A ROLEPLAYING GAME

WAYSTATION

PLAYER'S HANDBOOK

Mystery and intrigue
in a Victorian afterlife

VERSION 0.1 / PLAYTEST EDITION

2026



Waystation

The train comes to rest beneath a roof of iron and glass. Outside, sunlight catches on wet cobbles and the windows of a shop already open for business. Someone is arguing over the price of flowers. A man in a railway uniform offers directions, then pauses to let a porter through. You are dead, but the morning seems to be proceeding much as mornings always have. This is Waystation. People find rooms here, learn trades, fall in love, nurse grievances and make arrangements they later regret. Some have spent longer in this city than they ever lived on Earth. There are trains that leave as well as trains that arrive. You may have questions about those. First, though, there is the matter of somewhere to stay, something to eat, and the stranger who has just asked your name.

Contents

PAGE

01 **The City** 3
The city, its people and the everyday supernatural.

02 **Creating Your Character** 7
Former life, arrival, belongings, skills and demands.

03 **Playing the Game** 12
Roleplay, investigation, dice and Crisis on Demand.

04 **Violence, Harm and Recovery** 17
Conflict, conditions, care and recuperation.

05 **Your Life Here** 19
Under construction.

CHAPTER I

The City

There is a life to be made here. Most of its inhabitants are already busy making one.

Waystation has the sounds and smells of a city at the close of the nineteenth century. Wheels rattle over stone. Shopkeepers sweep their steps, kettles whistle behind open windows, and somebody upstairs is practising the same passage on a piano. A respectable coat helps in certain doorways. A familiar face helps in many more. People have work to finish and friends they are looking forward to seeing.

They also have lives on Earth behind them. The city is an afterlife, although that word explains less than a newcomer might hope. Its residents have built homes, businesses and institutions without an agreed account of why they are here. Whatever the larger purpose of the place, there is a great deal to occupy a person before they discover it.

Arrivals

Newcomers arrive by train. The station has staff accustomed to receiving them, and an arrivals office where someone can explain what happens next. Beyond the platform, people know that another train has come in and are largely getting on with their day.



New arrivals are dressed for a journey, with the luggage they would have packed for one. These need not be the clothes or belongings they had with them when they died. Some travel light; others step down laden with cases, carrying books, keepsakes and things they thought might come in useful.

Their bodies reflect the age and physical condition they feel to be their own. Someone who died old may step down from the carriage considerably younger. The injuries that ended a life need not accompany them here.

A language already known

One of the first strange things is how easily people understand one another. On arrival, a person knows the city's shared language. The words come naturally, despite belonging to no language they learned on Earth. Someone who could read and write before can also read and write it.

They keep the languages they knew on Earth. French, Serbian or Arabic may still be spoken around a supper table, and a familiar song or joke can be a pleasure to share with someone who understands it.

Old lives and new neighbours

The people of Waystation are human. They bring memories, habits, affections and prejudices with them. A former profession can offer a useful beginning. An old friendship can still matter, and an old quarrel may survive a reunion. Others are glad of the distance from the lives they once led.

Time passes at the same pace here as on Earth, but adults do not grow old. Someone who arrived a hundred years ago may still look thirty. A young face is therefore an uncertain guide to experience, and a historical event can be a neighbour's recollection.

Children are born in Waystation too. They grow up, then stop ageing in turn. To them, Earth is the distant place their parents and neighbours remember; the city is the only home they have known.

News from Earth arrives with people and their belongings. A recent memory, a newspaper or an ordinary photograph can be precious to somebody who has been waiting for word. Newcomers bring knowledge of inventions, discoveries and changes on Earth, alongside news of people and places they knew. Sending word back is another matter. For most residents, those left behind on Earth remain out of reach.



Making a home

Reception households offer newcomers a first address and someone to ask about the city. A resident host shares the house with people still finding their feet. Others begin with a room in a guesthouse or lodgings of their own.

Settled residents have family homes, rented rooms and fine addresses that remain well beyond most people's means. An old trade may help someone find work; a useful acquaintance can matter just as much.

Work and ordinary pleasures

Waystation uses its own dollars. There are goods to buy and people whose living depends on doing something useful for somebody else. Tailors, cooks and carpenters still have plenty of work.

