

MALANDROS

a DramaSystem game

by Thomas M^cGrenerly



MALANDROS



a DramaSystem role-playing game
by Thomas M'Grenery

Rio de Janeiro in the last days of imperial Brazil.
A city of slums and palaces, street gangs and tycoons,
magic charms and outlawed martial arts.

Cunning, bohemian, streetwise, the *malandro* walks
through it all without fear—because there's always a
way out.

DEDICATION

A minha Mestra que me ensinou

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To play this game, you will need:

- 3–8 players
- one or two six-sided dice per player
- about a dozen poker chips or beads
- as many index cards (or spare playing cards) as you have players
- writing utensils
- scrap paper

“Malandro é o cara que sabe das coisas
Malandro é aquele que sabe o que quer
Malandro é o cara que ta com dinheiro
E não se compara com um Zé Mané
Malandro de fato é um cara maneiro
E não se amarra em uma só mulher.”

*Malandro is the guy who knows things
Malandro is the one who knows what he wants
Malandro is the guy who has money
And he does not compare himself with any Joe Schmo
Malandro, in fact, is a cool guy
And does not tie himself to one girl.*

Bezerra da Silva, “Malandro É Malandro e Mané É Mané”

Last year, Princess Isabel signed the Golden Law, abolishing slavery in Brazil. So now we're all free: black, white and native alike. More or less.

Round here the coffee barons run the show. They might have fought against abolition harder if they hadn't figured out that it's cheaper to pay workers peanuts than put a roof over their heads.

The Empire of Brazil is entering its last days. At street level in the city, life continues to be vibrant, often violent, and full of people just trying to get by, to find a *jeitinho*. "Finding a way" – that's the streetwise thing to do; it's what *malandros* do. But as the proverb has it, *O malandro demais se atrapalha*: the guy who tries to be too smart only trips up himself.



Rio de Janeiro, 1889

WHAT THIS IS

Malandros is a roleplaying game based on the DramaSystem rules engine. Players take on the roles of characters in a tight-knit community caught up in tumultuous times.

Although *Malandros* takes a particular time and place in history as its starting point (1889 in Rio de Janeiro), it is not a historical simulation – you, the participants, will work together to create the story of what happens to your characters and their city.

In any given session of the game, most of your group will be the ‘players’. That is, you each portray a single player character (PC), one of the protagonists of your shared story. One of you will be the GM (short for *a Gente e o Mundo*), portraying the world at large and all the people in it that the player characters meet. If you are the GM, your player character becomes part of the supporting cast.

You may choose to have one person be the GM all the time or take turns at the job with each new episode, as you prefer.



HOW TO PLAY MALANDROS

CREATING THE MAIN CAST

Take turns to announce your role in the cast, choose a character type and name your characters.

Say how your Player Character (PC) is related to the others.

Choose a Desire.

Choose a pair of Dramatic Poles.

Say what you want, emotionally, from at least two other PCs:

E.g. I want...

- approval from my father
- love from the object of my desire
- respect from my boss
- to dominate the leader of the rival gang
- subservience from my employee

The other PC's player will tell you why you can't have what you want.

Finally, complete this sentence:

My story is of a man/woman who...

SCENES

Players and GM take turns to call scenes. When it's your turn, tell everyone:

- who is in the scene (including other people's characters if you want)
- where and when it takes place
- what is happening

Your PC must also have a goal in mind – why they're doing what they are in the scene.

If your character wants an emotional response from someone else – a favour, a show of obedience, a friendly word – it will be a *dramatic scene*.

If your character is pursuing a practical, concrete goal, it's a *procedural scene*.

If you can't think of anything straight away, take a moment to think. Look at your Desire and Dramatic Poles for inspiration, consider the episode's theme, or ask the group for help.

If it's not your turn to call the scene, you must wait until the caller asks for help before you can offer advice.

DRAMATIC SCENES

When you get what you want from another participant's character in a dramatic scene, give that player a drama token. If they don't give you what you want, they must pay a drama token to you.

Forcing

You may spend two drama tokens to force someone to grant a significant emotional concession. They may still withhold some part of what you seek.

You may block a force by giving the other player three drama tokens. Other PCs in the same scene may also contribute tokens to a force or block.

PROCEDURAL SCENES

To resolve a procedural scene you'll need to take one or more actions.

Roll a single six-sided die (1d6). If you want, you can add your rating in a relevant ability to the roll, but you have to say so in advance. When you use an ability, put a cross next to it on your character sheet. You can't use it again until you refresh it (see below).

Different actions have different outcomes according the die roll. In general, a result of 2 or less is usually a failure. 3-5 is a success with drawbacks, and 6 or more is a complete success.

Asé Dice

You may spend 1 Asé (rhymes with 'sachet') to roll an additional die for an action. Keep whichever rolls the highest result. Whenever an action says you "gain Asé", add 1 to your Asé score.

Refreshing abilities

You can regain the points you've spent on using an ability by calling a dramatic scene during which your character recuperates in an appropriate fashion. You must state when calling the scene that you intend to refresh an ability, and which one.

CONTENTS

Rio de Janeiro: Cidade Maravilhosa	8
The People You Meet	34
Creating Characters	62
Signature Moves	74
Episodes & Scenes	94
Stress & Harm	120
Wealth & Money	123
Playing the Game	127
Complications	144
Supporting Cast	147
Patuás, the Corpo Fechado & other uncanny matters	149

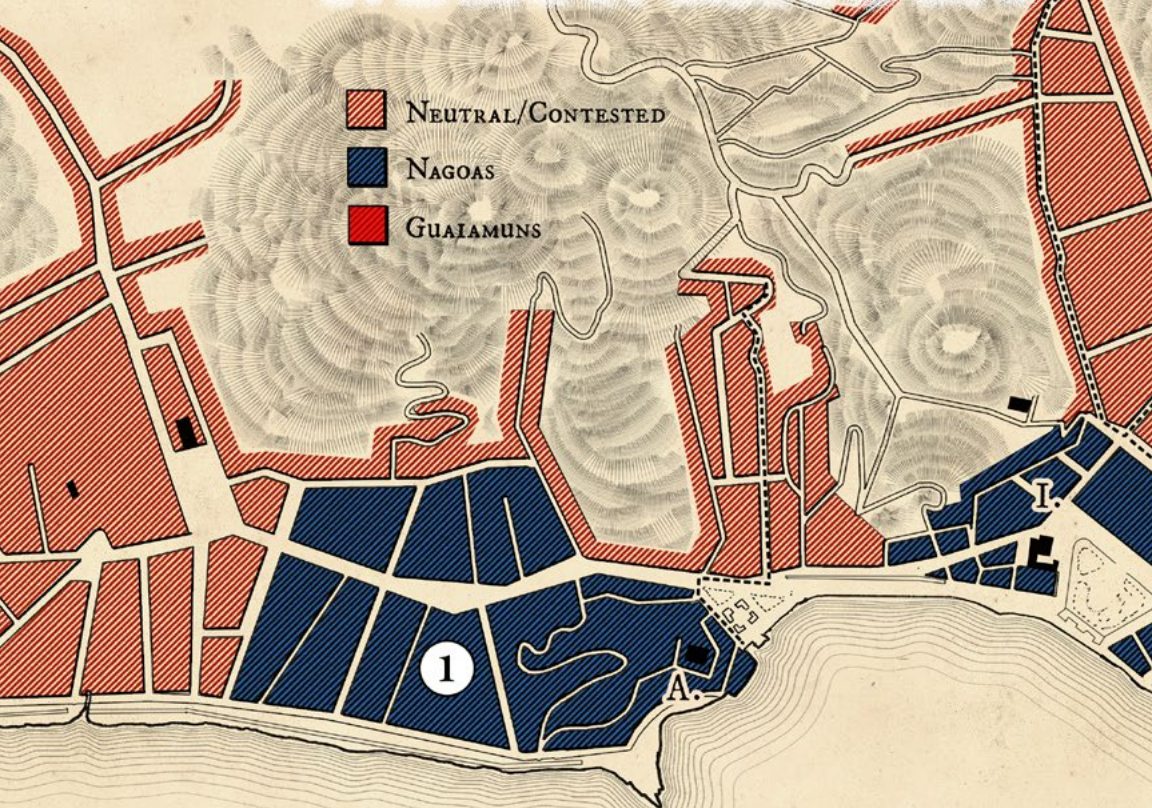


THE CITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO

SCALE 3 INS. to 1 MILE

0 1 2 3/4

CIDADE MARAVILHOSA



MALTA GANGS

A. Glória: Flor da Gente

B. Santa Luzia: Monturo

C. São José: Velho Carpinteiro

D. Santa Rita: Três Cachos

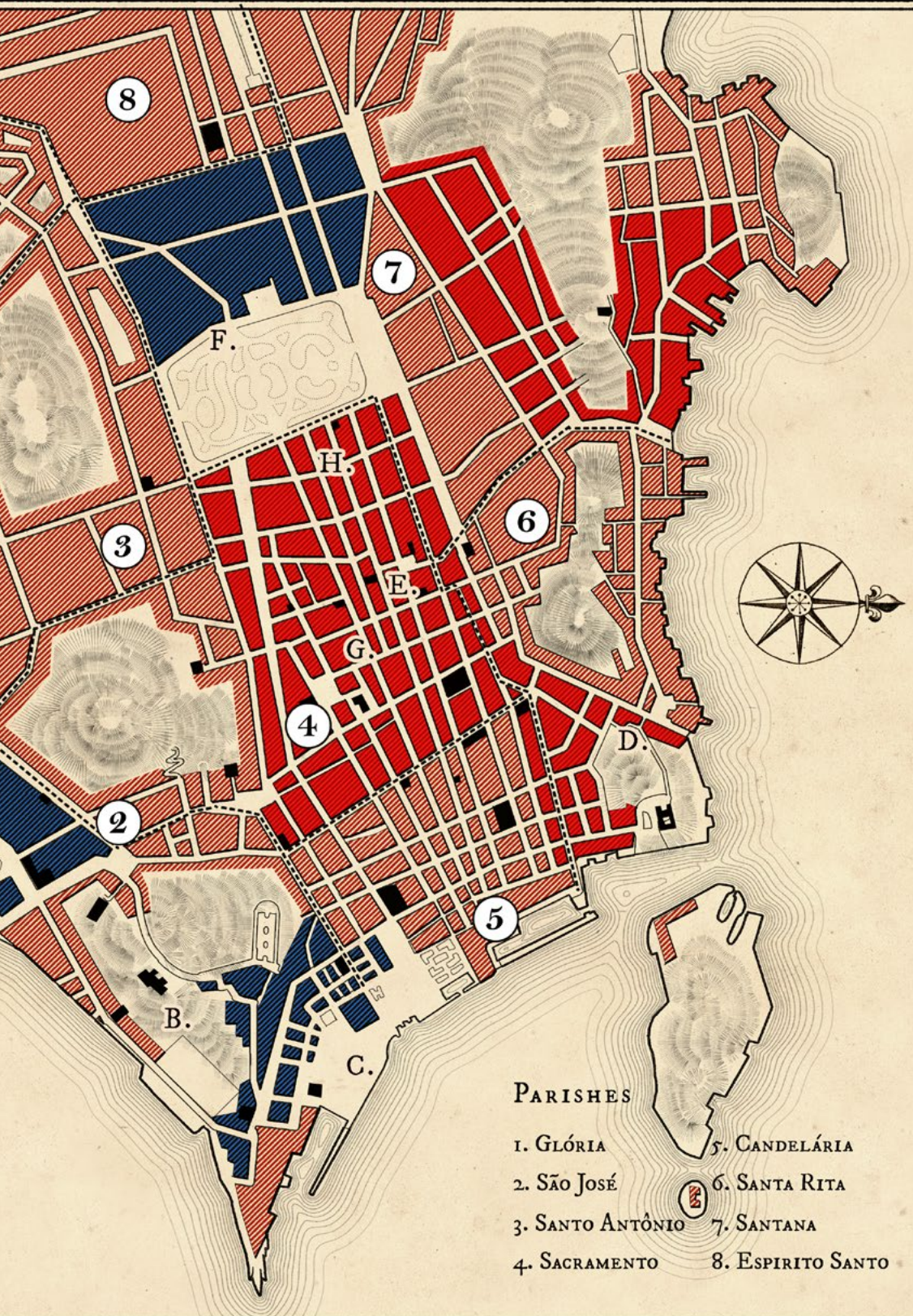
E. Bom Jesus do Calvário: Dos Ossos

F. Campo de Santana: Cadeira da Senhora

G. Largo de São Francisco: Franciscanos

H. São Jorge: Lança

I. Lapa: Espada





They call it the *cidade maravilhosa*:
the marvellous city.

Rio de Janeiro has much at which to
marvel.

Its grand palaces and avenues befit
the capital of an empire. Emperor
Pedro II, a reluctant monarch, holds
court in the Paço Imperial.

The white vaulting arches of the
Lapa Aqueduct bring fresh water to
the city.

The city has all the benefits of
modern science. Steam-powered
trams ply the streets, and at night
the city is illuminated by the glow of
gas lamps. A modern sewage system
keeps away the worst diseases.

Rio even has the most modern
communications technology – both
a telephone system and wireless
telegraphy.



Above: the proclamation of the Golden Law, freeing the slaves.
Left: Rua Ouvidor, one of the city's major thoroughfares.

COMMERCE

Brazil is rapidly urbanising.
Railways are being built at a
dizzying rate. Goods stream
into and through Rio constantly.

People flood into the city from
Europe and from other Brazilian
provinces to work in the many new
factories making textiles and other
products.

Coffee, cacao, rubber, sugar, cotton
and leather are brought into the
city by the thousands of tons,
ready for export.

Fishermen go out to sea every
day and bring home their catches
with the incoming tide.

The most profitable fishing is
more dangerous. The fishermen
must go far out to sea and it may
take days before they can return
home.





Minha jangada vai sair pro mar
 Pra trabalhar, meu bem querer
 Se Deus quise quand'eu volta do mar
 Um peixe bom eu vou trazer
 Meus companheiros tambem vão voltar
 E a Deus do céu vamos agradecer

*My boat will go out to sea
 To work, my beloved
 God willing when I come back from the sea
 A good fish I will bring
 My companions will return too
 And we will give thanks to God above*

Song of the Puxada de Rede



The streets and homes
of Rio are full of song.





MUSIC

The great and good dance in lavish attire to the music of the orchestra at formal balls where they are waited on hand and foot.

Ordinary people have their own kinds of music.

Choro is a style that usually has a fast, happy rhythm and makes great play of virtuosity and improvisation.

It is usually performed by a trio of flute, guitar and cavaquinho, typically informal groups of friends at parties, in botecos, on the streets, or at home balls called *forrobodós*.

The *maxixe*, sometimes called the 'Brazilian tango', is commonly danced to choro music.

From Portugal comes the mournful *fado*, songs of longing and regret performed by solo singers with guitar accompaniment.



RELIGION

Rio is a city of churches. Every bairro has its parish church, and often several more besides. Many professions and lay fraternities have their own chapels, as do military barracks, schools, hospitals and other institutions.

Christianity here is almost exclusively Roman Catholic. Catholicism is the state creed of the Brazilian Empire, though non-Catholics are not prevented from practising their faiths or building places of worship.

A few years ago, a contretemps between church and crown landed two bishops in jail over disobedience to the Emperor. They were soon freed after widespread public protest but the underlying discontent remains.



The church of Santa Luzia

Clergy and monastics are a common sight among the crowds in the city. Many are familiar faces: parish curates, friars or nuns who tend to the pastoral needs of the local community. Others are missionaries from overseas or from Brazil's interior, rarely staying in Rio for long.



Largely hidden from view as far as the elites are concerned, many descendants of Africans brought to Brazil as slaves practise *macumba*.

For non-practitioners this is a pejorative, catch-all term for African-derived religion, tantamount to witchcraft.

Believers know that 'macumba' is a misnomer and use the term only grudgingly, if at all. It does not really exist in a meaningful sense, for the Afro-Brazilian religions cannot be simply clumped together as one.



Drawing on traditional beliefs of West Africa, in particular those of the Yoruba cultures, a great deal of syncretism has occurred since the first slaves were brought to Brazil, influenced by Catholicism and native beliefs.

Furthermore, while society at large calls these religious practices primitive and backward, the truth is that they are complex, complete belief systems with centuries of history behind them.

The priestesses of these faiths, known as *mães-de-santo* – mothers of the saints – commune with the spiritual world to secure the blessings of the primordial beings called *orishas*.

Major orishas include:

- Exu, the messenger, who distributes *asé*
- Yemanjá, goddess of the sea
- Ogun, god of battle and metal
- Oshosi, spirit of the hunt, animals and wealth

Some people use their knowledge of the spirits to create protective amulets, and some to inflict harm on enemies – both services are available to others for a price.



Right: the orisha Yemanjá

The *malta*s – criminal gangs associated with the martial art of *capoeira* – are a constant menace to public order. There are two big *capoeira* “nations” – the Nagoas (whose colour is white) and the Guaiamuns (red). Each is made up out of many smaller local *malta*s who identify with a particular parish or area. Most gang members are in their teens or early twenties.

The Guaiamuns control the central areas of the city, but are surrounded on all sides by Nagoa territory. The Guaiamuns hold the old city centre, mainly the Sacramento and Santa Rita parishes. The latter includes the port area, which is full of the overcrowded tenements called *cortiços*. The Nagoas are strongest in the newer parts of town, forming a circle around the old city centre. Their turf includes Glória district, Lapa and the Santa Luzia beach. The big square of Campo de Santana is contested ground.

The Nagoas are identified with former slaves and Africans, who became a fixture of the city about 100 years ago, and are still from

mainly black neighbourhoods today. The Guaiamuns have native and *mestiço* roots, and grew significantly in the last few decades, as freemen, Portuguese immigrants, poor whites from the interior and creoles from all over Brazil became the majority of Rio's working population.

All the outfits hold regular training in headbutts, kicks, and techniques for the straight-razor and knife. The more experienced members act as instructors for the beginners. At first they practise thier techniques using wooden weapons, then later with actual blades, which often leaves the exercise areas stained with blood.

The *malta*s fight for territory, protect their bairros and commit countless crimes against person and property. They also defy the powers that be. Every time there is a big parade in the streets, you'll see young men full of bravado dance in front of the military bands, performing *capoeira* movements and acrobatics before escaping into the crowd, pursued by the police.

When a civilian parade is on, like for Carnival or a saint's feast day, the *capoeiristas* from the bairro accompany their neighbours as bodyguards, dancing along and knocking down people who get in the way.

The *malta*s also help decide elections. Most outfits have a particular patron, for whom they hassle opponents, drive off the wrong sorts of voters and “take care of” the ballot boxes on election day.

HOW TO START A FIGHT BY SPILLING YOUR DRINK

A Nagoa walks into a Guaiamun bar. He orders a glass of red wine, which he spills on the floor. He orders a glass of white rum, which he deliberately pours over the wine. White over red. Nagoa over Guaiamun. A brawl ensues.

MALTAS



GANG HATS

Nagoas: white ribbon over red,
brim down at the front.

Guaiamuns: red ribbon over
white, brim up at the front.



CAPOEIRA

It's a fight, a dance, a game. Created by slaves, a way for the downtrodden to make themselves free.

Capoeira is a martial art closely associated with the malta gangs that rule the streets of Rio. However, you don't have to be in a gang to learn capoeira. You can also learn it in the streets, or from a local or travelling master of the art.

When it's a fight, it's a contest of kicks, trips and head-butts – and often knives, clubs and straight razors.

When you *play* capoeira, it's a contest of agility, acrobatics, trickery and power, which takes place in a circle called a *roda*. How much of a straight-up fight it is depends on the players.

Sometimes you just want to show off your prowess, marking where a kick would land or giving your opponent a playful tap where their guard is down. Sometimes you want to knock them down. And very occasionally, you bring a blade and play for keeps.

The capoeiristas of Bahia and other regions to the north incorporate music into their rodas – the game is led by the sound of the *berimbau*, often accompanied by other instruments, and the lead berimbau player presides over the roda and leads call-and-response songs. This form of capoeira is uncommon in Rio, but not unheard of, at this time.

In most cases, carioca capoeira music is limited to the war songs that maltas belt out as challenges when they enter enemy territory, though games played for fun may be accompanied by music, singing, and general raucousness.

Getting caught practising capoeira will see you jailed for public disorder. You'll usually be released quickly on condition of future "good behaviour". Many arrested capoeiristas are subsequently recruited by the secret police.

"Capoeira is the worst fight in the world, and I'll tell you why. You get into a boxing ring, you know what the stakes are: a few rounds with a lot of rules and maybe you'll get knocked out. Go into a pistol duel or a street fight where the blades come out early and you know death is on the line. With capoeira? With capoeira you can never be sure."



This painting by Modesto Brocos depicts the aim of *branqueamento* (the policy of “whitening” Brazil) through three generations of one family: a black grandmother, her *mestiço* daughter and white son-in-law, and her white grandchild. The grandmother is thanking God that her descendants will be white.

RACE, ETHNICITY & CLASS

So, the good news is that no one is the literal property of anyone else in Brazil any more. It may be true that slavery was on the wane and, by the time of the Golden Law in 1888, most black Brazilians were already free. But being free because of economic conditions isn't quite the same as being free because the law recognises that you're a real person like everyone else.

That said, racism permeates Brazilian society. Black children have little or no access to education. All but the lowest status jobs are off-limits to black adults. Many immigrants have come to Rio, mostly

from Italy and Portugal. They are divided by culture and language from each other and from native-born Brazilians. Mutual distrust and prejudice is common. However, everyone has to live next door to each other.

The elite have no such need to mingle. They keep out immigrant entrepreneurs from the most lucrative businesses and make it hard for black or mixed-race people to climb the social ladder. There are exceptions, like the author Machado de Assis or the engineer and politician André Pinto Rebouças, but they are just that – exceptional.



