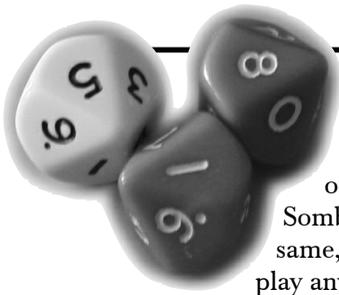




# SOMBRA SYSTEM LITE

INTRODUCTORY MANUAL





Greetings reader, if you are reading this first line, you are interested in the Shadow System. The rules that you have in your hands are a simplification of our system, which will let you play any game edited by Sombra Editions. Not all of our games are exactly the same, but they share several things and if you know how to play any of them (or you read this little manual) you can play all of them. In other words, this manual is a little guide to knowing the basics of the Shadow System. If you want to go deeper into the system, ask about our games in your usual RPG shop or follow the recommendations of your Game Master.

## TRAITS, CHARACTERISTICS AND SKILLS

These three expressions are the foundation on which the Shadow System is based. Traits are used during the character creation process and they affect, as explained below, the characteristics. Generally they have a value between 1 and 10, although some games let you go over the maximum value. There are five basic traits (see right table) and some games use a sixth one related to special powers, magic, etc. In general, they aren't used during the game, so you don't need to pay attention to them. In fact, some of our games (Pangea) don't have traits and they aren't needed to create a character.

The characteristics describe the character's general outline and each of them depends on one trait. This dependency means that no character can have a characteristic value over the depending trait. Now, we include a table with the traits and characteristics which limit them:

<b>Trait</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>
BODY	Strength
	Vitality
	Resistance
DEXTERITY	Agility
	Coordination
	Quickness
INTELLIGENCE	Memory
	Logic
	Inventive
PRESENCE	Charisma
	Will
	Appearance
INSTINTO	Perception
	Intuition
	Concentration

The characteristics' names are easy enough to understand, but if you want to know which aspects or features of your character are included in each of them, check the glossary at the end of this manual. It is rare that you will be asked to check a characteristic during a game. In these cases, the characteristic's value is multiplied

by three and it is resolved like a skill check (see actions section). Also it is possible that the Game Master will ask you to make a check adding three characteristics. For example, twice Quickness plus Agility (to see if you are able to beat an athletic activity) or Memory + Logic + Inventive (to help you with solving a mystery).

The **skills** are a character's knowledge or talents in specific fields and they are the resource you are going to use very often in games. All the skills depend on a characteristic. You will see this in the character sheet of any

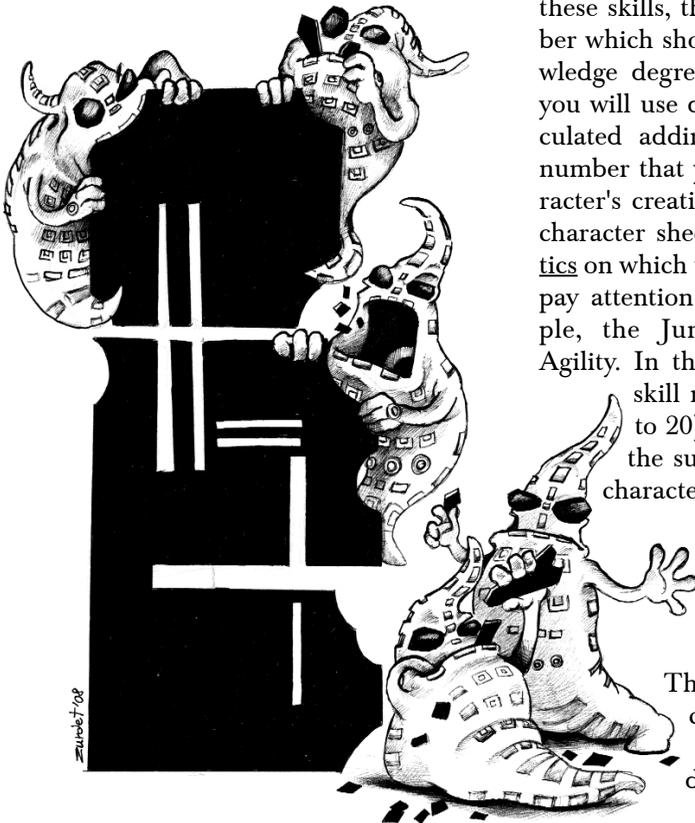
game because the skill name is followed by one of the characteristic abbreviations. For example, the athletic skills usually depend on Agility, meanwhile knowledge skills depend on Memory. The character sheet will show as follows:

	cha + Rank = tot.
Jump	agi + ____ = ____

In general, there are two skill types in the Shadow System: common skills and restricted skills.

