



# A particular group of corvids

A mystery & action game for a group of two-fisted  
bird sleuths

v. 0.4, 2022, Petri Leinonen

Think Robert Downy Jr.'s Sherlock with a bit of Peaky Blinders thrown in, but with birds.

The commune of Roost is a city of free thinkers and artists and highly individualistic birds and mammals. You are the trusted watchdogs within the scoundrel society of the Roost. Your job as corvids is to keep the rise of the Authoritarian Porcines that has taken hold everywhere else out. The birds of dark feather do this by solving crime and punching the bad guys before The Sus have a good reason to come here and solve things for you.

## RULES

This is a storytelling game. So the first rule is that if the rules come in the way of telling a good story, throw the rules away.

But regularly, when doing something where the action could end in an interesting failure, roll a pool of d20s, pick the largest number from those rolled, if it's a 10+, it is a success. Further drilling down on the results:

- 20 is a Critical Success
- 15–19 is a Great Success
- 10–14 is an Marginal Success
- 5–9 is a Marginal Failure
- 2–4 is a Failure
- 1 is a Spectacular Failure

You can take a **cost** to move **one step up** the success chain all the way to a Critical Success.

Use a point of Conviction to reroll a single die in a roll.

Failure and reason for that failure are up to the player, but especially when rolling more than 1 die, should not be because the character is not able to do something, but instead because of the circumstances.

## COSTS

**Costs** are significant prices for the character to pay. They should sting a bit, but not affect the task. So taking a hit to land a blow is an example of a cost. As is losing a valuable piece of equipment. Or insulting a friend. The players and the Storyteller should all pitch in on possible costs, and the player acting should then choose the one they think fits the character the best. If no-one comes up with a good cost, taking a 1–3 Feathers is a good substitute.

## BUILDING THE DICE POOL

- **1 die** if this is something you are good at.
- **1 die** if this fits your bird type.
- **1 die** if this fits your element.
- **1 die** if this is personal, or something extraordinarily dramatic.
- **1 die** if you have a clear advantage in the situation or someone is helping you.
- **-1 die** if you are in some sort of a disadvantage in the situation or someone is hindering you.

If you would roll **0 dice or less**, roll two dice and keep the lowest.

## CURRENCIES

**Conviction** is the willingness to fight. You start with 1. Your maximum is 3. You regain by connecting with the community either by witnessing hardships or enjoying or offering hospitality.

**Feathers** draw the characters away from the controlled investigator and back into the realm of being just a standard corvid. Every time you get a Feather, roll a d20. If you roll over the number of Feathers you have, you're fine. Otherwise, you succumb to the base instinct of your Bird Type for the rest of the scene. The Feathers reset to half their value (rounded down) after that.

**Exhaustion** tracks how tired the character is. It accumulates over time, but can take a character completely out only during action scenes.

- You get a point of exhaustion when you witness injustice.
- And a point of exhaustion if you fail a roll.
- If you accept a cost to upgrade a success, you get one exhaustion.
- If you get hit in a fight, you take exhaustion.

You clear one exhaustion when you enjoy or offering hospitality and whenever you strike a Sus down, and all of it when you solve a mystery.

## USE BIRD POWERS

A character can use each of their bird powers only once during a scene.

## SOLVE MYSTERIES

When inspecting a scene for clues, explain what sort of things you wish to find and how. Roll dice as usual, but failure in a roll still reveals the most important thing you need to know. Any success will give more context to what you find.

## KICK ASS

Enemies have health clocks that get filled the more you punch them. You, on the other hand have exhaustion, that ticks up as the game progresses.

A marginal success ticks one segment of a clock. Great success ticks two. Critical ticks four.

If an enemy hits you, mark exhaustion (1 for marginal success, 2 for great, 4 for critical), and roll a d20. If the roll is more than your exhaustion, you stay on your feet. If not, you go down.

## CHARACTER CREATION

To create a bird sleuth, follow these steps:

- Choose your bird type.
- Choose your element.
- From your bird powers, you get all level 1 powers and choose one level 2 power.
- Come up with a broad background to your corvid.
- After everyone has made their characters, discuss how you know each other.
- Mark your starting Conviction, Exhaustion and Feathers.

## BIRD TYPES

When you first changed to a corvid, you took on the characteristics of one of the five breeds.

### CROW: THE MUSCLE

Base Instinct: The bravo. Make sure you are the center of all attention by any means necessary.

Might, Endure, Terrorize

### JACKDAW: THE SPY

Base Instinct: The Perfectionist. Make sure things are done the proper way or not at all.

Dazzle, Transform, Sight

### MAGPIE: THE THIEF

Base Instinct: The selfish. Look out for yourself and how you can benefit from this.

Swiftiness, Veil, Sight

### RAVEN: THE LEADER

Base Instinct: The Tyrant. Make everyone else bend to your will by any means necessary.

Dictate, Terrorize, Dazzle

### ROOK: THE ARCANIST

Base Instinct: The follower. Try to please everyone the best you can.

Bird Magic, Veil, Endure

## ELEMENT

While each corvid is an able investigator in all areas, you have a specific area of expertise not shared by your companions. These are rooted in the element that best suits you.

## **BLOOD: THE MEDIC**

Expert in understanding alive and dead corpses.

You start with 2 exhaustion, 2 conviction and 0 feathers.

## **BREATH: THE VOICE**

Expert in getting answers from people.

You start with 0 exhaustion, 1 conviction and 1 feather.

## **FLAME: THE KEEN-EYED**

Expert at actually finding clues and details from places.

You start with 1 exhaustion 2 conviction and 1 feather.

## **SOUL: THE EMPATH**

Expert in figuring out things about the perpetrator from details.