MALANDROS & MALANDRAGEM

A *malandro* is someone who always has an eye for the main chance, whatever the situation.

The *malandro* uses charm, cunning and whatever resources are available to manipulate people and circumstances. The *malandro's* art is called *malandragem* and it will in time come to be seen as a typically Brazilian mode of navigating the whorls and eddies of society.

Malandragem is the art of sidestepping the rules, a rejection of the idea that following the rules can ever bring about the best outcome for you personally. It is a tool for an ordinary person to turn against the system, if they have the smarts to do it right.

The *malandro* is a male archetype, though one does not have to look

far to find example of women who, in similar fashion, refuse to take life on the terms presented.

The typical *malandro* is a sharp dresser, with a panama or straw hat and a smart suit, usually white with red or black details. In the breast pocket of the suit is a *navalha* – a straight razor. Purely for self-defence, of course.

The *malandro* is bohemian, enjoys music and dances, and views a steady job as a mug's game. Shady schemes, gambling and the largesse of lovers is more the *malandro's* speed.

The *malandro* is gallant, a hedonist, streetwise, deceitful, charismatic, lazy, a dandy, vicious when cornered, a trickster. You don't have to be all of those things to be a *malandro*, but you have to be at least a few of them.

SOME MALANDROS & MALANDRAS

- Aladdin
- Bender (*Futurama*)
- Blackadder
- Bridget Gregory (*The Last Seduction*)
- Bugs Bunny
- Bussy Malone
- Carmen Sandiego
- Dean Corso (*The Ninth Gate*)
- Doc Holiday
- Sergeant Ernie Bilko
- Fred (*Subway*)
- Han Solo
- Irene Adler
- Jeanne de Valois-Saint-Rémy
- Jenny Everdeane (*Gangs of New York*)
- Jordan Baker (*The Great Gatsby*)
- Marnie Edger (*Marnie*)
- Moll Cutpurse
- Molly Millions
- Pedro Navaja
- Robin Hood
- Top Cat





This page: a cortiço
Opposite: modern housing



YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

If you're new to the city, chances are you live in a *cortiço* – a slum tenement built around an enclosed central courtyard, with the rooms rented out individually.

A *cortiço* isn't a shanty town. It's a single building owned by one person rather than a cluster of individually constructed houses. The central courtyard is typically used for laundry and other menial piecework, and contains a communal well.

If you've been in the city longer, you probably live in one of the older districts, in a townhouse. If you're rich enough you might own the whole thing, but more likely you rent one floor or one room.

The older parts of town tend to have narrower, winding streets and alleyways. Some lanes are more like staircases with broad stone steps climbing one of Rio's hills.

The newer districts have broad, well-planned streets with all the benefits of modern engineering.

No matter what, your neighbourhood will have at least one church, a marketplace, several cafes and bars, and most likely a park or open plaza, though it might be quite run-down.

On the edges of the city, communities have sprung up around quarries, factories, railyards and other new places where jobs are available.



FOOD & DRINK

VENUES

BOTECO

Also known as a *botequim*. A place for bohemian types to meet, get a decent drink, cheap snacks and easy conversation. It's the kind of hole-in-the-wall place where you can show up alone and hang out with whoever else is there. As well as snacks and alcohol, most botecos sell tobacco, cigarettes, sweets and various sundries.

COFFEE HOUSE

More upmarket than a boteco, somewhere for the educated professional to relax with a coffee and a newspaper. Wine, beer and spirits are also available.

BAR

Much like a bar anywhere else in the world. Bottled and draught beers, wine and spirits. Rarely food, though.

RESTAURANT

Today in 1889, Rio is comparable to any of the world's great cities. As such, you can find cuisines from all over the world, provided you have the money to pay for it.

The common grade of restaurant tends to offer local Brazilian dishes or food from low-status immigrant communities such as those of Italy, Asia and Africa. Fine dining establishments cater to those in search of European cuisines such as French or German. Portuguese dishes can be found at restaurants of both types.

TO EAT

FEIJODA

A black bean-heavy feast using the lowest-grade cuts of pork or beef, this hearty slow-cooked stew originated in the slave-quarters and is well on its way to becoming Brazil's national dish. It is accompanied with rice, farofa (cassava flour) and oranges.

MOQUECA

A slow-cooked fish stew originally from the state of Espírito Santo, not far from Rio. Ingredients may include olive oil, salt-water fish, shrimp, crab and lobster. The dish is seasoned with onion, tomatoes, coriander and chives, accompanied by pirão, a paste made from cassava flour.

BOTECO SNACKS

- Figado Acebolado: liver & onions
- Chouriço Apimentado: spicy chorizo
- Giló Frito: fried aubergine

TO DRINK

COFFEE is one of the pillars holding up Brazil's economy, and there's plenty of it around, in bars, cafes and restaurants of all classes.

TEA is becoming more widely available now that it is grown in Brazil. A similar indigenous drink is made from the yerba mate plant.

WINE is almost always imported, from Chile or Europe.

CACHAÇA is a strong spirit similar to rum, distilled from sugarcane juice. It's usually drunk neat in shots or with ice.

In São Paulo they use cachaça to make a cocktail called a "caipirinha" but it hasn't really caught on anywhere else yet.

QUENTÃO is a kind of mulled wine, mostly drunk on festival days.

BEER is brewed locally though imported brands like Carlsberg and Heineken are popular. Lager, being well suited to the climate, is the most popular kind of beer.

A *cerveja* is a beer; a *chope* is specifically a draught beer.

AROUND TOWN

Use these prompts to help set the scene.

PLACES

a barbershop – full of gossip; with just one old man getting a shave

the beach – with fishermen bringing their jangadas in to shore; with rich people taking the sea air; with a ritual to Yemanjá taking place

a boteco – dark and smoky; cramped and raucous; a gang hangout

a café – with a tattered awning giving a little shade; with elegant tables and chairs out the front; cool, quiet and shady

a church – the heart of the parish; small and faded; where the orphans sleep; baroque and impressive; a military chapel

the docks – with a huge cargo of coffee going out; deserted; site of a clandestine capoeira roda

a factory – thundering with the modern machinery of commerce; where rows of workers sit and make goods by hand; closed down and dusty

the Lapa aqueduct – the iconic landmark of malandro Rio

mountains – serene and restful; a place to hide; a new construction site

a plantation – for coffee; for sugar; with conditions like slavery

a restaurant – haute cuisine direct from Europe; a bustling bistro; where the factory workers go after their shift

the sea – a place for fishing; where the cargo ships stand at anchor; a new life is on the far shore

tailor's shop – the finest formal wear in Brazil; suits for weddings and funerals; favoured by Rio's most stylish dandies

the theatre – popular; for the great and good; avant-garde

TRANSPORT

boats – flimsy fishing skiff; luxurious pleasure craft; the old ferry
horses – old nag; sleek polo pony; military charger
railways – bringing in fresh workers; your ticket out of here
ships – taking coffee to Europe; smuggling by night; listing heavily to starboard
trams – horse-drawn; steam-powered
wagons – blocking the street; bumping along a dirt road;
a young lady's carriage

NEIGHBOURHOODS

Candelária	Catete	Catumbi	Cidade Nova
Estácio	Gamboa	Lapa	Santa Teresa
Santo Cristo	São Sebastião	Saúde	Tijuca

STREETS

Ajuda	Bom Jardim	Catete	Carioca
Carmo	Cotovello	Espirito Santo	Floresta
Guarda-Velha	Marrecas	Mercado	Misericórdia
Olinda	Pescadores	Princesa	Quitanda
Rosario	Rio Comprido	Santo Amaro	
Sete de Setembro		Theatro	

You can also give descriptive names in your own language: e.g. Market Street, Harbour Road, Garden Lane.

PUBLIC SQUARES

Largo de Santa Rita	Praça do Caju
Praça da Constituição	Praça da Harmonia
Praça Saco Alferes	

CHURCHES

Nossa Senhora da Candelária	Nossa Senhora da Saúde
Santo Antônio	São Bento
São Francisco	São Sebastião
Santa Cruz dos Militares	Santa Luzia



THE PEOPLE YOU MEET





CABECILHA

GANG LEADER

[A] quasi totalidade dos crimes contra a pessoa têm sido perpetrados por indivíduos da infime classe da sociedade – escravos, estrangeiros, proletários e desordeiros, vulgarmente conhecidos por capoeiras.

Almost all crimes against the person are committed by the lowest class of society – slaves, foreigners, proletarians and troublemakers commonly known as capoeiristas.

Francisco de Faria Lemos,
Rio chief of police, 1870

Calling the shots on the *malta*'s turf, commanding through force of personality, shrewdness or straightforward brutality.

Abilities:

Authority
Enduring

Fighting
Sneaking

Signature Moves:

gang, capoeira





CAPOEIRISTA

MARTIAL ARTIST

Capoeira é defesa, ataque, é ginga de corpo e a malandragem.

Capoeira is defence and attack, a rocking of the body, and malandragem.

- trad.

Devoted to the outlawed martial art of capoeira.
Maybe a *malta* gang member, maybe just someone taking their freedom where they can get it.

Abilities:

Fighting
Moving

Knowing
Capoeira

Signature Moves:

capoeira, art





COMERCIANTE

STREET TRADER

Férias? Um luxo ... ele carregava caixas de frutas para que um dia eu pudesse carregar caixas de livros.

Holidays? A luxury... he carried boxes of fruit so that one day I could carry boxes of books.

José Serra

A local street vendor or shopkeeper, known by all the neighbourhood and who sees the whole life of the city as it passes by.

Abilities:

Talking

Knowing

Making

Business

Signature Moves:

community, business





ESTIVADOR

DOCK WORKER

Os dias prósperos não vêm acaso;
são granjeados, como as searas, com
muita fadiga e com muitos intervalos
de desalento.

*The days of prosperity do not come at
random; they are cultivated, like the
crops, with much fatigue and many
times of discouragement.*

Camilo Castelo Branco

A dock worker, loading and unloading the ships at the port.
It's hard work for low pay, but it's that or starve.

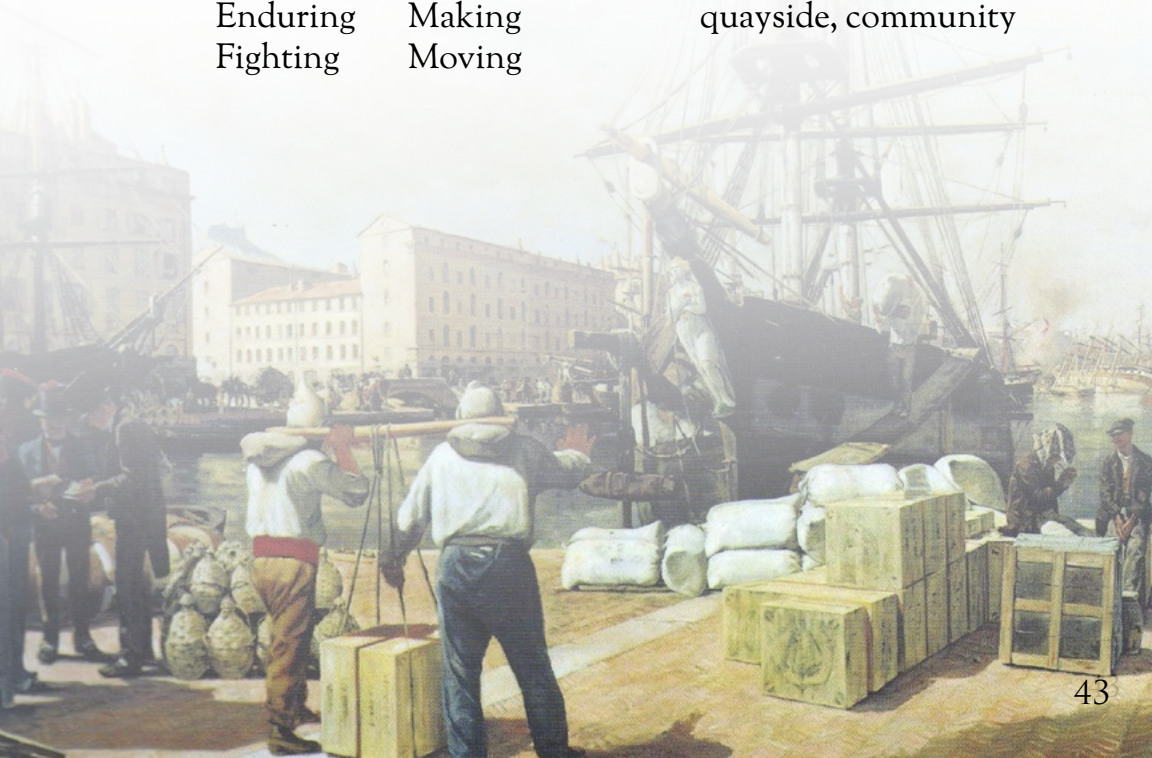
Abilities:

Enduring
Fighting

Making
Moving

Signature Moves:

quayside, community





MAGNATA

BUSINESS TYCOON

As esplêndidas fortunas – como os ventos impetuosos – provocam grandes naufrágios.

Splendid fortunes – like fierce winds – lead to great wrecks.

Plutarch

A captain of industry, part of Brazil's rising new elite. Perhaps a landowner with coffee, cotton or sugar plantations in the interior, or a manufacturing magnate with factories in the city.

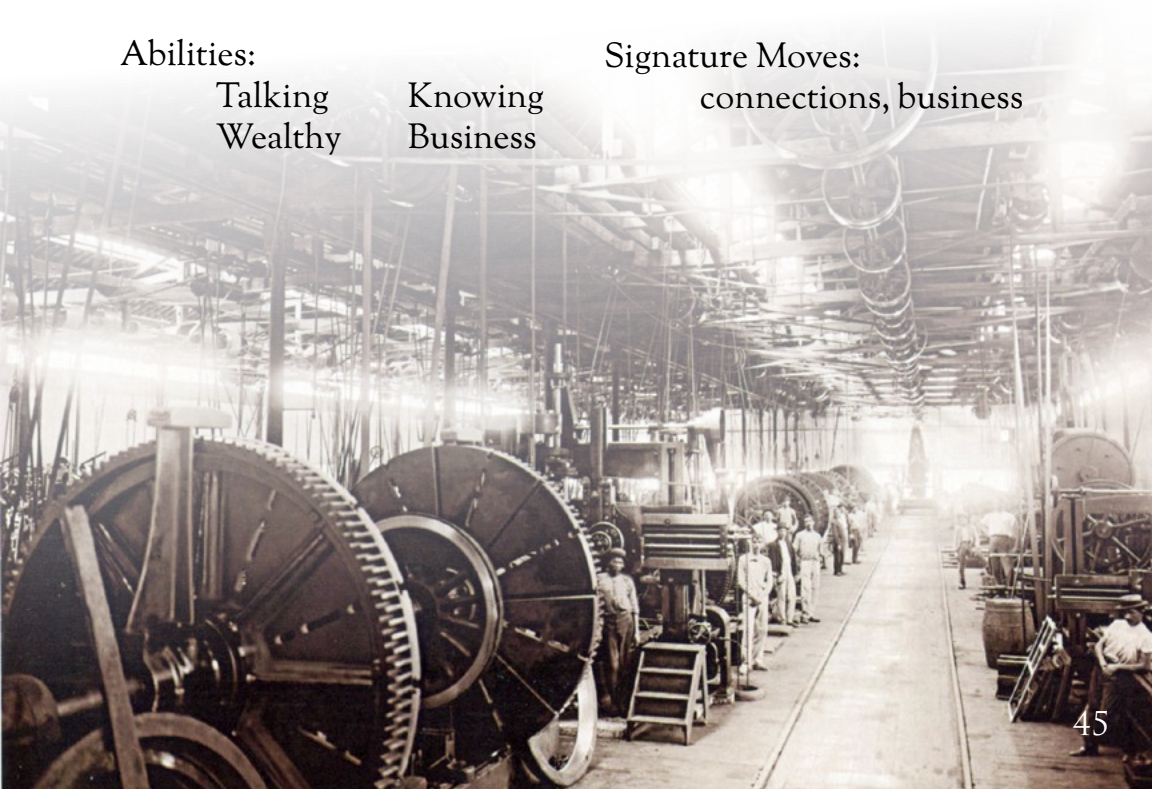
Abilities:

Talking
Wealthy

Knowing
Business

Signature Moves:

connections, business





MOLEQUE

STREET CHILD

Vestidos de farrapos, sujos,
semi-esfomeados, agressivos,
soltando palavrões e fumando
pontos de cigarro, eram, em verdade,
os donos da cidade,
os que a conheciam totalmente,
os que totalmente a amavam,
os seus poetas.

*Dressed in rags, filthy, half-starved,
aggressive, cursing and smoking
cigarette ends, they were, in truth,
the lords of the city:
the ones who knew it completely,
who loved it completely, its poets.*

Jorge Amado, *Capitães da Areia*

Orphaned, abandoned or simply dirt poor, there are hundreds of kids like this on the streets of the city. They scrape by how they can, begging and stealing. A few get taken off the streets to orphanages or reform school, but the world has a way of making more.

Abilities:

Talking
Moving

Knowing
Sneaking

Signature Moves: hustling, gang





MÚSICO

MUSICIAN

Música... Se eu pudesse ter
Não o que penso ou desejo,
Mas o que não pude haver
E que até nem em sonhos vejo

*Music... If I could have
Not that which I think or crave,
But what could not be
And even in dreams I do not see*

Fernando Pessoa,
“Música... Que sei eu de mim?”

For some people, music isn't just a pleasant diversion. Whether it's their day job or their hobby, it's what they truly live for.

Abilities:

Talking
Moving

Knowing
Art

Signature Moves:

art, community





ARTURO MICHELE
PARIS 1872

PEIXE FORA D'ÁGUA

SLUMMING ARISTOCRAT

Amor é fogo que arde sem se ver.

Love is a fire that burns without being seen.

Luís Vaz de Camões

A rich kid from a good background. Once people like this get a taste for the wrong side of town, it seems nothing can keep them away.

Abilities:

Talking

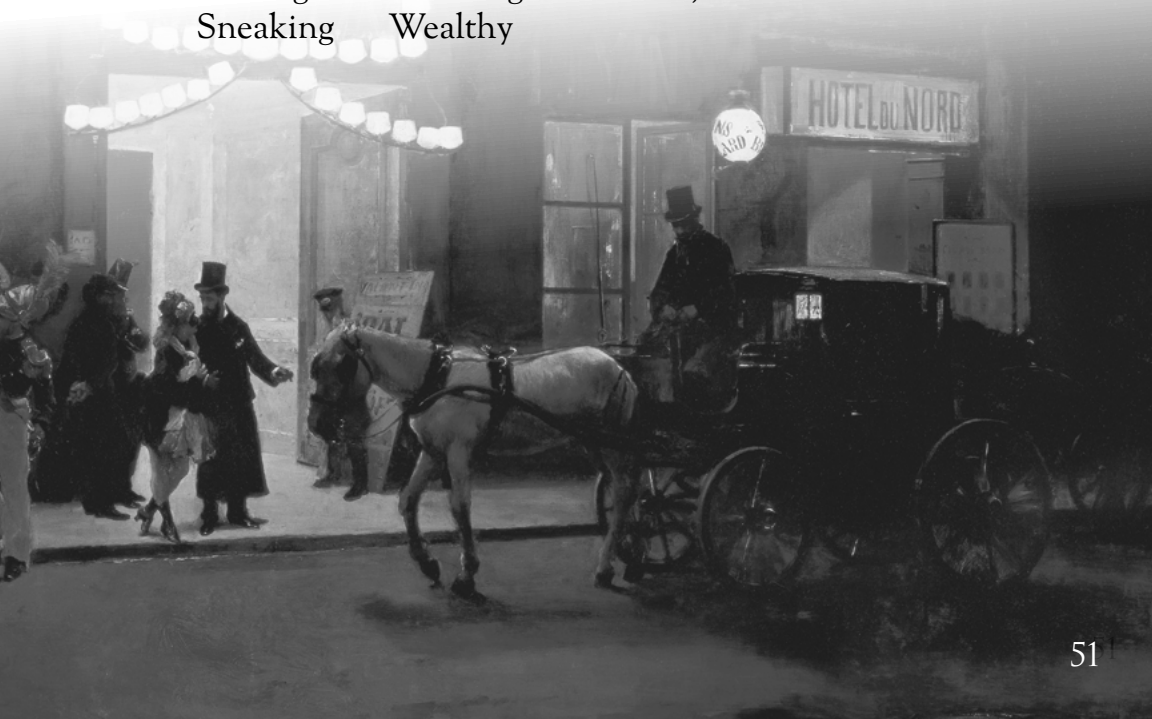
Sneaking

Knowing

Wealthy

Signature Moves:

wealth, connections





PESCADOR

FISHERMAN

Deus ao mar o perigo e o abismo deu
Mas nele é que espelhou o céu.

*God gave to the sea peril & the abyss
But it was there that He mirrored the
heavens.*

Fernando Pessoa, “Mar Português”

A hard-working mariner. The city’s fishermen brave the seas beyond the horizon to support their families. Sometimes they don’t come back.

Abilities:

Knowing
Enduring

Making
Talking

Signature Moves:

quayside, business





PROPRIETÁRIO

LANDLORD

O boteco é ressoante como uma concha marinha. Todas as vozes brasileiras passam por ele.

The boteco resounds like a seashell. All the voices of Brazil pass through it.

Nelson Rodrigues

The owner of a bar or cafe, a restaurateur or a slum landlord: someone whom everyone knows and who hears at least a little about everything that goes on in the neighbourhood.

Abilities:

Talking

Knowing

Making

Business

Signature Moves:

business, hustling





TIRA_{COP}

Não há crime sem lei.

There is no crime without law.

- trad.

A policeman, keeping the city streets safe.

At least that's the theory.

Half of them are in cahoots with one of the *malta* gangs, the other half are terminally demoralised. Maybe this one is an exception.

