

NEON HOPE

QUICKSTART RULES



HOPEFUL GAMES

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Version 1.2.1

Web Page:
neonhopegame.com

Comprehensive Rules:
rules.neonhopegame.com

Tabletop Simulator Demo:
demo.neonhopegame.com

Overview

Story and Concept

NEON HOPE is a cooperative game that tells a story in which you are the main protagonist. You and your friends take on the role of an everyday person in the not-so-distant future, stumbling into an affair much bigger than what you are prepared for.

Each game in **NEON HOPE** represents one part of an overall story. Imagine it like an episode of a TV show that culminates in a grand season finale. After every episode, your characters recover their strength, improve their abilities, and continue their adventure in the next game.

The places you visit, the people you meet, as well as the forces that work against you are represented by cards. On your turn, you will spend actions to interact with these cards (namely investigating leads, fighting enemies, hacking computer systems, or asking for support). After all players have acted, the surveillance increases, and you'll have to face new challenges.

Winning or Losing the Game

Each episode has a stack of chapter cards. Your current objective is on the top card of this stack. If you fulfill it, flip the card and advance to the next chapter. If you fulfill the objective of the last chapter card, you win the game together!

You lose the game together when one character exhausts – by taking too much Stress – or when the Surveillance becomes too high.

Until the final episode, the story continues, regardless of whether you win or lose. However, your luck, misfortune, and the decisions from your previous game will impact the next – and how the grand finale will play out.

Playing Your First Game

Follow these steps to set up the game:

A. Each player chooses and sets up their character.

(We recommend playing »Larx Krajewski« and/or »Deniz Yilmaz« in your first game before adding other characters to your group.)

- 1.** Place your Character card in front of you.

A**6 ACTION TRACKERS****3 HAND & DISCARD PILE****2 ENDURANCE****7 HOPE****1 CHARACTER****4 CHARACTER TOOL****5 TOOL KIT**

2. Take an endurance tracker and set it to your starting Endurance. The starting Endurance is based on the number of characters:

- Solo play: 10 Endurance.
- Two characters: 8 Endurance each.
- Three characters: 7 Endurance each.
- Four characters: 6 Endurance each.

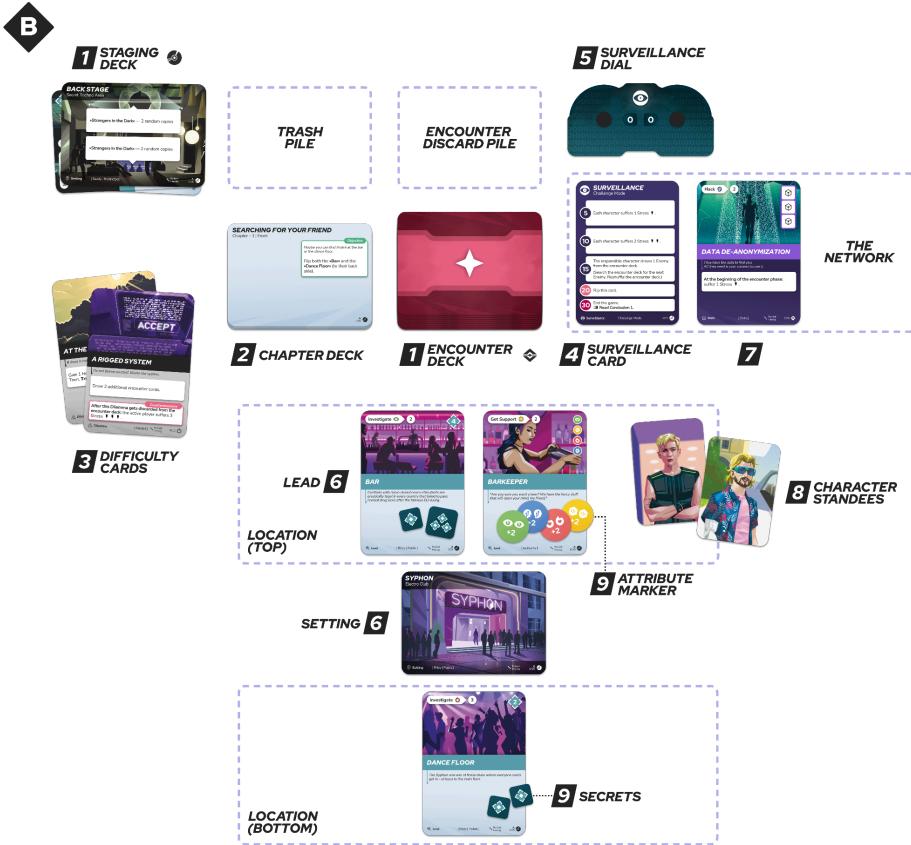
One character takes the purple endurance tracker. They are the responsible character for this episode. This has no gameplay effect, but it can be referenced by other effects.