You start with 0 exhaustion 2 conviction and 2 feathers.

## **STONE: THE FONT OF KNOWLEDGE**

Expert in knowing details about obscure fact or finding them out.

You start with 1 exhaustion, 1 conviction and 0 feathers.

# **BIRD POWERS**

Each black bird has some unique secret powers

## **DAZZLE**

**Shine (1):** Roll to force all attention on you. Take a Feather afterwards.

**Glow (2):** Roll to steer someone to a more favourable opinion of you. Take two Feathers afterwards.

## **ENDURE**

**Tough as nails (1):** If you get knocked out, make a roll to not get knocked out instead. Take a Feather afterwards.

**Bounce back (2):** Roll to recover from getting knocked down. Great success required to get back into action. Critical allows an instant follow-up action. Take 2 Feathers afterwards.

## **SIGHT**

**Superior senses (1):** Roll to extend one of your senses to supernatural heights. Take a Feather after the roll.

**Glimpse of the beyond (2):** Tune in to an object, person or a place, and roll to gain supernatural insight about it. Take a Feather after the roll, or two if you find the information received instantly useful.

## **SWIFTNESS**

**Flash (1):** Roll to instantly move to another location nearby. You can continue with another action instantly after. It can't be another Bird Power. Take a Feather after you have acted.

**Flurry (2):** You can do two things in the timespan it would take to do one. After you're done, take two Feathers.

## **MIGHT**

**Mighty strike (1):** Make an attack, add +1 tick to any clock you tick. Take a Feather.

**Superavian strength (2):** Pick up anything up to the size of a car and do with it what you will (if you use it as a weapon, double the ticks you cause on a clock). Take two Feathers.

## **TRANSFORM**

**New visage (1):** Roll to change your appearance to that of someone or something else. Take a Feather afterwards.

**Flock (2):** Roll to change your form into a flock of birds. Cover a larger area and be nondescript. Take two Feathers afterwards

## **TERRORIZE**

**Startle (1):** Roll to make someone stop what they're doing and reconsider. Take a Feather afterwards.

**Terrible presence (2):** Roll to make folk trying to act against you make all their rolls with disadvantage. Take Two Feathers afterwards.

## VEIL

**Faceless (1):** Roll to make yourself generally unnoticeable. People see you but don't pay attention to you unless you do something that draws their attention. Take a Feather after the roll.

**Poof (2):** Roll to disappear from plain sight. Take two Feathers after the roll.

## DICTATE

**Bark (1):** Roll to give a one-word command to a target. Take a Feather after the roll.

**Suggestion (2):** Roll to give a nuanced command to a target. Take Two Feathers after the roll.

## BIRD MAGIC

**Birdrich energies (1):** Roll to summon minor magical effects. Take a Feather after the roll.

**Daemonic Servant (2):** Roll to summon an unbound devilish servant that can perform services for you. Take two Feathers after the roll.

**Overreach with magic (2):** Roll to create a major magical effect. Roll a d20 afterwards. If it comes up equal or less than either your exhaustion or Feather, lose control of the effect. After all this, take two Feathers.

## THE FOLK

Everyone is an animal. At the Roost, there are mostly birds and mammals. You can become another animal if your nature turns in an essential way to being like that particular animal, and you want the change.

## THE CORVIDS

The corvids are a special breed of the Folk.

No-one is born a corvid, and no-one stays a corvid for all their lives. Becoming one is a calling that happens to those members of the Roost who are physically able and have the required skills to become one. These skills are then further enhanced by the dark feathers they don. A person serves as a corvid for a while. Maybe a year, maybe two, and then returns to their old life, making room for new corvids to take their place.

They're driven by both the need of individual freedom and the good of the community. They're also excellent sleuths. This might get them to trouble sometimes with other folk, especially those with more grey moralities,

but in general, their role is understood. They perform the important function of keeping the Sus out of the Roost by solving problems without needing the outside assistance.

## THE SUS

The Authoritarian Porcines, The Swine, The Sus. These are the names of the true enemy. They are the devil swines who aim to bring their own law and order to the Roost.

The Sus are a legion of daemons that originally took on the forms of pigs. While not all sus are pigs anymore, all pigs are sus. The Sus wield watery magics, wear civil masks and of course, commit great horrors in the name of "greater good". The government has made the sus a force that is meant to uphold the laws, but in reality, they only try to increase their own influence. The people of the Roost know these truths and prefer that locals solve crimes that happen instead of the sus coming in and deciding who is guilty and taking them away. Folk who feel like they are willing to relinquish their freedoms for an easy feeling of safety are easy prey to the sus, who surely will take over a community if given root in one.

## RUNNING THE GAME

Sorry, this is a very WIP version, I don't have a great primer on how to run a murder mystery for you. Good rule of thumb is give out a lot of clues and then let the players shine with their theories. There should be a fistcuff or three in the game, depending on your group composition.

Enemies should be rolling 1 or 2 dice typically. They can have neat superpowers to counter the corvids, but all in all, this whole game should be an opportunity for the player characters to shine.

Give breathers and opportunities to rest and regain strength.

Before you start, check the following things with the group:

- How human are the Folk? Is this a game about actual birds and animals, or of antropomorphised ones, or humans who have a mystical link to some particular animal within them?
- Where and when is the game set? Typically any setting that has an authoritative system in place and the need for freedom will do, but it's good to figure out beforehand if the game takes place in a fantasy setting or a cyberpunk one. Usually if you find a genre with the postfix "punk", it will do great: from 80's punk to steampunk.
- How brutal you want the game to be. Discuss the general level of violence and use a tool like lines/veils to calibrate themes that you want in the game.