

3 of 5:

Wine

Entomology

Accuser

Invincible

Companion

1 or more:

No character sheet

Custom cards

Fixed characters, no generation

Resolution uses colors

Hand gestures = in-game effect

One die roll = 3+ effects

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Lots of six-sided dice in three colors. These rules use red for tens, white for ones, and black for bonus dice, but any mutually agreeable combination is fine.

THE SHAB-AL-HIRI ROACH

Pemberton University, 1919 - Entomologist and Biology professor William Appleby-Jenkins returns from Mesopotamia with a terrible oily hissing cockroach. Unlike regular roaches, this one can crawl into your mouth and take control of your mind and body.

"Specimen is most certainly Blaberoidea; it bears superficial resemblance to both *Aptera fusca*, the Cape Mountain Cockroach, and supercedes *G. portentosa* in size at an astonishing and impressive 80 cm. It's desert home is in the range of neither. There is no question that my specimen is entirely unknown to science. I shall call it *Blaberidae pingui Jenkinsii*, Jenkins' Greasy Roach."

ABOUT PEMBERTON UNIVERSITY

A quiet and very old New England institution, Pemberton has a small, pleasantly dilapidated campus dominated by imposing stone buildings in neo-gothic style. Ancient oaks line the flagstone walks. Pemberton isn't very close to anything noteworthy, and the community is insular.

Pemberton's motto is *Sapientia stellarum nos conservabit* ("Starry Wisdom shall save us").

CHARACTER GENERATION

YOUR EXPERTISE

PCs are all members of the faculty of Pemberton University. You must choose a college (either Arts or Sciences) and department. Multiple characters can reside in the same department.

COLLEGE OF ARTS EXPERTISE LIST

Foreign and Ancient Languages

Art and Art History

History

Literature

Mathematics

Music
Philosophy
Poetry and Drama
Religion

COLLEGE OF SCIENCES EXPERTISE LIST

Anthropology
Astronomy
Biology
Botany
Chemistry
Geography
Geology
Physics
Psychology

This choice will dictate your character's professional relationships and, possibly, outlook and disposition toward other faculty members. You roll four dice in conflicts that directly relate to your field.

YOUR ENTHUSIASMS

You must also choose a pair of enthusiasms. You'll want to pick a particular trait or two to emphasize, but the assumption is that if you have a particular enthusiasm, you are generally competent within that broad field of endeavor. Like your academic field, you roll four dice in conflicts that directly relate to your enthusiasms. Below are some suggestions, but others are certainly possible.

ENTHUSIASM LIST

Deception: Lying, cheating, and stealing of every description.

Debauchery: Drinking, smoking, and gambling. The ability to get along in mixed company and among sailors. Throwing dice, playing cards, holding your own in a bare-knuckle brawl, and knowing where to go to hear jazz.

Pleasure: Romance and furtive sex, sumptuous dinners, expensive art objects, all things hedonistic are important to you.

Gossip: Both spreading and gathering petty intelligence, accurate or wildly speculative. Trivia, disinformation, and smear campaigns may be personal specialties.

Manipulation: Persuasion in every form, from arguing to ego-stroking to seduction to threats of physical violence.

Self-Promotion: This includes all facets of communication to further your interests and increase your reputation, from formal oratory, to op-ed pieces, including the art of the clever put-down or stinging bon mot.

Research: The bread and butter of the academic, in theory. Dusty library basements and bad-smelling laboratories are more home than home.

Subterfuge: Sneaking around, climbing ivy-covered trellises, picking locks and rifling file cabinets are all familiar to you.

Sociability: Dancing, making small talk, cleaning up nicely and generally being charming at cocktail parties. Making a good appearance and courting the wealthy and powerful.

Sport: Playing tennis and lacrosse, hunting, boating, and following the Permberton football team.

Technology: Fooling around with things like motorcars, aeroplanes, and wireless sets.

Creativity: Crafting works of beauty and meaning - art, poetry, music, theater, dance, the Great American Novel, that sort of thing.

Self-Destruction: Taking your other enthusiasm to dangerous extremes – not just debauched, but a raging alcoholic, for example. This enthusiasm allows you to flip dice in any conflict that is likely to injure or kill you.

YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Organize all players alphabetically by last name. Your character must have a strong positive relationship with character played by the next player in ascending sequence and a strong negative relationship with character played by the next player in descending sequence. If your last name is first or last in order, start over at the top or bottom of the alphabet, forming a chain. Collaborate with the other players to make these relationships fun and filled with interesting conflicts.

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Determine what is at stake in the conflict. Both sides in a contest will roll dice; where there is no obvious opponent the player rolls alone. GM-controlled NPCs may use their enthusiasm and expertise to flip dice as necessary, as can other player characters. Remember the Roach has the option of flipping dice whenever it wishes, as often as necessary.

ROLLING THE DICE

In all conflicts roll a number of six-sided dice, at least two but possibly many more. In a normal conflict, you'll roll three dice, and if it involves your Expertise or an Enthusiasm, you add one die for each relevant area. These dice are sorted, and two are selected to represent tens and ones, giving a gap-filled range from 11 to 66.

You can continue to roll as many times as you like, provided each roll is at least one higher than the previous. The more successful rolls you make, the greater the degree of success. A roll in which you cannot make a number equal to or lower than the current total signals failure.

There is an element of gambling here, because multiple successes make failure increasingly likely as well - and the degree of success at the time of the unlucky roll becomes the degree of failure.

In an opposed conflict, you'll need to not only succeed, but succeed with a higher number total rolls than your opponent. If both sides fail, you may elect to withdraw or continue the conflict. If both sides agree to continue, start rolling from scratch **with one less die each**.