(If possible, »Lark Krajewski« should be responsible in the first episode.)

3. Take the 8 Action cards that share your character's set icon (, , , or). From these, select a number of Action cards equal to your Endurance. These cards form your starting hand. Place

the remaining Action cards into your discard pile.

- Solo Play: Add 2 Action cards with the [Universal] trait from other characters to your Action cards.
- 4. Decide which side of your double-sided Character Tool you want to use.
- 5. Place the other 8 Tools that share your character's set icon under your Character Tool. They are considered out of play.
- 6. Take 3 action trackers. Flip them to their unspent side (purple).
- 7. Take 3 Hope.



B. Set up the episode.

- Assemble the staging deck and the encounter deck by combining all cards with the respective set icons listed in the storybook.
For the first episode these are:

- Staging Deck:
Y♪ + card #1 from X
- Encounter Deck:
≡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡

Set the staging deck aside. It is used over the course of the episode to bring more cards into play.

For the encounter deck, set the 9 cards showing the difficulty icon ⚡ aside. Shuffle the 4 other sets together.

- Stack the Chapter cards from the staging deck face up on top of each other in ascending order, starting with the front of Chapter card 1.

3. Choose the difficulty. The difficulty of the game is adjusted using two mechanisms:
 - **Surveillance card:** Each episode has two Surveillance cards. Depending on the selected difficulty level, use either the story mode or challenge mode Surveillance card.
 - **Difficulty set:** The difficulty set consists of 5 cards. Your selected difficulty level determines which difficulty cards form the difficulty set. The difficulty cards can be identified by the difficulty icon .
4. Find the Surveillance card of your chosen difficulty and place it next to the encounter deck with its front side up. This zone is called the Network.

Shuffle the difficulty set of your chosen difficulty into the encounter deck. Return the unused difficulty cards to the game box.

5. Set the surveillance dial to 0 and place it above the Network.
6. **Introduction**
Read aloud the introduction from the storybook in the section of the current episode.
The demo uses an introduction card instead.

Follow the additional setup instructions listed in the storybook in the section of the current episode.

Difficulty	Surveillance card	Difficulty Set
Normal	Story mode	4x »At the Darkest Hour« 1x »A Rigged System«
Advanced	Story mode	2x »At the Darkest Hour« 3x »A Rigged System«
Hard	Challenge mode	2x »At the Darkest Hour« 3x »A Rigged System«
Hopeless	Challenge mode	5x »A Rigged System«

*The demo uses a setup card instead.
This card is on the back side of the introduction.*

For the first episode, the instructions are: Put the »**Syphon**« setting into play from the staging deck. (Put the cards that are listed on the front side into play, then flip it over.)

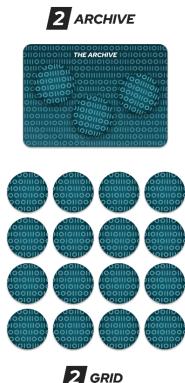
Whenever you put a setting into play you are instructed to bring specific Lead cards into play either at the top or the bottom of the setting.

*In this case, you place the »**Barkeeper**« and the »**Bar**« at the top of the »**Syphon**« and the »**Dance Floor**« at the bottom.*

Leads come into play with their front side. The front side can be recognized by the card number in the bottom right-hand corner beginning with A. There are two versions of the »Bar« and the »Dance Floor«. Choose one at random and return the other to the staging deck.

7. Search the encounter deck for 1 copy of »Data De-Anonymization«. It appears in the Network (next to the Surveillance Threshold card). Reshuffle the encounter deck.
8. The characters start at the »Syphon« (top). Place the character standees at the top of the »Syphon«.
9. Place the appropriate Secrets and support markers on each Lead in play. The appropriate type and number are shown in the top right-hand corner of a Lead.