Abilities:

Fighting
Knowing

Enduring
Authority

Signature Moves:

community, gang





VIGARISTA

GRIFTER

A mentiroso, boa memória.

A liar must have a good memory.

- trad.

A con artist, a swindler, a seducer. Always playing some kind of angle, always masking their true thoughts and feelings.

The kind of person country mothers warn their children about as they put them on the train to the city.

Abilities:

Talking

Knowing

Moving

Sneaking

Signature Moves:

hustling, business



NAMES

GIVEN NAMES FOR WOMEN

Maria
Adriana
Ana
Beatriz
Benedicta
Bruna
Carolina
Fernanda
Flávia
Fortunata
Glória
Isabella
Joana
Júlia
Luzia
Mariana
Rita
Rosa
Sophia
Teresa
Victoria

GIVEN NAMES FOR MEN

Adiadacto
António
Bernardo
Constantino
Domingos
Erineu
Felipe
Francisco
Guilherme
Gustavo
João
José
Lucas
Luiz
Mateus
Manoel
Miguel
Pedro
Thiago
Vinícius
Vitor

SURNAMES

Rich people have a lot of them, maybe four or more; slaves were forbidden surnames or African names, and now freed slaves or their descendants often have the surname of a former owner.

Most common

Silva Santos
Souza Costa
Pereira Carvalho
Almeida Guimarães
Oliveira Soares
Alves Gomes
Rocha Cruz
Machado

Derived from a place

Tavares Pires
Cortês Chaves
Almeida Andrade

Religious origin

de Jesus dos Reis
Ramos Pascoal
da Assunção Paz
Luz Trindade

Patronymic origin

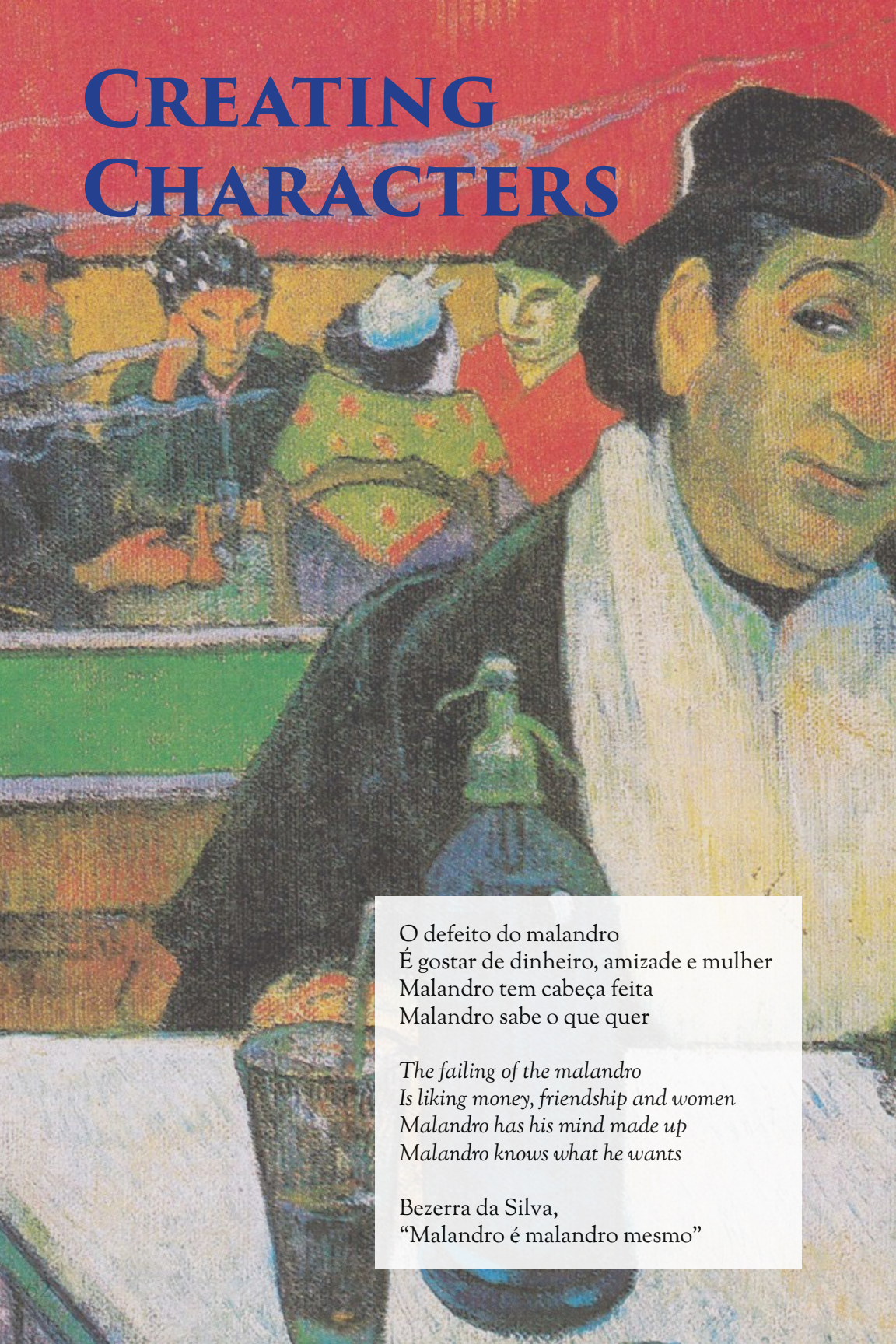
Henriques
Rodrigues
Lopes
Nunes
Mendes

NICKNAMES FOR GANG MEMBERS AND CAPOEIRISTAS

Aranha	Feijão	Risadinha
Bacalhau	Gafanhoto	Sábio
Baixinho	Ganso	Salomão
Baleia	Gato	Sapo
Batata	Gigante	Sem Pernas
Boneco	Índio	Tartaruga
Braço Forte	Macaco	Tico-Tico
Branco	Magrelo	Tomate
Canario	Maluquinho	Três Orelhas
Capitão	Mascote	Tucano
Coelho	Peixe	Turco
Doloroso	Pica-pau	Vaqueiro
Elefante	Preto Velho	Zumbi

A note on pronunciation: if you are familiar with carioca Portuguese and its pronunciation, great. Otherwise, don't worry about it.

CREATING CHARACTERS



O defeito do malandro
É gostar de dinheiro, amizade e mulher
Malandro tem cabeça feita
Malandro sabe o que quer

*The failing of the malandro
Is liking money, friendship and women
Malandro has his mind made up
Malandro knows what he wants*

Bezerra da Silva,
“Malandro é malandro mesmo”

OVERVIEW

The first step of a new game of *Malandros* is creating the player characters. Because the relationships between the characters are a key part of this, character creation should be done with all of the group present. Adding new PCs to the mix later is easy enough, but try to have at least three quarters of your group present for the first session, to create the tangled web of relationships that will be the wellspring of your adventures.

First off, someone (probably the GM) should briefly outline the concept and style of the game for anyone who's not yet familiar with *Malandros*. Pass the book around, maybe flick through the Character Types chapter, and think up some ideas.

PROCLAIMING YOUR ROLE

The first player proclaims their PC's name and role in the cast. The next player proclaims their character's name, role and connection to the first character. Each remaining player takes their turn to announce their character's name, role, and connections to those already proclaimed.

PROCLAIMING YOUR DESIRE AND DRAMATIC POLES

In the established order of precedence, players proclaim their characters' Desires. Then you go round again, with each player proclaiming their Dramatic Poles.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER CHARACTERS

Determine a new precedence order. Each player in order defines what their character wants from any other player's character. The player of the other character says why they can't get it. Both players adjust the statements as needed to reach an initial setup that's acceptable to both.

Do this until all characters are named as objects of at least two other characters' wants. (Any unaddressed relationships are defined during play.)

CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES

Each player determines their character's type, abilities, resource and Signature Moves.

YOUR STORY

Finally, sum up your character by completing the sentence "My story is of a man/woman who..." Your story might, in the end, turn out to be quite different from this sentence. This is just a beginning.

YOUR ROLE IN THE CAST

The main cast of player characters (PCs) in a game of *Malandros* belongs to a community centred around a city neighbourhood, your *bairro* – you’ll define the characteristics of the bairro together with the other participants during the course of the game.

Some or all of the cast consider themselves, or are thought of by others as, *malandros* – ‘bad boys’ – rascals identified by turns as charming, roguish, thuggish, lazy, dishonest, streetwise and cool. Whatever kinds of character your PCs are – male or female, black or white, rich or poor – they are all connected by the common bond of the bairro.

When you proclaim your role, you may have a specific character type in mind (e.g. “I want to play a *Músico*; I think I’ll be the piano player at the local cafe.”) but you may also want to come up with a more abstract role in the community before choosing the character type that will define your PC in terms of game rules.

For example, you might want to play the respected elder people turn to for advice, the ridiculed old guy everyone underestimates, the local tough guy or the local kid recently returned from abroad. Many roles can be filled by more than one of the character types that appear in the game.

DEFINING RELATIONSHIPS

When you define your relationship to another PC, you establish a crucial fact about both characters. You can make it any kind of relationship, so long as it’s an important one. Family relationships are the easiest to think of and may prove richest in play. Close friendships also work. By choosing a friendship, you’re establishing that the relationship is strong enough to create a powerful emotional bond between the two of you. Bonds of romantic love, past or present, may be the strongest of all.

As in any strong drama, your most important relationships happen to be fraught with unresolved tension. These are the people your character looks to for emotional fulfillment. The struggle for this fulfillment drives your ongoing story.

Players may raise objections to relationship choices of other players that turn their PCs into people they don’t want to play. When this occurs, the proposing player makes an alternate suggestion, negotiating with the other player until both are satisfied. Keep track of relationships as they are established during character creation with a relationship map.



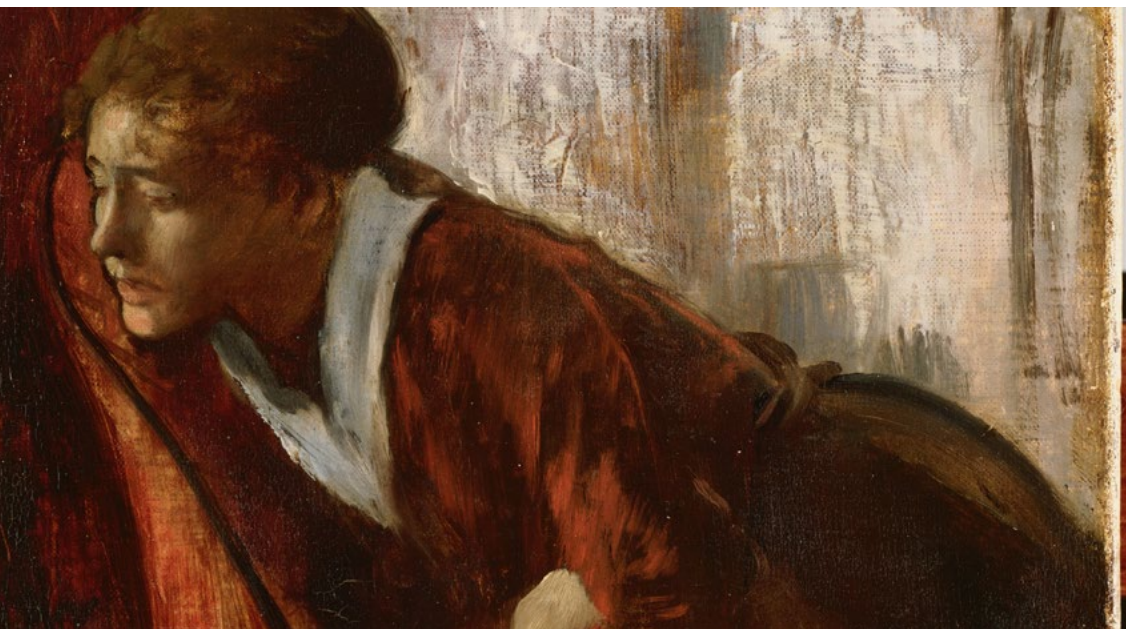
YOUR DESIRE

A PC's Desire is the broadly stated, strong motivation driving their actions during dramatic scenes. The Desire moves them to pursue an inner, emotional goal, which can only be achieved by engaging with other members of the main cast, and, to a lesser degree, with recurring characters run by the GM.

Your Desire might be seen as your character's weakness: it makes them vulnerable, placing their happiness in others' hands. Because this is a dramatic story, conflict with these central characters prevents your PC from easily or permanently satisfying their Desire.

Think of the Desire as an emotional reward your character seeks from others. The most powerful choices are generally the simplest, for example:

- approval
- acceptance
- forgiveness
- respect
- love
- subservience
- reassurance
- power
- to punish
- to be punished



YOUR DRAMATIC POLES

Driving any compelling dramatic character in any story form is an internal contradiction. Your character is torn between two opposed Dramatic Poles. Each pole suggests a choice of identities for the character, each at war with the other. Events in the story pull the character from one pole to the next.

Examples:

- altruism vs. self-interest
- ambition vs. loyalty
- fame vs. ambition
- freedom vs. responsibility
- genius vs. fool
- good cop vs. bad cop
- join the family vs. destroy the family
- love vs. fear
- revenge vs. friendship
- scholar vs. hedonist
- warrior vs. peacemaker



WHAT YOU WANT FROM OTHERS

Now bring your Dramatic Poles into specific focus by declaring what they lead you to seek from particular other PCs.

The sooner you define a want, the more important it is to you. The first and second PCs you name as your withholders of emotional reward are your *fraught relationships*.

List these first in the “People in My Life” section of your character sheet. Also, mark your fraught relationships by circling or highlighting them on your relationship map.

If you find it a useful memory aid, include a notation describing the emotional reward you seek.

The other PC’s player will tell you why you can’t have what you want from them. As the story develops, you’ll work on turning things around with some or all of the other PCs.

Examples:

I want...

- approval from my father
- love from a boy or girl in the bairro
- respect from my boss
- to dominate the leader of the rival gang
- subservience from my employee

The other PC’s player will tell you why you can’t have what you want from them. As the story develops, you’ll work on turning things around with some or all of the other PCs.

Examples, in reponse to the examples above:

“Music is no career for a man – how can I approve of that?”

“But I am engaged to my childhood sweetheart!”

“I’ve never known one of your kind ever amount to anything.”

“I’m too proud ever to back down to you.”

“I work for you because I have to, not because you’re better than me.”

CHARACTER TYPE

Choose one of the character types in the section “The People You Meet” to determine your PC’s initial selection of abilities and Signature Moves. Your character type also, to an extent, describes your PC’s place in the community of the bairro.

The neighbourhood where you live has at least one person living in it, PC or NPC, who fits each character type – or frequently visiting, in the case of the *Magnata* and *Peixe fora d’água*. The types, listed here with their strong abilities and Signature Move categories, are:

- Cabecilha – you’re the leader of a street gang
Authority, Enduring, Fighting, Sneaking
/ gang, capoeira
- Capoeirista – your calling is the outlawed martial art of capoeira
Capoeira, Fighting, Knowing, Moving
/ capoeira, art
- Comerciante – you’re a local street trader or shopkeeper
Business, Knowing, Making, Talking
/ community, business
- Estivador – you’re a dock worker, loading and unloading ships in the port
Enduring, Fighting, Making, Moving
/ quayside, community
- Magnata – you’re a business tycoon, part of Brazil’s new elite
Business, Knowing, Talking, Wealthy
/ connections, business
- Moleque – you’re a street kid, orphaned, abandoned or simply impoverished
Knowing, Moving, Sneaking, Talking
/ hustling, gang
- Músico – whether it’s your day job or a hobby, music is your passion
Art, Knowing, Moving, Talking
/ art, community
- Peixe fora d’água – a rich kid, you don’t belong here... but you can’t stay away
Knowing, Sneaking, Talking, Wealthy
/ wealth, connections
- Pescador – you fish for a living, in your own boat or as part of a crew
Enduring, Knowing, Making, Talking
/ quayside, business
- Proprietário – you run a bar, cafe or restaurant, or rent out slum housing
Business, Knowing, Making, Talking
/ business, hustling
- Tira – you’re a cop, keeping the streets safe
Authority, Enduring, Fighting, Knowing
/ community, gang
- Vigarista – you’re a swindler, a petty criminal, always on the make
Knowing, Moving, Sneaking, Talking
/ hustling, business

ABILITIES

Each Character Type has four abilities listed. Choose which one you want to be your strongest and give it a value of 3. Choose the one your character is least good at and give it a value of 1. Assign a value of 2 to the remaining two abilities.

The common abilities are:

Enduring	Fighting
Knowing	Making
Moving	Talking
Sneaking	

Any ability to which you add points is called a *strong* ability.

SKILLS & CUSTOM ABILITIES

You can create your own, narrower custom abilities and make it one of your strong abilities. Do this to make a clearer, more specific statement about your character. Strive for a one-word name.

A custom ability allows you to overlap several of the existing abilities, though only when the action directly relates to your specialty. Some character types get custom abilities as part of character creation. Relating to a particular kind of training or competence, these are called *skills*.

When a procedural action tells you to roll a specific ability, you can roll an appropriate skill instead. But you can't swap in another normal ability unless you have a Signature Move or other trait that lets you do so. For example, you can use Authority instead of Talking with all the Community Signature Moves. But you can't use Knowing or Sneaking.

HOW YOU DO IT

For each of your strong abilities, write a short phrase (or single word) describing your specialty within the type of activity concerned. In a situation where it fits to describe yourself as employing your distinctive talent, you gain some additional advantage. Use specific detail; don't just find a synonym for the broad category. Your GM may ask you to adjust an overly vague, broad, or dull description.

Descriptors help to distinguish main cast members from one another. If two players pick similar descriptors, negotiate to decide who keeps the current idea and who picks a new one.

YOUR RESOURCE

Choose a cherished item your character owns, or another kind of special resource. When you use it, it counts as an ability with a rating of 2. Whatever you choose, its application should be narrower than standard abilities, such that either it only comes into play occasionally or can only be used in ways that tend to escalate the situation (such as a weapon).

Suitable items or traits might include:

- a book of poems by Luis Camões
- lots of contacts among ex-slaves whom you helped find work in Rio
- your mother's ivory cameo
- an old pocket watch
- years of fishing experience
- a heavy fighting cane (a *bengala*)

YOUR SIGNATURE MOVE

Each character type lists two categories of Signature Moves. These are special actions that mark your PC as someone who stands out from the crowd. When you create your character, choose one Signature Move from your primary category: the category listed first in the character type description.

The Signature Moves are provided in the next chapter. They might make reference to game rules that haven't been explained yet. In that case, just pick something that you most like the sound of.

You'll pick up new Signature Moves as the game goes on. The "Learn Something" action describes how that works, later in this book.

YOUR STORY

Given what you've now discovered about your character, complete the sentence:

My story is of a man/woman who...

The sentence should evoke your Desire, and possibly your central relationships and contradiction. It serves as a reminder to keep you focused on the story you, taking into account the collaboration of other group members, have resolved to tell. If your sentence is more than 25 words long, your idea isn't simple enough. Adjust the introductory clause a little if it makes for a clearer, shorter sentence.

QUESTIONS TO ASK EACH OTHER

Ask these questions during character creation or later in the game when they seem appropriate. Answer individually or decide as a group.

ABOUT YOU

How long have you lived in the neighbourhood?

Where did you come from?

I've been here all my life / moved from another part of the city / arrived from another country / migrated from the interior.

Around 30% of Rio's current population are immigrants, mostly from Portugal, but with many from the Levant or elsewhere in Europe, particularly Italy.

Nearly a third of cariocas were born in Brazil to a Portuguese father or mother.

What race are you?

Black / white / mestiço / native / other.

(Natives are few and far between in Rio de Janeiro at this time.)

Can you read and write?

Literacy is low in general, but it's common enough that a PC of any background can say 'yes' to this. Upper-class characters may not say 'no'.

What is your family background?

Slaves / farmers / urban workers / fi hing / monied.

(Abolition is recent enough that black characters may have been born into slavery: it was only 18 years ago that the Rio Branco Law freed all children born to slave parents, and it's been one year since the Golden Law abolished slavery completely.)

ABOUT CONNECTIONS

Whose picture do you keep in your home?

Why don't you trust my Player Character?

Which of your brothers or sisters are you closest to?

The last time your boss admonished you, what had you done wrong?

Whose was the most recent funeral you attended?

Why did you have to kick [name] out of your place last week?

ABOUT RACE & ETHNICITY

What did you do the first time a landlord refused to rent to you because you are black?

When did you first understand the social benefits of being white?

When did you get a favour because of your ethnicity and how did you pay it back?

ABOUT THE WAR, 20 YEARS AGO

What did you lie about when you returned from Paraguay?

What did the war take from you?

How did you react when your promised reward for military service was not forthcoming?

ABOUT POLITICS

What did the abolition of slavery mean to you?

Why do you support the Conservative politician Duque-Estrada Teixeira?

When did you start working for the secret police? Why?

What did you say when your co-workers suggested forming a union?

ABOUT COMING TO RIO

Why do you keep your real name a secret?

Were you freed from slavery, or did you run away to the city?

What did you leave behind in your home country?

Who first took you in when you arrived from the countryside?

Who do you wish had come to Rio with you?

Who was your friend on the voyage to Brazil? How did you lose touch?

ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBOURS

Who in the bairro misses their home the most?

Who has attracted the attention of the local grandee, and why?

Who runs the local street gang? Are they affiliated with the Nagoas or Guaiamuns?

Who does everyone go to for advice?

Which neighbours have an ongoing feud?

Who has the best connections with the police?

Who is everyone careful not to provoke?

Who do people talk about, long after they moved away?

Who is rumoured to be having an affair?

Who is an outcast, and why?

Who has a lot of expensive, luxury goods in their home?

ABOUT YOUR BAIRRO

What's the layout of your neighbourhood? Is it centred on...