The *common skills* are the common knowledge and talents in a setting. In these skills, the skill value (the number which shows the character's knowledge degree or talent and which you will use during the game) is calculated adding the skill rank (the number that you get during the character's creation that is noted in the character sheet) and the characteristics on which the skill depends. If you pay attention to the previous example, the Jump skill depends on Agility. In the first gap will be the skill rank (a number from 0 to 20) and in the second gap the sum of the rank plus the characteristic. Nevertheless, in-game, always will be used the skill value, the number farthest to the right.

The *restricted skills* are the character's knowledge and special talents inside a setting; things that,



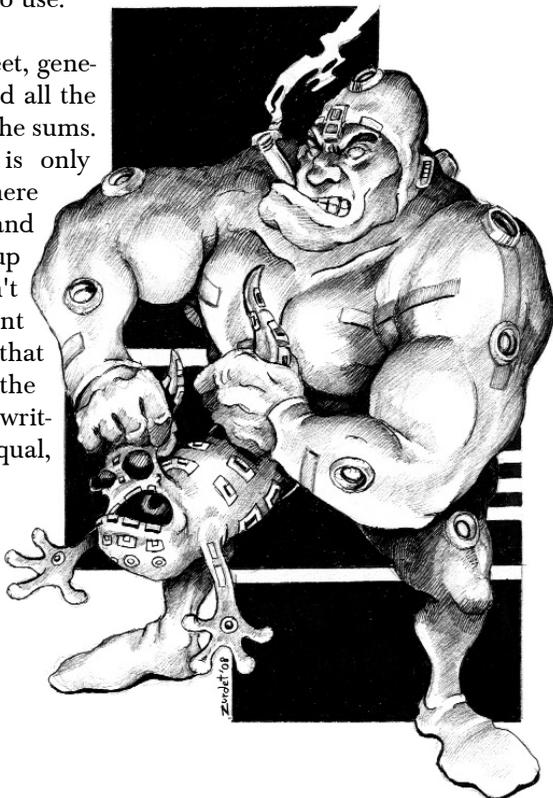
generally, people don't know except through special education. The restricted skills are usually the ones underlined in the character sheet. For example, in WWII it was unusual that people knew how to swim; only characters within certain requisites during the character's creation will know how to swim and, because this, will know this skill. The same is true of weapons in a modern setting like Role Noir. If a character has restricted skill knowledge (that is, the skill rank is over zero), the skill total will be calculated the same way as the common skill; if the character hasn't any knowledge, the total will be zero. In other words, if you don't know the skill, it will be too complex to use.

Really, in your character sheet, generally, you will have calculated all the skills and will have done all the sums. The previous explanation is only meant to explain to you where some numbers came from and why some skills are added up in a way or others aren't added up. The important thing is that you understand that the number used during the game is the total of the skill, written at the right, after the equal, in each skill.

## ABILITIES

On the reverse of the character sheet you will find another kind of game values that seem like skills but, mysteriously, are included in another place. Abilities are the character's talents that can't be trained or learned. Values depend on character's characteristics and they are the result of them: how quickly you move, how much you jump, how much weight you can lift, how well your sixth sense works, etc.

There are two types of abilities: one works like skills (for exam-



ple, Alertness) and you resolve the action as if it was a skill. The other works as values which help other parts of the game (for example, the jumping distance points from where the character will have to make Jump checks).

All the abilities are calculated with one or more characteristics. They are mathematical operations which give us the ability value which is the one that will be noted in the character sheet.

Not all the games use the abilities concept. If your character sheet doesn't have any, don't worry about it.

## DICE IN SHADOW SYSTEM

One of the features of the Shadow System is the use of three 10-sided dice and one throw to resolve a situation. This leads us to comment on the first rule of the Shadow System: "DON'T PICK UP THE DICE AFTER YOU THROW". After calculating the total of the three dice (this is the first step to determine the success or a failure of an action), the dice and their combination will be used to gather more information about the situation. Because of that, it is important to leave them over the table so the GM can get all the possible data from the dice thrown.