Alchemy supplies much of the city's food, fuel and raw materials. Producing them is skilled work, with recipes to follow, apparatus to maintain and ingredients to measure. Workshops, manufactories, orchards and hothouses all help keep the city fed, clothed and warm.

Cafes, theatres, lending libraries and sporting clubs give people things to anticipate after work. There is gossip to catch up on, music to hear, and an acquaintance with an opinion about both.

Occult practice



Some things called superstition on Earth work here. Rituals can be learned, materials prepared, and procedures repeated. A competent practitioner need not possess an unusual personal gift. Formulaic magic belongs to the practical knowledge of the city, although knowing that a process works does not necessarily explain why it works.

There are also people with stranger capabilities. A face can be borrowed; a person can possess strength quite at odds with their appearance. These arts are associated with initiation and communities of practitioners. They can change a person's place in society as much as what that person is able to do.

Those communities have different customs, reputations and reasons to admit someone. Their members also have ordinary occupations, friendships and loyalties. Sharing a gift does not make two people political allies or tell either of them whose interests ought to come first.

Company and loyalties

A club, a trade society or a circle of regulars at a cafe can become a second home. Members look after one another, pass on opportunities and introduce their friends. Their loyalties also bring rivalries: two societies may compete for the same patron, while their members have reasons to remain on good terms.

Public offices, employers and private associations have their own interests too. Access to a useful room, a trustworthy introduction or a piece of information can depend on relationships. People remember who helped them, who embarrassed them and which account of an incident reached them first. Becoming familiar with the city means becoming familiar with its people.

Beyond the streets

Beyond the city and its nearby orchards and workshops, the roads are less familiar. Travellers bring back accounts of strange places and increasingly perilous journeys. Some describe returning to the city without having turned back. Their stories circulate among people who have never gone far enough to judge them, alongside maps whose owners disagree about how much to trust them.

Onward

People can choose to leave Waystation by train. Departure has its own arrangements and a recognised place in the city's life. Residents say goodbye, make provision for those staying, and leave rooms, belongings and unfinished matters behind them. Their reasons for going can be as particular as their reasons for having stayed.

The existence of a departure service supplies no certain knowledge of the destination. Its staff can organise a journey without being able to answer the largest question about it. What lies beyond, and what relationship it bears to a life spent here, remains uncertain.

Life in the city can also end through violence or accident. Bodies can be hurt, and people can die. What becomes of them is no clearer than what awaits those who board an onward train.

In the meantime, households continue to set places for supper. People make promises, meet new neighbours and find reasons to remain.



CHAPTER II

Creating Your Character

Begin with the person who boards the train: the life they remember, the things they carry and the abilities they bring with them.

Your character is a person from Earth, newly arrived in Waystation. Start with their former life, then decide how they appear on arrival and what travels with them. Six skills and four demands describe their capabilities. Record these choices on the character sheet.

A life on Earth



Choose a **Name** and record their **Earth origin**: where they came from and where they made their home. In **Former life**, give a brief account of how they lived. Their occupation, circumstances and important experiences can give you a sense of the person you will play. A dressmaker who employed two apprentices and spent Sundays with her sisters already has a life to draw on.

Under **Earthly attachments**, describe what mattered to them while they were alive. This might be a person, a place, a cause, an unfinished undertaking or something they hoped to become. A particular attachment is useful: pride in keeping a family business open, for example, or a determination to be recognised for their work.

Record their **Age at death** and **Cause of death**. A short factual entry such as "pneumonia" or "a fall from a ladder" is enough for the latter.

List the **Earth languages** they knew, drawing on their upbringing and experiences. All new arrivals also know Waystation's shared language. They speak it fluently, and anyone who could read and write on Earth can read and write it here. Their Earth languages remain with them.

Arrival

Choose their **Age on arrival**. Their body reflects the age and physical condition they feel to be their own, which may differ from those at death. Someone who died at seventy might arrive looking forty; a younger person

might arrive older. The injuries that ended their life need not accompany them. In **Appearance**, describe their build, features and manner of dress.