- a courtyard tenement (a cortico)
- a narrow residential street
- a busy crossroads
- a leafy public square
- a marketplace
- a quarry on the outskirts of the city
- a dock and the nearby warehouses
- the townhouse of an aristocratic family
- a factory

Where is the parish church?

Where do people gather to relax in the evening?

Where does the richest person in the neighbourhood live?

Where do you go to hear music? Where is the general store?

Where is the cafe? The bar?

What is the landmark people refer to when describing your bairro?

SIGNATURE MOVES





ART

DUENDE

When you make a compelling connection with someone during a performance, roll Art.

On a 6+, gain 3 hold over them. On a 3–5, gain 2.

They can spend your hold over them, a point at a time, by:

- giving you something you want
- acting as your eyes and ears
- fighting to protect you
- doing something you tell them to

NPCs can't act against you while you have hold over them. For PCs, any time you like you can spend your hold so they distract themselves with the thought of you. They're then acting under pressure.

On a 2-, they hold 2 over you, which they can use in the same way.

FAME

When you meet someone new, roll Art.

On a success, they've heard of you, and you say what they've heard.

On a 6+, you gain Asé too.

On a 2-, they've heard of you, but the GM will decide what they've heard.

READ THE ROOM

When you try to Dar um Jeitinho, you may roll Art instead of Knowing.



SAUDADE

When you give a performance of profound emotion, no one who can see you can do anything but watch and listen. You command their absolute attention. If you choose, you can exempt individual people, if you know their names.

SHAME THE DEVIL

When you express a telling truth to someone through your art, roll Art. On a 6+, choose 2. On a 3-5, choose 1.

- You gain Asé
- They gain Asé
- They suffer stress

BUSINESS

PROFIT & LOSS

If your business is secure and fully under your control, at the beginning of the first scene you call in a session, roll Business.

On a 6+, you gain Wealth and Asé. On a 3-5, you gain Wealth, but choose 1 pressing need. On a 2-, your business is in difficulty of some kind.

PATRONAGE

When you are introduced to someone who wishes to make use of your services, roll Business. On a 3+, you attract one or more high-paying customers and gain Wealth. On a 3-5, choose one of the following. On a 6+, choose three.

- The job is not particularly dangerous.
- The job will not involve imperial entanglements.
- The job pays very well.
- The patron is not withholding information about the job.



WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME

When you want to know something about someone who could reasonably be assumed to have visited your place of business, roll Business. On a 6+, ask the GM up to 3 questions from the following. On a 3-5, ask 1:

- What have they been doing lately?
- What or who do they love best?
- Who do they know, like and/or trust?
- When and where should I expect to see them next?

WORKSPACE

You have a workshop, or similar place for making or repairing things. Choose 3 things your workspace includes, e.g. a dock, a place for growing things, skilled labour, a yard or stock room full of raw materials, a wagon and horse, a forge, paint and canvas, a training yard, leatherworking tools, carpenter's tools, metalworking tools, a foundry, a bakery.

When you go into your workspace and dedicate yourself to making a thing, improving a thing, or to getting to the bottom of something, roll Making.

On a 6+, choose one. On a 3-5, the GM chooses up to two.

On a 2-, the GM chooses three.

- It will take hours/days/weeks/months of work
- First you'll have to get/build/fix/figure out something
- You're going to need someone to help you
- It's going to cost you a lot of Wealth
- You can only make a poor-quality version
- It's going to mean exposing yourself (and maybe others) to danger

Once you've determined these conditions, you can reconsider whether or not to go ahead with the project.

CAPOEIRA

CHAMADA

When you want to call for a break in the action (in the roda or elsewhere) roll Capoeira or Talking. On a success, people stop to watch and listen to you. On a 6+, choose two from the list. On a 3-5, choose one:

- Everyone in the scene pays attention, not just those closest to you
- You get more than a few seconds to do or say what you want to
- You're not open to a surprise attack
- You gain Asé

ENTRE OS DEDOS DOS PÉS

When you fight with a navalha gripped between your toes, its range becomes hand/close.

ESQUIVA

When you try to dodge an attack or other source of danger, roll Capoeira or Moving. On a 6+, choose two. On a 3-5, choose one:

- You gain Asé
- You move away from or towards your opponent without additional danger
- You suffer little or no harm

THE CAPOEIRISTA MANDUCA DA PRAIA

Unlike many who became famous for their prowess at capoeira, Mestre Manduca da Praia was not affiliated with any malta, although he was well respected in the capoeira underground. He was a sharp dresser, with a fondness for blue silk kerchiefs.

He was a successful local businessman. He made a decent living from his fish stall in the market. But he also worked as a bodyguard and election fixer for monarchist politicians, whose influence kept him out of prison after his numerous arrests for assault.



STRIKE OR HURT?

Where a move description says ‘strike your opponent’, you have a choice. That can mean to simply hit them with a kick or other blow, dealing them harm. But you might also want to simply mark where the blow *would* have landed, demonstrating your skill or superiority.

CAPOEIRA OR FIGHTING?

The skill of Capoeira may be used as a substitute for Fighting: another strong ability to spend in a scene. It may also be used instead of Moving for acrobatics or dodging, instead of Art for singing or playing instruments associated with capoeira, Knowing for capoeira matters, &c.

MALICIA

When you try to Dar um Jeitinho, you may choose to roll Capoeira instead of Knowing.

MEIA-LUA DE FRENTE

When you employ a front crescent kick, roll Capoeira. On a 6+, choose 2.

On a 3-5, choose 1:

- They drop an item they’re holding in one hand
- You gain Asé
- You strike your opponent

RABO DE ARRAIA

When you execute this fast, spinning kick, roll Capoeira. On a 6+, choose 2.

On a 3-5, choose 1:

- You get +1 on your next action against them
- You gain Asé
- You strike your opponent

RASTEIRA

When you attempt to trip an opponent, roll Capoeira.

On a 6+, choose 2. On a 3-5, choose 1:

- You trip your opponent
- You gain Asé
- You strike your opponent

COMMUNITY



FINGERS IN EVERY PIE

When you put out word that you want something (or someone), roll Talking. On a 6+, it shows up. On a 3-5, people do their best but you may have to make do with a close approximation.

THE GOOD LISTENER

You can question any NPC resident in your neighbourhood about anything they know, even their darkest secrets; roll Talking. On a 6+, they tell you everything they know. On a 3-5, choose 1.

They tell you everything they know as a favour to you; now you owe them. They point you towards someone who knows more; add +1 to your next Talking roll involving that person.

PILLAR OF THE COMMUNITY

When you use your position to claim authority or hide behind the law, roll Talking. On a 6+, your opponent must either submit or strike back at you immediately. On a 3-5, choose 1:

- They submit without reservation.
- You don't suffer stress.
- You don't make a bad impression on bystanders.

RABBLE-ROUSING

When you address a mob, roll Talking. On a 6+, gain 3 points of hold over them. On a 3-5, gain 1.

Spend your hold 1 for 1 to make the mob:

- bring people or things forward and deliver them.
- unite and fight for you.
- travel en masse to a location of your choice.
- go quietly back to their lives.

On a 2-, the mob turns on you.

WORD ON THE STREET

When you find something out by listening to or recalling local gossip, you may choose one extra result.

CONNECTIONS

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

Put out the word that you want something – could be a person, too – and roll Talking. On a 6+, it shows up for you, like magic. On a 3-5, your people do their best and come up with something close but not quite what you wanted.

FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES

You have *malta* connections who will do stuff for you. When you ask them to carry out a task, roll Talking. On a 6+, it gets done but choose 1. On a 3-5, choose 2.

- You're seen associating with a known criminal.
- They need cash up front – spend Wealth.
- People know you were behind it.
- You get out of your depth in the bad part of town – suffer harm.

I KNOW PEOPLE

When you want to know something about someone important, roll Talking. On a success, you can ask the GM questions.

On a 6+, ask 3. On a 3-5, ask 1:

- How are they doing? What are they up to?
- What or who do they love best?
- Who do they know, like and/or trust?
- When next should I expect to see them?
- How could I get to them, physically or emotionally?

CONVINCING

You are skilled at getting others to do things for you. Once per episode, when you convince a player's character to do something for you, they roll +1 on actions related to doing it. If they succeed, gain Asé.

FAMOUS

Your reputation precedes you. Unless you disguise yourself, you may be recognised by any people you meet. If someone recognises you, you can roll +1 when acting against them, but they'll tell people that they met you. Both you and the GM can declare that someone recognises you.

“These were the days of the Flor da Gente – a capoeira outfit whose territory was the borough of Gloria in Rio de Janeiro, enlisted in the service of a powerful member of the Conservative party from a family steeped in politics – Duque-Estrada Teixeira. On his behalf they pitched themselves into the rough-and-tumble political battles of the campaign of 1872.

“In a blur of razor slashes, sweeps, spinning kicks and head butts those battle-scarred veterans of the Paraguayan War drove Liberal voters from the polling places and swept opposition candidates off their raised platforms.”

Carlos Soares, *The Black Guard: Capoeira in the Rough-and-Tumble of Politics*



GANG

LEADER OF THE PACK

You have a group of tough guys under your command. When you try to impose your will on your gang, roll Authority. On a 6+, they do what you want, no problem. On a 3–5, choose one:

- They don't do what you want.
- They demand a reward.
- You have to make an example of one of them.

HARD BASTARD

You have two “Beaten Up” boxes on your harm track. If both are ticked, when you remove stress you can remove both ticks at the same time.

HANDY WITH MY FISTS

You don't need a weapon to mess someone up; you do 2 harm unarmed.

YES, BOSS

When you suffer stress or harm rather than disobey orders, gain Asé.

COUNT THE TAKINGS

You run some kind of racket in the bairro (specify what it is). If your territory is secure and your rule unchallenged, at the beginning of the session, roll Authority.

On a 6+, you gain Wealth. On a 3–5, you gain Wealth but a threat has emerged that you must resolve before you can use this action again.

On a 2–, no Wealth: just the threat.



HUSTLING

DO THE HUSTLE

You have a number of rackets on the go. When you first take this move, you have 2 rackets going. At the start of each episode, choose one or more of your rackets, describe what each job is, and roll Sneaking.

On a 6+, you profit from each of your jobs. On a 3-5, one of them goes wrong and you profit from the rest. Each job you profit from gives you 1 Wealth. On a 2-, everything's gone wrong. When any job goes wrong, you must resolve the situation before you can use this move again.

When you first take this move, choose two rackets:

- Numbers: You run the *jogo do bicho* lottery around the neighbourhood.
Gone wrong: Someone's out of pocket and blames you.
- Theft: You have a small crew who perform minor local robberies.
Gone wrong: They robbed the wrong guy.
- Surveillance: You have a small network of informants who report goings on; you then sell that information.
Gone wrong: Someone acts on bad info.
- Deliveries: People hire you to transport things.
Gone wrong: The delivery never arrives.
- Brokering deals: You arrange for the right people to meet each other.
Gone wrong: the deal that you arranged turns sour.
- The short con: You pull confidence tricks on the rich, the new to town, or ideally both.
Gone wrong: You've been rumbled.
- Prostitution: You run a stable of prostitutes or are one yourself.
Gone wrong: Something has happened to bring business to a halt.

HUMAN RESOURCES

When you hire someone to do a job, and they succeed, you both gain Asé.

ESCAPE ROUTE

When you decide to Dar um Jeitinho, roll Sneaking instead of Knowing.

PAPERS, PLEASE

When you falsify documentation, roll Making.

On a success, you forge the documents required.

On a 3-5, choose one drawback:

- The forgeries are perfect but costly; -1 Wealth.
- They won't fool anyone for long; they only work once.
- They attract attention from the law, now or later.

THE POWER OF STREET KNOWLEDGE

When you try to overtake someone by using shortcuts, roll Moving. If you succeed, you get to your destination first.

On a 6+, choose 2. On a 3-5, choose 1.

- You arrive more than a minute before them.
- You suffer no harm en route.
- They suffer stress.
- You gain Asé.

THE VIGARISTA MADAME SATÃ

Drag queen, capoeira fighter, hustler and cook, Madame Satã ("Madam Satan") was a legend in the bohemian circles of Lapa district and Brazil's counterculture. Born in Pernambuco to ex-slaves, he came to Rio at the age of seven and fell in love with the city's Carnival.

Poor, black and gay, he was frequently the target of police abuse and brutality. He fought back, and stood up for other marginalised people too. He became notorious for fighting police officers, often four at a time, and winning. He served many prison sentences, including three for murder.



QUAYSIDE

A BUYER'S MARKET

When you sell cargo, roll Talking. On a 6+, you can sell it for its true value; gain Wealth. On a 3-5, gain Wealth but choose one.

- There's little interest; you have to spend a week before you can shift the merchandise.
- The cargo is illicit or stolen.
- You know someone who'll take it off your hands but now you owe them a favour.

OLD SALT'S YARNS

When you seek to mollify or entertain a group, roll Talking. On a 6+ gain 3 hold over them, on a 3-5 gain 1 hold. Spend your hold a point at a time to make the audience:

- be happy and forget about a specific care that you name
- go quietly to their beds or homes
- reveal to you what they know about a topic of your choice

On a 2- they turn against you.



IN EVERY PORT

You can easily find things out when far away in distant lands, or use news and information from far away when you want to find something out close to home.

MASTER OF MY FATE

You own a seagoing vessel. Define your vessel's seaworthiness as a number between 0 and 3. When you're on your boat or ship, add its seaworthiness to all procedural rolls.

At the beginning of each session, you must spend Wealth on your vessel's upkeep equal to its seaworthiness. If you go into minus numbers, you're in debt.

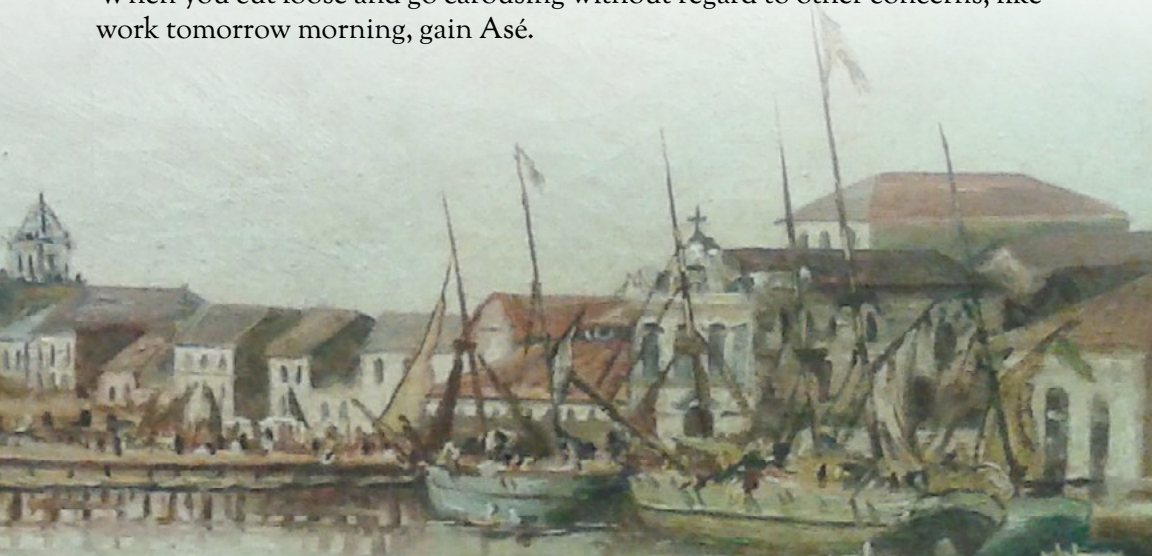
CAPTAIN OF MY SOUL

You have a crew of sailors, stevedores or other labourers. When you try to impose your will on your crew, roll Authority. On a 6+, all three. On a 3–5, choose one:

- They do what you want.
- They don't demand something in return.
- You don't have to make an example of one of them.

ROLL OUT THE BARREL

When you cut loose and go carousing without regard to other concerns, like work tomorrow morning, gain Asé.



WEALTH

BLUE BLOOD

You are a member of the aristocracy. You have invitations to all the best parties. When you use your family name instead of spending money, roll Talking or Wealthy.

On a 6+, spend 1 fewer Wealth than you would normally have to.

On a 3-5, save 1 Wealth and the GM chooses 1:

- Word gets back to your family.
- Word gets back to someone else's family.
- You suffer embarrassment.

GREASE THE WHEELS

When you Dar um Jeitinho or Find Something Out, you may roll Wealthy instead of Knowing.

INHERITED WEALTH

You have a relatively steady income, provided you keep its source in good condition. At the beginning of each episode, provided your source of wealth has no pressing need held over from last time out, roll Wealthy.

On a 6+, gain Wealth. On a 3-5 gain Wealth and choose one pressing need – for example:

- You have to convince an older relative (your Aunt Agatha?) that you're not a wastrel.
- An unruly cousin is foisted on you and you have to take care of them.
- You have got engaged, possibly by accident, to what your family considers an inappropriate match. They will give you no more money till you call off the wedding.

On a 2-, the GM chooses a pressing need and you gain no Wealth.

MONEY IS NO OBJECT

When you make known that you want something and spend dinheiro to speed it on its way, roll Wealthy + Wealth spent (maximum +3). It has to be a thing you could legitimately get this way. On a 6+ it comes to you, no strings attached. On a 3–5 it comes to you, or something pretty close to what you wanted.

REBELLIOUS

When you receive good advice or instruction but act on your own instincts instead, gain Asé.

USED TO THE FINER THINGS

When you go into a city's bustling market, looking for some particular thing to buy, and it's not obvious whether you should be able to just go buy one like that, roll Wealthy. On a 6+, yes, you can just go buy it like that. On a 3–5, the GM chooses one of the following:

- It costs more than you'd expect.
- It's available, but only if you meet this guy who knows a guy.
- You can only get an inferior version or a near approximation of what you actually want.

THE PEIXE FORA D'ÁGUA CHIQUEINHA GONZAGA

Born into a wealthy family, Chiquinha Gonzaga was a musical prodigy who became the first female *choro* musician and the genre's first pianist. She was famous but widely criticised for her “unladylike” life choices.

In her youth, she fled an unhappy arranged marriage for the bohemian life of a musician. In later years, she became a prominent citizen and campaigned for the abolition of slavery.



EPISODES & SCENES



Each game session presents an episode—a series of loosely connected scenes, each one featuring one or more of the Player Characters.

THEMES

Distinguishing each episode is a theme for participants to weave, loosely or obviously, into its events.

The theme of your first *Malandros* episode will be “Freedom” – introduced by the GM in the opening scene. At the end of the first session, decide who will be the GM next time. That person will choose the theme of the next episode.

If one participant will be the GM for your whole series, at the end of each episode they must nominate a player to choose the next episode’s theme. In this case, each player gets one turn at choosing the theme, then it’s the GM’s turn again.

If it’s your turn choosing the theme, do your best to let the group know what it will be at least one or two days in advance of your next game session, so that everyone has time to think about the scenes they might like to call.



SAMPLE THEMES

Ancestors
Boa viagem (Bon voyage)
Changes
Corruption
Defence and attack
Escape
Industry
The jaguar died, the jungle is mine
Loyalty

Malandragem
Music
Poverty
Protective measures
Reading & writing
Rising & falling tides
A sinking ship
Slavery
The time is now

SCENES

Each episode consists of a number of scenes:

- an opener that introduces the theme
- an indeterminate number of development scenes that move the story on
- a closer that somehow completes the theme—or ends organically, on a cliffhanger, conclusive line, or other exciting moment

Later on, this chapter is going to go on at some length about dividing scenes into types, all kinds of parameters, resolving things with die rolls and token exchanges, &c. But the main thing to remember is this:

When it's your turn to call a scene, the question you're being asked is "OK, what's happening next?" Answer that question first and all this stuff that follows will fall into place.

Choose the scene you want to see play out next, start to play it out, and only then do you need to get into whether it's procedural or dramatic, what tokens or abilities to use and so forth.

CALLING SCENES

Each scene begins when a participant calls the scene, laying out the parameters under which it unfolds. These are:

Cast: names the main or recurring characters taking part in the scene. You must always include your player character when you call a scene – or an NPC in the case of the GM.

Setting: where the scene takes place (at least at its outset; a scene can shift in time and place as it unfolds)

Time break (if any): by default, scenes are assumed to take place shortly after, or concurrently with, the previous scene. If you want to jump ahead in time, say so, and by how much. Time breaks are susceptible to challenge (see below.)

Situation: a brief description of what's happening at the scene's outset. As vividly as possible, the caller describes the scene's location, the activities of the characters involved, and the prevailing circumstances.

The situation may be a simple meeting of characters to hash out an emotional conflict, or can introduce a complication: a new plot development affecting some or all of the main cast. Other players cast in the scene may bounce off your description to describe what they're doing or other details. The scene, dramatic or procedural, then unfolds from the complication.

Goal: Most importantly of all, when you call a scene there's something your character wants. You might not be too clear on exactly what that is as the scene opens, but just call what seems natural and you'll figure it out soon enough.

If your character wants something from someone else – a favour, a show of obedience, a friendly word or some other emotional reward – it will be a *dramatic* scene.

If your character is pursuing a practical, concrete goal, it's a *procedural* scene.

CALLING ORDER

The player choosing the episode's theme always calls its first scene. After that, the order is down to the GM. They may choose the next scene caller at random, or hold cards with the players' names on them like a poker hand and play them in the order they choose. Or just announce whose turn it is next, or go round the table in seating order.

Whatever system you use, each player gets to call one scene each, then it's the GM's turn – and then the GM calls on a new player to start and another round begins.

N.B. You may never skip your turn as scene caller. If you draw a blank, lean back, take a moment. Ask the other players for ideas if you want.

If you really can't think of what your character wants right now, just think of what they'd be doing now on an ordinary day, and describe that. The other participants will help you continue the scene.

If you aren't the scene caller, you may not offer advice until the caller asks for it. Give each other time.