One of the dice we use must be different from the other two. It must be easily recognisable. In Sombra games we recommend using one dice of one colour and the other two should both be another colour (the colour is unimportant but the tradition, and the editor, will establish dice colours for each game). Also we recommend dice with numbers from 0 to 9 (although 0 will be read as 10 in almost all cases) and we recommend not using tens-dice (10,20,30...) or dice that are so decorative that the numbers are obscured. From your location, dice may be easily read, but from where the GM is sitting, it may become more difficult!

### Taking note of the throws

In books and articles about the Sombra games, we adopt a standardized format to note the dice throw. That is:

**Sd, d+, d- (skill value)**

If you see noted: **5, 7, 3 (22)** it means the player (or the GM) got a 5 on the Shadow dice, a 7 on the higher damage dice and a 3 on the lower damage dice. Also, the characteristic, skill or ability checked has a value of 22.

The different coloured dice have different names: Shadow dice, Location dice, Special dice, etc. In this manual we will call it **Shadow dice** and the abbreviation we will use is **Sd**.

The other two dice are called generically damage dice as they are used so many times with this function (to know the damage points you deal or you receive). One of the dice will show a higher result than the other most of the time. We call this dice the **higher damage dice** (or **d+**), meanwhile the other dice will be called the **lower damage dice** (or **d-**). It could be that sometimes, both will have the same value. When that happens, it doesn't matter which dice is which; the important thing is the value they have. If both dice have the same result, it means that the higher dice and lower dice are the same at this time.

## ACTIONS

Almost everything your character does during a game or game session is called an action. Therefore, it would be an action to speak or pilot a space fighter. The GM will tell you when the action requires a check or when it is automatic. From the previous examples, crossing the street would be an automatic action most of the time (when you are trying to cross the street and enemy soldiers are opening fire with a machine gun, it usually will not be an automatic action).

Generally, when an action is not automatic it can be a difficulty action or a confronted action.

### Round

A round is an artificial time unit which regulates the amount of actions during the game. Strictly speaking, a round is the minimum time an action should last (but it is true that more than an action can be done in a round). The exact duration is 3.6 seconds. There are reasons for this weird duration, but there is no need to go into those details in this simplified manual. For the game, a round will be about 4 seconds. This will be enough.

An action is a **difficulty action** when no one opposes it. That is, when characters depend on their own abilities to get whatever they want. There could be other people obstructing the action (innocent pedestrians who get in the middle of a chase), but as they are not in the middle on purpose; the action will be a difficulty action.

When we want to know if an action is successful or not, we will proceed with an Action Check (or AC). Dice will be thrown and sum up the result of the three dice. This sum is compared with the skill (or characteristic or ability) and if the value is the same or lower, the action will be successful; if it is higher, it will failed. As a general rule, the closer the sum of the three dice is to the skill value, the better the

result will be (better if it is a success and less bad if it is a fail).

Sometimes it will be not enough to add up the dice, and in these cases the GM will add or subtract values called difficulties. In the Shadow System, difficulties are always applied to the check and that will make you think the signs are inside out. A difficulty of -5 will make it more likely that the AC result would be under the skill value; we describe this as a bonus. A +5, on the other hand, will make the AC check more difficult, and we describe this as a penalty. The GM is the one who adds or subtracts these difficulties to the check, but some GMs prefer to say it before the AC and they tell the players: make a Jump check (or any other skill) with a +5; which means the player must throw the dice, add up, add 5 to the sum and compare the result with the skill value.

When the three dice are thrown and the three have the same result (the same value) it is an exceptional situation. Calculate the sum and the AC as usual and if the check was a success, then you will have a **critical** or high success (you did it flawlessly); if the result is a fail, you will get a **fumble** or high fail (the try was a resounding and shameful, and probably dangerous, fail).

Difficulty actions tend to last a round, but also they can also last several minutes, hours and even days. These are called extended actions

### Other levels of success

Some Sombra games add some levels of success and failure:

**EXCEPTIONAL SUCCESS OR FAIL.** When both damage dice are the same, it is considered that the action was done in an exceptional way, half way between a normal success or fail and a high success or fail. An exceptional success will be not as good as a critical, but will let you do some additional things (self-motivation, secondary actions, etc.) An exceptional fail can be as shameful as a fumble, but will never carry imminent danger.

**LOW SUCCESS OR FAIL.** When both damage dice sum 4 or less, it is a barely result. Or you barely pass, or you fail for a few.