C

C. Set up the Grid and the supply

1. Assemble the modifier pool according to the image above.
2. Shuffle all modifiers from the modifier pool. Lay out 16 modifiers at random in a 4-by-4 grid. These form the Grid. Place the remaining 3 modifiers on the Archive card.
3. Set all other tokens, cubes and dice aside out of play. They form the supply.



Gameplay

Each episode is played over several rounds until the characters fulfill the objective of the final Chapter card or lose by either taking too much Stress or increasing the Surveillance to the highest threshold. Each round consists of a character phase where the characters act (taking their individual turns) and an encounter phase where the game acts.

Settings, Locations, and the Network

The world, places and people of **NEON HOPE** are all represented by cards. **Settings** represent large areas and form the basic structure of the board. **Settings have a top and a bottom location** where several characters, Enemies, and Leads can be at. In addition to settings and their associated locations, there is a global zone called **the Network**. The Network contains cards that are active regardless of the location. In general, characters can only interact with cards at their location or in the Network, but can support each other as long as they are at the same setting.

Character Phase

During the character phase, each character can perform 3 actions during their turn. The characters can choose the order in which they take their turns. However, a character must finish their turn before another character starts theirs.

The available actions are:

- Change Location
- Perform a Task
 - Investigate
 - Get Support
 - Fight
 - Hack
- Activate (Not used in episode 1)

Change Location

To change the location, move your character standee to another location in play. This location can be at any setting.

Perform a Task

Performing a task is the main way you interact with the game. When you perform a task, you will use one of the four attributes of your character. You then modify your attribute by revealing a random modifier from the Grid and compare it to the difficulty of the task. To increase your chances of success, you can play an Action card.

Tasks can be found on Leads, Enemies, States, and Tools. You can perform a task on a card at your location, in your play zone, or in the Network.



There are four different tasks (Investigate, Get Support, Fight, Hack) which have different effects but follow the same procedure. To perform a task, follow these steps in order:

1. Determine the type, attribute, and difficulty of the task. Your base value is equal to your attribute matching the attribute of the task.



2. Optionally, modify your attribute by:
 - playing an Action card matching the type of the task.
 - spending a charge of an Attribute Marker matching the attribute of the task. This adds +2 and can be done by you or other characters at your setting.
3. Reveal one modifier from the Grid and modify your attribute by the revealed number. For details, see [the Grid](#) in the following section.

4. Check if you succeed or fail. If your modified attribute is equal to or higher than the difficulty, you succeed. Otherwise, you fail, and there is no effect. (There is no penalty for failing a task unless it has a threat value.)
5. If the task has a threat value, check if you must resolve the threat. For details, see [Threat](#) on page 12.
6. If you succeed, resolve the basic effect of the task. This depends on the type of the task and is explained in the following section.
7. If you complete the task, gain 1 Resource. For details, see [Completing a Task](#) on page 13.

Example: You play as Deniz and perform the Hack task on »Data De-Anonymization«. As you have 3 Technology against a difficulty of 2, you decide to not play an Action card. You reveal 1 modifier from the Grid which is a [+2]. This brings your Technology to 5. You succeed and place 1 Hacking cube on »Data De-Anonymization«. You did not complete the task, as there are still free hacking cube slots.

The Grid

When you perform a task, you must reveal a random modifier from the Grid, which modifies your attribute by adding or subtracting a value.

Revealed modifiers stay revealed until you reset the Grid. You must reset the

Grid when all modifiers – except those in the Archive – are revealed.

To reset the Grid, flip all modifiers – including those in the Archive – facedown and shuffle them. Then, lay out 16 modifiers at random in a 4-by-4 grid and place the remaining modifiers on the Archive card.

In addition to the Number Modifiers, there are three Symbol Modifiers which have the following effects:

- **Epic Win:** You immediately succeed, stop revealing modifiers, exceed all threat and retreat values, and get 1 additional Impact. For details on Impact, see [Playing an Action Card](#) on page 13.
- **Epic Fail:** You immediately fail, stop revealing modifiers, do not match any threat or retreat value, and activate Enemies after the action. See [Enemy Activation](#) on page 11.
- **Skull:** You modify your attribute by -1, reveal an additional modifier, and activate Enemies after the action. See [Enemy Activation](#) on page 11.