THE RIGHT TO DESCRIBE

Players with characters present in the current scene may at any point narrate details, including:

- physical circumstances
("I look up and see gulls circling overhead.")
- the behaviour of walk-on characters
("The Nagoas are getting restless.")
- their own characters actions and what comes of them
("I pick up a stone and smash the idol.")

When someone objects to a bit of narration, they can either adjust what they're describing or let it go to challenge.

The GM also pitches in with narration, as needed.

DRAMATIC SCENES

In a dramatic scene, characters engage in verbal conflict over the granting or withholding of a desired emotional reward. When you get what you want from another participant's character in a dramatic scene, give that player a drama token. If they don't give you what you want, they must pay a drama token to you.

Technical terms: The character seeking a reward is called the petitioner. The character deciding whether or not to extend it is the granter.

DRAMA TOKENS

All participants, including the GM, collect and spend drama tokens throughout the course of an episode. Everyone starts the first episode with zero tokens.

A central pile, or kitty, contains an inexhaustible supply of tokens. Drama tokens left unspent at the end of a session carry over to the next episode.

THE MAGNATA ANDRÉ REBOUÇAS

André Pinto Rebouças was an inventor, engineer and abolitionist, an important public figures of African descent in the final days of the Empire. He was famed in Rio for solving the city's water-supply problem. In the 1880s, Rebouças co-founded the Brazilian Anti-Slavery Society. After the Republican coup d'état, Rebouças went into exile with Pedro II.



When you switch GMs, the new GM gets the tokens the previous GM had left over. The previous GM gets however many tokens they had at the end of the most recent episode in which they were a player.

CALLING DRAMATIC SCENES

Call a dramatic scene by specifying:

- the cast
- the location
- how much time has passed since the previous scene (if any)

The final ingredient for a dramatic scene is intent—what the petitioner wants, consciously or otherwise, from the granter.

When a player calls the scene, their PC must want something from one or more of the other members of the cast – i.e. you're always a petitioner in the scenes you call.

When the GM calls a dramatic scene, they may cast any participants in the scene, provided at least one of them is a player character. If any NPCs are in the scene, one of them must have an intent with a PC as the granter.

If only PCs are in the scene, the GM may suggest what they might want, but each PC's player has the final decision on their intent.

Common intentions include dispensing or receiving:

- Acceptance
- Acknowledgement of a debt
- Acknowledgement that a debt has been paid
- Admiration
- Affection
- Anger
- Apology
- Attention
- Calm
- Excitement
- Favour
- Forgiveness
- Obedience
- Punishment
- Reassurance
- Trust
- Truth

GAINING TOKENS

Every dramatic scene ends with an exchange of one or more drama tokens. If the petition is willingly granted by the participant, the granter earns a drama token—from the petitioner if he has one, or from the kitty if not. If the granter refuses, the petitioner gains the token—from the granter if she has one, or from the kitty if not.

In any given scene, you might be a granter, petitioner, or both: as a group, you don't have to formally assign these statuses at the top of each scene. You can just work into the scene organically and figure things out from there.

Whenever you're in a scene, think about what you want from the other characters there. If you get it, give that character's player (or the GM) a token.

FORCING

If the participant playing the granter chooses not to relent, the petitioner may, by spending two drama tokens, force the granter to grant a significant emotional concession. They may still withhold some part of what the petitioner seeks, especially on the practical level, but must nonetheless represent a meaningful shift of emotional power from the granter to the petitioner.

At the end of the scene, the forced granter receives the two drama tokens from the petitioner, provided the force actually takes place.

The granter's player may block a force by spending three drama tokens. These are paid to the petitioner, at the end of the scene. The petitioner does not spend the 2 tokens that would have been spent on the force, for a net gain of 3.

After a force occurs or is cancelled, the same characters may not, for the duration of the episode, be called into similar scenes intended to reverse the original result. Some significant new element, as judged by challenge voting if need be, must be added to make the scene a true new development, and not just another kick at the can.

TIP: CALL DRAMATIC SCENES IN PUBLIC

If you want to get a concession from someone and make it stick, it's worth making sure other people see it happen. Just because someone showed you respect and promised to do a task for you, for example, doesn't mean they have to do it. If your conversation was behind closed doors, all you can do is get angry at them. But if you extracted that promise in a crowded cafe, everyone in the bairro will know about it.

SUPPORTING OR BLOCKING A FORCE

Players not directly involved in a scene may support an attempt to force, or cancel a force, by giving their drama tokens to the current petitioner or granter—provided their character is present in the scene. They describe what they say or do to make the force more or less likely.

If you support a force which the granter blocks, you get your tokens back.

CONCESSIONS AND EMOTIONAL POWER

A grant needn't give the petitioner everything he wanted in exactly the terms he wanted. This is why it's important to know the emotional demand you're making rather than the practical one.

One character might ask another for a free cake from the bakery because they want a show of love, or perhaps because they want a show of obedience. If the granter can't actually give away free cakes that day, they must find another way to demonstrate their emotional grant if they want to give it. A kiss on the cheek, perhaps, or a fearful offering-up of a fresh baguette instead.

Sometimes it won't be clear to you what the other person wants from you in emotional terms, until the end of the scene. The kiss on the cheek might be met with a scornful dismissal, and you'll have to pay a drama token for the privilege. Such is life.

Any appropriate shift in emotional power from granter to petitioner counts as a grant. Sometimes you'll reach clear consensus on what constitutes an appropriate shift; in a few cases you'll have to vote. Participants acting as petitioner must not actively deceive the granter as to the nature of their emotional demands, though they are not required to make it utterly transparent either.

Even a force must respect the bounds of the granter's established character. You can't, and shouldn't expect to, turn an avowed enemy into a loyal friend in a single scene. Forced petitions represent the character giving in for the moment, not undergoing a life-changing epiphany.



BURNING YOUR BRIDGES

If you're forced into a concession that would be utterly beyond the pale for your character, but absolutely can't think of a way to grant the necessary emotional concession while staying within the bounds of believability, you have one final desperate option: you may turn your back on the city.

Your character refuses the petition, and the petitioner gets their drama tokens back. This does not cost you any tokens. However, it is now your character's final episode. They pack up their belongings and leave Rio, or withdraw into a secluded life. Either way, they play no further part in the story, though the other characters may hear of them from time to time. Create a new character for the next episode.

PLAYING AND RESOLVING DRAMATIC SCENES

Players portray their characters through dialogue until the petition is either granted, or it becomes apparent that it has been conclusively rebuffed, or is losing tension and energy. This occurs when the players in the scene start to repeat themselves, or players not taking part in the scene grow visibly bored or restless. Where necessary, the GM steps in to declare the scene concluded, by asking the petitioner if he thinks he got a significant concession.

If the answer is yes, the petition is considered granted, even if other players feel that the petitioner didn't get everything he or she wanted. Neither the caller or the other players in general may gainsay the petitioner's player on this point.

If the answer is no, and the rest of the group agrees with the petitioner's assessment, the petition is considered to have been refused. The granter doesn't need to have actually given an outright refusal – a non-response also counts as a no, because it is not a significant concession to what the petitioner wanted.

If the answer is no, but other participants feel that a significant shift in emotional power from granter to petitioner occurred, the group, including GM, votes. The scene's caller gets an extra tie-breaking vote, where necessary.

If you're the petitioner, you can show that you think the scene is done and your petition granted by simply handing a drama token over to the granter. The GM will then throw to the next scene caller: "OK, so what are you doing while all this is going on?"

As petitioner, you can show you think there's been no concession this by emphatically getting out of the scene, implying the lack of concession in your

dialogue, or just by shaking head and signalling to the GM to cut. If the granter agrees with your assessment, you might be able to talk it out in-character. But most often you'll have to break character at that point and briefly discuss what went down.

Forces and blocks can be shown at the table without breaking character by pushing tokens back and forth as appropriate.

IF THINGS GET COMPLICATED

On some (hopefully rare) occasions, you'll conclude a scene and not be sure who should be getting tokens from whom. In general, follow this principle:

Did you ask for and get a emotional concession from someone?

If yes, give them a drama token.

If the situation still isn't clear, or there is a dispute, take an inter-scene break and talk about it, using the special-case guidelines below as appropriate.

In the early episodes of your game, you'll likely have to stop and discuss scene outcomes at first. But as everyone becomes familiar with the token mechanics, you'll be able to get by with the passing of tokens from one player to another and the occasional meaningful gesture.

TWO-WAY EXCHANGES

At the end of a dramatic scene, the GM and players might conclude that it was a two-way exchange, in which each character sought an emotional payoff, which either was or wasn't granted.

If both participants were a) denied or b) got the payoffs they sought, each receives a drama token. If both players have a drama token already, this cancels out—you needn't actually trade tokens. If one or more have zero drama tokens, however, the missing tokens come from the kitty.

THE PESCADOR

FRANCISCO XAVIER DE SANTANA

Fishermen in 19th-century Brazil divided areas of the sea into territories, fiercely guarded and contested.

Francisco Xavier de Santana was a lone fisherman who suffered assault and sabotage over a period of years from a group of rival fishermen who wanted to kick him out of "their" waters.



MULTIPLE PETITIONERS

Sometimes more than two characters will take part in one dramatic exchange—or several dramatic exchanges will overlap and interweave with one another. This might happen when:

- a player jumps into a dramatic scene
- a dramatic scene arises organically from a conference scene

Where possible, the GM avoids having recurring characters take major roles in these multi-layered dramatic scenes. Ideally, they act only in a supporting capacity, answering questions or offering opinions without seeking emotional rewards of their own. Sometimes the story demands that they take part as granters. The GM can almost always ensure that they don't act as petitioners.

After the various discussions come to a head and appear to resolve themselves, ask whether this was a dramatic scene at all. Do one or more players feel that their characters sought an emotional payoff?

If not, it was an expository scene setting up future events, probably of a procedural nature. No drama tokens are exchanged. Call the next scene.

If only one player answers in the affirmative, this is an ordinary drama scene with onlookers. Determine the distribution of tokens as usual. This is the most common case: even in a group scene, one character's petition usually dominates, to a degree that all participants instinctively acknowledge.

If multiple players feel they sought emotional reward, the group, led by the GM, continue as follows.

The GM quizzes each participating player, asking:

- what they most wanted, emotionally, in the scene
- who they wanted it from
- and whether they got it

If they got what they wanted, the specified player granted their petition and earns a drama token—from the petitioning player if he or she has one, or from the kitty if not.

If they didn't get what they wanted, the specified player refused their petition. The petitioner earns a drama token—from the refuser of the grant if he or she has one, or from the kitty if not.

A group scene might easily come to one overall conclusion about a practical course of action, with various different emotional ramifications for those taking part.

PETITIONING FOR PRACTICAL FAVOURS

Any scene involving a main cast member or recurring character asking a favour of another is by definition dramatic. Even if the granter seems to be asking for a practical favour, the subtext of the scene is always emotional. Depending on how self-aware the characters are, they may or may not realize this, but it's true all the same.

The scene counts as a grant if the promise to perform the favour feels like a significant concession to either the petitioner, or to the group at large. Whether the favour is later performed to the petitioner's satisfaction does not retroactively alter the outcome of the scene—but probably provokes a new scene in which the disappointed petitioner returns to the granter to express a grievance.

DRAMA WITH THE SUPPORTING CAST

The GM plays all supporting cast characters drawing on a single pool of drama tokens. Like any player, the GM must earn drama tokens by granting or by losing petitions.

ESTABLISHMENT SCENES

You can also call a scene which only features one character and doesn't invoke the petitioner-granter relationship or a procedural action. These are often used to establish a fact about your character ("I go for a lonely walk down by the beach.") or about something in the story ("I go down to the station to check what time the train from Ouro Preto gets in."), hence the name "establishment scenes".

Establishment scenes are categorised as a subset of dramatic scenes, and they may be use for ability refreshes.

THE MÚSICO ERNESTO NAZARETH

Ernesto Júlio de Nazareth was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1863, one of five children. He was a professional musician by the age of 17 performing at venues such as Club Mozart and for the imperial court.

He was noted as a composer of *maxixe* and other genres whose work straddled the divide between classical and popular music. He composed over 200 polkas, tangos, waltzes, sambas and other pieces.



PROCEDURAL SCENES

In procedural scenes, characters pursue practical, external goals. These may allow them to petition for emotional rewards in subsequent scenes, but at the moment of success or failure are matters of practical effort.

CALLING A PROCEDURAL SCENE

To establish a procedural scene, the caller describes the basic situation. While adding as much evocative narration as possible, they specify:

- The scene's location
- Which characters are present
- What they're trying to achieve, and how

To call a procedural scene your character is not in, spend a drama token. (This requirement does not apply to the GM.)

PROCEDURAL RESOLUTION

When your character is involved in a procedural scene, the game becomes a conversation in which you say what your character does, and the GM responds with what happens and how non-player characters react.

When the outcome of what you do is in doubt, you need to take an action. Actions are governed by discrete chunks of game rules that are triggered by particular circumstances. When you describe your character doing something that triggers an action, its rules come into play. (The GM can also take actions, but GM actions work somewhat differently.)

Often this will involve a die roll to test one of your abilities. The action's description will tell you which one with the syntax "roll [Ability]" – for example, "roll Talking" or "roll Art".

Decide if you will *spend* that ability. If so, roll a six-sided die and add your ability rating to the result. If not, or if you have no applicable strong ability, just roll the die.

Your total determines the outcome, according to the action's rules description – in general, a 6 or more is really good, 3-5 is pretty good, and less than 3 is pretty bad. If your points expenditure bumps your result to a higher bracket, narrate how your expertise or strength in that area helped you out.

Once you've spent an ability, you can't use it again until you refresh it in a later scene.

When it is clear that the goal in a procedural scene has been achieved or will not be achieved, the scene concludes.

ASÉ DICE

You may spend 1 Asé ('a-shay') to roll an additional die for an action. Keep whichever rolls the highest result. You can may announce you are spending Asé after you see the result of the first roll.

Whenever an action says you “gain Asé”, add 1 to your Asé score.

PROCEDURAL RESOLUTION IN DRAMATIC SCENES

- AND VICE VERSA

Sometimes you want to find out if a character can succeed at something practical in the middle of a dramatic scene. In such cases, the GM will ask you to roll for an action, without starting a separate scene.

However, if the matter at hand looks like it'll take more than one or two actions to resolve, any participant may request it be handled as a separate scene. Conclude the current dramatic scene with token exchanges as usual, and with the procedural action about to begin. *The GM must call that procedural scene on their next turn, unless another player has already done so.*

The events of a procedural scene may generate or represent an emotional exchange between two or more characters. Drama tokens may be exchanged in a procedural scene in the aftermath of a requested procedural action (see 'Getting Dramatic' on p.144). In other circumstances, save the drama for later – call a separate dramatic scene in which the characters reflect on what happened.

SUCCESS BY NARRATION

Often you can describe your characters, in concert with others or alone, as undertaking successful practical action, without submitting yourself to the vagaries of procedural resolution. You can do this at the top of a scene, while setting the scene, or as it unfolds. You needn't be the caller to describe your character's practical successes.

WHAT IS ASÉ ?

The term asé (also spelled aché or axé) is a word that comes from the Yoruba-speaking peoples of western Africa, many of whom were transported as slaves to Brazil.

Asé is the life force that exists in all things, the power to make things happen. According to the traditions, asé is distributed by the orisha spirit Exú, lord of the crossroads.

If no participant objects to your narration, what you describe becomes part of the narrative.

If any participant objects, you must play out a procedural to see if your pursuit of a practical goal succeeds. You aren't obligated to start a procedural when an objection is raised. Instead you can delay the attempt, or give up on it entirely. In the second case, your character probably sees that the action is more difficult than it at first appeared.

When you call a procedural scene, and the GM doesn't see any good story reason for you to face resistance, she'll ask if anyone else objects to your success. If not, you describe your action as having succeeded, and then call a reframed scene arising from that.



REFRESHING ABILITIES

You can regain the points you've spent on using an ability by calling a dramatic scene during which your character recuperates their energies in an appropriate fashion. The refreshing activity is the background to the dramatic scene.

You must state when calling the scene that you intend to refresh an ability (and say which one); the activity you choose is open to challenge from the GM or other players. The outcome of the dramatic scene does not affect whether or not you refresh the ability.

Example: Jorginho, a fi herman, has spent 3 points of Enduring. His player calls a dramatic scene in which Jorginho goes to the local restaurant to eat his fill f feijoada and to flirt wi h the owner, Amelia. His petition for affection is refused, so he gets a drama token in addition to regaining his Enduring rating. He can now choose to add 3 to the result next time he rolls Enduring.

INTERRUPTING REFRESHES

You may cast your character into a player's refresh scene, using the rules for rushing a scene, in order to disrupt the activity they had planned. If your rushing of the scene is successful, their ability remains spent.

The GM may also interrupt refreshes in this way by introducing unwelcome NPCs. Be aware that once you start playing for keeps like that, things could get competitive around the table pretty fast. Never start a fight you're not prepared to finish.

DRAMA VS. TALKING

Where any scene between a PC and either another PC or a recurring character is by definition dramatic, with emotional stakes at play, all dialogue interactions with minor characters are procedural, and resolved with the Talking ability. They can never grant meaningful dramatic concessions, because the PCs have no emotional investment in them. They can only grant—or refuse—practical favours. Drama tokens are never awarded or spent as the result of a Talking scene.

Players may want to elevate a minor character to recurring character status in order to deal with them in a dramatic scene. This is permissible, but machiavellian players should be careful: if you have emotional power over the third spear-carrier from the left through drama tokens, he now has the same power over you – and you just made him immune to procedural Talking rolls.

SAMPLE ABILITY REFRESHES

Art

Attend a good performance or exhibition of your artform by someone else.
Spend three hours practising your artform.

Business

Talk shop with a friend in your line of business.
Spend two hours going over the accounts.
Take a day off from work.

Capoeira

Participate in a roda from beginning to end.
Spend an hour or two training hard, alone or with friends.
Learn a new song from another capoeirista.



Enduring

Enjoy a hearty meal without interruption.

Fighting

Spend several hours on punishing combat training.
Go out carousing with friends.

Knowing

Curl up for the afternoon with an improving book.
Catch up on the latest gossip with your social circle.

Making

Spend an afternoon in your workspace pottering around but not really making anything useful.

Moving

Go swimming in the sea for fun.
Relax your muscles with a nice, warm bath.

Sneaking

Get out and about on the streets, observing what's going on.

Talking

Spend an evening carousing and telling tall tales.
Listen to a stirring oration or recital.

Wealthy

Spend the afternoon shopping for trinkets.
Attend a high-society party.

ENDING THE EPISODE

End your game session when a natural break is reached in the story, or when you run out of time – whichever happens first. As far as possible, try to ensure everyone has had the chance to call an equal number of scenes.

Whoever chose the theme for the episode may, though they don't have to, award a point of Asé to the player they think best brought the theme to life during the game session.

Then look at your character sheet and ask yourself, "Did I embody one or both of my Dramatic Poles during this episode?" If yes, gain Asé.

Drama Tokens carry over to the next episode. Note that Drama Tokens attach to characters, not players. So if you are changing GMs, the new GM gets the current GM's pool next time round.



THE FINAL EPISODE

Sooner or later your story must come to an end. Decide as a group when you have played the penultimate episode of the current game, at the end of the session in question. The next episode will be the last.

You might do so when one or more Player Characters have achieved, or seem about to achieve, their Desires; when the overall story feels like it is coming to a conclusion; or when you know that the next session must be the last for practical scheduling reasons.

During the final episode, strive to resolve any outstanding issues you feel are important and to decide once and for all which of your PC's Dramatic Poles will be dominant for the rest of their lives.

It is up to the GM to say which scene is the last and thus to declare the story complete.

At the end, ask yourself: did I achieve my Desire? If the answer is yes, congratulations. You have won the game. Changing circumstances and the events that occurred while you were pursuing your Desire may now make it seem like a hollow victory, but such is life.



Tell the group whether you think you achieved your Desire, and how you feel about that.

Next, take it in turns to describe a brief epilogue for each of your Player Characters and, perhaps, prominent members of the supporting cast. This is a brief, descriptive scene, neither dramatic nor procedural, but simply observing the character in question as if from a distance, emblematic of their circumstances and outlook at the end of the story.



Frucht-Verkäuferin in Rio de Janeiro.

HENSCHEL & BENQUE
RIO DE JANEIRO



PHOTOGRAPHIA ALLEMÃ
40 RUA DOS OURIVES



ACTIONS

This chapter contains the actions that are available to all Player Characters. Actions restricted to certain characters are covered in the Signature Moves chapter.

ACT UNDER PRESSURE

When you act despite being under threat, or suffer some kind of adversity, say how you deal with it and roll. The ability you use depends on how you do it – for example...

- ...by busting heads, Fighting
- ...by getting out of the way or acting fast, Moving
- ...by withstanding the onslaught, Enduring
- ...by taking advantage of something you have learnt, Knowing
- ...with stealth, Sneaking
- ...using charm and social grace, Talking

On 6+, you do what you are trying to do and the threat doesn't come to fruition. On 3-5, you succeed but with drawbacks.

On 2-, the GM says what happens.

FIND SOMETHING OUT

When you go looking for information, roll the appropriate ability – Talking if you canvass people on the street, Knowing if you delve into the recesses of your own memory, and so forth.

On 6+, you find what you wanted, if available, and choose 1:

- You gain an ally.
- You get bonus information.
- You find out quickly.

On 3-5, choose 1:

- The search takes too long.
- You have to spend wealth.
- You suffer harm.
- You have to call in a favour.
- What you seek is out of reach, for now at least.
- Your search attracts unwelcome attention.

On 2-, the GM chooses 2 from any of the above.

The two actions above are the two core types of procedural action in *Malandros*. All other actions may be seen as refinements of these two principles. If in doubt as to which action applies, think of Act Under Pressure or Find Something Out as your fallbacks to resolve any situation where the outcome is uncertain.