Luggage and possessions

> **Packing for the journey**
> Imagine your character the last time they took a train: their clothes, luggage and personal possessions. If they never took one, imagine how they would prepare for a journey.

Record these belongings under **Luggage & possessions**. Take what they could reasonably bring on a train journey and carry on their own. Think about what they would pack for comfort, what they would expect to need, and what they would keep close to hand.

Earth objects attract considerable interest in Waystation. A book, a toy, a photograph, a tool or a freshly minted coin can delight someone who has spent years away. News and ordinary possessions bring something of Earth into the city; a new model of sewing machine can be an event.

Skills

Skills describe what a character can do. Each has a rating from **0 to 4**. When an action calls for a roll, the Director chooses a relevant skill and a demand: the pressure that makes the attempt difficult. Add their ratings to find how many six-sided dice to roll. Higher ratings give more dice.

Violence

Harming or subduing another living being. Violence includes the willingness to hurt someone as well as the practical ability to do it. It covers striking with a fist or weapon, firing a pistol, or restraining someone who is resisting.

Athletics

Moving and exerting the body. Running, jumping, climbing, swimming and lifting a heavy object all draw on Athletics. It can also help a character get out of the way when someone tries to hurt them.

Stealth

Keeping yourself or your actions from being noticed. Stealth can cover slipping past a doorway, palming a key, concealing an object or following someone through a crowd without attracting their attention.

Performance

Presenting a convincing performance or sustaining a role. It can cover playing to an audience, imitating a voice, maintaining a disguise or keeping up a false identity under questioning.

Craft

Working with objects and substances. Craft covers making, repairing and altering things, from mending a coat to repairing a mechanism, opening a lock or preparing a compound. The materials, tools and knowledge available still determine what the character can attempt.

Medicine

Caring for bodies and treating injury or illness. Medicine can cover stopping bleeding, stitching a wound, setting a broken bone or treating poisoning.

> **Conversation and investigation**
> There are no perception, persuasion or investigation rolls. Describe what your character does, ask questions and draw your own conclusions. Skills can help with actions along the way; they do not settle a conversation or solve a mystery for you.

Assigning skill ratings

Choose one of the two starting allocations below. **Balanced** gives two strong skills and broader competence. **Specialist** gives the highest available rating in one skill, with more pronounced gaps elsewhere. Each allocation is a set of six numbers: one rating for each skill.

Allocation	Ratings to assign
Balanced	**3, 3, 2, 2, 1, 0**
Specialist	**4, 3, 2, 1, 0, 0**

To put your chosen allocation on the sheet:

1. **Choose a skill for the highest number.** Give it to an activity your character does particularly well.
2. **Assign the remaining numbers.** Take each number in turn and give it to another skill. Continue until all six skills have a rating.
3. **Fill in the dots.** A rating of 3 means filling the first three of that skill's four dots. For a rating of 0, leave all four empty.



Example: assigning skills
For a dressmaker who enjoys amateur theatre, choose **Balanced**: the two 3s go in Craft and Performance. The remaining ratings complete the sheet:

Skill	Rating	Dots on the sheet
Violence	0	○○○○
Athletics	2	●●○○
Stealth	1	●○○○
Performance	3	●●●○
Craft	3	●●●○
Medicine	2	●●○○

Demands

Demands are rated from **0 to 3**. Each describes a kind of pressure; a high rating means your character functions well under it.

The Director chooses the demand that best fits the attempt. The same activity may use different demands as circumstances change.

Urgency

Acting with little time to spare. A high Urgency rating helps a character work quickly when delay would cost them their chance: getting through a door before it closes, opening a lock before a watchman returns, or taking a shot before a target disappears from view.

Scrutiny

Acting while watched, evaluated or closely examined. A high Scrutiny rating helps a character hold up under attention: sustaining an assumed identity through questioning, treating a patient under a senior physician's critical eye, or discreetly passing an object in a closely watched room.

Complexity

Managing intricacy and precision. A high Complexity rating helps a character carry out delicate or complicated work: repairing an unfamiliar mechanism, following an intricate sequence of movements or stitching a difficult wound.

