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THIS GAME IS FOR ADULTS

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We live
in a world
where the sun
has set.

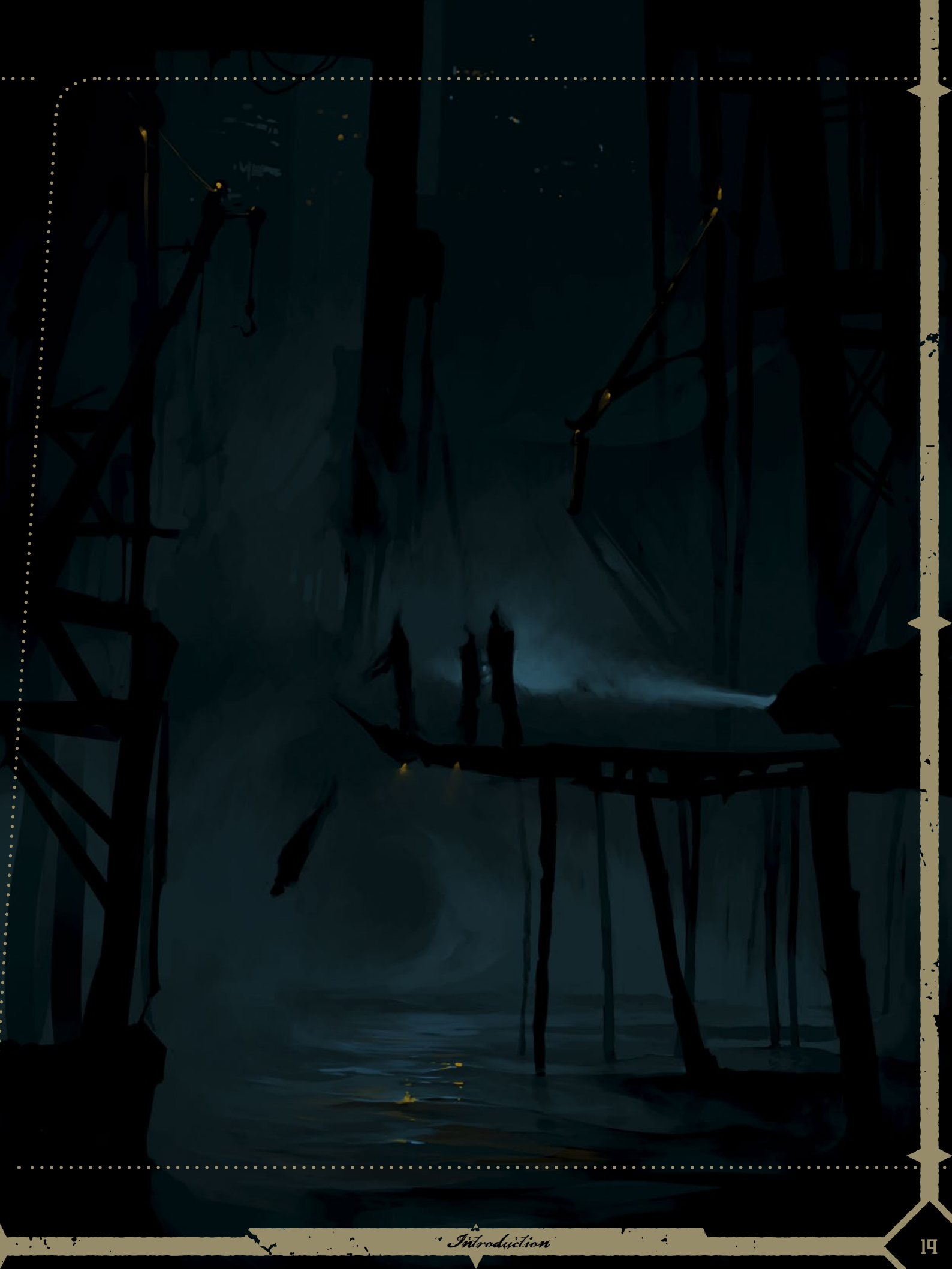
Forsaken creatures
roam deserted streets
in crumbling cities.

Fallen angels,
mourning their Creator,
seek shelter
in abandoned cathedrals
of steel and rust.

Behind
silent façades
of skyscrapers,
people in designer clothes
strap their victims
to cold autopsy tables.

Forbidden rituals
are woven
with human blood
and terror.

Mangled bodies
are taken away
in plastic bags
to disappear
forever.

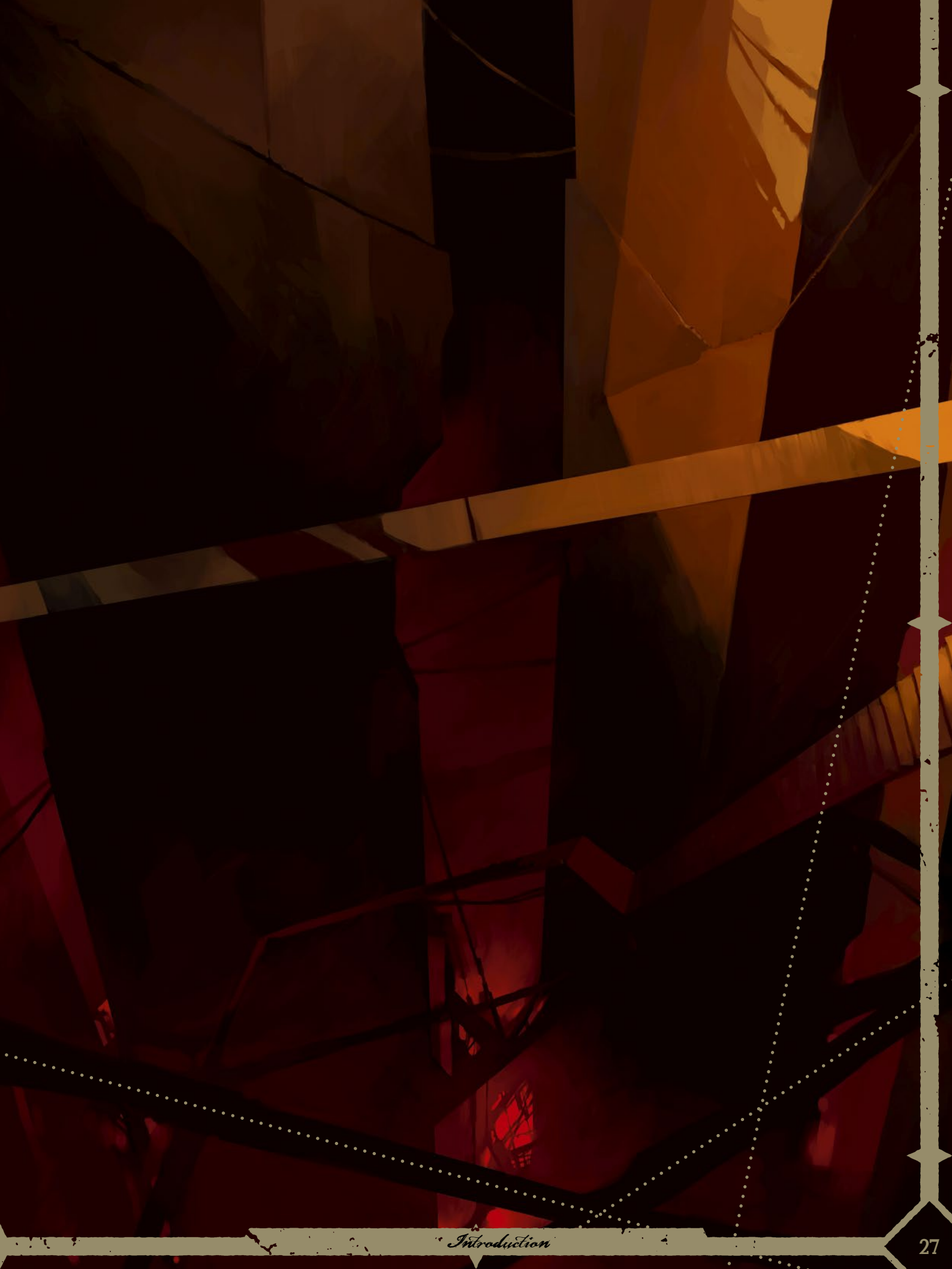


Secret words
are spoken
by Death-magicians
over cheap bourbon
in rundown bars.

In abandoned buildings,
Children of the Night
sell demons
in bottles
from Estée Lauder.

Forgotten gods
are revived
by the neon lights
and the street noise,
and tread
their dance of death
in trendy clubs.

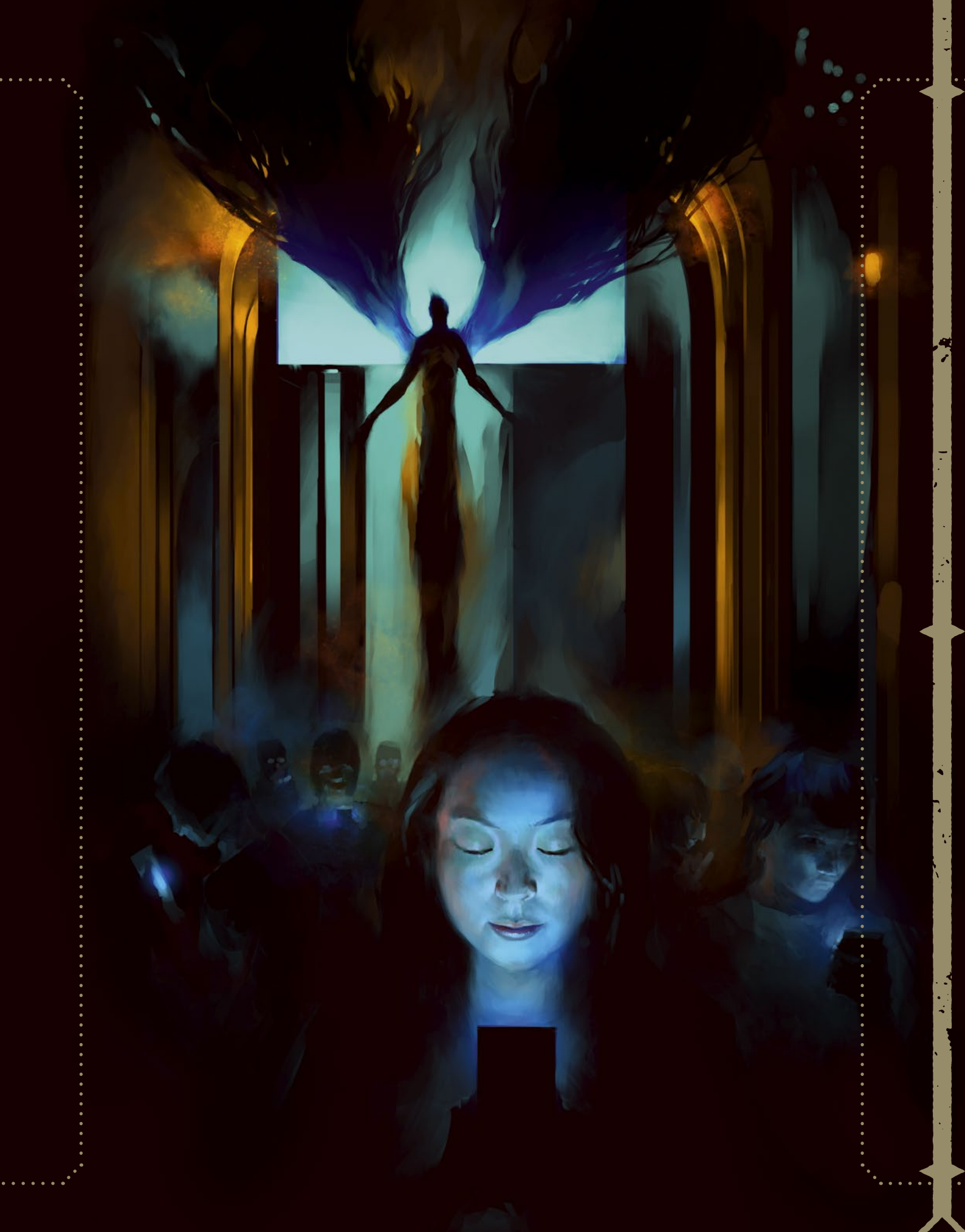
Every crossing,
every rickety staircase
or doorway,
may lead
to unknown worlds.