In any case, the GM is the one who interprets the success and fail levels. Don't worry so much learning these concepts.

and they are a variation from the difficulty actions. In these cases, they are resolved as the difficulty ones, but the AC is checked when the time finishes. For example, if the GM asks for forcing a lock, the player must spend, at least, 3 rounds. When the third round comes (which can be dangerous if there are enemies shooting), the player will make the AC.

### interpreting the results

The GM will use the dice in different ways to help him to tell the action result. Combat is where this will be seen more frequently because the Sd is used to determine the location and the d+ and d- to determine the damage (as we will see next), but it is valid to use the dice for other things. For example, in the AC for opening a lock that we commented on before, the GM could use the Sd to determine additional rounds needed before trying a second chance of opening the lock. In the example of the room with a bomb, the GM could use the d+ and d- to determine the damage dealt by the bomb explosion to those who failed to get out in time.

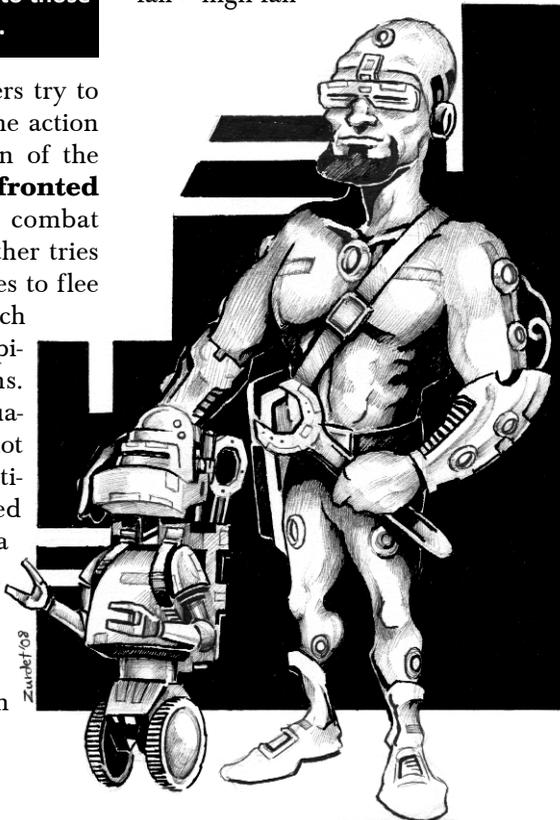
When two or more characters try to make an opposing action (the action of one will block the action of the other), it is called a **confronted action**. In hand-to-hand combat (one tries to hit while the other tries to dodge), in chases (one tries to flee while the other tries to catch up) are some examples of typical confronted actions. However, some common situations, in which you will not need an action check, sometimes become in confronted actions. Going out through a door doesn't need an AC, but going out first of a group of several people, will need an agility AC (for example) confronted with

everyone who tries to get out of the room (maybe because they found a bomb ready to explode).

Each confronted character must make an AC of the skill, characteristic or ability confronted and compared results between them. The one who gets the highest level of success or fail will make his/her action (or will be the first to do it if there are several who can do it simultaneously). Regarding the success levels, consider that:

high success > exceptional success >  
normal success > low success >

> low fail > normal fail > exceptional  
fail > high fail

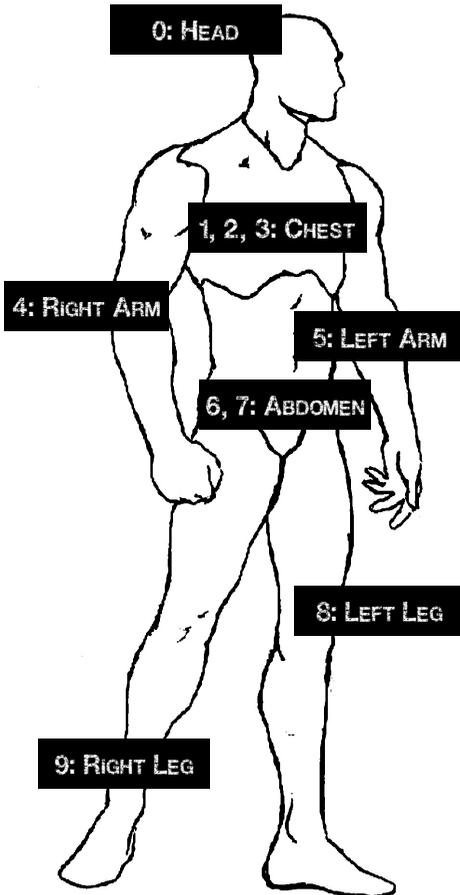


That is, in the confrontation, the ones who get a high success will go before the ones who get an exceptional success, these will go before the ones who get a normal success and so on and so forth till the ones who get an exceptional fail that will go before the one who get a high fail.