Strain

Acting through pain, fear or distress. A high Strain rating helps a character remain effective when hurt, frightened or shaken: climbing despite a fear of heights, treating a badly injured friend or keeping up a performance after receiving terrible news.

Assigning demand ratings

Use the same method as for skills, this time with **3, 2, 1, 0**. Give 3 to the pressure your character handles best, then assign 2, 1 and 0 to the other three demands. Fill in the **Base** dots beside each demand to match its rating.

Your dressmaker might work well when hurried but struggle with intricate tasks, giving them **Urgency 3** and **Complexity 0**. You then assign the remaining ratings: **Strain 2** and **Scrutiny 1**. All four demands now have a starting rating.

> **Putting the ratings together**
> Your dressmaker tries to open a lock before the watchman returns. The Director calls for Craft + Urgency. With **Craft 3** and **Urgency 3**, you roll **six dice**. If the main difficulty were the lock's intricate mechanism, the Director could instead call for Craft + Complexity. With **Complexity 0**, that would be **three dice**.

Ready to arrive

Your character is ready for their first session. Leave **Life in Waystation** for the ambitions and connections they develop during play.



CHAPTER III

Playing the Game

A question asked over supper can lead to an invitation, an argument or something neither person meant to reveal.

One person at the table is the **Director**. They describe the surroundings, portray the people you meet and decide how the world responds to your actions. Each other player plays a character, choosing what that person says, does and keeps to themselves.

Much of play happens in character. You speak to the people around you, listen and respond as the person you are playing. The Director supplies the surroundings and the parts of the scene that need describing. When an uncertain outcome calls for dice, they ask for a roll, then the scene continues with whatever has happened.



Taking part

Speak from your character's point of view. To get a quiet word with the caretaker, you might say, "Let me take that end. There's something I'd rather ask you outside." The Director answers as the caretaker, and you respond to what they actually say. A suspicious "Why outside?" gives you a different conversation from a grateful "Thank you. Mind the step."

Let the character emerge in the exchange: how readily they trust a stranger, what makes them laugh, how they react to a slight. Leave pauses for other people to answer, interrupt or change the subject. Their responses give you something to play with.

Describe actions that the table needs to picture, such as picking up the chairs or holding a door open. If speaking in character feels awkward, describing what they say is fine too. You can move into their voice as you become comfortable with it.

Getting to know people

The people you meet have lives already underway. They have errands to finish, friends they worry about and opinions they are pleased to share. Give yourself time to become acquainted. A conversation can wander from the weather to a photograph on the mantelpiece, and from there to someone worth meeting.

Small exchanges can become part of a relationship. Perhaps you return to lend the book you promised, apologise for an argument or hear the rest of a story. A shared joke, a kindness or a careless insult can stay with both people long after the conversation ends.

As you get involved in their lives, your interests may draw you together or put you at odds. Someone you like may ask a favour you resent. A rival may be the person whose help you need. Let your character's affections, pride and loyalties enter into what they say and what they are prepared to promise.

Following a mystery

A mystery begins with something that invites another look: an absence, an unexpected object, a story that sits uneasily beside what you have seen. Follow that curiosity. Visit the place, examine what is there and speak with the people involved. The Director fills in the surroundings and the results of your examination; ask for details whenever the picture is unclear.



Bring your discoveries to the other characters. "He says he's never been here. Then how did his coat get upstairs?" gives them a question to argue over and a reason to act. Compare explanations, challenge one another's assumptions and decide what would help you find out more. Your next move might be a conversation with the owner of the coat or a closer look at the room where it was found.

A few notes on names, discoveries and unanswered questions help you pick up a thread later. Some answers may reach your character privately, through a quiet exchange or a note from the Director. Deciding whom to tell, and how much, becomes part of their dealings with the other people involved.

When to roll

The Director calls for a roll when an action has an uncertain outcome worth resolving. Straightforward actions can simply happen. The circumstances establish what is possible: access, tools, preparation and the time available all affect an attempt.

Before rolling, establish what the attempt covers. Opening a lock in a hurry and working on it for half an hour are different undertakings. Say how you intend to proceed so the Director can judge the attempt as a whole.

Making a roll

Waystation uses ordinary six-sided dice, also called **d6s**. The handful rolled for an action is its **dice pool**.