We are imprisoned
in the borderlands
of Darkness
and Madness,
Dreams
and Death.

体系化す
研究者

A veil
has been placed
over our eyes.
Masking the Truth
and keeping
our divine souls
asleep.



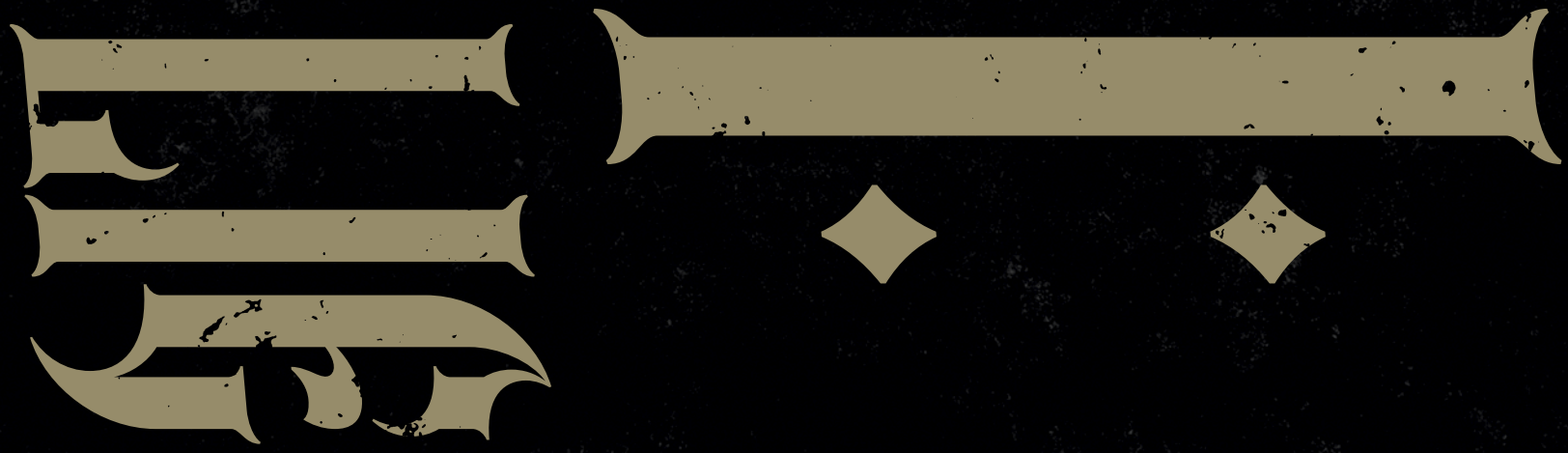
In the labyrinth
of the City,
the prophets
of our age
begin their journey
towards
Awakening.

We live
in a world
where the sun
has set.

Where our Divinity
is Lost.

Where Death
is only
the Beginning.

BLUE



CHAPTER 1

A WORLD IN DARKNESS

WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE THE SUN HAS SET. Fallen angels, twisted demons, and lost gods walk in our midst. So too do our eternal jailers, pitiless beings beyond Time itself, striving to keep us imprisoned. Their corrupting influence seeps into every aspect of our existence. They wield almost total control over our top politicians, religious leaders, law enforcement officials, internet celebrities, and media industries. Their only goal is to keep us distracted, passive and quiet, so we never awake from our trance and see the world as it truly is.

The Demiurge

Ages ago, a being of immense power, known as the Demiurge, ensnared us and forced us into submission. He forged ten Principles with which to bind humanity, then fettered us and quelled our divine fire, reducing it to a dying ember. We existed completely in His counterfeit world, and our souls fed its infrastructure when we died. The delicate Illusion depended on infinitely complex machinery, where every facet of our lives served only to perpetuate our enslavement. Our jailers, the lictors, held positions of power throughout our societies, keeping us distracted with endless conflicts, impossible commitments, and aching desires. The Illusion seemed impenetrable.

But then, unexpectedly, the Demiurge's power started to weaken. We began to question the intricately constructed system of faith and politics which kept us enslaved. The divine order was thrown into revolt, world religions lost their adherents, and the once crowded churches were abandoned. Over a few centuries, the worldview that had endured for thousands of years slowly fell apart. Early in the 20th century, this collapse reached its zenith and the Demiurge vanished from existence, either having fled or died.

Now, the boundaries of the Illusion are weakened. Even so, only a rare few have begun seeing through the lies. Most of us close our eyes to the Truth, creating new distractions to keep ourselves enthralled, nurtured by our greed and vanity. Our jailers struggle to keep our hands tied, obscuring our perceptions, whispering new lies, and always fearing we will wake up. They know that most of us, somehow, feel an uneasy sense of loss or emptiness, a pervasive need to know that there is more. The Illusion's disintegration creates mental discomfort and disorder, which are controlled with therapies and medications that also blind us to the True Reality. Madness – the irrational feeling something isn't right – overwhelms and leads us further into the darkness, away from the familiar and conceivable.

Beyond Darkness and Madness

When we see through the Illusion, we glimpse a world far darker and more terrifying than the one we thought existed around us. Grim buildings, dirty stone façades, and darkened doorways, leading to labyrinthine border worlds where pale beings dwell in perpetual shadows. Demons and other tormentors target the mentally ill for spiritual torture, using them as bridges to claw their way into our reality. In housing projects, local cults worship strange gods and ritually butcher outsiders who won't be missed. Condemned men hunt for the secrets of immortality, making pacts with fallen angels. Conjurers solve intricate puzzles by deciphering arcane nonsense scribbled on subway walls. At the end of the street, the desolate house has a secret entrance, which only an unlucky few can see. Old gods linger in the slums, bewildered, remnants of ancient beliefs sustained by humanity's dreams of bygone years. Beneath her well-dressed veneer, the smiling stranger is a flayed and mangled nephalite, who leaves bloody footprints behind her. The exquisite model is a mindless semblance created by humanity's twisted ideals of beauty, while the charming man on the dating site is one of Tiphareth's Incarnates. Creatures no longer fully human dwell in ghost towns, rundown industrial areas, and ramshackle buildings in the inner cities. In hospitals, coma patients construct vivid and marvelous dream worlds, places where they can rule unchallenged even as their bodies wither. Terror also dwells within us and when the Illusion weakens, our nightmares assume physical form and stalk the earth. Our perverse appetites, repressed for millenia, birth unspeakable creatures of flesh and fear. Some of us seek our origins, discovering pathways, puzzles, and magic to part the Illusion and lead us toward the dim light of our original divinity.

Playing KULT

In *KULT: Divinity Lost*, the protagonists are people who become involved in or are pulled into events tied to their pasts. Past sins catch up with them, demanding atonement. Childhood fears bubble up to the surface, manifesting in physical form. These terrors take their shape based on what lurks inside of us. As such, we cannot perceive whatever exists out there without also being reflected in it. Every human being has their personal demons, their own purgatories. In these stories, the protagonists are forced to journey into the abyss, perhaps even across the threshold of death itself, only to discover there is no final destination – Death is only the beginning.

The oracles and prophets seek our attention with their graffiti inlaid with hidden meanings, through their rambling screeds on conspiracy blogs, and by stopping us on the street and shouting the Truth into our faces with spit-laden monologues. Yet we immediately turn our gaze down towards the comforting light of our cellphone screens and keep walking on as if nothing happened.

In KULT's stories, the main characters are suddenly awakened from their slumber and, despite everything they thought they knew, realize their lives have been a lie. As the reality these characters carefully constructed around themselves falls apart piece by piece, they begin to glimpse a darker world lurking behind the cracks in the mortar. The Illusion is starting to tear.

The characters will confront unthinkable horrors. Those who do not perish are changed irrevocably. They will make pacts with sinister entities to elude even darker forces, glimpse the Truth that renders their past lives meaningless, and experience both the sweetness of victory and its rotten aftertaste.

Roleplaying

KULT: Divinity Lost is best suited for groups of three to six people willing to experience a dramatic horror story. One of the participants assumes the role of gamemaster (GM) and is responsible for leading the conversation and managing the story's scope as well as the bulk of the game's rules. The remaining participants are the players, who each utilize the game rules to create a player character (PC), who represents their protagonist in the story. Before beginning the game, the group determines guidelines for the story, such as when and where it takes place, and any notable events the PCs have been part of.

During the course of the game, the GM is tasked with describing the scenes and people the PCs encounter, overseeing events which transpire during the story, and asking the players what their characters are doing. The GM also controls and portrays all characters who are not player characters – called non-player characters (NPCs). If a PC encounters an NPC in the story, the GM describes what the NPC does and says. In turn, the players assume the roles of their characters when they converse with each other or any NPCs they encounter, as well as describe what their characters do. All of this interaction is framed in the format of a conversation.

The typical conversation might progress something like this:

GM: "It's eight-twenty in the evening, Saturday, November 22nd, 2014. Heavy sleet falls onto the streets of Stockholm, turning the ground into brown slush. People are hurrying, almost running, through the ice-cold downpour. John, you're hanging out by The Slab on Sergel's Square, standing underneath the roofing of the subway entrances. You're waiting for your contact at *Daily News*, Johanna, to show up. You'd decided on meeting her here at eight o'clock. But now, it's twenty minutes past and Johanna is always punctual."

Player (John): "I'm sure I arrived here a while before eight, just to make sure I wouldn't miss her, so I've been waiting for a fairly long time. I'm probably pretty nervous, considering the people pursuing me, so I'll give Johanna a call and see if she picks up."

GM: "Alright, you call. A few rings later Johanna's voicemail picks up and asks you to leave a message."

Player: "Shit! I'm pretty sure something must've happened. What if they know I'm here? Out of habit, I start fiddling with the gun in my inside jacket pocket.

GM: "You're aware there's a pretty large number of police on the square at this time on a Saturday night..."

Player: "Oh yeah, true. I glance around nervously and stop messing with the gun. Where the hell is she? I think I'll wait for another ten minutes, and if she doesn't show by then, I'm getting out of here."

GM: "Okay, you continue waiting there. As the minutes tick by impossibly slowly, hundreds, maybe thousands, of people hurry by you and out onto the wet square, heading towards the surrounding buildings to escape the weather. You're just about to get on your way when you finally spot Johanna."

Player: "Oh, damn. I approach her, quickly."

GM: "Okay, as you start walking, you notice the man following really close behind her. Johanna's got the hood of her jacket up, but you can still make out the heavy bruising on her face. Something is terribly wrong here. What do you do?"

Player: "Fuck, fuck, fuck. I don't know."

GM: "Do you continue approaching her, or do you just stay out on the square?"

The conversation between the GM and player continues in this fashion, letting the group discover what happens next in the story. Maybe the GM will switch to a different PC, describe a scene, and ask the player what her PC does, or another PC is introduced into the scene described above:

GM: "Mary, you are crossing Sergel's Square on your way home from work when you suddenly see John standing in the middle of the square. He looks panicked, and is staring at a woman further down the square. She looks familiar but you can't remember from where. What do you do?"

Rules, Moves, and Rolls

The GM is responsible for applying and adjudicating the **rules** of the game. Before the game begins in earnest, the rules help the GM prepare the story and assist the players in creating their characters. During the game, they help guide the GM and players in determining whether difficult or resisted actions are successful or not. They also assist the GM in telling the story, and serve to introduce unexpected narrative twists, adjudicate outcomes, and determine the consequences of PCs' actions.

The rules outlining the GM's preparation and storytelling process are located in ***Book II: The Madness***. Rules assisting the players in the creation of PCs can be found in ***Chapter 2 – Archetypes*** and ***Chapter 3 – Character Traits***. It is also useful for the players and GM to have glanced through ***Chapter 4 – The Player Character***, and for the GM to have read ***Chapter 6 – Setting up a Story*** before the players create their PCs.

Certain actions the players may wish their characters to frequently undertake are described as **Moves**, and require following the instructions outlined in the rules whenever they're carried out. Generally, this involves the roll of two ten-sided dice, doing some simple arithmetic, and consulting the specific Move's text for the outcome, depending on the result.

Example

• Influence Other

When you influence an NPC through negotiation, argument, or from a position of power, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) She does what you ask

(10–14) She does what you ask, but the GM chooses one:

- She demands better compensation.
- Complications will arise at a future time.
- She gives in for the moment, but will change her mind and regret it later.