EPIC WIN



EPIC FAIL



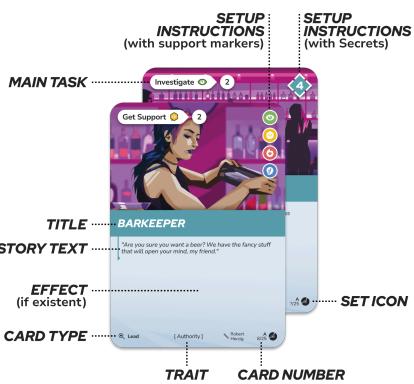
SKULL

Leads

Leads are double-sided cards that represent the places you visit and the people you talk to.

When a Lead enters play or is flipped, place Secrets or support markers according to its set-up instructions (top right-hand corner) onto it. Attribute Markers come into play with 2 charges.

When the last Secret or support maker is removed, flip the Lead if it is on the front (card number starts with A) or place it on the trash pile if it is on the back (card number starts with B).



Investigating Leads

You can Investigate Leads with Secrets.

When you successfully Investigate a Lead, you remove 1 Secret from it.

Return the removed Secret to the supply.

Getting Support from Leads

You can Get Support from Leads with support markers.

When you successfully Get Support from a Lead, you obtain 1 support maker of

your choice from it. Place it in your play area. There are different kinds of support makers you can spend for various effects.

Support Markers

Attribute Markers enter play with 2 charges. You can spend 1 charge during a task matching the attribute of the support marker to add +2. This can be done by you or other characters at your setting. For a single task, characters may spend charges from any number of Attribute Markers, but only 1 charge from each individual marker. After you spend the last charge of an Attribute Marker, return it to the supply.



2 CHARGES



1 CHARGE

Hope can be spent to ignore Stress. Each Hope spent ignores 1 Stress. For details, see [Stress and Surveillance](#) on page 12.

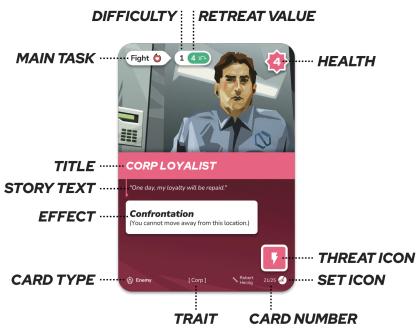
Resources can be spent at the beginning of the game or whenever you Focus to purchase Tools. For details, see [Focus](#) on page 14.

Fighting Enemies

When you successfully Fight an Enemy, you deal 1 Damage to it. If an Enemy has Damage equal to or higher than its health, the Enemy is defeated and placed in the encounter discard pile.

In addition to difficulty, many fight tasks have a retreat value. During the resolution of a task, when your modified value is equal to or higher than the retreat value, the Enemy retreats:

Flip the Enemy face-down. This is not optional. As long as an Enemy is face-down, it can not attack you, its effects are inactive, and you cannot fight it. In the encounter phase, the Enemy will flip back.



Enemy Activation

When you reveal a Skull from the Grid, you must activate Enemies after the action. For each Skull you revealed, perform the following steps in order:

1. All Enemies at your location attack you (ignore retreated Enemies). Sum up their threat icons and suffer as much Stress and/or trigger as much Surveillance.
2. One Enemy at a location without a character moves to your location (ignore retreated Enemies). Prioritize the Enemy with the highest remaining health.

Enemies are only activated after all other effects of an action have been resolved. This includes defeating or retreating Enemies.

Stress and Surveillance

For each point of **Stress** you suffer, discard 1 card from your hand.

For each point of **Surveillance** you trigger, increase the Surveillance on the surveillance dial by 1.



STRESS



SURVEILLANCE

Hacking States

When you successfully Hack a State, you place 1 Hacking Cube on one of its empty hacking cube slots. If all hacking cube slots are covered, the State is defeated and placed in the encounter discard pile.

Hacking Cubes are also placed automatically on States in the Network during the encounter phase, see [Encounter Phase](#) on page 14.



Threat

In addition to a difficulty value, some tasks have a threat value. During the resolution of a task, when your modified value is lower than the threat value of the task, you must resolve the threat: According to the threat icons, you must suffer Stress or increase the Surveillance.



Hacking as a Secondary Task

In addition to the main task, some Leads and Enemies have a secondary Hack task. Just like when hacking States, you place 1 Hacking Cube on an empty hacking cube slot when you successfully hack a Lead or Enemy. Those hacking cube slots can be part of a threat icon or inside a retreat box.