In the following actions, if it's not specified what happens when you roll 2 or less, it means the GM gets to choose.

DAR UM JEITINHO

When you look for a way out of a sticky situation, roll Knowing. On a 6+, ask 2. On a 3–5, ask 1:

- What's my best escape route/way through?
- Who is most vulnerable to me?
- Who is the biggest threat?
- What should I be on the lookout for?
- What here is useful or valuable to me?
- What here is not what it appears to be?

When you act on one of the GM's answers in a procedural scene, take +1 to your roll.

BE PERSUASIVE

When you try to seduce, coerce or manipulate a minor character you have leverage over, tell them what you want and roll Talking.

On a success, they ask you to promise something first, and do it if you promise.

On a 6+, whether you keep your promise is up to you, later. On a 3–5, they need some concrete assurance right now.

BRAWL

When you attack an enemy hand-to-hand, roll Fighting (or Capoeira). On 6+, you strike your opponent and avoid harm. On 3–5, you still strike them, but choose one from the list below:

- They strike you in return.
- You inflict little harm (-1 less than normal, usually).
- You're left in a disadvantageous position.

GO TO WORK

When you spend a day or night at your job, roll an appropriate ability: Enduring for physical labour, Talking for service work such as working in a shop, Knowing for acting as a foreman or administrator, etc.

On 6+, gain wealth. On 3-5, gain wealth and suffer stress. On a 2-, suffer stress or something worse.



LEARN SOMETHING

Once per episode, when you use a Signature Move, choose one of the following for your PC:

- a new Signature Move from one of your categories
- a new Signature Move from another category, provided no other PC has it
- add 1 point to an existing ability
- gain a new ability with a rating of 1

ACTIONS FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS

These won't come up as much as the actions given above. Still, here they are.

OBTAIN A PATUÁ

When you consult an expert regarding the preparation of a protective amulet for yourself, roll a die.

On a 6, choose 1. On a 3-5, the GM chooses up to 2.

- A specific component is needed to make your patuá.
- You need to accomplish a task first.
- You must agree to owe the maker a favour, no questions asked.

On a 2-, you are not yet ready to carry a patuá. You cannot ask again until the next episode. If you receive a patuá, your GM will give you a new Signature Move that you can use by calling on its power.

BREAKING AND ENTERING

When you commit a burglary, roll Sneaking. On a 6+, all 3. On a 3-5, choose 2.

- You leave no evidence you were there.
- You gain wealth or something of value.
- No alarm is raised.

GO ON A DANGEROUS JOURNEY

When you travel through hostile territory, roll Moving. On a 6+ you arrive at your destination without trouble, though something interesting may happen on the way. On a 3-5, choose 1. On a 2- the GM chooses 1:

- The journey requires more money or resources than you expected.
- There is a breakdown of some type, like a fallen yard or broken wheel.
- You meet trouble along the way.

BLOW OFF STEAM

When you relax and enjoy yourself, roll Talking and add +1 to your result per 1 wealth spent. On a 6+, choose 2. On a 3-5, choose 1. On a 2-, choose 1, but things get complicated (the GM will say how).

- You make a new friend.
- You hear about a promising opportunity.
- You remove one stress of your choice.

THE ARTFUL DODGER

When you try to pick someone's pocket, roll Sneaking. On a 6+, you get the item you want without complications. On a 3-5 choose two, on a 2- choose one:

- You get the item you wanted.
- No one notices what you're up to.
- Later on, the mark can't be sure when or where the pickpocketing took place.

GRAB HOLD

When you try to seize something by force, or to secure your hold on something, roll Fighting. On a 6+, choose 3. On a 3–5, choose 2:

- You take hold of it.
- You suffer little or no harm.
- You inflict harm.
- You impress or frighten your opponent.

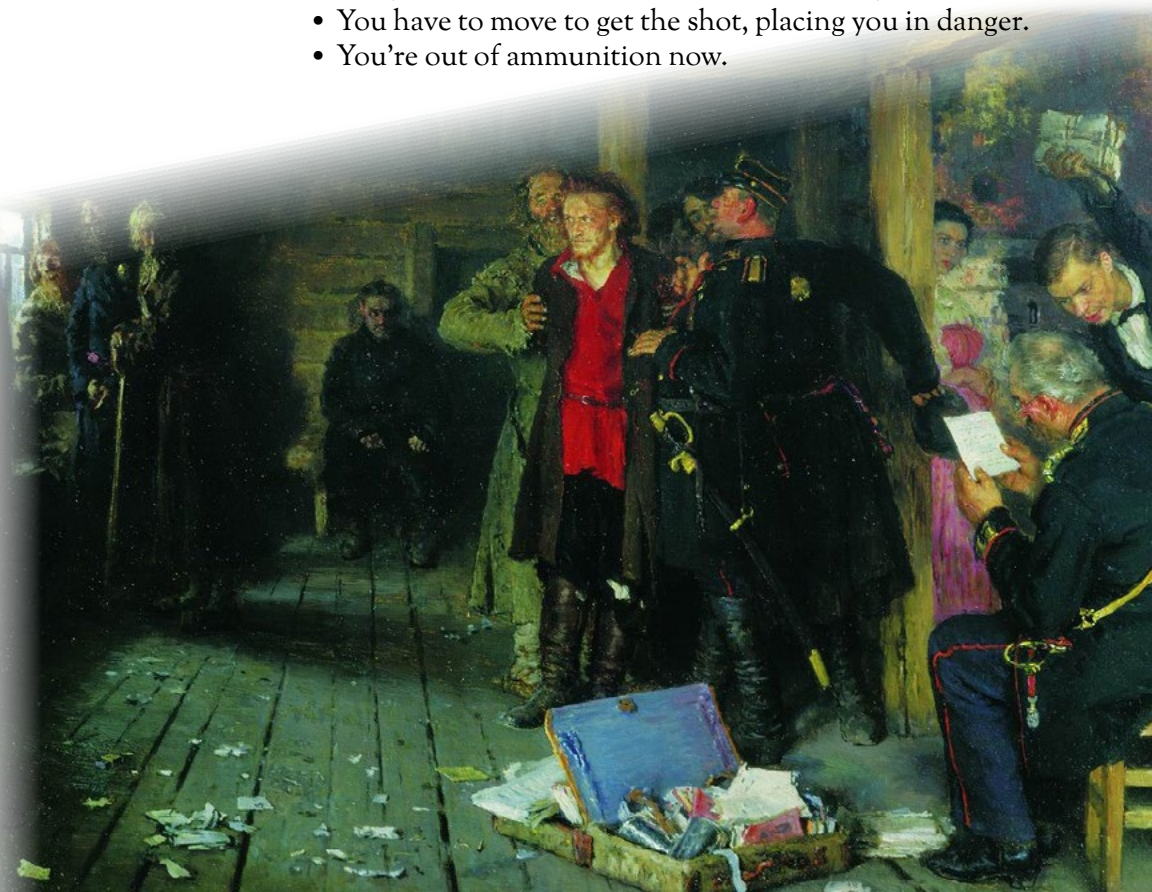
OPEN FIRE

When you shoot at an enemy at range, roll Fighting

On a 6+, you have a clear shot—inflict your weapon's harm.

On a 3–5, choose one (whichever you choose, you inflict harm):

- You have to move to get the shot, placing you in danger.
- You're out of ammunition now.



STRESS & HARM

Life can be difficult, especially in a city like Rio. Work, social pressure and general hassle and stuff that happens can leave you exhausted, upset, embarrassed or even physically bruised. In *Malandros*, you measure that with *stress*.

There are 4 kinds of stress:

Stunned, Angry, Embarrassed, and Beaten Up.

Whenever your character is under the effects of one or more type of stress, you take -1 to all rolls. This penalty does not increase if you tick more than one stress type – it just makes it harder to get rid of the penalty.

The existence of stress as a thing you can measure doesn't mean that, for example, you suffer a penalty whenever your character is angry. Rather it means that, when the Angry stress box is ticked on your character sheet, your PC gets so angry that it's putting them off doing anything.

You don't have to play every scene as if you're furious, either, just because you have the Angry box ticked – outwardly, your character may still express any of the gamut of human emotions. But that Angry thing is inside, preying on his mind when he should perhaps be concentrating on other things.

You can remove one stress mark by calling a dramatic scene in which your PC reduces their stress, being reassured or calmed down by someone, or having their bruises tended to. You can also remove a stress mark by calling a procedural scene in which you use the “Carouse” action.

Where stress measures relatively minor physical and mental strain, *harm* is serious physical punishment.

There are 4 degrees on the harm track:

Beaten Up, Hurt, Injured, and Out.

(Note that Beaten Up is a kind of both stress and harm.)

When your character is Beaten Up, all action rolls are made with a -1 penalty. The penalty when Hurt is -2, and when Injured, -3.

When a character is Out, they are unconscious, incapacitated, or even dead.

Whenever you suffer harm, tick off boxes on the harm track according to the amount you took. E.g. if you are already Hurt and suffer 1 harm, you are now Injured.

SHIFTING HARM

Whenever you suffer harm, instead of ticking a box on the harm track, you may instead tick an appropriate stress type. You can only do this for 1 level of the harm you suffer – any remaining harm must be counted on the harm track. The stress type must be appropriate to the situation. For example, if you take 1 harm from falling out of a tree when there's no one around to see you, you can't tick Embarrassed.

This is what the stress and harm tracks look like:

☐	☐	☐	☐	
Dazed	Angry	Embarrassed	Beaten Up	-1
			☐	
			Hurt	-2
			☐	
			Injured	-3
			☐	
			Out	

There are two actions that relate specifically to harm. And here they are now:

SUFFER HARM

When you suffer harm, mark it on the harm track and roll Enduring. On a 6+, you're as OK as you could hope for, in the circumstances.

If you took 1 or more harm, the GM can choose something from the 3-5 list below, but you take -1 harm. On a 3-5, the GM can choose 1:

- You lose your footing.
- You lose your grip on whatever you're holding.
- You lose track of someone or something you're attending to.
- You miss noticing something important.

On a 2-, choose 1:

- You're out of action: unconscious, trapped or in a panic.
- It's worse than it seemed. Take an additional 1 harm.
- Lose a body part (e.g. hand, finger, half an ear).

AT DEATH'S DOOR

When you hit 'Out' on the harm track from a potentially lethal blow, roll Enduring. On a 3+ you survive until medical help comes – choose one from the list if you get 6+, choose two if you get 3-5.

- You owe someone for the treatment – a lot.
- Side effects: lose 2 points from one of your abilities.
- Lose the use of a major body part (e.g. arm, leg, eye).

If you get 2-, you die.

WEAPONS

When one character strikes another, they inflict harm based on the weapon they are using. Different weapons also have different ranges at which they can be used.

Fists & feet: 1 harm, hand

Navalha (straight razor), club: 2 harm, hand, easy to hide

Big knife: 3 harm, hand

Bengala (cane): 2 harm, hand/close

Sword: 3 harm, hand/close

Pistol: 3 harm, close/far, loud

Winchester rifle: 4 harm, far, loud

Ranges

Hand: touching distance

Close: slightly beyond arm's length

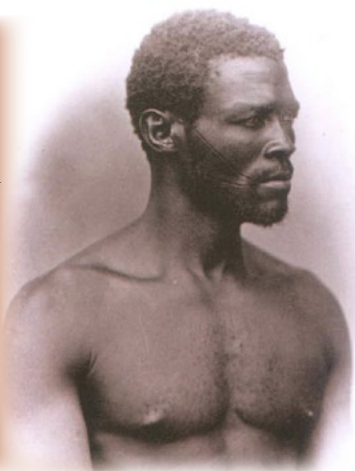
Far: further away than that

If you want to move towards or away from an enemy who can attack you at the range you either start or finish in, you have to Act Under Pressure.

THE ESTIVADOR PRATA PRETA

Horacio José da Silva, better known as Prata Preta (Black Silver), was a stevedore and capoeirista in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

During the Vaccine Revolt of 1904, he led over 2,000 people defending the barricades against the army. He was arrested when the makeshift fortifications fell and deported to Acre, Brazil's westernmost state.



WEALTH & MONEY



The funny thing about money is that it doesn't stand still. You would think that if you get 10 times richer tomorrow, you'd be able to buy 10 times as much stuff. But it never seems to quite work out like that.

If you're rich, a lot of the time people start giving you stuff for free. Gifts, tickets to the opera, whatever. Now that you can afford nice stuff, you don't have to pay for it. This is what the "Wealthy" ability does – it lets you get stuff without actually expending your points of wealth.

On the other hand, when people know you have money, they know they can charge you more because you can afford it. That's why a simple dock worker spends the same amount of wealth to pay off a blackmailer as a slumming aristocrat does. The dock worker's 1 wealth represents less actual money, since the blackmailer knows there's no point pushing for more.

So why even be rich? Well, levels of the ability Wealthy give you access to stuff that lower levels can only dream of. That diamond ring in the window? Yeah, you can spend wealth to get it. But the aforementioned humble dock worker won't even be allowed into the shop.

Generally speaking, if an action requires you to "spend wealth", it means spend 1 point of it.

If you need to use wealth as a bargaining chip and you're less Wealthy than the person you're offering it to, you need to come up with a reason your relatively paltry wealth would be worth their while. Maybe you have access to exotic native beadwork that will wow the crowds at the next governor's ball, or your ship's cargo can be used as the prototype for their next factory product or something. A malandro has to be inventive.

HOW MUCH WEALTH DO PCS HAVE AT THE START OF THE FIRST SESSION?

None. They have clothing, food and resources appropriate to their station in life, but in game terms of liquid, tradable wealth: 0.

Some may have Signature Moves that get them wealth. Those without must deal with other PCs or rich NPCs to get it.

TALKING ABOUT MONEY

In the game, there may be times you need to talk about a particular amount of money for something – getting a price on a new mast for your boat, bargaining over the price of a shipment of coffee, etc.

In mechanical terms, the first price mentioned in a scene is worth 1 Wealth. Any amount higher is 2 Wealth, anything lower is 0 Wealth.

The exception to this is if you've established the price of something in a previous scene and are still talking in reference to that. In such cases, Wealth amounts may now range above 2 or below 0.

Example:

Old Ze is trying to shift his latest catch of fish, but his usual buyer Rodrigo told him in a previous scene that the bottom has fallen out of the market because all the newly-arrived fishermen from Italy have been offering insanely low prices. Ze wanted 400 mil-réis for his catch (1 wealth), but Rodrigo could only offer 300 (0 wealth).

In the new scene, Ze catches up with Jorge, a guy he doesn't usually deal with. "Sorry, friend," says Jorge, "I can only give you 200 mil-réis. Any more than that and I'd lose money at the market."

In game terms, Jorge's offer is -1 Wealth, because it's even less than Rodrigo's 0 Wealth price.

"What?!" cries Ze. "It cost me more than that to get the crew together and catch these fish in the first place!"

THE PROPRIETÁRIO JOÃO ROMÃO

A major character in Aluísio Azevedo's 1890 novel *O Cortiço*, João Romão is a Portuguese immigrant who owns the eponymous *cortiço* tenement, renting out hovel-like rooms to most of the other characters.

He also owns the local store where everyone buys groceries. A slovenly but hard-working miser, he milks his tenants for everything they've got. To his chagrin, all his money earns him no social prestige, and his desire for a noble title drives many of the novel's events.



CURRENCY

real (plural réis)

vintém (plural vinténs) = 20 réis

1 mil-réis = 1000 réis

1 conto = 1000 mil-réis

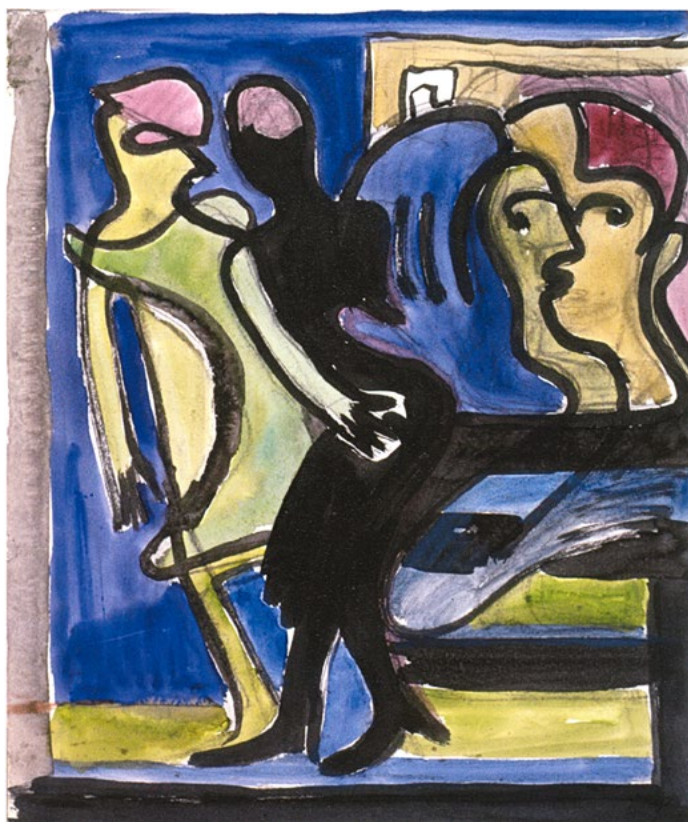
TYPICAL PRICES

These prices are not intended as something to be strictly adhered to. They're here to help you make up realistic-sounding dialogue when you talk about buying and selling things in character.

- A box of tobacco or a decent cigar: 40 réis
 - A bouquet of flowers: 50 réis
 - A bottle of wine: 50-200 réis
 - A large bottle of Carlsberg beer: 3 mil-réis
 - Hiring a thug to administer a beating: 60 réis
 - A meal in a decent restaurant: 12 vinténs
 - Rented washtub, 1 day: 500 réis
 - A month's rent in a lower-class bairro: 12-25 mil-réis
 - A month's stay in a rich merchant's home: 250 mil-réis
 - Dowry for a rich merchant's daughter: 80 contos
-
- A day's wages for a menial servant: 400-600 réis
 - A night's earnings for an expensive callgirl: 30 mil-réis
-
- A month's pay for...
 - watering someone's garden once a day: 2 mil-réis
 - a successful street vendor: 20-30 mil-réis
 - an unskilled labourer: 30 mil-réis
 - a qualified stone-cutter: 50 mil-réis
 - a quarry foreman/explosives expert: 70 mil-réis
 - a government office worker: 80 mil-réis

PLAYING THE GAME

Being a chapter of hopefully useful advice
on getting the most out of *Malandros*



GUIDELINES FOR PLAYERS

SHOW YOUR CHARACTER

Outside of the things they say and do, your character doesn't exist to the other people at the table. So if your PC is angry about something, demonstrate it. Say so to someone, smash a chair, make it known. If your PC dreams of being a ballerina, go to auditions, or at least dance around a bit when sweeping up in the factory canteen.

FOLLOW YOUR DESIRE

A lot of the time you won't have a problem thinking of what scene to call next. There'll be some plan in motion, or something to respond to, that will make it pretty obvious what your PC's next move would be.

But when that doesn't happen, and you're having trouble thinking where to go next, look down. Your character sheet holds the answers. The main one is your Desire. Think of the shortest route between where you are now and your Desire, then take it.

If that doesn't help, look at your Dramatic Poles – which one haven't you played up for a while? How could you demonstrate it? If you can do that while heading for your Desire, all the better. But if you can't, just acting out your personality once in a while is pretty good too.

PLAY THE GAME YOU WANT TO PLAY

Do game the system if you feel like it – that's what it's for. Astute observers will notice that DramaSystem lets you mess with other players in a fairly simple way – give in to others' demands for a couple of scenes and you've already got enough drama tokens to force someone to do something they don't want to do.

This is intentional. It reflects the give and take of relationships between people who are emotionally connected, and you can use that. This approach to play works well if you're playing a character who's a bit of a hustler, a social manipulator or a politician.



Dramatic scenes also feed into refreshing procedural ability pools. You can get a drama token and an ability refresh in the same scene, and you're very much encouraged to do so. The GM and other players will be along shortly with all kinds of ways to spend those things.

Feel free to play for keeps with scene framing. Cast other PCs in procedural scenes that they maybe don't really want to be involved in – if they want to duck the scene, they can pay a token for the privilege.

DramaSystem also works if you choose to pay only peripheral attention to which tokens are going where. If book-keeping and plotting moves in advance doesn't work for you or doesn't fit the character you're playing, don't worry about it. Just play your character and use the procedural rules or exchange drama tokens as and when the rules indicate – they'll become a framework for your actions rather than a tool: when a dramatic scene isn't going your way, look down and see if you have the tokens to force a concession; when your ability pools are running low, think about having your character take a break in a refresh scene.

EMBRACE THE FORCE

You're always playing your character but you aren't always in control. Sometimes your PC will be forced to make a concession. Most of the rest of the time, the game is about deciding what your character would do and then making that happen.

When someone forces a concession on you, the game temporarily becomes about figuring out a convincing reason why your character would do the thing another player just decided on. Have fun with it. You can always get revenge on the other players later.

SHORT SCENES ARE OK

It's easy to be paralysed by choice when your turn comes round to call the next scene. Sometimes you just can't think of what your next move should be, or come up with a way to pursue your Desire on the spur of the moment. But you don't get to skip your turn.

Remember that there are really three kinds of scene, even though we only distinguish two mechanically: there are scenes where you exchange drama tokens, scenes where you roll for actions, and the third kind – scenes where you establish something about your character or the world.

The third kind is the place to go when you're short on ideas. Visit your mother, have a coffee with a friend, visit the market, tell someone a joke.

Whatever your character would do on an ordinary day, where they'd be – that's the "something" you establish.

You can play out a brief scene with the GM or another player, or you can just describe it, like Felipe on break at the fish market, hanging around with the other crate loaders, smoking a cigarette. Someone does an impression of the foreman and Felipe laughs so much he starts to choke.

Give everyone a little vignette of your character's life, then move on. See what happens next.