(–9) Your attempt has unintended repercussions. The GM makes a Move.

The *italicized text* is considered the Move's *trigger*. Whenever the situation described in the trigger occurs in the story, the Move is executed by following the additional instructions. In the case above, the ***Influence Other*** Move only triggers if:

- The target of the PC's influence is a non-player character (controlled by the GM), and
- If the influencing is done via negotiation, argument, or from a position of power

If it's unclear whether a Move's trigger applies – for example, if a child PC argues with their imposing teacher, who they have minimal leverage over – it is up to the GM to adjudicate whether the Move is executed or not.

If the Move's trigger is deemed to apply, the rest of the Move's instructions tell the player taking the action to **roll** two ten-sided dice and add the combined result to their character's value in the attribute **Charisma**. This determines their final result.

- A final result of **15 or greater** is referred to as *complete success*, and means the action takes place exactly as the player character intended.
- A final result **between 10 and 14** is referred to as *success with complications*, and means the player character did what they set out to do, but there's a complicating factor, an unexpected consequence, a hard choice, or a worse outcome than what the character hoped for.
- A final result of **9 or less** is referred to as *failure*, and means the action produces negative consequences for the player character.

Moves are the basic mechanic in KULT's rules and will be activated frequently during play. When PCs take actions to which no Move's trigger applies, the GM decides what happens. Often, the PCs successfully do exactly the thing they intended, but if they're unskilled, unequipped, currently in a bad situation, opposed by someone or something powerful, or simply because the GM believes it'd be more appropriate to the story, the GM can instead provide them with an unexpected or unwanted outcome, or make a Move themselves.

More information on rules for Moves that player characters can use are in ***Chapter 4 – The Player Character***.

All actions taken by NPCs happen as described, since the GM will have already determined it makes sense for the character to take that action. The GM does have access to Moves as well, but these don't tend to have triggers. Instead, the GM executes a Move of their choice during certain dramatic moments throughout the story. No dice rolling is involved (or required) for the GM and the events in the GM Move transpire immediately and irrevocably. These Moves often result in challenges, obstacles, or consequences in the story, which the PCs must then react to. These **GM Moves**, and more about running the game, are covered in ***Chapter 5 – The Gamemaster***.

CHAPTER 2
ARCHETYPES

EVERY STORY NEEDS IT PROTAGONISTS. SOMEONE WITH a drive to push the story forward, enough dirt on them to present some surprises and with some important subsidiary characters, friends and enemies, to support and hinder the protagonist. This chapter gives you the inspiration and rules to create your own set of player characters (the protagonists of the game) by using a rule framework called Archetypes.

WHAT IS AN ARCHETYPE?

Archetypes originate from movies, books, and other sources of inspiration for *KULT: Divinity Lost*. Archetypes provide a framework for players to quickly create compelling characters, so the stories they tell become more personal and unsettling. Archetypes also give the gamemaster (GM) an idea of what themes their players want to explore.

Each Archetype provides players with a set of character options, which help define a unique PC around a particular concept. A character could be *The Veteran* who is tormented by side effects of medical experiments in their military past, *The Avenger* who is obsessed with their quest to right a real or imagined wrong, or *The Artist* who explores dark places in the mind through their art. Perhaps they are the disillusioned *Detective* who has sacrificed everything in the pursuit of an elusive serial killer, *The Seeker* who has discovered a terrible conspiracy and is now hunted by faceless pursuers, or one of the myriad of other Archetypes available in this chapter.

However, Archetypes aren't limited to being mere stereotypes, and can be individually adapted to the role the player really wants to portray.

Indeed, each Archetype can be reused repeatedly to create unique player characters. The rules serve only as a framework for creative direction, which assists both the players and GM in telling the story.

Choosing Archetypes

There are twenty-five Archetypes outlined in this book. All of them are written to capture character concepts appropriate to KULT's typical stories, and provide each player character with certain strengths and weaknesses.

Twenty Archetypes are considered *Aware*. An Aware PC is conscious of the inconsistencies in the world. Horrific occurrences – their Dark Secrets – have caused the character to wake up from the self-imposed dream state the majority of humanity currently exists in.

Four Archetypes are *Enlightened*. Enlightened PCs have an advanced understanding of Reality and have unlocked powers (and curses) from their inner selves. Due to this knowledge, Enlightened PCs create (and require) different types of stories and are presented in ***Chapter 22 – The Awakening***.

GM Note: One of the Archetypes is special. It's referred to as The Sleeper since PCs based on this Archetype exist completely within the Illusion, unaware that anything else exists. The Sleeper Archetype is played in a specific way, which may be disruptive to certain narratives. As such, to avoid complications, the entire group of players should discuss what effect this Archetype will have on their story prior to mixing Sleepers with other player concepts.

Before the players choose an Archetype, the GM should present all the Archetypes appropriate for their story. In ***Chapter 6 – Setting Up a Story***, there are short summaries of each Archetype for quick reference. The GM can also print out the Archetypes, and let the players skim through them.

When there's No Good Fit

On occasion, a player will have an idea for a character that doesn't match an existing Archetype. In these cases, the GM and player can do one of the following:

- Make the character freehand
- Create a new Archetype

Make a Character Freehand

To make a character without an Archetype, follow these steps:

[1] Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets (see ***Chapter 3 – Character Traits***).

[2] Select 2 Disadvantages of your choice (see ***Chapter 3 – Character Traits***).

[3] Select 3 Advantages of your choice to begin with, and 5 others you can choose from later on when advancing your PC (see ***Chapter 3 – Character Traits***).

[4] Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

[5] Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

[6] Detail the distinguishing features for your character's Looks.

[7] Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

[8] Determine what personal property your character owns and what their standard of living is.

[9] When the players introduce and establish their characters' Relations, you can use this list:

- One character is your friend. Take **+1 Relation** to her.
- One character has betrayed or acted against you.
- You assisted another character in the past. She takes **+1 Relation** with you.
- One of the characters is an old acquaintance of yours.
- One of the characters is your sibling. Take **+2 Relation** to her.

Create a New Archetype

As an alternative to freehand creation, if you have time before the story starts, the GM can create a new Archetype suitable to the player's character concept. Rules for creating new Archetypes are available at the end of this chapter.

Preparations

Before the GM assists players with creating their PCs, they should familiarize themselves with ***Chapter 1 – A World in Darkness*** and ***Chapter 4 – The Player Character***, in addition to the Archetypes detailed in this chapter. Here are a few more helpful preparation tips:

- Explain what *KULT: Divinity Lost* is like to the group, and discuss what elements of the game you'd like to include in your campaign. Don't decide anything ahead of time, but imagine what some characters, locations, and horrific situations might look like in your game. If you need more ideas, take a look at the lists of inspirational sources for KULT at the end of this book.
- Print out a copy of each Archetype so the players can review them and have their own copy to work from while they create their characters. There are also character sheets for each Archetype you may download and print. The character sheet summarizes all character information for reference and lets the players note down their character creation choices directly onto the sheet.
- If you're unable to print the character sheets, you can also note down the player characters' relevant information on a handheld device or notepad.
- Provide one pencil for each player and at least one eraser.

The Academic

The Academic studies the world from her desk. Everything is interconnected via logical rules of causality, yet she suspects something must be wrong. Pieces refuse to fall into the safe, predictable patterns of common scientific models. Worse, shadowy forces silence new and alternative fields of research. Those who question the scientific establishment and its rational worldview risk disgrace and the destruction of their research, reputation, and revenue. Does she dare to look for the truth?

Occupation

Choose your Academic's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing:

Professor, Student, Ph.D. candidate, Teacher, Public servant, Advisor, Politician, Author, Television show host, Aristocrat, Researcher, Psychologist, Archaeologist, Dilettante, Antiquarian.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Forbidden Knowledge
- Guardian
- Occult Experience
- Returned from the Other Side
- Strange Disappearance

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Nightmares
- Obsession
- Phobia
- Repressed Memories
- Rationalist
- Stalker

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Academic Network (Charisma)
- Authority (Charisma)
- Elite Education (Charisma)
- Collector (Reason)
- Data Retrieval (Reason)
- Expert (Reason)
- Occult Studies (Reason)
- Elite Sport (–)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character. Some suggestions:

Clothes: Tweed, carefree, ill-fitting, mottled, proper, suit, casual, nerdy, or old-fashioned clothes.

Face: Childish, round, ravaged, tired, pale, square, disproportionate, narrow, beaky, ugly, handsome, aged, or bearded face.

Eyes: Skeptical, arrogant, analytical, disinterested, curious, shy, intelligent, distracted, authoritarian, glasses-framed, or tired eyes.

Body: Thin, chubby, tall, wispy, bent, weak, athletic, out of shape, slow, angular, rigid, impaired, large bellied, fat, short, compact, or hairy body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters studied at the same campus as you, and you became good friends. Take **+1 Relation** with each other.
- One of the characters is your relative.
- One of the characters met you at a seminar.
- You hired one of the characters as an assistant for a research project.
- One of the characters is your lover. Take **Relation +1** or **+2** with them.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE AGENT

The Agent does whatever is necessary to protect and serve her employer's best interests. People are simply resources to be used, abused, and expended. Anyone standing in the way must be removed. She gathers and analyzes information at an almost impossible speed. Threats demand rapid responses, and sometimes there are no good choices. The Agent's job means accepting great costs, usually in the form of dangers, but also an ever-growing debt to those sacrificed for the greater good. When this burden finally becomes too heavy, The Agent's exits have likely already closed, and 'good' and 'evil' have lost all meaning.

Occupation

Choose your Agents's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Open-source officer, Case officer, Counterterrorism analyst, Analytic methodologist, Special agent, Security professional, Operations officer, Collection management officer, Handler, Infiltrator, Spy, Sleeper agent.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Forbidden Knowledge
- Guardian
- Occult Experience
- Strange Disappearance
- Victim of Medical Experiments

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Lost Identity
- Nightmares
- Obsession
- Rival
- Stalker
- Wanted

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Moles (Charisma)
- Burglar (Coolness)
- Analyst (Reason)
- Explosives Expert (Reason)
- Tracer (Reason)
- Quick Thinker (Reason)
- Field Agent (Violence)
- Endure Trauma (–)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Suit, everyday wear, military uniform, camo, trenchcoat, streetwear, or practical clothes.

Face: Scarred, inconspicuous, innocent, grim, one-eyed, expressionless, tense, wrinkled, stern, smiling, chomping, square-jawed, or handsome face.

Eyes: Penetrating, kind, hardened, avoidant, piercing, suspicious, curious, indifferent, intelligent, guilt-laden, or empty eyes.

Body: In shape, chubby, large, emaciated, flexible, hard, sinewy, average, right, short, quick, feline, curled, mutilated, scarred, or trembling body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters has been your informant for several years. They take **+1 Relation** with you.
- You possess compromising information about one of the characters' past.
- One of the characters is an old friend of yours. Take **+1 Relation** with each other.
- One of the characters is your lover. They take **+2 Relation** with you. Choose what **Relation** you have with them.
- One of the characters is your colleague. Take **+1 Relation** with them.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: one **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE ARTIST

The Artist exists only to create, to give themselves, body and soul, over to the arts. They express this desire through many mediums. A hypnotic painting, music trapping the audience in pure ecstasy, books spellbinding their readers, or a model's sculpted flesh are all the purview of The Artist. Artists have the ability to speak to the souls of others by inviting them into their own, but this ability always comes at a price. The price is paid by The Artist themselves, be it their sanity or strength.

OCCUPATION

Choose your Artist's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Author, Dancer, Actor, Painter, Videographer, Photographer, Designer, Model, Musician, Singer, Personal trainer, Cosmetologist, Television Host, Director, Reporter, Blogger.

DARK SECRETS

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Curse
- Heir
- Mental Illness
- Pact with Dark Forces
- Victim of Crime

DISADVANTAGES

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Cursed
- Depression
- Drug Addict
- Nightmares
- Schizophrenia
- Victim of Passion

ADVANTAGES

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Artistic Talent (Charisma)
- Fascination (Charisma)
- Notorious (Charisma)
- Observant (Intuition)
- Body Awareness (Perception)
- Enhanced Awareness (Soul)
- Forbidden Inspiration (Soul)
- Snake Charmer (Soul)

ATTRIBUTES

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

LOOKS

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: New Age, Gothic, Metal, peacockish, designer, bohemian, worn, or normcore clothes.