When a threat icon is covered by a Hacking Cube, that icon is ignored when you resolve the threat.

When a retreat box is fully covered by Hacking Cubes, discard all Hacking Cubes and retreat the Enemy.



THREAT ICONS WITH
1 HACKING CUBE SLOT



THREAT ICONS WITHOUT
HACKING CUBE SLOTS



RETREAT BOX WITH
2 HACKING CUBE SLOTS

Special effects can apply directly when the card is played (indicated by the when played icon) or during the resolution of the task after the modifier was revealed (indicated by the resolution icon).



WHEN
PLAYED



RESOLUTION

Playing an Action Card

When you perform a task, you may play 1 Action card from your hand. The action type of the Action card must match the type of the task. If you played an Action card, place it in your discard pile at the end of the task.

An Action card can provide an attribute bonus, additional Impact, and special effects:

The attribute bonus of the Action card is added to your attribute.

For each additional Impact (each) , you resolve the basic effect of the task an additional time if you succeed, e.g., you remove an additional Secret during an Investigate task.

Completing a Task

You gain 1 Resource as a reward after you complete a task. A task is completed if you remove the last Secret from a card, obtain the last support marker from a card, deal the last point of damage to defeat a card, or place enough Hacking Cubes to fill the final hacking cube slot on a card.

Example: You play as Larx and perform the Investigate task on the »Dancefloor« which has a difficulty of 3. You play »Kicking in Doors« and decide to suffer 1 Stress to add +2, bringing your Courage to 5. You reveal 1 modifier from the Grid which is a Skull. You must reveal an additional modifier which is a [-1]. The revealed modifiers bring your final Courage to 3 which is enough to be successful. Because of the additional Impact from »Kicking in Doors« you remove both Secrets from the »Dancefloor«. As you removed the last Secret, you completed the task and gain 1 Resource. After the action, you must activate Enemies.



Focus

Whenever you have no cards in your hand, you must automatically Focus. When you Focus, perform these steps in order:

1. Recover cards

- Lower your Endurance by 1.
- Take a number of Action cards from your discard pile back into your hand equal to your new Endurance.

2. Purchase Tools

- To purchase a Tool from your Tool Kit, spend Resources equal to the cost of the Tool. Purchased Tools are placed in your play zone.
- You can purchase any number of Tools as long as you have enough Resources.



If you discarded your last card due to Stress and there is still excess Stress, you must spend Hope to ignore that Stress. If you have no Hope left and there is still excess Stress, you must trigger 1 Surveillance, regardless of how much

excess Stress remains. After that, the excess Stress is ignored.

If you reach 0 Endurance, you become exhausted. If you exhaust during the encounter phase, the current episode ends immediately. If you exhaust during the character phase, the episode ends at the end of the character phase, but your turn ends immediately. In both cases, read the conclusion on the Surveillance card when the episode ends.

You can also Focus voluntarily during your turn by discarding all cards in your hand. This is not an action and can be done at any time while you are not performing an action.

Encounter Phase

After all characters have taken their turn, the encounter phase starts. Perform these steps in order:

1. Resolve all effects that happen "When the encounter phase begins" in an order of your choice.
2. Place 1 Hacking Cube on each State in the Network.
3. Trigger 1 Surveillance per character.
4. Trigger 1 additional Surveillance for each Enemy that is at a location with one or more characters. (Ignore retreated Enemies.)
5. All retreated cards flip face up.
6. Flip all action trackers to their unspent side.

7. Each character draws 1 encounter card.
8. In clockwise order, starting with the responsible character, each character resolves their encounter card.

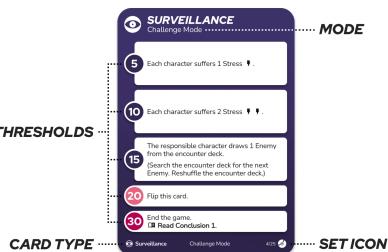
While characters are normally allowed to discuss their cards and strategy freely, in steps 6 and 7 of the encounter phase, they are not allowed to consult with each other and must make all decisions on their own.

Surveillance Thresholds

Whenever the Surveillance meets or exceeds one of the thresholds on the Surveillance card, the threshold effect is activated.

At a certain threshold, the Surveillance card is usually flipped to its escalation side. While flipped to the escalation side, the Epic Fail modifier will gain an additional negative effect when revealed.