CALL THE SCENES YOU WANT TO SEE

To a great degree, you're responsible for your own fun in this game, and you have the power to make it happen through scene-calling. The other players' characters have their own Desires to pursue. The GM has plenty to do keeping track of everything that's going on and depicting a vibrant, living city. So if you want to do something, don't wait for it to happen. Call your scene, because no one else is going to do it for you.



GUIDELINES FOR THE GM

HELP THE PLAYERS TO CALL SCENES

Sometimes it's suddenly your turn to call a scene and you don't know what to do. If this happens to a player, first of all give them some time to think. Then, if they ask for help, ask them questions to draw out the scene they want to call.

EXAMPLE:

GM: *"Who do you want to talk to next?"*

Player: *"We need to go talk to the Captain!"*

GM: *"Where do you think he would be right now?"*

Player: *"Probably having a drink after work, with some important people he knows."*

GM: *"OK, maybe at Cafe Raimundo, sharing a bottle of red wine with the Duke at an outside table overlooking the plaza."*

Player: *"Right. Yeah. So me and Tico-Tico walk right up to his table and push his guard out of the way..."*

GIVE THEM HARD CHOICES

This is how dramatic scenes work – making hard choices between what you want and what the other person wants. In mechanical terms it means deciding whether to get your own way or to take the drama token.

It's also how GM actions work in procedural scenes. In this game, the GM doesn't roll dice like the players do. Instead you describe what's happening and say "what do you do?" – if the PCs do nothing to change the situation, you take an action. If they roll and fail (get a 2 or less), you take an action.

What's happening can be broad in scope – "Unless someone stands against him, it looks like Sandro Oliveira will win the election in a landslide. What do you do?" – or relatively small scale – "Gafanhoto swings a bottle at your head – what do you do?"

We'll come to the specifics of GM actions later.

Note that when you take an action in response to what PCs do or don't do, there's no requirement to make it happen right away. But it does have to happen at some point.

In the examples above, if the PC didn't try to dodge or block the incoming blow you'd most likely deal harm immediately, but the effects of Sandro Oliveira winning the election could take days or weeks to be felt.

OFFER PCS WHAT THEY DESIRE

But giving them hard choices comes first. Your Desire for acceptance can be realised now that you're upwardly mobile – but you have to leave friends and family behind. Sure, your Desire for respect could come true if you succeed where other civil guard captains failed – but will you put your best friend in jail? You want to punish the men who ruined your family? How far are you prepared to go? The love of a good woman is right there in your grasp – if you can settle down and give up being a malandro.

PLAY OFF THEIR DRAMATIC POLES

Before a new episode, take a look through the Dramatic Poles of each PC. Have any of them been neglected for a while? If so, come up with some scene ideas that will bring those poles to the fore.

If you see a Dramatic Pole that doesn't seem to apply to the character any more, due to changes the PC has gone through or because the character as played hasn't turned out quite like the original idea (which is, by the way, totally legit), discuss writing a new Dramatic Pole with the player.



SAY 'CUT' WHEN THE SCENE IS DONE

Scenes don't have to be very long to be valuable. A whole bunch of short scenes that build up to a bigger picture is just as good as one big scene where all kinds of things occur. Maybe better.

Keep an eye out for scenes meandering on after they're finished. A dramatic scene is done when an emotional petition is granted or refused. Do the token exchange and move on. Don't hang around for small talk.

The same goes for procedural scenes. At the start of a procedural scene, the first step is to find out what the PCs are trying to do. Once you have discovered whether or not they achieve it, that's the end of the scene.

Someone tried to break his friend out of jail and got caught? And he's been cornered by armed guards? Well, the aim was "get my pal out of jail" and that didn't work, so the scene is over. Cut. If you want to know what happens next, wait till it's your turn and call the scene where you find out.

MIX HIGH AND LOW STAKES

Granted, the very first guideline above says "give them hard choices" – just don't do it all the time. *Malandros* is a game of desperation, corruption and violence, but it's also a laid-back, sunny afternoon slice-of-life kind of game.



When it's your turn to call a scene, consider the value of a low-key moment. An invitation to go for a drink at the botequim on the corner can be just as valuable and revealing an emotional moment as an order from a commanding officer to shoot unarmed protestors – and in terms of how many drama tokens they're worth, they are precisely the same.

Use your GM-called scenes to offer a counterpoint to those the players are calling. If they're exchanging drama tokens scene after scene on the basis of coffee invitations, introduce a more serious, life-changing decisions. If the players' scenes are all blood and thunder, remind them of everyday life with a gentler interlude.

GM ACTIONS

If you are the GM, any time a player rolls a 2- on a procedural action (unless the rules text says different), or when everyone looks at you to say “what now?”, you can take one of the following actions:

- Put someone in a difficult situation.
- Bring news of things happening off-screen.
- Offer an opportunity.
- Demand wealth.
- Make known an impending threat.
- Inflict harm or stress.
- Take away their stuff.
- Show an advantage’s downside.



PUT SOMEONE IN A DIFFICULT SITUATION.

The someone doesn’t have to be a PC. It can also be an NPC who the PCs care about. It cannot be an NPC the PC’s don’t care about.

BRING NEWS OF THINGS HAPPENING OFF-SCREEN.

Good news or bad news, either way. As long as it’s interesting.

OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY.

This opportunity may or may not come with a cost attached.

DEMAND WEALTH

Make them spend their money. Need somewhere to live? Spend wealth on fixing the roof. Want some ammo for that revolver you got? Spend wealth. Want to get into that party to meet that guy? Spend wealth on some nice clothes.

When they are down to 0 wealth, they need to find a way to get some (an honest job, a con, marrying someone rich, maybe). Or they need to go into debt. And remember, they start at 0 wealth – get them into debt early.

MAKE KNOWN AN IMPENDING THREAT.

Give them a chance to react before you inflict harm or stress, take away their stuff or show an advantage's downside.

EXAMPLE

Miguel arrives at the harbour in the morning and goes to where he moored his little fishing boat to discover that a coterie of local fishermen are trying to force him out. The GM is about to say "someone has set fire to your boat in the night – it's just a blackened husk now" but stops. Because this is the first encounter with the rival fishermen, burning Miguel's whole livelihood is a step too far. He hasn't had any warning yet. Instead, the GM says "you see a couple of guys in your boat, messing with your nets and gear. What do you do?"

INFLECT HARM OR STRESS.

Do this when you've warned the player what the harm or stress will be and they either fail to avoid it or choose not to.

E.g. Harm from being punched. Anger from having to shove your way through a crowd of block-headed pedestrians. Exhaustion from staying up all night. Dying from execution by firing squad.

TAKE AWAY THEIR STUFF.

They'll probably want to get it back. Stuff can be physical possessions or money, but it can also be more abstract – social standing, health or family, for instance.

SHOW AN ADVANTAGE'S DOWNSIDE.

The problem with being rich is that people try to rob you. The problem with being famously great at capoeira is that capoeira is illegal. And so forth.

PLOT POINTS & PROGRESS TRACKS

The GM will usually find that the Desires and conflicting Dramatic Poles of *Malandros* characters drive them forward into interesting events without much prompting. However, it can be useful to have dynamic elements of the setting ready to provide an outside impetus for a PC to act.

Having plot points on hand is a way to prepare for future scenes and episodes while retaining the flexibility you need to GM a DramaSystem game.

Each plot point is targeted at one Player Character, asking a question about that character's personality or just what's going to happen to them. After the question comes a pressing scenario that puts that question into practice in the story.

A plot point may stand alone, or be followed by escalating steps of pressure and consequences that come about if the preceding steps aren't dealt with.

One step is just fine, and will be enough to get you through the current episode. Add more steps when you think of them, based on what's been happening in the story.

EXAMPLE:

Will Machado's love for Ana win out over his pride?

- 1) *Ana wants you to dress up in a dandyish suit she has picked out for you to go to the Baron of Cotegipe's ball. It makes you look stupid.*
- 2) *Ana tells you to stop getting in fights. If you do, Pula de Gato and his Nagoa crew start telling people you've gone soft.*
- 3) *Without you on the streets, the gang lose their fighting spirit, and now Pula de Gato has claimed Avenida Rio Branco and started collecting protection money there. Will you let the gang be shamed like this, or fight back and risk losing Ana?*

All the GM has to come up with are the questions and the dilemmas. There is no need to come up with a 'correct' solution. In fact, doing so may be counterproductive, as it can encourage you to try and guide the players to a particular outcome.

Be prepared to revise or drop your plot points in reaction to developments in the story. This may happen because the PCs resolve the situation, or because facts established in play pre-empt the future stages in your notes.

Examples:

- 1) *Machado wears the stupid suit to the ball, but when people start mocking him, he breaks things off with Ana – setting up a new pressure point because her brothers*

hate him now. Steps 2 and 3 don't apply any more, because Machado and Ana aren't together, and you've answered the initial question – no, it won't.

2) While still at step 1 in the example given above, Machado and his crew ally with Pula de Gato and the Nagoas. It doesn't make sense now that Pula de Gato would besmirch Machado's reputation, so – for the time being, at least – the GM shelves this particular pressure point.

PLOT POINTS FOR THE FIRST EPISODE

In general, plot points will focus on one particular PC. But before you start the game, you don't know who the PCs will be, or even what character types they'll be. But as the GM, you do know what the theme will be, so you can create simple, one-step plot points on that basis. Choose a question about freedom (or another theme, if that's what you've chosen) and prepare a scene idea suitable for each character type that relates to that question.

These early plot points are an opportunity for the players to express their characters' personalities – and can be expanded on after the first session if you feel they're promising.

EXAMPLE: *What is the price of your freedom?*

Bar/cafe owner: Ritter brand beer! It's the latest thing, everyone wants it – says your supplier. Actually no one wants it. But he won't sell you any beer at all if you don't take 12 crates of the stuff.

Capoeirista: Your cousin Mascote has been locked up by the civil guard for breach of the peace and practising capoeira. Your auntie says you got him into capoeira, you get him out of jail.

Coffee tycoon: The company's debts are crippling. Teixeira and his consortium say they'll pay them off but only in exchange for a controlling interest in your plantation.

Dock worker/sailor: Lay-offs at the docks. The owner says you can keep your job but only for bed and board, no money. Isn't that just what you had when you were a slave?

Fisherman: Paulinho drowned at sea last week. Your wife begs you to take a safer job on shore, maybe at the coffee packing plant.

Gang leader: Your crew has always been independent. Maybe a little friendlier to the Guaiamuns, but that's all. Now along comes Peixe from the Nagoa outfit two

streets over and says you'd better start wearing their colour or else.

Grifter: The old lady is pointing you out to the police. You've just got time to throw her necklace away before they come over, but you won't get it back.

Musician: You've got a good paying gig tonight playing the tedious stuff hey like to dance to at the Viscount's ball. Your wife says don't even think about skipping it to play in the choro party at Zeca's cafe – even if Viriato Cordeiro is looking for new band members.

Policeman: You and Sandro have orders to hurry a letter to the Manuel Velho Fort commander. Sandro says it's not that urgent; the captain is just trying to show who's boss. Let's stop for a coffee. We have stuff o discuss.

Politician: There's a big vote today on clearing the slums in the northern district. How are you going to vote? OK, well, the party says vote the other way. No matter what you promised your supporters.

Slumming aristocrat: Mummy says you're to be charming and have tea with the Viscount, who is old and ugly and rich and looking for a wife.

Street kid: You went begging at a rich lady's house to scope the place out for a burglary. But she's taken you in as her own child – you're just like the kid she lost to cholera years ago. You even have the same name. You could stay and live a life of luxury, and forget about your friends on the streets. Couldn't you?

Street trader/merchant: Old Pedro says you could make more money if you worked for him. Would he be a good boss? Do you even want one?

After the first episode, you can continue to prepare thematic pressure points if you know the theme in advance, in addition to standard pressure points aimed at the PCs.

It's good if the GM can bring out the theme of each episode in their scenes – but it's just as valuable to bring out the distinctive characteristics of the setting: customs, sights & sounds, issues of race and class, poverty and wealth.

DEVELOPING NEW PLOT POINTS

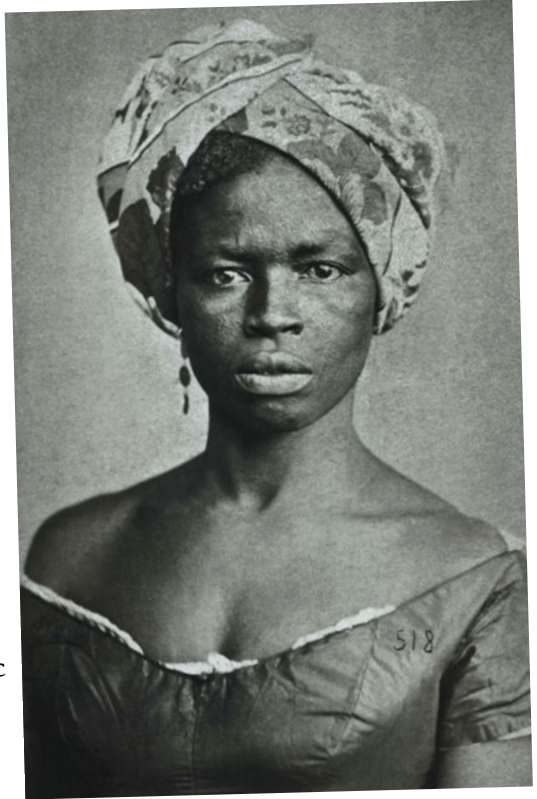
As the GM, you have two key responsibilities – to portray the everyday world and to react to what the players do.

PROGRESS TRACKS

When an ongoing activity or possible future event comes up that seems like it's going to be important, draw a line of four to six boxes on a piece of paper in the middle of the table (maybe on the edge of your shared bairro map), label it with what it represents, and tick the first box. Decide what the final box means – it could be the completion of a project, perhaps, or the event taking place.

Every time there's a new scene in which that final thing gets closer, tick off another box. When all the boxes are ticked, the end result occurs.

EXAMPLE: Peixinho asks Old Ze to help him print some placards because the dockworkers are planning a strike. The group decides this merits a progress track. Old Ze's player draws six boxes, writes "Dock Strike" next to them, and ticks the first one. The group decides that the when the final box is ticked, the dockworkers strike.



You can label intermediate stages of the Progress Track with specific events, or figure out what they mean as you go along. Don't tick a new box just for an off-hand mention of the thing you're tracking – only do so if someone takes action to move things along or brings news of a significant development.

STOPPING THE TRACK

You, or someone else, might not want a Progress Track to be completed. Don't mess with the original Progress Track. Instead, create a rival to it, with at least an equal number of empty boxes. Whichever gets completed first stops the other from happening.

EXAMPLE: The GM labels the 3rd box of the "Dock Strike" track as "Cops get wind of the strike" and draws an arrow to a new Progress Track. This has 4 boxes (when the 3rd Dock Strike box is filled it will have 3 left empty) and is labelled "The Wheels of Commerce". The final box is labelled "The strike ringleaders are arrested."

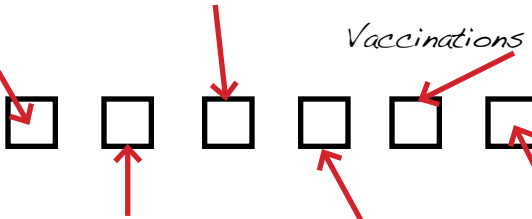
SAMPLE PROGRESS TRACKS

VACCINE REVOLT

Mayor passes law allowing police & health workers to enter homes by force to vaccinate people against smallpox

Opposition forms the "League Against Mandatory Vaccine"

Vaccinations are suspended.



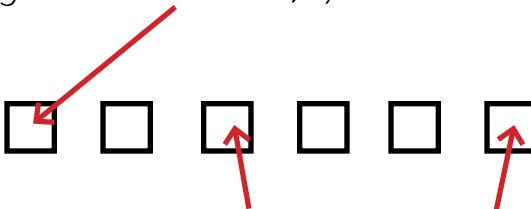
Rumours that women have to undress to be vaccinated. Discontent.

Rioting: police attacked, streets barricaded, trams overturned, shops looted.

The National Guard is called in to restore order. Several civilians are killed.

DOCK STRIKE

Rumblings of discontent at pay and conditions.



The cops get wind of the plans.

Strike! The docks close down.

THE WHEELS OF COMMERCE

Police find out about the planned strike.



*Ship owners and coffee traders
petition government to step in.*

*The police arrest the strike
ringleaders in midnight raids.*

THE QUOTIDIAN GRIND

The Player Characters have long-term dreams and Desires. It's not really your job to call scenes that focus on those things, although if there's a scene you want to see that focuses on a PC's Desire, by all means call it. But while they are thinking about their lofty ambitions, your job is to introduce the day-to-day hassles that make them dream those dreams in the first place.

In dramatic scenes those include: Bosses who want them to show obedience. Bullies who want them to show fear. Friends who want them to show trust. Relatives who want them to show family loyalty.

In all these cases, make those difficult demands to accede to. Make them choose one Dramatic Pole or another – or neither – if they accept the petition.

You can use stress as an in-scene threat (but you have to tell the player about the potential side-effect first): Showing fear to the bully is humiliating now, leading to the Embarrassed stress, but not showing fear could get you beaten up later.

Play one relationship against another: The boss wants you to be obedient and work late, but your wife already got you to show devotion by promising to leave on time tonight.

Make accepting the petition a fairly obviously bad idea: Trusting the friend means lending him Wealth that everything in his previous history tells you you'll never see again.

Use procedural scenes for ‘slice of life’ events, like escaping an attempted mugging, or loading a cargo of coffee without suffering stress.

Use them whenever a PC wants to get some Wealth, too. If a fisherman wants to earn money to maintain his boat, he doesn’t get anything just for saying “I would have been fishing today, right?” You don’t get something for nothing – procedural scenes representing going to work should offer threats that match their compensation.

For example, simply going out to sea to fish or working at a bar for a scene has the potential to inflict stress, but earns the character 1 Wealth. If you need to make more than that, you need to make a deal with someone to pay you 2 or more Wealth, and that job is concomitantly more dangerous. You have to head far out to sea or into a storm where you may suffer harm, or you can get a loan with your house as collateral.

REACTING TO THE PLAYERS

The way *Malandros* is set up, an individual PC can just go and accomplish stuff all by themselves. Once they have enough drama tokens to force a concession, they can get one. Ability points give them a very good chance of getting things done in procedural scenes, even if it means a refresh scene or two later on. Because of that, they don’t exactly need help from the other PCs when it comes to actually accomplish the actions.

But the city is a big place – a lot bigger than the Player Characters. And almost anything they do in pursuit of their Desires will cause a backlash. As the GM, it’s your job to make that backlash feel real and compelling.

Have NPCs take direct action. When a gang leader takes new territory, the people who had it before will want it back.

Get the other PCs involved. When a PC market trader turns the bairro against the crooked politician who’s planning to tear their houses down, his agents offer the street tough PC a lot of cash to scare her into silence.

Draw on their Dramatic Poles. This is a more authorial kind of reaction. If a player has been leaning heavily on one Dramatic Pole to the neglect of the other (let’s say it’s been a whole lot of “War” without much “... or Peace?” for a couple of episodes), think about calling a scene that will tug the character in the other direction.



CHALLENGES, MIXED SCENE TYPES, & OTHER COMPLICATIONS

The following rules are provided to handle disputes that may arise during the course of play. These will not come into play very often – but if you need to go to the rulebook to resolve an issue about a problematic scene, here they are.

CHALLENGES

Players may request adjustments to called scene parameters by announcing a challenge. How they do this depends on the element they object to. Except where otherwise indicated, challenges are resolved through a vote. With a show of hands, all players side with the caller or the challenger.

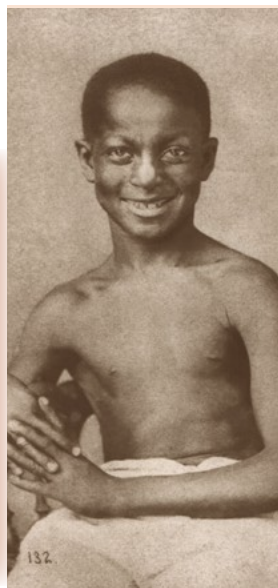
The GM votes to break ties. Should the scene seem satisfyingly in keeping with the narrative to date, she votes to uphold the call. When the call seems somehow punitive, unfair, or contrary to the spirit of collective creation, she votes to uphold the challenge.

Players may see that a scene might justifiably be challenged, but elect not to do it.

THE MOLEQUE PEDRO BALA

Arguably the protagonist of Jorge Amado's 1937 novel *Capitães da Areia*, Pedro Bala is the leader of the eponymous "Captains of the Sands", a gang of orphan kids who live in an abandoned warehouse on the beach and live by begging and stealing.

At one point, Pedro deliberately gets arrested so that he can steal an orisha's icon from the police station's evidence locker. Such daring is typical of him.



DUCKING A SCENE

You may challenge your casting in a scene you do not want your character to take part in. The caller may then acquiesce to your objection, and call the scene without you, or may further describe the scene so that your character's Desire and Dramatic Poles compel your participation.

You can duck this compulsion by spending a drama token, which goes to the caller.

After you successfully duck a scene with a cast of two, leaving nothing to play, the caller starts over, calling a new scene that does not include your character. You may not duck a scene you are calling.

RUSHING A SCENE

To insert your character into a scene the caller has not cast you in, and actively wants to keep you out of, spend a drama token. The caller receives the token. It costs nothing to join a scene if the caller consents to your joining.

The caller may block your unwanted entrance into a scene by spending a drama token. You may attempt to rush a scene already in progress.

CHALLENGING A TIME JUMP

Players may object to jumps in time when they preclude them from taking actions they see their characters as wanting to take in the nearer term. Resolve a challenge to a time break with a vote.