Face: Haggard, cute, pretty, captivating, beautiful, ascetic, tired, or expressive face.

Eyes: Easy, cheerful, crystal clear, magnetic, profound, burned out, hypnotizing, or passionate eyes.

Body: Cute, agile, robust, emaciated, sexy, lanky, sensual, warped, graceful, or voluptuous body.

NAME

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

RELATIONS

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

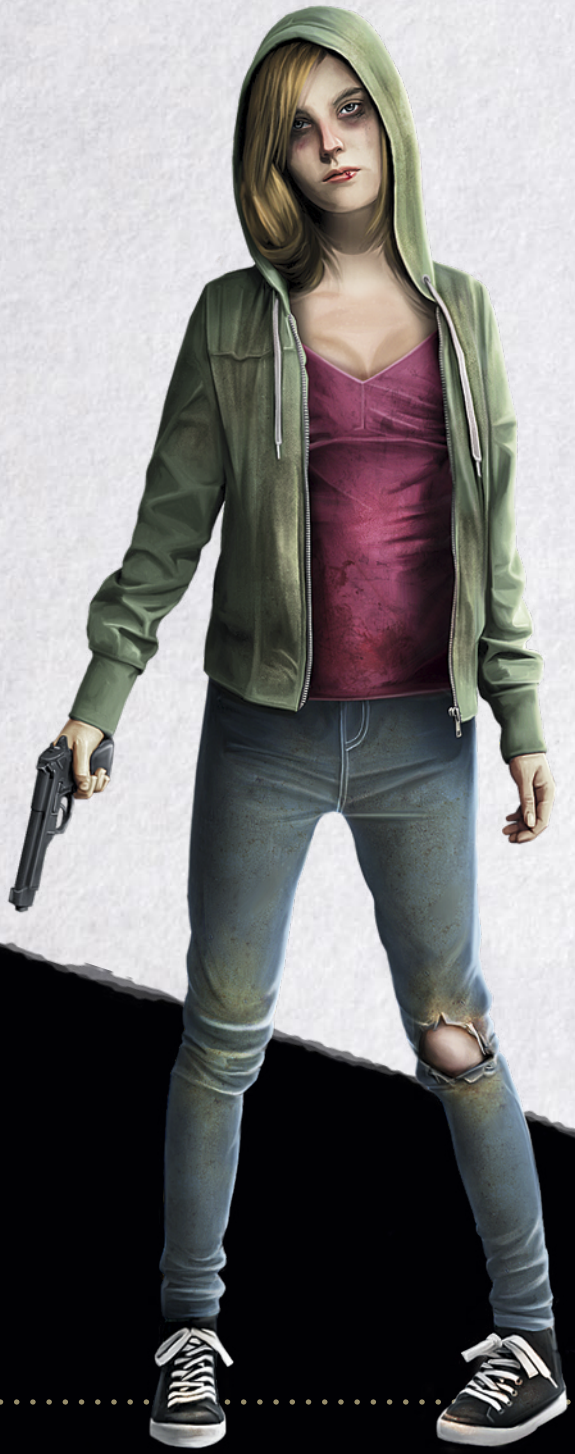
If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters is involved in your art. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters is your lover. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters hurt you.
- One of the characters is infatuated with you. They take **+2 Relation** with you.
- One of the characters commissioned a work of art from you. They take **+1 Relation** with you.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE AVENGER

The Avenger has been robbed of something dear to them, be it their loved one, job, family, humanity, honor, memories, or life goals. Regardless of what was taken from them, its loss can only be paid for in blood. The only thing remaining is revenge, and The Avenger isn't about to let anything or anyone get in their way, regardless of consequences.



Occupation

Choose your Avenger's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Homemaker, Police Officer, Panhandler, Unemployed, Student, Criminal, Conspiracy theorist, Refugee, Prison escapee, Prize fighter, Widow(er), Washed-up celebrity, Failed businessperson, Science experiment on the run.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Guardian
- Returned from the Other Side
- Strange Disappearance
- Victim of Crime
- Victim of Medical Experiments

Disadvantages

You automatically receive the Disadvantage:

- Oath of Revenge

Choose 1 additional Disadvantage. Suggestions:

- Mental Compulsion
- Nightmares
- Schizophrenia
- Stalker
- Wanted

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Animal Speaker (Intuition)
- Instinct (Perception)
- Enhanced Awareness (Soul)
- Intimidating (Violence)
- Survival Instinct (Violence)
- Code of Honor (–)
- Eye for an Eye (–)
- Rage (–)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, –1, and –2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Leather, survival, filthy, mismatched, coat-covered, casual, or worn clothes.

Face: Haggard, sharp, neotenic, scarred, bony, thin, mutilated, or dour face.

Eyes: Ruthless, frosty, indifferent, desolate, sorrow-filled, tired, mad, or dark eyes.

Body: Robust, deformed, plump, mutilated, slender, animalistic, bony, emaciated, willowy, massive, strong, or youthful body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- You have entrusted one of the characters with a secret, which could put you away in prison if revealed.
- One of the characters tried to get you to forget your oath of revenge. Give them **+1 Relation** with you.
- One of the characters tried to help you fulfill your oath of revenge. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters has ties to the target of your revenge.
- One of the characters is connected to your past life somehow.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

The Broken

The Broken has gazed into the Abyss and escaped with their mind in tatters. They could be a homeless person who subconsciously performs rituals to forgotten gods, the mental patient who became a test subject for experimental medications, or the sinner who was physically dragged down into hell, yet somehow managed to escape back to the land of the living. The Broken views things and sees through the Illusion in ways others do not. In exchange for their irreparable trauma, they've been granted unique insights about the Truth. The question is, how far can they trust their own senses?

Occupation

Choose your Broken's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Homeless, Escaped mental patient, Street peddler, Street performer, Fence, Thief, Police, Drug dealer, Addict, Street artist, Freelance journalist, Tattoo artist, Abuse survivor, Normal person in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Forbidden Knowledge
- Mental Illness
- Occult Experience
- Returned from the Other Side
- Victim of Medical Experiments

Disadvantages

You automatically receive the Disadvantage:

- Broken

Choose 1 additional Disadvantage. Suggestions:

- Drug Addict
- Involuntary Medium
- Obsessive Compulsion
- Schizophrenia
- Stalker

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Street Contacts (Charisma)
- Intuitive (Intuition)
- Daredevil (Perception)
- Contagious Insanity (Soul)
- Enhanced Awareness (Soul)
- Magical Intuition (Soul)
- Sixth Sense (Soul)
- Wayfinder (Soul)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Hobo, streetwear , ripped suit, strange, ragged and worn, alternative, casual, kinky, formal, amulets and fetishes, or dirty clothes.

Face: Haggard, tattooed, bony, wild beard and long hair, grimacing, cheerful, sorrowful, dirty, scarred, or apprehensive face.

Eyes: Obscured, staring, desolate, deranged, frightened, anxious, furious, unfocused, fearless, darting, intense, or carefree eyes.

Body: Jerky, crouching, feral, skinny, large, tattooed, scarred, hairy, misshapen, obese, tall and gangly, dirty, or unsteady body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters is trying to get you back on your feet again. Take **+1 Relation** with each other.
- One of the characters was with you when you were broken. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters is your closest friend. Take **+2 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters was the reason you were broken. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- You are angry with one of the characters. Take **+1 Relation** with them.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE CAREERIST

The Careerist is the consummate brown-nosing backstabber. Most remain stuck in a cubicle farm, performing the same mundane tasks day after day, while the ruthless few climb upwards in the corporate hierarchy. Potentially, The Careerist could also run their own company, fighting for survival against corporate giants. In a world where nothing is off limits when it comes to advancing one's career, success necessitates being willing to do whatever it takes.

Occupation

Choose your Careerist's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Lawyer, Businessman, Office worker, Director, CEO, Consultant, Bureaucrat, Politician, Jet setter, Yuppie, Salesman, Trainee, Aristocrat.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Curse
- Guilty of Crime
- Occult Experience
- Pact with Dark Powers
- Responsible for Medical Experiments

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Cursed
- Greedy
- Haunted
- Liar
- Rationalist
- Rival

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Awe-inspiring (Charisma)
- Influential Friends (Charisma)
- Network of Contacts (Charisma)
- Notorious (Charisma)
- Daredevil (Perception)
- Puppeteer (Reason)
- At Any Cost (–)
- Opportunist (–)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, –1, and –2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Cheap suit, tailored suit, chinos and shirt, latest fashion, casual, polo and khakis, or expensive clothes.

Face: Pretty, sharp, round and sweaty, dominant, chiseled, ruthless, beautiful, boring, or flat face.

Eyes: Attentive, penetrating, ruthless, weary, cunning, sharp, warm, or authoritarian eyes.

Body: Slim, sexy, lanky, chubby, big, small, in shape, thin, or voluptuous body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters assisted you with removing a company rival. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters opposes your business ventures.
- One of the characters knows your Dark Secret.
- One of the characters also works for your boss.
- You are in love with one of the characters. Take **+2 Relation** with them.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE CRIMINAL

Mobsters, gang members, thieves, drug dealers, and hitmen are all driven by two things: their quest for money and all the shit they've endured during their lives. For a precious few, their criminality grants them the life of luxury. But for most, they only catch a fleeting glimpse of wealth before someone bigger and meaner takes it all away from them. It's a dog-eat-dog world.

Occupation

Choose your Criminal's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Thief, Robber, Dealer, Gang member, Homeless, Prize fighter, Corrupt cop, Enforcer, Club owner, Extortionist, Hitman, Face of the operation, Getaway driver, Con artist, Mobster, Dealer, Muscle for hire.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Family Secret
- Forbidden Knowledge
- Guilty of Crime
- Occult Experience
- Victim of Crime

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Bad Reputation
- Drug Addict
- Harassed
- Nemesis
- Sexual Neurosis
- Wanted

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Streetwise (Charisma)
- Burglar (Coolness)
- Escape Artist (Coolness)
- Sixth Sense (Soul)
- Deadly Stare (Violence)
- Enforcer (Violence)
- Gang Leader (Violence)
- Streetfighter (Violence)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Streetwear, suit, biker, gangsta, casual, tracksuit, exclusively-cut, or worn clothes.

Face: Hard, handsome, scarred, battered, dishonest, or cruel face.

Eyes: Grim, calculating, ruthless, cold, mad, piggish, dark, or suspicious eyes.

Body: Muscular, lanky, enormous, top-heavy, graceful, truncated, maimed, broken, plump, stocky, or wiry body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters hid you from the police or others who were after you. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters knows you've committed a terrible crime.
- One of the characters is indebted to you.
- One of the characters is connected to one of your rivals.
- One of the characters knew you from before your criminal dealings. Take **+1 Relation** with them.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: one **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE CURSED

The Cursed is living on borrowed time. They might be the unfortunate victim of a deadly disease or the target of a higher power's rage. Usually, however, The Cursed has sealed their own fate by selling their soul for fortune and fame. Now their time is almost up, and The Cursed has realized life itself is the most worthwhile thing they possess. No price is too high to pay for The Cursed to thwart their destiny, even if it means sacrificing others.

Occupation

Choose your Cursed's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Occultist, Cult escapee, Police officer, CEO, Detective, Military Officer, Gangster, Politician, Disability collector, Amateur magician, Celebrity, Jailbird, Businessman, Playboy, Refugee, Researcher, Internet celebrity.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Chosen
- Curse
- Occult Experience
- Pact with Dark Powers
- Returned from the Other Side

Disadvantages

You automatically receive the Disadvantage:

- Condemned

Choose 1 additional Disadvantage. Suggestions:

- Drug Addict
- Greedy
- Haunted
- Nightmares
- Stalker

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Occult Studies (Reason)
- Bound (Soul)
- Magical Intuition (Soul)
- Death Drive (Violence)
- Ruthless (Violence)
- Desperate (–)
- Sealed fate (–)
- To the Last Breath (–)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, –1, and –2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Brand name, unique, tailored suit, unconcerned, trenchcoat and suit, heavy metal, designer, tattered and stained, uniform, all black, foreign, business casual, or blood-soaked clothes.