If the final threshold is reached, the episode ends. Read the conclusion as instructed.



Other Rules

Recycle & Trash Tools

Some Tool effects instruct you to **Recycle** or to **Trash** the Tool. Unless otherwise stated, such effects can only be activated during your turn.



RECYCLE



TRASH

When you **Recycle** a Tool, return it to your Tool Kit. It is not in play anymore, but can be purchased again when you Focus.

When you **Trash** a Tool, place it on the trash pile. It is permanently out of play. Only effects that explicitly name trashed Tools can interact with them.

Effect Boxes

Some cards have colored boxes that indicate standardized effects. They are highlighted by the words: **Revealed**, **Completed**, and **Follower**.

- **Revealed** effects are resolved when the card enters play or is flipped to the side showing the effect.
- **Completed** effects are resolved when the main task of the card is completed.
- **Follower** effects are also resolved when the main task of the card is completed: Move the card to the play area of any character at your setting, granting them a permanent bonus.

Attribute Die

Some effects instruct you to roll the attribute die to determine a random attribute. If the die shows 2 attributes, you must choose one of them. To indicate this, flip the die to your chosen side.

Regular & Elite Cards

Some encounter cards are **Elite**.

This has no gameplay effect, but it can be referenced by other effects. A card that is not Elite is regular.

*Example: An effect that retreats a regular Enemy **cannot** retreat an Elite Enemy.*

Solo Rules

All player card effects that instruct you to “choose another character” allow you to choose yourself when playing solo.

Reminder: You start with 10 Endurance and 10 Action cards as described in the character setup rules.

Round Overview

1. Character Phase

Each character takes their turn by performing 3 actions.
(characters take turns in any order, but must finish their turn before passing.)

2. Encounter Phase

- a. Resolve all abilities on cards that happen "when the encounter phase begins".
- b. Place 1 Hacking Cube on each State in the Network.
- c. Trigger 1 Surveillance per character. Trigger 1 additional Surveillance for each Enemy that is at a location with one or more characters.
- d. Each retreated card is flipped face up.
- e. Each character flips their action trackers to their unspent side.
- f. Each character draws 1 encounter card. (Characters resolve their card without consultation.)

Enemy Activation

After any action or effect that revealed one or more Skulls ends: you activate Enemies once for each Skull revealed. Perform the following steps individually each time:

- Each Enemy at your location attacks you.
- 1 Enemy without a character at their location moves to your location.
(Prioritize the Enemy with the highest remaining health.)

Credits

Visual Design & Art Direction

Torben Ratzlaff

Illustrations

Robert Herzig (Cards)

Consuelo Pecchenino (Cover)

Development

Richi Anna Haarhoff

English Story & Rulebook Editing

Tyler Scott Sanchez

German Story Editing

Manuel Stark

Playtesting

Christopher Steinbiß

Malte Maaß



Keywords

The following keyword effects can be found on encounter or player cards.

■ **Confrontation**

You cannot move away from a location with a card with the **Confrontation** keyword.

■ **Follow-Up**

After you are done with fully resolving this encounter card, draw 1 additional encounter card from the encounter deck.

■ **Unpredictable**

If you reveal a Skull during the task, you treat it as the Epic Fail instead.

■ **Analyze modifiers**

Look at the specified number of unrevealed modifiers from the Grid. If instructed to archive modifiers, place those on the Archive card. After you have looked at unrevealed modifiers from the Grid, shuffle them back into the other unrevealed modifiers in the Grid.

■ **Analyze encounter cards**

Look at the specified number of cards from the top of the encounter deck. If instructed to discard cards, place those in the encounter discard pile. After you have looked at cards from the encounter deck, shuffle the encounter deck.

■ **Shape modifiers**

Reveal the specified number of modifiers in the Grid. Then, choose the same number of revealed modifiers, flip them to the unrevealed side, and

shuffle them back into the Grid. These can be different modifiers than those just revealed. Then, activate Enemies for each Skull you have just revealed (but do not reveal additional modifiers).

■ **Reckless**

This task reveals 1 additional modifier from the Grid. (Apply all modifiers that are revealed for a task.)

■ **Teamwork**

Characters at your setting may spend 1 matching Attribute Marker to get 1 additional Impact instead of +2.

■ **Flexible**

Characters at your setting may spend 1 Attribute Marker of any type as if it were matching.