground. Scooping up the Howler, Parker pivots and stops Wiley's headlong rush with a rapid burst. The ghoul is flung backward into the wall, where he starts to flail and burn. As the room falls quiet, and Parker grits his teeth against the pain again, looking for anyone still conscious. Ungar unwisely chooses that moment to groan.

Howler Autocannon 9 VFXP2

Riddle's shoot total =22

Parker's evade total =18

Result 4

Result +10 for [F] = 14

Impact =3 hits

[V] on weapon =no soak step

Injury = XP5

Parker's current pools P8 M5 E4

Reduce [X] for P1 M1

Reduce [P] for M1

Distribute 5 hits

Parker's hit pools now P4 M2 E3