Face: Haggard, emaciated, sharp, model, tanned, smiling, scarred, branded, fleshy, pale, flushed, masculine, sorrowful, or sickly face.

Eyes: Desperate, devious, hard, surrendered, fearless, burned, intimidated, beautiful, shades, dark, tired, stubborn, or hopeful eyes.

Body: Sickly, well-trained, tanned, taut, shaky, trembling, weak, attractive, muscular, slender, corpulent, curvy, crippled, cowering, towering, straight-backed, or dejected body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters knows the fate awaiting you. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters inadvertently caused your fate to befall you. They take **+1 Relation** with you.
- You utilized your prior success to help one of the other characters. They take **+1 Relation** with you.
- One of the characters is assisting you in avoiding your fate. Take **+2 Relation** with each other.
- One of the characters is standing in your way, preventing you from avoiding your fate. Determine how together.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE DECEIVER

You were in love. You finally met Mr. Right. Your future was certain, the wedding was planned, and everyone felt you were perfect for each other. Then one day, your beloved disappeared along with your bank account and all your jewelry. You were another target of the Deceiver.

Deceivers are manipulative people who fool others into trusting them to deprive them of money or services. They are masters of masking their true intentions and feelings, and can become exactly the person their victims want. Deceivers leave a trail of bitter enemies in their wake. When their past catches up to them, it often ends in tragedy.

Occupation

Choose your Deceiver's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Model, Between jobs, Catfisher, Lover, Escort, Heir(ess), Jetsetter, Party animal, Secretary, Party planner, Marriage swindler, Con artist, Gigolo, Scammer, Thief, Snitch, Pornstar.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Heir
- Mental Illness
- Occult Experience
- Pact with Dark Powers
- Victim of Crime

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Cursed
- Greedy
- Liar
- Nemesis
- Sexual Neurosis
- Wanted

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Erotic (Charisma)
- Impostor (Charisma)
- Seducer (Charisma)
- Backstab (Coolness)
- Eye for Detail (Perception)
- Intuitive (Intuition)
- Grudge (–)
- Manipulative (–)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Tight-fitting, designer, sexy, revealing, bohemian, stylish, trendy, proper, peacockish, exclusively-cut, distressed, or attention-grabbing clothes.

Face: Elfin, handsome, neotenic, youthful, chiseled, defined, soft, round, gorgeous, innocent, dignified, or cheerful face.

Eyes: Mischievous, twinkling, intense, vulnerable, innocent, pretty, understanding, friendly, large, penetrating, or warm eyes.

Body: Slim, sexy, masculine, curvy, towering, sensual, voluptuous, petite, toned, youthful, hearty, tall, short, thin, or wiry body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters helped you kill one of your many enemies. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters knows one of your victims.
- One of the characters met you during a rare moment when you were your true self.
- One of the characters is your current victim. They take **+2 Relation** with you.
- One of the characters is attracted to you. They take **+1 Relation** with you.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

The Descendant

Blood, soul and heritage weigh heavy on The Descendant's shoulders. She is an offspring of some mythic ancestor, a now dead family, a lost god, chosen by a dark cult or maybe the heir of some unknown power. It is the past that haunts The Descendant – the Sins of the Fathers. It may be dark pacts, servitude to demons, or a still lingering upbringing filled with abuse and violence. No matter where The Descendant goes or hides, her past will eventually catch up to her.

Occupation

Choose your Descendant's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Antiquarian, Aristocrat, Author, Homeless, Tattoo artist, Occultist, Sect escapee, Preacher, Heir, Unemployed, Office worker, Craftsman, Forester.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Chosen
- Family Secret
- Heir
- Occult Experience
- Pact with Dark Powers

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Cursed
- Haunted
- Nightmares
- Phobia
- Repressed Memories
- Stalker

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Influential Friends (Charisma)
- Intuitive (Intuition)
- Occult Library (Reason)
- Artifact (Soul)
- Bound (Soul)
- Enhanced Awareness (Soul)
- Inner Power (Soul)
- Watchers (–)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, –1, and –2 to the other seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Old fashioned clothes, casual, ragged and worn, tailored suit, layer upon layer, odd, or black clothes.

Face: Childish, sharp, sorrowful, scarred, dishonest, sickly, pretty, pronounced, tense, or round face.

Eyes: Tired, indifferent, anxious, intense, suspicious, fearless, innocent, restless, cunning, or sad eyes.

Body: Weak, strong, bony, small, sickly, slender, athletic, big, spindly, hunched, stiff, or lean body,

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to work out your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters grew up alongside you. Take **+2 Relation** to one another.
- One of the characters has seen what is hunting you. Take **+1 Relation** to them.
- You are secretly in love with one of the characters. Take **+2 Relation** to them.
- One of the characters is your contact person.
- One of the characters is intertwined with your dark secrets. Take **+1 Relation** with them.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: one **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE DETECTIVE

Be they the disillusioned private eye in their office shrouded in clouds of cigarette smoke or the hardened investigator on the homicide unit, The Detective is motivated by their desperate need to find answers. Meanwhile, their families disintegrate, friends abandon them, and they fall into a spiral of darkness and addiction. Their 'noble' search leads them down lonely and dangerous paths best left untrodden.

Occupation

Choose your Detective's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Beat cop, Private eye, Lawyer, Investigator, Security guard, Investigative journalist, Intelligence officer, Detective, Medium, Hacker, Cryptologist, Conspiracy theorist.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Forbidden Knowledge
- Guilty of Crime
- Occult Experience
- Returned from the Other Side
- Strange Disappearance

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Drug Addict
- Infirm
- Nightmares
- Repressed Memories
- Stalker

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Fast Talk (Coolness)
- Interrogator (Intuition)
- Instinct (Perception)
- Read a Crowd (Perception)
- Shadow (Perception)
- Crime Scene Investigator (Reason)
- Dreamer (Soul)
- Enhanced Awareness (Soul)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Suit, tweed, trendy, casual, severe, business, or shabby clothes.

Face: Friendly, sharp, round, sweaty, innocent, determined, or tired face.

Eyes: Empathic, indifferent, squinty, sharp, suspicious, warm, or concerned eyes.

Body: Spindly, fat, wiry, stout, stocky, or muscled body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters saved you from a dangerous situation. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters tricked you into protecting someone you were investigating.
- You helped one of the characters solve a mystery. They take **+1 Relation** with you.
- One of the characters is your coworker. Take **+1 Relation** with them and they take **+1 Relation** with you.
- One of the characters is your informant. Take **+1 Relation** with them.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE DOLL

In the shadows, The Doll stands ready. The Doll strives to break free, to be human again, and assume control of her own life while others strive to possess her. She has lived a life in submission, as an outcast, a prisoner, a freak, or a trophy. Feelings of emptiness and tragedy reside within her, as well as dreams of hope, love, and happiness – dreams which are shattered over and over again.

OCCUPATION

Choose your Doll's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Child beauty contestant, Model, Stripper, Trophy wife, Gigolo, Actor, Escaped experiment, High school prom queen, Vlogger, Reality TV celebrity, Pornstar, Escort, Abuse survivor, Imprisoned innocent, Trafficking victim.

DARK SECRETS

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Chosen
- Guilty of Crime
- Occult Experience
- Victim of Crime
- Victim of Medical Experiments

DISADVANTAGES

You automatically receive the Disadvantage:

- Object of Desire

Choose 1 additional disadvantage. Suggestions:

- Harassed
- Owned
- Phobia
- Sexual Neurosis
- Stalker

ADVANTAGES

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Perpetual Victim (Charisma)
- Backstab (Coolness)
- Ice cold (Coolness)
- Sneak (Coolness)
- Divine (Soul)
- Magnetic Attraction (Soul)
- Endure Trauma (–)
- Gritted Teeth (–)

ATTRIBUTES

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, –1, and –2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

LOOKS

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Revealing, frilly and fluffy , sexy, strange, trendy, impractical, spectacular, gothic, ornate, bohemian, bright, innocent, ripped, or sharp clothing.

Face: Pretty, smiling, sad, childish, black and blue, chiseled, reassuring, made-up, androgynous, or happy face.

Eyes: Innocent, beautiful, spellbinding, multicolored, frightened, purple, pale, sapphire blue, emerald green, yellow-gold, hungry, dispassionate, large, veiled, devastated, or flirtatious eyes.

Body: Frail, attractive, small, graceful, petite, curvaceous, athletic, dignified, lean and fit, slender, willowy, androgynous, or tall body.

NAME

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

RELATIONS

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters is in love with you. They take **+2 Relation** with you.
- One of the characters has taken care of you. Take **+1 Relation** with each other.
- You are secretly in love with one of the characters. Take **+2 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters liberated you. Take **+1 Relation** with each other.
- One of the characters is jealous of you.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE DRIFTER

The Drifter never stays in one place long enough to feel at home. The road is their home. It could be an uncontrollable urge to never put down roots, or a reaction to pursuers always on their heels. The Drifter has learned to live with whatever fits in their backpack or the back of their car. What is important to others lacks meaning to The Drifter, who never gets attached to anything. Other vagabonds and outcasts are their friends and allies. They seek refuge in rundown motels, boxcars, abandoned homes, and other makeshift shelters. The eternal question for those who meet them is: what are you running from?

OCCUPATION

Choose your Drifter's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Homeless, Vagabond, Runaway, In witness protection, Draft dodger, Small-time crook, Backpacker, Refugee, Prison escapee, Traveling salesman, Courier, Day laborer, Outsider.

DARK SECRETS

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Curse
- Family Secret
- Mental Illness
- Returned from the Other Side
- Rootless

DISADVANTAGES

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Cursed
- Harassed
- Haunted
- Schizophrenia
- Stalker
- Wanted

ADVANTAGES

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Street Contacts (Charisma)
- Driver (Coolness)
- Improviser (Coolness)
- Character Actor (Intuition)
- Vigilant (Intuition)
- Wanderer (Perception)
- Artifact (Soul)
- Enhanced Awareness (Soul)

ATTRIBUTES

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

LOOKS

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Worn, odd, biker, ripped, practical, street, wilderness survival, layer upon layer, wrong season, cheap suit, or hobo clothing.

Face: Ravaged, innocent, weathered, pronounced, filthy, friendly, tough, tattooed, scarred, or memorable face.

Eyes: Cloudy, tired, restless, blind, one-eyed, bloodshot, tense, suspicious, fearful, cheerful, sarcastic, or intelligent eyes.

Body: Wiry, bony, hobbled, fast, dirty, scarred, big, small, slim, androgynous, tall, disproportionate, laid back, tense, malformed, twisted, tattooed, or animalistic body.

NAME

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

RELATIONS

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters lets you stay with them sometimes. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters got you out of a bind. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters is an old friend. Take **+2 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters is someone you know in the underworld.
- One of the characters gives you occasional jobs.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE FIXER

The Fixer has all the contacts, and uses them to make quick cash. Drugs, weapons, illegal prize-fights, antiques, cars, apartments – The Fixer can set you up with whatever you need. But everything she sells comes with a catch. Once The Fixer gets their hooks in you she'll never let you go.

As long as there's money involved The Fixer doesn't care about the stakes, and the more successful she is, the more enemies she makes along the way. In the underworld, there are always people hungrily watching you, waiting for the right moment, and willing to step over your body to take your place.

OCCUPATION

Choose your Fixer's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Mafia boss, Business person, Real estate agent, Dealer, Restaurateur, Club owner, Fence, Loan shark, Bookie, Advisor, Extortionist, Criminal, Consigliere.

DARK SECRETS

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Forbidden Knowledge
- Guilty of Crime
- Heir
- Pact with Dark Powers
- Victim of Crime

DISADVANTAGES

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Competitor
- Cursed
- Greedy
- Jealousy
- Liar
- Stalker

ADVANTAGES

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Forked Tongue (Charisma)
- Streetwise (Charisma)
- Ace Up the Sleeve (Coolness)
- Backstab (Coolness)
- Boss (Coolness)
- Extortionist (Intuition)
- Sixth Sense (Soul)
- Worldly (–)

ATTRIBUTES

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

LOOKS

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Suit, street, leather, casual, bizarre, luxury, or sportswear clothing.

Face: Pleasant, good-looking, attractive, bony, smashed, innocent, meaty, or open face.