In the case of two players getting the same success level, the one who got the highest result in the confrontation if it is a success, or lowest if it is a fail will win. If still drawn, the one

who has the highest skill rank will win, and if still drawn, the GM will decide if both or neither gets the action.

Sometimes it will not be enough to win the confrontation to overcome the action. The GM can establish that to overcome the action you will need at least one success and also to win the confrontation. In the previous example regarding going out from a room where there will be an explosion, the GM could ask besides winning the confrontation (or been amongst the two or three best in the confrontation) it was also necessary to overcome an AC with success. Those who fail wouldn't get out from the room, even they made it better than others.



## DAMAGE

One of the main secondary uses of the dice in the Shadow System is the calculation of damage and its location in the several situations where damage is one of the consequences of an action: shots, brawling, accidents, falls, etc.

The Sd will always be used to determine the **location**. Each location has one or more dice values assigned (for example, the abdomen is usually 6 and 7). On the reverse of your character sheet you will find the silhouette of a character (note: his nickname is *Sombrito*) similar to the one we show you to the left of these lines.

In some games with non-human races, some locations will vary (check with your GM if your character has 4 arms or a prehensile tail), but, in general, all the characters share the same locations in all the games.

To know received **damage**, the Shadow System has a code based on the damage type. Each weapon or each situation has a damage type. There are nine basic damage types, but in this manual we will only talk about the first six damage types (the rest are used mainly against vehicles and buildings).

**Type 0:** the damage is the d- (usual in bare hand hits or falls from short distances).

**Type I:** the damage is the d+ (usual in edged weapons).

**Type II:** the damage is the sum of both damage dice (d- + d+) (usual on firearms of small calibre).

**Type III:** the damage is twice the sum of both damage dice [ $2 \times (d- + d+)$ ] (big calibre firearms).

**Type IV:** this damage is so wide, usual in area weapons like grenades, and is a little more complex to calculate because it affects more than one location. To summarise, it is a type II in the Sd location, a type I in the Sd-1 and Sd+1 and then a type 0 in the immediate superior and inferior location till reach in the number of locations in the d-. For example, a Throw

AC (grenades) of 5, 6, 4 will do: 10 damage points in 5, 6 damage points in 4, 6 damage points in 6 and finally, 4 damage points in 3. As we reach 4 locations (d-) we stop calculating damage. If the d- was 5, then we add 4 damage points in 7.

**Type V:** this damage is typical from fragmentation weapons such as shotguns and similar weapons. It is similar to the type IV, but easier to calculate. The damage is type II (the sum of both damage dice) in the locations from the three dice (in this case we consider d- and d+ as two more locations). For example, with the previous AC (5, 6, 4), the character would receive 10 damage points in 5 (left arm), another 10 damage points in 6 (abdomen) and 10 more damage points in 4 (right arm).

### Multiple Damage

Some games use what is called multiple damage. They call it, for example, damage III multiple. In these cases, the damage is the one in the damage dice according to the damage type in the Sd location, plus this damage in the locations from the damage dice. That is, the damage is multiplied by 3. Note that a damage II multiple and damage type V work in the same way.

Note: the damage and the location are calculated with the same dice you get in the AC which provoked the damage. Let us remind you the first rule of the Shadow System: **"DON'T-PICK UP THE DICE AFTER YOU THROW"**.

### Fire in the hole!!!

The damage in Shadow System is higher compared with the character Hit Points. A character has as many Hit Points as 3 times Resistance (usually that is around 15). A handgun bullet, as we saw before, adds two ten-sided dice to calculate the damage (an average of 11 damage points). While it may be true that a shot wouldn't be deadly for a character, not being shot is recommended. That leads us to comment on the second rule of the Shadow System: **"BETTER IF YOU ARE NOT SHOT"**.

Reaching zero hit points isn't sudden death. There are some mercy rounds depending on the Mortal Threshold (a character's ability). The GM will tell you how to use it (varies a little depending on the game), but the Mortal Threshold is the minimum number of rounds your character can survive without medical attention. If you go below your Mortal Threshold plus a number added by the GM, then the story will be finished for your character.

