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## A Fist Full of Obstacles

The only limit on obstacles is the dealer's imagination; however, we at Smoke & Mirrors realize that we have created a unique rules landscape and that we may need to give your imagination a map and compass to help you on your journey. These five obstacles (when combined with those presented in the playsets) should get you through until you decide what obstacles are best for your group. Each is presented in the standard obstacle format, and each is written as a generic building block that can be refitted for any setting. Additionally, we have striven to include aliases to help you picture each obstacle in a range of settings.

### Adjusting Obstacle Strength

When using any obstacle, be conscious of the deck that it draws from. If the plot of your adventure calls for obstacles A,B, and C, but you fear that those three together will overmatch your party, consider drawing them from a separate deck with high cards removed. Similarly, if you want an otherwise humble obstacle to become fearsome, draw its cards from a deck with low cards removed. Beware of overusing either end of this technique though: legions of obstacles that use only high cards will quickly make players who chose powers like Counter-strike and Shield feel like they wasted their powers; similarly, hordes of low-card enemies will destroy the significant difference between an ace and a jack. One other word of warning: the fewer card types in the deck, the higher the probability that a handed obstacle will draw straights and sets; this can make a huge difference, even if you intended on making the encounter easier. The following chart may help you gauge a proper obstacle deck.

Difficulty	Cards in Deck from	To
<b>Very Easy</b>		2 8
<b>Easy</b>		2 Jack
<b>Average</b>		2 Ace
<b>Difficult</b>		5 Ace
<b>Much More Difficult</b>		8 Ace



**The Chasm** (AKA: No Man's Land, The Great Martian Desert, Hanuman's Leap, The Wall, The River, The Language Barrier)

The Chasm is a great way to break up a scene. Effectively, a Chasm creates two zones that obstacles and protagonists can occupy, the far side and the near side. By moving from one side to the other, players can get a more fully realized sense of accomplishment than that given by removing an obstacle's health tokens. You can also use multiple Chasms in limitless combinations to form all manner of spaces. You can think of this as a scene-by-scene version of the movement rules presented in Consoles and Cards.

**Exotic Obstacle:** Select at least twice as many cards as you have protagonists. Spread these face-down on the table in a row: it'll look something like a game of Go Fish. Consider the chasm to be an obstacle blocking for all behind it.

**Indestructible:** No action taken by characters will remove the chasm from play. It's a landscape feature, not a monster to be killed.

**Leap:** Conventional strikes and powers are ineffective against The Chasm. The only action that is relevant to it is leaping (fording, swimming, or other appropriate crossing action); a protagonist lays down a card as if it were a strike and then pulls any card from the chasm. If the protagonist's card is equal or higher, he is moved to the far side. Otherwise he loses a health token.



**The Generator** (AKA: The Ant Hill, The Barracks, The Factory, The Dimension Portal)  
The Generator opens up an infinite source of evil by creating an ever-growing horde of face-value obstacles. To be used effectively, the Generator should be placed behind a rank of other obstacles (probably its own creations) because it is extremely vulnerable to attack. Generators opposing large groups should be able to use Get (see below) two or more times in a round.

**Exotic Obstacle:** Select at least twice as many cards as you have protagonists. Stack these together face down like a deck, but make it clear that the pile is an obstacle in play. The Generator may not make strikes but will use Get on its action.

One hit to defeat (see Defend the Nest below).

**Defend the Nest:** Whenever a strike is directed against the Generator, flip its top card face up. Should it be equal or higher in value to the attack, the strike is nullified and the revealed card enters play as a face-value obstacle in blocking position to defend the Generator. Should the card be of lower value than the strike, the Generator is destroyed.

**Get:** Reveal the Generator's top card; this is now a face-value obstacle that may begin attacking next turn.



**Heavy Infantry** (AKA: Dragoons, The Black Magic 7, A Tough Crowd)

A face-value horde can be a real challenge if you want it to be. These heavy infantry can take a beating and then spring back. It takes coordination to actually defeat them and start syphoning off that kitty.

To use Heavy Infantry as the only obstacles in a scene you can use twice the number of protagonists for a reasonable challenge. Break them into clearly differentiated squads as necessary. However, they are probably best deployed as one or two squads to support a more complex obstacle (handed or exotic); they add ample firepower but are easily understood and dealt with tactically leaving plenty of player attention to deal with a big bad.

Face Value Obstacle (dealt randomly).

Two hits to defeat.

Squad Tactics: Heavy Infantry will form into hordes comprising up to 4 individuals each.

First Aid: Instead of striking, Heavy Infantry may return one health token to another Heavy Infantry in the same horde with the same or lesser value than itself.



**Poison** (AKA: The Rot, The Ear-Worm, The Creeping Death, The Evil Eye, The Larval Stage)

Nothing can scare a player like an enemy inside his protagonist. Poison may be played based on plot logic (*“As you reach the bottom of your champagne flute, you feel a wrenching deep inside you. The Countess smiles, and the scene begins”*) or it can be an effect generated by another obstacle (i.e., if the cobra hits with a diamond strike, his victim loses one health token and is poisoned). Regardless of how it enters the scene, Poison functions as a separate obstacle: it is represented by its own card or marker, and it attacks and defends separately from other opponents in the encounter. However, if you are considering poisoning several protagonists, you may wish to simplify your play by combining all of the Poison obstacles' hands.

Handed Obstacle: Hand 3, Draw 1, Play 1.

2 Hits to defeat.

Affliction: When Poison enters play, the dealer chooses one protagonist. This is the only protagonist who may affect or be affected by Poison, regardless of powers like Ranged Attack.



## Obstacle Playtest as of 16Feb2015

**Zombie** (AKA: Atomic Zombie, Cyber Troll, Black Friday Shopper, Fluffy-Bunny Zombie, Sheeple, The Infected, Miasma)

Whether created from viral infections, magic or television, this represents unshakable shambling hordes that are nether dead nor alive. These could also be used for any other obstacle against which resistance is, at best, a delaying action and at worst suicide. Unlike most obstacles, Zombies are not meant to be beaten, so some method of escape should be given to the protagonists (possibly a Chasm obstacle?).

Face Value Obstacle (dealt randomly).

One hit to flip face-down (see below).

Inevitable: Whenever a Zombie would take damage, flip it face-down instead. At the end of the dealer's turn, flip all face-down zombies face-up; they may make no strikes on a round where they start the dealer's turn face-down.

Head shot: A strike using an Ace does not flip a zombie; instead it removes it from play.

Horde: All Zombies in a scene will usually form a single horde.