DIE-ROLLING EXAMPLE

There's a conflict to be resolved. I figure out what's at stake – it involves one of my Enthusiasms, so I roll four dice. On my first roll I get 1,2,5,5, and out of those I pick 12. I roll again and get 1,1,3,5, and I pick out 13 as my best combination. Two successes so far (The first one is always free!). I roll again and get 3,3,4,5 and pick out 33. Then 4,5,5,6, and pick 45 – four successes.

Next roll: 3,3,3,5 and I pick 53 – five successes, but it is getting more likely that I will fail. Should I stop? Hell, no! Next roll – 1,3,3,5 – and I can't beat 53, so I fail.

THE FALL SEMESTER

The game is played over the course of the 1919 fall semester at key points of interest to the faculty.

"Stand-Up" greeting ceremony
Rush (frat/sorority)
Convocation
Fall recess
Homecoming, dance, football game
Thanksgiving
Halloween
Christmas
Faculty retreat
President's wine and cheese social
Formal Ball

Registration
First day of classes
Mid-terms
Finals

Tenure committee
Recital/performance/lecture
Recitation/reading day
Faculty senate meeting

GAME PLAY

Players do not know who the roach is in at the moment, but it is always in someone. If you think it is in you and behave accordingly, and it is determined that it is in someone else ... the roach has bred, and now there are two. When everyone is bound by the roaches the game ends.

What if you could signal to other players that you were under the control of the insects by never letting go of the table or other subtle gestures?

Some in-game events trigger gradually increasing possession. Players always have two distinct sets or orders to follow, depending on who is in control. No one knows what events trigger increased roach control in their counterparts, because it is based on physical and mental weakness.

The game ends when everyone has been taken over by the Roach.

Cards for academic social interaction/sniping and cards for the roach commandments.

What does the roach want?
To destroy people and to spread itself among them.

Trust mechanic, card swapping mechanic, hidden possession mechanic

Power
Recognition

Prestige
Wealth
Status
Control
Dominance
Ambition
Lust
Ideology
Doctrine

OLD STUFF

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Determine what is at stake in the conflict. Both sides in a contest will roll dice; where there is no obvious opponent the player rolls alone. GM-controlled NPCs may use their enthusiasm and expertise to flip dice as necessary, as can other player characters. Remember the Roach has the option of flipping dice whenever it wishes, as often as necessary.

ROLLING THE DICE

In all conflicts roll two six-sided dice, one white, one red. The red is tens and the white is ones, giving a gap-filled range from 11 to 66. This first roll is your base number, and to succeed, you must surpass it in your next roll. You will fail often - you are an academic.

You can continue to roll as many times as you like, provided each roll is at least one higher than the previous. The more successful rolls you make, the greater the degree of success. A roll equal to or lower than the current total signals failure.

There is an element of gambling here, because multiple successes grant bonus dice for future use, but failure becomes increasingly likely as well - and the degree of success at the time of the unlucky roll becomes the degree of failure.

In an opposed conflict, you'll need to not only succeed, but succeed with a higher number than your opponent. If both sides fail, you may elect to withdraw or continue the conflict. If both sides agree to continue, start over with new base numbers.

DIE-ROLLING EXAMPLE

There's a conflict to be resolved. I figure out what's at stake and roll. I get a 2 (red) and 5 (white), or 25, for my base. I roll again and get a 31. So far so good - one success. I roll again and get a 53 - my second success, and the odds are now very much against me. I roll again, get a 36, and fail badly.

FLIPPING DICE

When what's at stake involves your Field or Enthusiasm, you can flip red and white dice once per conflict. Since this can turn a 16 into a 61, it is a useful advantage. If the conflict involves more than one Enthusiasm, or an Enthusiasm and your Expertise, you can flip once for each area involved.

If you are controlled by the Roach, your dice become unordered - you can arrange them as you wish after each roll. Obviously this is a huge advantage, a permanent flip. Fear the roach.

SUCCESS

Exceeding your base number on the following roll signals success - you can stop there and win the conflict. However, you have the option of rolling again. As long as you continue to roll higher than your previous effort, you continue to succeed. Multiple successful rolls should indicate a remarkable triumph, and you are rewarded with bonus dice (see below).

FAILURE

The severity of your failure is dictated by the number of successful rolls that precede it. A bad roll right out of the gate (not meeting your base roll) should be narrated as a minor loss with the opportunity to recover later. A failure after a single success is pretty bad, and should be definitive. A failure after multiple successes should be utterly disastrous.

LOSING YOUR NERVE

Sometimes your base number will be high. In these cases, you may choose to back out of the conflict. You lose whatever is at stake, but narrate it in the most innocuous and positive way possible.

BONUS DICE

Bonus dice are black. You earn them by achieving more than one success in a conflict **without the use of bonus dice**. Every success beyond one earns you a bonus die **to use in a future conflict**, provided that you don't end in failure.

Bonus dice are single-use perks. You can roll a bonus die after any roll, including your base number roll, and substitute the bonus die for either die if you wish. This won't always be useful, but it will be more often than not if you roll poorly.

You can receive bonus dice when controlled by the Roach, but you may never spend them.

BONUS DIE EXAMPLE

In your conflict your base number is 21, and you've already rolled a 43 for one success. You roll again and get a 41 – no good! Luckily you have a bonus die, which you decide to roll. It comes up 4, so you swap out the 1 to make your roll a 44, and a success. Because this multiple success required the use of a bonus die, you don't get a bonus die as reward.