## GLOSSARY

**Abilities:** are innate talents the character has. They are a series of values which have effect during the game but they can't be incremented during the character's creation nor later through the experience, only by increasing the characteristic that they depend on. They are calculated depending on the characteristic's values, so if they change during the campaign, the abilities will change as well.

**AC:** Action Check.

**Action Check (AC):** throwing 3d10 to check if you are successful in an action.

**Agility (agi):** is a characteristic which defines the flexibility of your body. It depends on Dexterity.

**Appearance (app):** is a characteristic which defines the physical looks of your character. It depends on Presence.

**Body (BOD):** is a trait which defines the character's health and physical form.

**Characteristics:** are the true possibilities (acquired through experience or study) of making actions. When an action isn't covered by skills, it will be solved with one characteristic or a combination of them. They are the character's basic skeleton and quan-

tify how much the character has developed or evolved them. In some games, all characteristic is tied to a trait, so each trait has three characteristics depending on the trait.

**Charisma (cha):** is a characteristic which defines how easily the character can influence other people. It depends on Presence.

**Concentration (con):** is a characteristic which defines how easy it is to focus the character's intellectual potential. It depends on Instinct.

**Coordination (coo):** is a characteristic which defines how easy it is to do complex tasks involving several limbs or senses, or quickly. It depends on Dexterity.

**Damage dice:** of the three dice thrown in an AC, the dice with the same colour. The one with the highest result is the higher damage dice (d+) and the one with the lowest result is the lowest damage dice (d-).

**Dexterity (DEX):** is a trait which defines character's movement and reaction.

**GM:** Game Master. The person who arbitrates a game.

**Instinct (INS):** is a trait which defines the character's more savage side in opposition to the Intelligence which rules the character's more rational part.

**Intelligence (INT):** is a trait which defines the character's more intellectual part and the character's learning capacity.

**Intuition (int):** is a characteristic also known as sixth sense. It depends on Instinct.

**Inventive (inv):** is a characteristic which defines the capacity of creating random coherent thoughts. It depends on Intelligence.

**Logic (log):** is a characteristic which defines the character's reasoning and the possibility to reach conclusions. It depends on Intelligence.

**Memory (mem):** is a characteristic which defines how easy it is for the character to retain exact memories. It depends on Intelligence.

**Mortal Threshold (vit):** this ability lets us know how much time the character has till death after losing all Hit Points.

**NPC:** Non Player Character. Secondary characters played by the Game Master.

**PC:** Player Character. Character played by a person who isn't the Game Master.

**Perception (per):** is a characteristic which defines how acute the character's senses are. It depends on Instinct.

**Presence (PRE):** is a trait which defines the character's appeal, flair and charm.

**Quickness (qui):** is a characteristic which defines how easy it is for the character to react and the character's celerity. It depends on Dexterity.

**Resistance (res):** is a characteristic which defines how easy it is for the character to tolerate physical damage. It depends on Body.

**Sd:** Shadow dice.

**Shadow dice:** of the three dice thrown in an AC, the differently coloured dice.

**Skills:** the skills are used normally to solve the game actions. When it is needed to know if a character can or not make an action, is will usually be an action check.

**Skill rank:** is the talent that the character has through learning or practice. The skill rank goes from 0 to 20 and it will be modified during the character's creation or experience. During the game what is used is the skill value.

**Skill Value:** all the skills depend on a characteristic (that is noted in the character sheet) and they have a rank (a number which goes from 0 to 20). The skill value is the sum of the rank plus the characteristic on which the skill depends.

**Strength (str):** is a characteristic which defines character's muscular potency. It depends on Body.

**Traits:** are the innate possibilities (could be said genetic based) of making actions. The traits are the character's limit and they aren't used during the game.

**Vitality (vit):** is a characteristic which defines how easy it is for the character to carry out lengthy activities. It depends on Body.

**Will (wil):** is a characteristic which defines resistance to external influences on the character's mind. It depends on Presence.

## CREDITS

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The Shadow System was designed originally by *Juan Carlos Herreros Lucas, Raul Lopez Diaz-Ufano, Fernando Ruiz-Tapiador Gutierrez, Hugo Wilfredo Serrano Ruiz y Javier SevillaVillafane* for EXO: science-fiction role play game in 1999.



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