Eyes: Cheerful, calculating, cold, servile, cunning, tough, confused, or evaluating eyes.

Body: Broad, athletic, skinny, sensual, skipped leg day, tall and wiry, or stocky body.

NAME

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

RELATIONS

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters endured a beating to get you out of a bind. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters caused a problem for which they let you take the blame.
- One of the characters is indebted to you.
- One of the characters works for you.
- One of the characters is a business contact.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations:
One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE OCCULTIST

The Occultist seeks the answers to life's mysteries through occult theories. Ancient tomes, mad sect leaders, and obscure internet forums speak of different dimensions, magical rituals, other-worldly creatures, and powers that can turn men into gods. The Occultist has discovered enough information to begin experimenting with these forces, but not nearly enough to give them any degree of control. Magic always comes at a high price, and The Occultist's account is coming due.

Occupation

Choose your Occultist's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Antiquarian, Medium, Exorcist, Linguist, Unemployed, Theologian, Professor, Morgue employee, Teenager, Student, Bureaucrat, Disability collector, Librarian, Recent convert, Thelemic.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Forbidden Knowledge
- Guardian
- Occult Experience
- Pact with Dark Powers
- Visitations

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Guilt
- Haunted
- Involuntary Medium
- Nightmares
- Repressed Memories
- Stalker

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Crafty (Intuition)
- Occult Library (Reason)
- Dabbler in the Occult (Soul)
- Dreamer (Soul)
- Enhanced Awareness (Soul)
- Exorcist (Soul)
- Magical Intuition (Soul)
- Thirst for Knowledge (–)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: All black, suit and trenchcoat, hippie, occult symbolism, casual, spiritual, flashy, shimmery, tattered, new age, peculiar, discreet, or spectacular clothes.

Face: Big bushy beard, long black hair and pale skin, bony, disfigured, worn, pretty, tense, pallid, indifferent, scornful, bored, wrinkled or aged face.

Eyes: Hollow, lucid, mad, piercing, arresting, interrogating, distant, tired, defeated, power-hungry, or sad eyes.

Body: Emaciated, scarred, broken, towering, trembling, tattooed, burned, wispy, hunched, lanky, obese, stiff, or inviting body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters participated in one of your rituals.
- One of the characters is related to someone you lost. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters is your friend. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters assists you with acquiring books, information, and artifacts. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters hates you for doing something to them, despite your love for them. Take **+2 Relation** with them.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE PROPHET

Faith and religion bestow power, whether you're a priest, pastor, imam, rabbi, or other sect leader. The Prophet may have chosen to serve their god, but it could also be a path they've been forced to walk by their family or congregation from an early age. Being on the inside of a religious association provides access to community and a sense of higher purpose. However, the shadows cast by the Divine's light often hide abuse of power, occultism, perverted doctrine, forced marriages, and the worship of false gods.

Occupation

Choose your Prophet's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Priest, Pastor, Imam, Rabbi, Sect leader, Sect member, Sect escapee, Prophet, Medium, Witch, Preacher, Healer, Missionary, Seer, Cultist, Idolater, Iconoclast, Elder, Oracle, Guru.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Chosen
- Forbidden Knowledge
- Guardian
- Occult Experience
- Visitations

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Cursed
- Fanatic
- Harassed
- Involuntary Medium
- Sexual Neurosis
- Stalker

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Charismatic Aura (Soul)
- Cult Leader (Soul)
- Enhanced Awareness (Soul)
- Exorcist (Soul)
- Lay on Hands (Soul)
- Voice of Insanity (Soul)
- Divine Champion (–)
- Good Samaritan (–)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Suit, clerical robes, orthodox, organic materials, bohemian, casual, coat and hat, street, strange, or worn clothes.

Face: Handsome, smooth, attractive, childlike, dominant, narrow, aristocratic, open, or ascetic face.

Eyes: Cheerful, deep, mad, wise, forgiving, mesmerizing, piercing, or passionate eyes.

Body: Large, slender, thin, small, spindly, sickly, plump, firm, energetic, or voluptuous body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters shares your faith.
- One of the characters saved you. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters denied your god.
- You saved one of the other character's immortal soul. They take **+1 Relation** with you.
- One of the characters is your lover. Take **+1 Relation** with them.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE RONIN

The Ronin always teeters at the edge of a bottomless pit. When you've run out of options, you hire The Ronin to solve the problem. They perform any task where compassion and morality are liabilities, and where mistakes mean prison, death, or worse. The Ronin can never trust anyone. Yesterday's employers are tomorrow's potential targets. Once The Ronin's hunt has begun, there is no escape for their prey.

Occupation

Choose your Ronin's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Contract killer, Hitman, Special agent, Special ops, Military experiment, Sniper, Spree killer.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Curse
- Guardian
- Occult Experience
- Victim of Medical Experiments
- Visitations

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Cursed
- Haunted
- Marked
- Nemesis
- Nightmares
- Wanted

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Weapon Master (Coolness)
- Chameleon (Intuition)
- Exit Strategy (Perception)
- Manhunter (Reason)
- Sixth Sense (Soul)
- Lightning Fast (Violence)
- Sniper (Violence)
- Jaded (–)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, –1, and –2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Suit, discreet, black, worn, concealing, extravagant, fashionable, or practical clothes.

Face: Emaciated, expressionless, mundane, friendly, scarred, tough, pretty, or smooth face.

Eyes: Grim, appraising, cool, obscured, melancholy, merciless, or challenging eyes.

Body: Graceful, athletic, small, scarred, strong, massive, wiry, emaciated, toned, or battered body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters knows who you really are. Take **+1 Relation** with each other.
- One of the characters knows you under one of your aliases.
- One of the characters knows your deepest fear.
- One of the characters owes their life to you. They take **+1 Relation** with you.
- You harbor a secret passion for one of the character's partner. Take **+2 Relation** with that partner.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE SCIENTIST

The Scientist explores the unknown in the hope of finding answers to the questions of life and the universe. Her research often leads to dangerous experiments, where the fabric between our dimension and others is temporarily blown aside. In psychology, medicine, physics, chemistry, and various parasciences, these experiments often lead to terrible consequences. They might call her mad, but she knows this is because they refuse to see the Truth.

Occupation

Choose your Scientist's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Doctor, Psychologist, Surgeon, Inventor, Engineer, Technician, Therapist, Physicist.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Forbidden Knowledge
- Mental Illness
- Responsible for Medical Experiments
- Returned from the Other Side
- Victim of Medical Experiments

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Bad Reputation
- Experiment Gone Wrong
- Fanatic
- Mental Compulsion
- Repressed Memories
- Wanted

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Battlefield Medicine (Reason)
- Inventor (Reason)
- Scientist (Reason)
- Enhanced Awareness (Soul)
- Genius (Soul)
- Implanted Messages (Soul)
- Arcane Researcher (–)
- Workaholic (–)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Suit, worn and dirty, casual, practical, coat and hat, peculiar, lab coat, stained, neat, or durable clothes.

Face: Worn, square, scarred, bony, round and sweaty, pronounced, exhausted, ravaged, or serious face.

Eyes: Calculating, dead, squinting, burning, mad, confused, or commanding eyes.

Body: Frail, angular, stocky, overweight, emaciated, skinny, slender, tall, hunched, or strange body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters received help from you. They take **+1 Relation** with you.
- One of the characters assisted you with an experiment, which went terribly wrong.
- One of the characters knows details of your dreams.
- One of the characters volunteered for one of your experiments. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters is involved in your research.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE SEEKER

Seekers are explorers of modern, ancient, and forgotten urban myths. They are bloggers, hackers, and storytellers of the Modern Age. On the Internet, faceless voices whisper of lies and conspiracies. In abandoned subway stations, someone leaves messages in seemingly meaningless graffiti. If you dig deep enough you'll find the Truth, but most of us cannot see through the thick fog of misinformation, and we become hopelessly lost in the tempest of propaganda, pornography, and mindless entertainment. The Seeker knows how to use the Internet to uncover secrets under stones best left unturned. For the Seeker, no price is too great to find the Truth and expose it for public consumption.

Occupation

Choose your Seeker's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Student, Unemployed, Blogger, Hacker, Activist, Academic, Researcher, Parapsychologist, Author, Journalist, Thief, Medium, Conspiracy Theorist.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Family Secret
- Forbidden Knowledge
- Guardian
- Occult Experience
- Strange Disappearance

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Cursed
- Haunted
- Nightmares
- Repressed Memories
- Stalker
- Wanted

Advantages

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Parkour (Coolness)
- Access the Dark Net (Perception)
- Keen-eyed (Perception)
- Hacker (Reason)
- Prepared (Reason)
- Enhanced Awareness (Soul)
- Stubborn (Soul)
- Endure Trauma (–)

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Nerdy, second-hand, leather, alternative, casual, durable, smelly, comfortable, stained or ripped clothes.

Face: Wrinkled, lively, cute, neotenic, pale, grim, smashed, or innocent face.

Eyes: Clear, hard, tired, bloodshot, doubtful, curious, avoidant, suspicious, or evaluating eyes.

Body: Lanky, sinewy, robust, fragile, hefty, deformed, wispy, chubby, bent, short, or youthful body.

Name

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- You entrusted one of the characters with a secret, which could put you away in prison.
- One of the characters helped you with your investigations. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- You look up to one of the characters. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters saved your life. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- You have discovered one of the characters in the act of something criminal, obscene, or extremely shameful.
- You befriended one of the characters in the process of assisting them with some supernatural trouble. Give her **+1 Relation** with you.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE VETERAN

The Veteran has seen death up close. She has spent a major part of her life in combat, weapon in hand, and adrenaline coursing through her veins. She might be an infantry soldier crouching in an Afghanistan foxhole, a SWAT officer carrying out frequent missions against heavily armed criminals, or a civilian from a country devastated by war, now a refugee but still tortured by memories of the conflict.

OCCUPATION

Choose your Veteran's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Special agent, Military soldier, Street soldier, Mercenary, MMA fighter, Military officer, Security guard, Body guard, Hitman, War refugee, Military police, Retiree, Homeless vet.

DARK SECRETS

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Guilty of Crime
- Returned from the Other Side
- Victim of Crime
- Victim of Medical Experiments
- Visitations

DISADVANTAGES

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Drug Addict
- Haunted
- Nightmares
- Phobia
- Repressed Memories
- Stalker

ADVANTAGES

Choose 3 Advantages from the list below.

- Hunter (Perception)
- Instinct (Perception)
- Survivalist (Perception)
- Voice of Pain (Soul)
- Martial Arts Expert (Violence)
- Officer (Violence)
- Dead shot (–)
- Hardened (–)

ATTRIBUTES

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

LOOKS

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Street, athletic wear, blood-stained, casual, camo, uniform, or practical clothes.

Face: Hard, coarse, scarred, weathered, fragile, harsh, or disfigured face.

Eyes: Hardened, dead, desolate, burning, sorrowful, angry, or commanding eyes.

Body: Compact, hardy, scarred, huge, hefty, limber, tall, muscular, sinewy, strong, or brutalized body.