1. Build the pool

The Director chooses a skill for the activity and a demand for what makes it difficult. Add the two ratings:

Skill + Demand = Dice Pool

Craft 2 and Complexity 2 give a pool of four dice. Apply any dice bonuses or penalties that are in effect. For an action the Director calls a roll for, roll at least **one die**, even if the resulting pool would be zero.

2. Roll and count successes

Roll the whole pool at once. Each die showing **4, 5 or 6** counts as one success. A die showing **1, 2 or 3** contributes no successes.

Pairs of 6s are **critical pairs**. Each pair counts as **four successes in total**. Set the two dice aside as a pair, then count the remaining dice. Each die belongs to only one pair; an unpaired 6 counts as one success.

Dice showing	Successes
1, 2 or 3	0 per die
4, 5 or an unpaired 6	1 per die
A pair of 6s	4 for the pair

For example, **6, 6, 5, 2** gives **five successes**: four from the pair, one from the 5 and none from the 2. Three 6s would give five successes; four 6s would give eight.

3. Resolve the attempt

For an action without an opposing roll, the Director sets a **difficulty**: the number of successes needed. They establish it before the roll, based on the circumstances, and **keep the number private**.

Tell the Director your total successes. If it **meets or exceeds** the difficulty, the attempt succeeds; if it falls short, the attempt fails. The Director describes the result, and you continue from there.

Example: repairing a catch
You try to repair a damaged window catch. The Director calls for **Craft + Complexity**, having privately set a difficulty of **2**. Your ratings are 2 and 2, so you roll four dice: **6, 6, 5, 2**.
The critical pair gives four successes and the 5 adds one, for a total of **five**. You report that total. The Director checks it against the difficulty and tells you that the catch works again.

Opposed rolls

Sometimes a roll pits your action against another character's resistance. Each participant rolls the skill and demand that fit what they are doing. The two pools can use different skills and demands.

Compare the number of successes. **The higher total wins. A tie goes to the character who initiated the action.**

For example, you try to snatch a letter from someone's hand. You initiate the action. If you both roll two successes, you get the letter. If the other person rolls more successes, they keep it.

When both participants roll **zero successes**, the Director may instead rule that **both fail**, describing how their attempts go wrong in the circumstances.

Time and further attempts

Keep an eye on the day and approximate time in the story. Appointments, journeys and other people's plans can continue while your character is occupied. The Director describes how much time passes as events unfold; a walk across town may take only a sentence at the table.



Time can also affect a roll. Say how long you are prepared to spend on a task. Working carefully for an hour may make it easier than doing the same work in a few minutes, and sufficient time can sometimes settle the task without a roll.

A roll resolves the whole attempt you established. If it fails, a fresh attempt needs a meaningful change: a different method, better tools, new information or a new opportunity. If the roll covered half an hour's work on a lock, that effort has already been accounted for. Finding a suitable tool or another way into the room gives you something new to try.

Crisis on Demand

Under serious pressure, your strengths and weaknesses can shift. **Once per session**, before a roll, you can declare a **Crisis on Demand**. The Director decides whether the pressure is enough to qualify.

This randomly reassigns your four demand ratings for the rest of the scene. Use four cards or slips of paper marked **0, 1, 2 and 3**.

1. **Shuffle and deal.** Deal one card to each demand in sheet order: Urgency, Scrutiny, Complexity, Strain.
2. **Record the new ratings.** Write the dealt numbers in the **Scene** column and mark **Crisis used**. Keep your Base dots as they are.
3. **Use the Scene ratings.** They apply to the roll you are about to make and every later roll in this scene. Skills keep their usual ratings.
4. **Return to Base when the scene ends.** Clear the Scene entries and resume using your ordinary demand ratings.

A **scene** is one continuous encounter or situation; the Director marks its end. A **session** is one gathering to play. Clear **Crisis used** at the start of the next session.



CHAPTER IV

Violence, Harm and Recovery

Combat uses opposed rolls. Harm is recorded as a condition, together with its cause.



Taking action

When a fight breaks out, describe what you do. The Director orders turns to fit the situation, giving each participant **one proactive action** before anyone acts again. You might strike someone, run for cover, bar a door or help a fallen companion.