CHALLENGING A PLOT JUMP

Players may object to a situation on the grounds that it advances an ongoing plot element that would be more satisfying if played out in full. Alternately, they might feel that you're cutting into the middle of a brand new situation, and that it's unbelievable that their characters would not have intervened in it sooner.

If the caller loses the challenge, she must then revise her situation description to meet the objections of the challenging player, and the voters who supported him.

CHALLENGING FOR NOVELTY

Players may object to a situation on the grounds that it is an attempt to retry an earlier scene the caller's character lost. If the scene seems too similar to the GM, she invites the caller to point to a change since the previous scene that puts the situation in a new light.

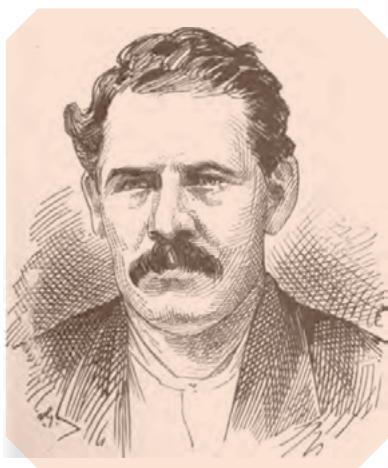
The best defence against this challenge is to point to an intervening scene that changed the situation. Prevailing in a dramatic scene with a third character may change the complexion of an emotional conflict enough to justify a second attempt. If the player can't point to a changed situation, the GM resolves the challenge by requiring the caller to call an entirely different scene.

GOING TO PROCEDURAL

If a player describes their character successfully performing a difficult practical task, any participant, GM included, may demand that a procedural resolution instead be performed to see if they successfully do it. Unlike other challenges, it takes only one objector to trigger a procedural resolution. The narrating player may avoid the procedural resolution by either withdrawing the description entirely, or adjusting it to satisfy the objection.

GETTING DRAMATIC

Similarly, one player may demand a drama token in return for performing a particular procedural action that another player has asked them to do in the current scene. If the requesting player refuses to pay the token, the other must give them a token instead. Forces and blocks may not be used in the midst of this scene – save those for a follow-up dramatic scene where the characters hash out what just happened.



THE CABECILHA CAMPANHÃO

Of all the carioca malta leaders of the 19th century, perhaps none was more feared than Campanhão, who could snuff out a life as casually as one might a candle.

One day Campanhão was walking with his malta when he met Gigante, a butcher with whom he had quarrelled. Seeing Gigante had an axe with him, Campanhão said, "Armed and dangerous? That's the kind of guy I like to fight!" He pulled out his *navalha* and went for Gigante. With a mighty leap, Gigante swung his axe and cleaved Campanhão's right shoulder clean off with a single blow.

SUPPORTING CAST

Supporting characters don't get all the abilities, Signature Moves and whatnot that Player Characters do. But they do have Desires, actions and demands.

For PCs, a Desire is a fundamental emotional need. Recurring characters may have these, but just as often their Desire is a practical goal. Minor characters only have practical goals as their Desire.

Supporting cast actions are added to the GMs repertoire of actions when that character is in the scene.

Demands are things they might ask for from a Player Character in a dramatic scene, usually backed by a promised reward or a threat.

Some supporting characters are described as a group; GMs must use their own judgement as to which actions can be used by a lone group member, and which require greater numbers. Mine the 'Cidade Maravilhosa' chapter for scene-setting material.

ARISTOCRATIC EMIGRÉ

Desire: to be seen as a real person

Actions: pine for the old country, fall in love with the wrong person

Demands: bring me a token of affection, take me away from all this

BEAT COP

Desire: to maintain order

Actions: arrest someone; call for back-up

Demands: drop your weapons; come to the station

FLAMBOYANT CAPOEIRISTA

Desire: to show off

Actions: play capoeira; flirt with the ladies

Demands: buy me a drink; acknowledge my skill

FISHERMAN

Desire: to catch fish

Actions: bargain with fishmongers; put out to sea

Demands: fix my boat/net; join my crew

THE COMERCIANTE SABINA DAS LARANJAS

A fixture at the gate of the city's Medical Academy for years, on the 25th of July 1889, the old orange-seller Sabina became the focus of a widely reported event that later inspired some of Brazil's most famous musical numbers.

When a local official had the police remove Sabina from her accustomed fruit-vending spot, thousands of medical students staged a huge, comical protest that wound through the streets of Rio. Sabina regained her rightful place pointing out that she had been at the Academy longer than most of the faculty.



ITINERANT GUITAR PLAYER

Desire: to find an appreciative audience

Actions: find a new gig; play beautiful music

Demands: give me a job; praise my performance

OVERBEARING BOSS

Desire: to hold power

Actions: yell; humiliate

Demands: show me obedience; make money for me

STREET TOUGH

Desire: to make some fast cash

Actions: demand respect; bully the weak

Demands: give me your money; get out of my way

You can write up creatures and things that aren't people in a similar way, though they generally lack demands:

ESCAPED BULL

Desire: to get out of this confusing place

Actions: snort; charge; gore; flee

CHOLERA

Desire: to infect

Actions: spread through contaminated water; cause vomiting & diarrhoea; dehydrate; kill

PATUÁS, THE CORPO FECHADO & OTHER UNCANNY MATTERS

Brazilian folklore, the Afro-Brazilian religions that the uninitiated called “macumba”, and capoeira culture all have strong associations with magical practices, including the protective amulets called patuás, communion with divine entities and sometimes superhuman powers.

The extent to which such things appear in your game of *Malandros* is up to the group as a whole. The manner in which they appear – particularly in terms of game mechanics – is at the discretion of the GM.

In this chapter are some Signature Moves that PCs can get as a result of mystical training, from a item of power such as a patuá, or whatever other circumstances arise. Obtaining one of these counts as your use of the Learn Something action for the session.

The GM chooses which of these Signature Moves are available as and when the question arises. The following examples begin with relatively modest abilities, which might be explained away as the effects of psychology. Others are more powerful and more nakedly supernatural.

Though the GM gets to choose how these powers manifest, they must also take into account the wishes of the players. The players’ own actions are useful indicators: if someone spends a great deal of time and effort finding out about how to transform into a beetle, that’s a strong hint that they’re interested in this whole magic beetle-transformation thing.

Common components used in the making of a patuá:

- Figas de Guiné (carved images of hands/forearms) · Seahorses
- The eye of a wolf · Estrelas de Salomão (stars of Solomon)
- Estrelas da guia (guiding stars)
- Cruz de Caravaca (a double-barred crucifix) · Wolf leather
- Wolf hair · Santo Antonio de Guiné (an image of St. Anthony)
- Images of Exú and Pombagira · Various prayers
- Seeds of different kinds · Magnets

PATUÁ EFFECTS

To use a patuá effect, you must be wearing the amulet in question, and be free of negative magic targeting its enchantment. You may only ever choose one “Child of...” status, and cannot switch to another.

CHILD OF EXÚ

When you wear red and/or black and cause mischief or surprise others with your actions, gain Asé.

CHILD OF OGUM

When you wear dark blue and act on impulse or are quick to take offence, gain Asé.

CHILD OF OXOSSI

When you wear turquoise and demonstrate leadership, independence, or respect for nature, gain Asé.

CHILD OF OSAIN

When you wear green and white, and demonstrate an imperturbable spirit or knowledge of plants, gain Asé.

CHILD OF OXUM

When you wear yellow or gold, and show your elegance or vanity, gain Asé.

CHILD OF XANGÔ

When you wear red and white, or brown, and you demonstrate that you’re the boss, gain Asé.

CORPO FECHADO

When you have performed the necessary rites, wear the correct amulets and do not break any of the taboos given to you by the maker of your patuá, you gain the corpo fechado, the ‘closed body’, making you invulnerable to knives or bullets.

TUCUM DAGGER

It is said that an enchanted knife made from the wood of the tucum palm tree is the only weapon that can kill a man who has a corpo fechado.

SUPERNATURAL ABILITIES

These might be granted by spells, amulets, or simply be personal powers gained through great understanding, the favour of the spirits, or piety.

MAGICAL ESCAPE

When you want to leave a scene as if by magic, spend a point of Asé and you're gone, just like that.

FLIGHT OF THE BEETLE

When you spend a point of Asé, you can fly.

TRANSFORMATION

When you concentrate for a moment and spend a point of Asé, you can turn into a common animal such as a beetle, cat or lizard. (Choose which one when you first gain this ability.)

BLIND SPOT

When you stand still and stay quiet, and spend a point of Asé, people looking for you cannot see you. They just walk right past as if you weren't there.

THE TIRA MIGUEL NUNES VIDIGAL

As chief of the Royal Police Guard, Major Vidigal was the scourge of Rio's samba dances, Afro-Brazilian religious activities and, especially, capoeira.

Tall, bulky but a skilled capoeirista himself, "unsurpassed in kicks and headbutts", Vidigal used his authority to persecute those he saw as troublemakers with a rigid and brutal interpretation of the law.



MAGIC & MANDINGA

Referring to the ability to weave magic or to wear the blessings of the spiritual world, the term *mandinga* comes to Brazil from west Africa and the slave trade. To have mandinga is to have the necessary expertise and awareness to work with the natural magic of the world. To outsiders it is just more “macumba”.

Some people use mandinga to inflict harm, financial failure, illness, death, etc. on other people for various reasons. One request that a spiritual leader will ask if you want to inflict harm on a person is to bring a picture of that person and to write their name on the back of the picture.

More common are rituals intended to produce beneficial effects for oneself: enchantments to promote good health or luck, ritual cleansings of a house to protect it from evil, love potions and wards against the evil eye.

Spells of wealth and beauty are available, but practitioners warn that both of these have unavoidable negative effects. The subject of a wealth spell becomes greedy and grasping, while someone under a beauty spell becomes ugly on the inside.

MAGICAL POWDERS

Those trained in the art also know how to create magical powders from certain plants. Concealed in the palm or under a fingernail, the powder can be slipped into food or drink, or transferred while shaking hands, to harm or kill an enemy. The powder called ataré, made from pimenta-da-costa seeds, is placed on the ground where an enemy will walk in order to inflict a disease, or placed in a house to cause misfortune there.

CHANGING HEADS

The ritual ‘troca de cabeça’ – “exchanging heads” – can be used to free a person of a negative spirit that is haunting them. The process is complicated and a well-guarded secret. It takes the spirit from the person and puts it into an animal or object, usually a dead chicken, which is then left at a crossroads or other place of power. It is easy for the spirit to jump into a passerby, who will then need a troca de cabeça of their own.

The troca de cabeça has a more sinister use. A priest or priestess has the

ability – some say the right – to use the ritual to take life force from their disciples, causing a premature death in the follower in exchange for a year of extra life for themselves.

MANDINGA FOR PLAYER CHARACTERS

Players who want their characters to know the ways of macumba must acquire Mandinga as a separate skill. You can roll Knowing to know about various practices, gestures or enchantments, but actually being able to perform them yourself requires the specific skill.



EXAMPLE OF PLAY

This example of play features five participants: the GM and four players, who are denoted here by their characters' names. Luiz is a policeman (*Tira*). João is a musician (*Músico*). Ana is a slumming aristocrat (*Peixe Fora D'Água*). Sofia is the leader of a street gang (*Cabecilha*).

We join the action part-way through the episode.

GM: It's Luiz's turn to call the scene. What's happening?

Luiz: I'd like to go talk to that gang leader. What was his name?
Tartaruga.

GM: Yep, Tartaruga. Where do you catch up with him?

Luiz: Well... would I know where the malta guys get together to play capoeira?

GM: Sure, you're a beat cop, you know the area.

Luiz: Great, so let's say there's a bar or something where Tartaruga holds court, they have capoeira bouts and so on.

GM: OK, so there you are at this kind of dive bar. Out the back there's a space where they've cleared out all the furniture to make space. People are standing around the edges with drinks and there's rowdy music.

Luiz: Like a biker bar in a cop movie.

GM: Yeah, exactly. And in the middle guys are coming into the roda two at a time and playing capoeira. They're playing, but they're playing hard – people are coming out bleeding and bruised. You can see Tartaruga on the far side of the room. He gives you an unfriendly look and so do his guys.

Luiz: I make my way around the circle. I do that whole respectful nodding thing to people as I go past. I've arrested quite a few of these guys in the past.

GM: Tartaruga waits for you to get close, then walks over to near the back door where it's a little quieter. "What the hell do you want?"

Luiz: I point to a guy staggering out of the roda with a busted nose. "I want that to stop. Blood all over the place."

GM: "I'm not sure I follow you."

Luiz: "Here's what I mean, man. I don't want to be coming around closing down capoeira meetings. I get them. I understand why you do it. I was one of you, before. But all this violence, even behind closed doors, but especially when it gets out on the street... you are just giving the powers that be an excuse to step on you."

GM: Tartaruga's a little more relaxed now. You can see his body language is less defensive. "I don't think you do understand. Your fellow coppers beat us in the street, for nothing. If you're going to

get beaten, imprisoned, it may as well be for something. You take this away, we have nothing to defend ourselves with.”

Luiz: “But you can make it stop. Make capoeira something they’ll accept. Tell them it’s like a folk art.”

GM: “You really have bought everything they’re selling, haven’t you? You think that if you obey, things will get better. Well, that’s not how it is. If you obey, things will stay exactly the same.”

Luiz: Well, I tried. I tell him “I hope you reconsider” and shrug and make my way out of the bar.

GM: OK, so that’s the scene. I guess you didn’t get what you wanted.

Luiz: Not really. His agreement, maybe out of respect for me. Didn’t get that.

GM: Works for me.

The GM gives Luiz a drama token.

GM: OK, so it’s my scene. I think now is about the right time for Pedro’s goons to catch up with you. You’re outside in the street, just walking away from Tartaruga’s bar, shaking your head in disappointment. When you go round the corner, it’s dark, and you become aware that someone is waiting for you.

There’s half a dozen of them. Low-level thugs from the Santa Rita gang in scruffy linen suits. A couple of them have clubs. One steps forward, like he’s made himself the leader. “Hey copper.”

Luiz: I think I can talk my way out of this... wait, no, that’s not my scene. I let him come forward, try to threaten me. Then when he’s halfway through a threat, I kick him – a *martelo* to the side of the head.

GM: OK, that’s a Brawl action. Roll Fighting – or Capoeira.

Luiz: I only have Fighting. I’ll spend it.

Luiz rolls a die, getting a 3, and adds his Fighting rating of 2 to the result, for a total of 5. He must choose a drawback from the list of options in the action’s description.

Luiz: I’ll do the harm, but be at a disadvantage.

GM: All right. Fists and feet do 1 harm, so you give him a solid whack on the side of the head. The leader drops back but his cronies get all agitated and move to surround you. What do you do?

Luiz: Trying to escape would be Moving, right? I’m bad at that.

GM: Yeah, it would be. What else have you got?

Luiz: I still have my cane! I’ll try to smash my way through.

GM: Oh, right. The cane is your Resource, isn’t it?

Luiz: Yeah, so roll with plus two?

GM: Go for it.

Luiz rolls again, getting 5, and adds 2 from his Resource – a sturdy cane – for a total of 7.

Luiz: Seven! Is this a Brawl again?

GM: It could be but I think let's treat it as a violence-based Act Under Pressure. You smack a couple of them about the head with your *bengala* and get some distance between you. The two guys you hit fall to the ground clutching their heads, and the others look at you, afraid. What do you do?

Luiz: I run like hell.

GM: Fair enough. End of scene.

Luiz: What if I hadn't got away?

GM: You'd have had a sound thrashing, like 3 harm probably. All right, who's next... Ana.

Ana: I'd like to go back to the Fonseca house. I need to steal that locket from Lady Carolina's study. But I'm not sure if this is a dramatic scene or a procedural one...

GM: Well, go ahead and describe how the scene starts and we'll figure that out later.

Ana: All right. I'm not much of a burglar, so I think I'll try and bluff my way in to the house. I ring the doorbell and when the maid opens the door, I just breeze in as if I own the place.

GM: She's taken aback but she doesn't stop you from coming in. So there you are in the hall. One of the male servants is up on a ladder cleaning the chandelier. The maid... did we give her a name? She's looking at you a little nervously. "Miss Fortunata is out, Miss," she says.

Ana: Can I roll Talking here? I want to get her to let me into the study.

GM: Yeah, she's not a major character... yet. That's a Be Persuasive action.

Ana rolls a die, getting a 4, and adds her Talking score of 3, for a total of 7.

GM: Well, that worked. What did you tell her?

Ana: I tell her that I left a book behind and I need to get it so that I can lend it to someone else.

GM: All right, so she shows you into the study and leaves you to it.

Ana: Do I need to roll something to find the locket?

GM: No, we can leave it there for now. In the next scene you call, you can just establish that you have the locket already. Or someone else might call a scene where you're still in the Fonseca house and have to get the locket without being caught.

GM: Who's next... João, I think?

João: Yes, my turn. I promised I'd go to my grandma's place for dinner, so let's do that.

GM: OK, great. Who's there?

João: Well, there's Grandma, of course, and João and Sofia. And probably... did we establish how many siblings I have?

GM: Not as such. Let's just say that João has an indeterminate number of brothers and sisters. And if we need to pin it down later, we will.

João: Works for me!

Sofia: What if I don't want to be there?

GM: You can ask not to be in the scene, or pay a drama token to definitely get out of it.

Sofia: I don't mind being in the scene. Just asking for future reference.

GM: João, please set the scene for us.

João: We're all preparing for dinner. Grandma's cooking, the table is being laid, and so on, and I buttonhole Sofia and take her through to the next room on the pretext of getting some drinks or something.

"So what happened?"

Sofia: "With what?"

João: "With getting that cop, Luiz, to back off."

Sofia: "Ah. Yeah. It didn't go that well. I had a few of my lads menace him in a dark alley, but he smashed them in the head and got away."

João: "You know that he knows we're siblings, right? So his vague disapproval of me has now probably escalated to wanting to beat me up."

Sofia: "All is not lost. I can raise the stakes. You know, smash his windows. That kind of thing."

João: "Yeah, no. Don't bother." I pick up several wine glasses and carry them through to help lay the table.

GM: So what did you want there?

If it was reassurance, I think that's a no.

João: Yes, it probably was reassurance. I'm the exact opposite of reassured now.

GM: Does that work for you, Sofia?

Sofia: Yes, that's fair.

Sofia pa ses a drama token to João. The game continues.

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MALANDROS CHARACTER SHEET

NAME DESIRE Role in the cast/type

Played by

DRAMATIC POLES

OR ?

THE PEOPLE IN MY LIFE

Name	Relationship	What I want from him/her

ABILITY RATING HOW I DO IT

Enduring	—	[]	_____
Fighting	—	[]	_____
Knowing	—	[]	_____
Making	—	[]	_____
Moving	—	[]	_____
Sneaking	—	[]	_____
Talking	—	[]	_____
(Skill)	—	[]	_____
(Skill)	—	[]	_____

SIGNATURE MOVES

Primary:

Secondary:

STRESS	O	O	O	O	HARM
	Dazed	Angry	Embarrassed	Beaten Up	-1
Wealth	O	O	O	O	Hurt
					-2
Asé	O	O	O	O	Injured
					-3
					O
					Out

What I look like:

MY RESOURCES & POSSESSIONS

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... and others who remain nameless.

Index

A

Abilities 70
Actions 114
Around Town (scene prompts) 32
Asé 107

B

Biographies

The Capoeirista: Manduca da Praia 80
The Comerciante:
 Sabina das Laranjas 148
The Estivador: Prata Preta 122
The Magnata: André Rebouças 98
The Moleque: Pedro Bala 144
The Músico: Ernesto Nazareth 105
The Peixe Fora d'água:
 Chiquinha Gonzaga 93
The Pescador:
 Francisco Xavier de Santana 103
The Proprietário: João Romão 125
The Vigarista: Madame Satã 89

Burning your bridges 102

C

Cabecilha 37
Calling Order 97
Calling Scenes 96
Capoeira 23
Capoeirista 39
Challenges 144
Character Sheet 161
Character Types 35
Comerciante 41
Commerce 12
Concessions and Emotional Power 101
Creating Characters 62

D

Desires 66
Dramatic Poles 67

Dramatic Scenes 98
Drama Tokens 98

E

Ending the Episode 111
Episode Themes 95
Establishment Scenes 105
Estivador 43

F

Food & Drink 30
Forcing 100

G

Gaining Tokens 100
GM Actions 134
Guidelines for Players 128
Guidelines for the GM 131

H

How to play Malandros 4

I

Intentions in dramatic scenes 99

K

Kickstarter backers 162

M

Magnata 45
Malandros & Malandragem 26
Maltas 20
Mandinga 152
Moleque 47
Money & Wealth 124
 Currency 126
 Typical prices 126
Multiple Petitioners 104
Music 15
Músico 49

N

Names list 60
Neighbourhoods 29

P

Patuá effects 150
Peixe fora d'água 51
Pescador 53
Petitioning For Practical Favours 105
Plot Points & Progress Tracks 136
Procedural Actions 115
 Act Under Pressure 115
 Artful Dodger, The 119
 Be Persuasive 116
 Blow Off Steam 118
 Brawl 116
 Breaking and Entering 118
 Dar um Jeitinho 116
 Find Something Out 115
 Go on a Dangerous Journey 118
 Go to Work 117
 Grab Hold 119
 Learn Something 117
 Obtain a Patuá 118
 Open Fire 119
 Suffer Harm 121
Procedural Scenes 106
Proprietário 55

Q

Questions to ask each other 72

R

Race, Ethnicity & Class 25
Refreshing Abilities 109
Religion 16
Resolving Dramatic Scenes 102
Resources 71
Rio de Janeiro - overview 11

S

Signature Moves 74
Stress & Harm 120
 Shifting Harm 121
Success By Narration 107
Supernatural abilities 151
Supporting Cast 147
Supporting or Blocking a Force 101

T

Tira 57
Two-Way Exchanges 103

V

Vigarista 59

W

Weapons 122

Y

Your Story 71