NAME

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

RELATIONS

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

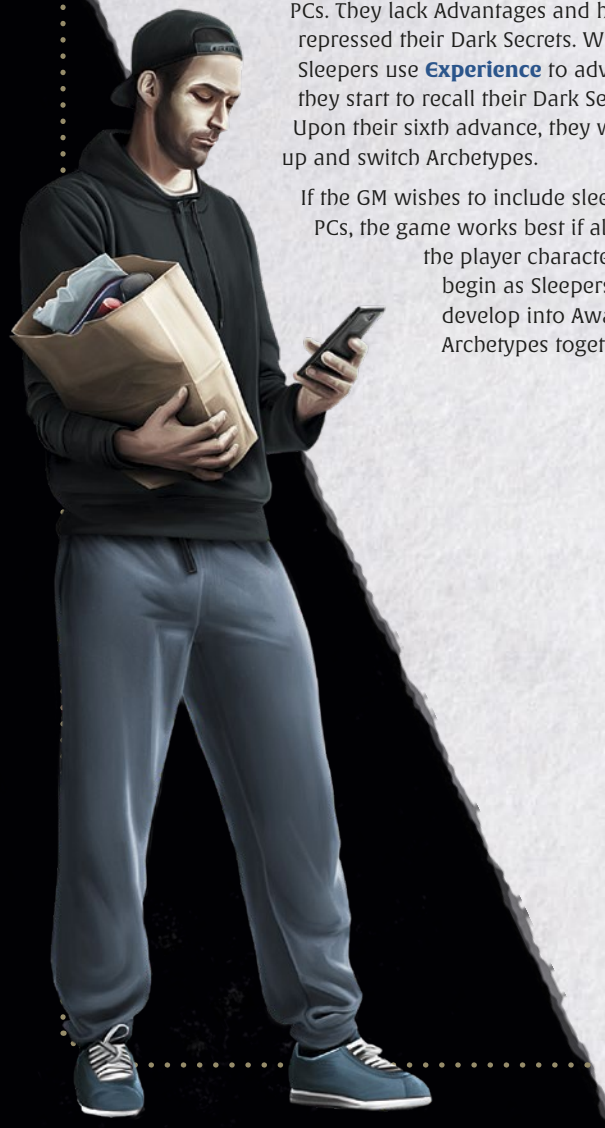
If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters assisted you when you were in need. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters abandoned you when you needed them most.
- One of the characters followed you into battle. Take **+1 Relation** with each other.
- One of the characters listened to your war stories.
- One of the characters has seen you lose control.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

THE SLEEPER

Your past is obscured by flawed memories, and you try not to think about the future. You focus on the here and now, living through your TV's infinite offerings, Internet forums, and the apps on your phone. Your life and job are fine, but you make sure to only share the best snippets, where everything seems amazing. Everyone else has nice homes and great jobs, and you wouldn't want people to think you're worse off than them. After work, you usually watch TV until it's time to go to bed. You work out in the morning, during lunch, or on the way home. Everyone else seems so perfect, so you'll motivate yourself to push through your routine on the treadmill while listening to the latest podcast, drinking low-fat shakes, and eating pre-packaged foods. People feel best when they don't focus on negative thoughts. One of the blogs you read told you that. Above your bed hangs a pretty piece of calligraphy, which reads, "I am in charge of how I feel, and today I am choosing happiness." That's nice to think about. You live your life in a bubble, filtering out all shadows and shades of grey in the world. You are one of the Sleepers.



Playing Sleepers

Sleeping PCs are weaker than Aware PCs. They lack Advantages and have repressed their Dark Secrets. When Sleepers use **Experience** to advance, they start to recall their Dark Secrets. Upon their sixth advance, they wake up and switch Archetypes.

If the GM wishes to include sleeping PCs, the game works best if all the player characters begin as Sleepers and develop into Aware Archetypes together.

OCCUPATION

Choose your Sleeper's occupation. It could be anything you wish.

DARK SECRETS

Choose any 1 Dark Secret. You get to pick the Dark Secret, but for as long as they're asleep the PC will not remember anything about it.

DISADVANTAGES

Choose 2 Disadvantages from any Archetype.

ADVANTAGES

You start with no Advantages.

ATTRIBUTES

Assign the modifiers +2, +1, and +0 to the three passive attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the seven active attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

LOOKS

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Mainstream, hipster, proper, athletic wear, jeans, suit, trendy, bohemian, gangsta, anonymous, all black, nerdy, chic, handsome, provocative, flattering, normcore, or alternative clothes.

Face: Cute, tired, forced smile, rosy, hard, doughy, swollen, emaciated, pale, non-expressive, pretty, masculine, soft, grim, long, round, square, bearded, or tanned face.

Eyes: Avoidant, large, contemptuous, flirtatious, cheerful, innocent, intense, drowsy, dominant, demanding, dark, bright, confused, or bored eyes.

Body: Thin, muscular, chubby, skinny, tall, short, big, heavy-set, lean, strong, hearty, bent over, straight-backed, bouncy, serene, expressive, frantic, jittery, or gray body.

NAME

Choose a name for your character, suitable to the locale in which the campaign is set.

DISTRACTIONS

There is something you use to distract yourself from the world around you, enabling you to remain asleep.

Choose 1 or several:

- Dating services.
- Discussion forums.
- Exercise and fitness.
- Fashion.
- Interior decorating.
- Online games.
- Pornography.
- Reality television.
- Shopping.
- Social media/apps, e.g. Instagram, Facebook, or similar.
- TV-series.
- Distraction of your own design.

When you engage in your Distraction for several hours, you recover +1 **Stability**.

When you are unable to engage in your distraction for a few days, you must make a ***Keep it Together*** Move to not give in to it – even to your detriment.

When you have been forced to interrupt your distraction, you take *–1 to your next roll.*

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters is an associate from work.
- One of the characters is a lover or a friend. Take **+1 Relation** with each other.
- One of the characters is connected to your Dark Secret.
- You secretly follow the character on Instagram, their blog, or similar social media. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters has something you're jealous of.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

Sleepers and Advancement

A sleeping PC advances in the following steps:

[1] They remember something about their Dark Secret.

[2] They remember something about their Dark Secret.

[3] They remember something about their Dark Secret.

[4] They remember something about their Dark Secret.

[5] They remember something about their Dark Secret.

[6] They awaken. The player chooses an Aware Archetype. The PC keeps their Dark Secret and their Disadvantages, but the player picks three Advantages from their new Archetype.

Depending on how the group wants to play it out, the Sleeper's memories of their Dark Secret can:

- Be prepared and delivered by the GM (suitable for prepared scenarios)
- Be authored by the player
- Be authored collaboratively by the group
- Be authored by the other players, but not the person affected

In those cases where the players author the details, they should limit their contributions to vague memory fragments the GM can expand and build on later. Each advancement should not reveal the Dark Secret's true nature, but should work more like clues the PC can investigate.

Creating a New Archetype

Creating a new Archetype for *KULT: Divinity Lost* requires developing a broad and interesting theme for the Archetype and the construction of balanced Advantages. You can extrapolate from the established Archetypes and proceed as follows:

- Write a short description of the Archetype, explaining its core themes.
- Write some suggested occupations for characters of this Archetype.
- Suggest five Dark Secrets. You can choose from existing ones or develop new ones.
- Suggest six Disadvantages. You can also create one or more unique Disadvantages to suit the Archetype.
- Give the Archetype eight Advantages the player can choose from at the start. You can use existing Advantages or develop new ones unique to the Archetype. Some **Soul**-based Advantages, such as ***Enhanced Awareness***, ***Magical Intuition***, and/or ***Sixth Sense***, recur in several of the twenty Aware Archetypes in *KULT: Divinity Lost*.
  - *Note:* if this is your first session of *KULT: Divinity Lost*, do not create your own Advantages or Disadvantages. Play a few sessions first, in order to give you some idea of how Moves work and what effects are suitable to apply when PCs roll a success **(15+)**, success with complications **(10–14)**, and failure **(–9)**.
- Assign suggested looks in the categories of clothes, face, eyes, and body.
- Write down five alternatives for established starting **Relations** with other player characters. Some of the alternatives can establish a **Relation** value of **+1** or even **+2**, either for the character or the PC the character has a relationship with.

CHAPTER 3
CHARACTER TRAITS

EVERY PLAYER CHARACTER (PC) HAS A PAST, WHICH HAS SHAPED THE person they are today. Traumatic events, buried secrets, and encounters with the supernatural have awakened doubts that things may not be as they seem. Through pain, fear, guilt, and madness, these events have forged the PC's personality and provided her with both strengths and weaknesses. Dark Secrets, Disadvantages, and Advantages are representations of these experiences and personality traits. Each character begins the game with **one or more** Dark Secrets, **two** Disadvantages, and **three** Advantages.

Dark Secrets are windows into traumatic, mystical, or guilt-laden episodes in the character's past. Each Dark Secret has a theme, which the player and gamemaster (GM) take into consideration when developing the Secret's specifics. However, any Dark Secret can provide the framework for a great variety of events, serving as inspiration for developing a character's concept and backstory, as well as acting as a storytelling aid for the GM and player. The PCs' various Dark Secrets provide the GM with concrete themes for the overall story, such as guilt, revenge, escape, sorrow, passion, and redemption. They also serve as anchor points for locations, objects, and entities to be included when preparing a story.

Disadvantages can be the character's personal failings, negative personality traits, adverse conditions, or external threats in the form of individuals, institutions, creatures, and/or supernatural powers. The character might suffer from schizophrenia, harbor a rampant urge to take revenge on someone, or be pursued by faceless enemies. Disadvantages are Moves rolled by the players, but unlike the basic player Moves, they provide the GM with opportunities to affect the PCs later in the story. Examples might include the character's schizophrenia distorting her perception of reality, or the character's pursuers finally catching up with her.

List of Disadvantages

Disadvantage	Description	Page
Bad Reputation	You are hated by the public for something you are accused of.	96
Broken	Your **Stability** can never increase beyond *Distressed*.	96
Competitor	You have a competitor in the criminal underworld.	96
Condemned	Your fate is sealed and your Time is ticking down.	97
Cursed	You are afflicted by a curse.	97
Depression	You are struggling with depression.	97
Drug Addict	You are addicted to hard drugs.	97
Experiment Gone Wrong	You carried out an experiment that went terribly wrong.	97
Fanatic	You are a fervent adherent of an ideology.	97
Greedy	You are driven by an unquenchable desire for money and wealth.	98
Guilt	You carry heavy guilt for your past sins.	98
Harassed	You are part of a harassed minority group.	98
Haunted	You are haunted by supernatural forces.	98
Infirm	You suffer from a dangerous physical disease or condition.	98
Involuntary Medium	You are an open vessel for spirits and demonic entities.	98
Jealousy	You want someone else's life for yourself.	98
Liar	You are a compulsive liar.	99
Lost Identity	You have a repressed true identity that resurfaces sometimes.	99
Marked	You are marked by darkness.	99
Mental Compulsion	You have a mental compulsion.	99
Nemesis	You have made an enemy who does everything in their power to take revenge on you.	99
Nightmares	You suffer from recurring nightmares.	99
Oath of Revenge	You are obsessed of taking revenge on someone or an organization.	100
Object of Desire	You ignite unhealthy desires in others.	100
Obsession	You are obsessed by a conspiracy or supernatural phenomenon.	100
Owned	You have fled from someone who kept you as his private property.	100
Phobia	You harbour an overpowering fear of something.	100
Rationalist	Your mind refuses to acknowledge anything except things confirmed by modern science.	100
Repressed Memories	You have repressed an unpleasant event.	100
Rival	You have an ambitious rival, who will do anything to be in your shoes.	101
Schizophrenia	You struggle with psychosis and hallucinations.	101
Sexual Neurosis	Your sexuality is a destructive, controlling force in your life.	101
Stalker	You are hunted by a faceless enemy.	101
Victim of Passion	You have an overwhelming passion for someone or something.	101
Wanted	You are wanted by the authorities.	101

For more information on how Dark Secrets, Disadvantages, and Advantages work together to create stories, read *Chapter 6 – Setting Up a story*

Advantages are strengths, rare abilities, supernatural powers, and valuable resources the character can use in the story to gain Edges and accomplish things others can't. The character might be tough and doesn't get hurt easily, have special training in crime scene investigations, possess influential friends, or be the leader of a gang of underlings. Advantages are Moves which either provide the character permanent bonuses on rolls of a specific nature, extend the scope of a basic Move, or provide the player with the opportunity to take special actions nobody else can.