When you attack, describe how. The defender describes their response. The Director chooses a skill and demand for each participant: attacking usually uses Violence, while dodging might use Athletics. Resolve the attack and defence as an **opposed roll**.

If the attacker wins, the defender suffers the attack's harm. If the defender wins, they avoid it. Ties favour the attacker, with the usual option for the Director to rule that both fail on a 0-0 result. **Defending leaves your own action available.** Any attack you make on your turn is a separate contest.

Example: a punch and a reply
Victor throws a punch. Eva ducks. The Director calls for **Violence + Urgency** from Victor and **Athletics + Urgency** from Eva. She wins, so the punch misses.
On her turn, Eva can act. She might strike back, pull a door shut between them or leave while she has the chance.

Harm

Mark your current **condition** on the character sheet and note its **cause**: a cut arm, exhaustion, shock, or whatever has left its mark.

Condition	Effect
Well	No impairment penalty.
Impaired	Subtract **one die** from your rolls, to a minimum of one die.
Incapacitated	You are out of action. Depending on the cause, you might be unconscious or otherwise unable to continue.
Dead	Your character has died in Waystation.

A successful attack normally moves its target **one step down the track**. A Well character becomes Impaired; an Impaired character becomes Incapacitated. An attempt to restrain someone or force them back is resolved according to that aim.

The Director judges harm from what actually happens. A fall, a fire or an attack against someone helpless may skip states. If an attack would certainly kill someone, the Director can resolve it without a roll.

The step to Dead requires harm that could actually kill the character in the circumstances. Someone Incapacitated by distress does not die simply because they receive more upsetting news.

Exhaustion and severe distress can also worsen your condition. You can choose to give an emotional event this weight: if terrible news leaves your character unable to sleep, for example, you might agree with the Director that they are Impaired by exhaustion the following morning.

Recovery

Recovery takes **appropriate care and time**. The cause of your condition determines what will help; the Director judges what is needed and how long it takes. Note the necessary care beside the cause on your sheet.

Impaired to Well requires deliberate care or recuperation. A wound needs tending and time to heal. Exhaustion calls for proper rest. For distress, you and the Director decide what recovery looks like for your character.

Incapacitated to Impaired usually requires another person's help, often treatment followed by supervised recovery. Regaining consciousness may leave you Impaired and still in need of care.

A **Medicine** roll can resolve an uncertain treatment. Success means the attempted care works; recovery still takes the time it needs.

CHAPTER V

Your Life Here

Under construction

WAYSTATION

VERSION 0.1 / PLAYTEST EDITION

After the game

I'd like to hear about your games of Waystation: the moments you enjoyed, the rules that needed explaining, and anything that got in the way of play. Notes from Directors and players are both welcome.

FEEDBACK & CONTACT

Telegram: @icanfast

WAYSTATION

CHARACTER RECORD

NAME

EARTH ORIGIN

AGE AT DEATH

AGE ON ARRIVAL

EARTH LANGUAGES

CAUSE OF DEATH

Skills

Violence	○ ○ ○ ○
Athletics	○ ○ ○ ○
Stealth	○ ○ ○ ○
Performance	○ ○ ○ ○
Craft	○ ○ ○ ○
Medicine	○ ○ ○ ○

Balanced allocation: 3, 3, 2, 2, 1, 0
Specialist allocation: 4, 3, 2, 1, 0, 0

Demands

	BASE	SCENE
Urgency	○ ○ ○	
Scrutiny	○ ○ ○	
Complexity	○ ○ ○	
Strain	○ ○ ○	

☐ Crisis used

Starting allocation: 3, 2, 1, 0

FORMER LIFE

EARTHLY ATTACHMENTS

APPEARANCE

LUGGAGE & POSSESSIONS

Life in Waystation

AMBITION

CONNECTIONS & NOTES

Condition

☐ Well
☐ Impaired
☐ Incapacitated
☐ Dead

Impaired: −1 die.

CAUSE / CARE

Roll skill + demand (at least 1d6). Each 4, 5 or 6 is a success; a pair of 6s counts as four.