List of Advantages

Advantage	Attribute	Description	Page
Academic Network	**Charisma**	You have contacts at universities around the world.	102
Access the Dark Net	**Perception**	You know how to access and search the Dark Net abyss.	108
Ace up the Sleeve	**Coolness**	You are good in a tight spot.	105
Analyst	**Reason**	You are good at making connections when you ***Investigate***.	110
Animal Speaker	**Intuition**	You can control animals.	107
Arcane Researcher	–	You know things about alternate planes of existance and creatures from other dimensions.	119
Artifact	**Soul**	You have an artifact with mystical powers.	113
Artistic Talent	**Charisma**	Your work of art have a great effect on audiences.	102
At any Cost	–	You can get *+2 to a roll* by decreasing **Stability (–2)**.	119
Authority	**Charisma**	You can use your academic authority to influence others.	102
Awe-Inspiring	**Charisma**	You can inspire awe and obedience in others.	102
Backstab	**Coolness**	You are dangerous when you attack unprepared victims.	105
Battlefield Medicine	**Reason**	You are trained in stabilising wounds.	110
Body Awareness	**Perception**	You have exceptional control over your body.	108
Boss	**Coolness**	You have a gang of criminal henchmen.	105
Bound	**Soul**	You can draw powers from an extradimensional entity.	113
Burglar	**Coolness**	You are an expert in breaking and entering.	105
Chameleon	**Intuition**	You are great at concealing your appearance and imitate others.	107
Character Actor	**Intuition**	You are a master at blending in.	107
Charismatic Aura	**Soul**	You can force people to trust you and seek your company.	113
Code of Honor	–	Gain **Stability** when you take risks or make sacrifices for your code of honor.	119
Collector	**Reason**	You know how to find unusual or rare items.	110
Contagious Insanity	**Soul**	You can infect others with temporary insanity.	113
Crafty	**Intuition**	You can make others trust you.	107
Crime Scene Investigator	**Reason**	You are skilled at finding clues at crime scenes.	110
Cult Leader	**Soul**	You can perform rituals with your followers.	113
Dabbler in the Occult	**Soul**	You can perform rituals from written instructions.	114
Daredevil	**Perception**	You get Edges when you enter dangerous situations.	108
Data Retrieval	**Reason**	You are a skilled researcher.	110
Dead Shot	–	Any **Harm** with a firearm is considered **+1 Harm**.	119
Deadly Stare	**Violence**	You can freeze an NPC with your stare.	117
Death Drive	**Violence**	You get Edges when you fight with no regard for personal safety.	117
Desperate	–	You have *+1 on all rolls* when trying to make it through overwhelming odds.	119
Divine	**Soul**	You can make monsters obey you temporarily.	114
Divine Champion	–	You get stronger when you fight against your deity's enemies or protect a sacred object.	119
Dreamer	**Soul**	You can use dreams to meet people or experience past events.	114
Driver	**Coolness**	You are a trained professional at operating motor vehicles.	106
Elite Education	**Charisma**	You have contacts in the world's social elite.	102

Advantage	Attribute	Description	Page
Elite Sport	–	You have competed professionally in a sport.	119
Endure Trauma	–	Whenever you reduce **Stability**, you always lose 1 fewer level than normal.	119
Enforcer	Violence	You can threat people to do what you want.	117
Enhanced Awareness	Soul	You can open yourself to visions and communicate with entities from other dimensions.	114
Erotic	Charisma	You can use your attractivness to influence others.	103
Escape Artist	Coolness	You are a master at slipping away when the shit hits the fan.	106
Exit Strategy	Perception	You are an expert in hiding the tracks of your kills.	108
Exorcist	Soul	You can perform rituals to banish spirits or demons.	114
Expert	Reason	You get to ask an additonal question about whatever you want when you ***Investigate*** things in your fields of knowledge.	110
Explosives Expert	Reason	You can build and disarm bombs.	110
Extortionist	Intuition	You can ***Read*** others weaknesses.	107
Eye for an Eye	–	You get *+2 ongoing* to all rolls against any one who wounds you.	119
Eye for Detail	Perception	You are good at noticing details on people.	109
Fascination	Charisma	You can use your art to seduce an NPC.	103
Fast Talk	Coolness	You are good at distracting NPCs with small talk.	106
Field Agent	Violence	You get Edges when you enter combat.	117
Forbidden Inspiration	Soul	You can use your art to experience visions and lure creatures to you.	114
Forked Tongue	Charisma	You can manipulate others into trusting you.	103
Gang Leader	Violence	You have a gang of criminals.	117
Genius	Soul	You get Edges in life-threatening situations.	115
Good Samaritan	–	Gain **Stability** when you help others at your own expense.	119
Gritted Teeth	–	You suffer no penalties to rolls from wounds.	119
Grudge	–	You take *+1 ongoing* to revenge when someone ruin your plans.	120
Hacker	Reason	You are an expert on penetrating networks.	110
Hardened	–	You take *+1 ongoing* to ***Endure Injury***.	120
Hunter	Perception	You are a skilled hunter.	109
Ice Cold	Coolness	You can use your calm and cool in the midst of violence and chaos.	106
Implanted Messages	Soul	You can get power over humans by experimenting on them.	115
Impostor	Charisma	You have several romantic relationships to use for resources.	103
Improviser	Coolness	You are good at winging it out of dangerous situations.	106
Influental Friends	Charisma	You have friends with power and influence.	103
Inner Power	Soul	You harbour an uncontrollable, dangerous power.	115
Instinct	Perception	You get +2 on your questions when you ***Observe a Situation***.	109
Interrogator	Intuition	You are an expert in ***Reading*** when others are lying.	108
Intimidating	Violence	You can scare others to submit.	117
Intuitive	Intuition	You get to ask an additional question when you succed in ***Reading*** someone.	108
Inventor	Reason	You can create and repair things.	110
Jaded	–	You can suppress the effects of a **(10–14)** on ***Keep it Together***.	120
Keen-Eyed	Perception	You are skilled at determing enemies' strengths and weaknesses.	109
Lay on Hands	Soul	You can heal someone by sacrificing yourself or a victim.	115
Lightning Fast	Violence	You get Edges when you move fast in combat.	118
Magical Intuition	Soul	You can perceive Kirlian auras and sense the presence of magic.	115
Magnetic Attraction	Soul	You can draw people to you.	115

Advantage	Attribute	Description	Page
Manhunter	Reason	You are good at getting information about people.	110
Manipulative	–	You can use given favors and learned secrets against people.	120
Martial Arts Expert	Violence	You get Edges when you fight in close quarters.	118
Moles	Charisma	You have a number of moles to use when needed.	104
Network of Contacts	Charisma	You can get information about people.	104
Notorius	Charisma	You can use your fame to influence others.	104
Observant	Intuition	You are good at judging someone's character.	108
Occult Library	Reason	You have a library about supernatural things.	110
Occult Studies	Reason	You know things about the occult.	111
Officer	Violence	You get Edges when you fight with allies on your side.	118
Opportunist	–	Gain **Stability** when you sacrifice someone to further your own goals.	120
Parkour	Coolness	You are deft at running, climbing and jumping.	106
Perpetual Victim	Charisma	You can appear defenseless and make others take care of you.	104
Prepared	Reason	You are good at researching places.	111
Puppeteer	Reason	You are good at executing plans with other people as pawns.	111
Quick Thinker	Reason	You are good at thinking your way out of danger.	111
Rage	–	Go into a rage to gain Edges in combat.	120
Read a Crowd	Perception	You are a master at overhearing information in crowds.	109
Ruthless	Violence	You get Edges when you sacrifice others to save yourself.	118
Scientist	Reason	You are good at ***Investigating*** objects or entities.	111
Sealed Fate	–	You may mark Time to stabilize wounds.	120
Seducer	Charisma	You can make people fall in love with you.	104
Shadow	Perception	You are skilled in shadowing and shaking of any stalkers.	109
Sixth Sense	Soul	You can sense danger and the right path in front of you.	116
Snake Charmer	Soul	You can charm intelligent, monstrous creatures with your art.	116
Sneak	Coolness	You can avoid detection when hiding or sneaking.	107
Sniper	Violence	You are a master at firing at distant targets.	118
Street Contacts	Charisma	You have contacts among the social outsiders and outcasts.	104
Streetfighter	Violence	You get Edges when you fight in close combat.	119
Streetwise	Charisma	You have contacts in the criminal underworld.	105
Stubborn	Soul	You can push yourself to overcome threaths and gain Edges.	116
Survival Instinct	Violence	You get more viscious when you are wounded.	119
Survivalist	Perception	You are trained in surviving in the wild.	109
Thirst for Knowledge	–	You gain **Stability** when you learn about other dimensions and supernatural entities.	120
To the Last Breath	–	You mark Time to reroll the dice.	120
Tracer	Reason	You have intelligence networks to trace things or people with.	111
Vigilant	Intuition	You can ***Read*** when others hide things from you.	108
Voice of Insanity	Soul	You can manipulate crowds.	116
Voice of Pain	Soul	You learn to fight enemies better when they wound you.	116
Wanderer	Perception	You know things about places.	110
Watchers	–	You are watched over and protected by a group of mysterious people.	120
Wayfinder	Soul	You can let your madness lead you through shortcuts in the city.	116
Weapon Master	Coolness	You are a master in armed combat or gunplay.	107
Workaholic	–	Gain **Stability** when you create things or carry out experiments.	120
Worldly	–	Establish facts and relations when you arrive to new locations in the story.	120

Dark Secrets

Dark Secrets are events from the PCs' pasts, which haunt and threaten them throughout your story. Each character must have **one or more** Dark Secrets. When the player chooses a Dark Secret, they should, in collaboration with the GM, decide to what degree she's aware of the Dark Secret, as well as choose a personal drive that has emerged from it.

Chosen One

You have been chosen by a god to become its advocate or sacrificial lamb. The god's disciples watch over you, waiting for the day of your ascension. You may have grown up in their cult, or were discovered by them well into your adulthood. Whichever the case, you're sure the cult has terrible plans for you. You've tried escaping from these disciples, but they always end up finding you again.

Suggested personal drives:

- Avoid your pursuers.
- Fight the cult and/or their god.
- Fulfill your god's desire.
- Expand the cult's membership.
- Find out the truth about your destiny.

Curse

You are afflicted by a curse, knowingly or not. The curse has started influencing your life and you must find a way to get rid of it. The curse may have been inherited or brought upon yourself through your own actions. Its effects are starting to make you lose your grasp on reality and threaten to harm those closest to you.

Suggested personal drives:

- Find out what the curse is.
- Discover how to break the curse.
- Transfer the curse to someone else.
- Find some way to accept your fate.
- Take revenge on the person responsible for the curse.

Family Secret

Your family has a well-kept secret, which has haunted you for your entire life. They may have been members of an obscure sect or exposed to some dreadful horror. You may have been initiated into this secret as a child, or only recently found out the truth as an adult. This secret keeps you on edge and threatens to destroy your life. You likely have to take action to save yourself and your family.

Suggested personal drives:

- Keep the secret.
- Avoid your family.
- Confront your family.
- Help your family.
- Find out the entire truth.

Forbidden Knowledge

You have uncovered some horrid truth, which brings reality's very nature into question. It might be unlocking some way to move between dimensions, exposing the mayor's true demonic visage, finding proof that history has been rewritten, or discovering that the world as we know it is actually an illusion. The Illusion's keepers are now after you and it is only a matter of time before they find you.

Suggested personal drives:

- Reveal the Truth to the world.
- Acquire power or knowledge.
- Explore the forbidden truth.
- Fight the enemy.
- Escape your pursuers.

Guardian

You have been chosen to protect an important object, place, or person. This sacred duty could have been inherited, assigned to you specifically, or granted to you at your own request. What you are protecting may be intended for accomplishing some great task in the future, or you may be safeguarding it to ensure it doesn't fall into the wrong hands.

Suggested personal drives:

- Keep what you are guarding safe.
- Find out more about the previous guardians and what you are protecting.
- Pass the guardianship over to a worthy individual.
- Fulfill your purpose.

Guilty of Crime

You feel constant remorse for a crime you have committed. Regardless if you committed the crime on your own initiative or because you were coerced by others, you feel you are solely to blame. The victim, their relatives, and/or the police are probably looking for you.

Suggested personal drives:

- Avoid justice.
- Confront the victim or their relatives.
- Punish yourself.
- Help other people.
- Bring the other perpetrators to justice – be it of the legal or personal variety.
- Take revenge on those who made you commit the crime.

Heir

You have been granted a unique inheritance from relatives or friends. It could be a small object or something more substantial, such as a house. The inheritance has instilled an unnatural obsession within you. You know it hides secrets and perhaps unknown forces. Might it reveal what happened to its previous owner? Others want to possess your inheritance also, and you suspect they will stop at nothing to acquire it.

Suggested personal drives:

- Discover the truth about your inheritance.
- Protect your inheritance.
- Investigate what happened to its previous owner.
- Confront those who seek to acquire your inheritance.

Mental Illness

You or one of your close relations suffer from mental illness. There's a good chance you have seen with your own eyes (or heard from your relative) that reality is simply an illusion. But who would believe a crazy person? Psychiatric institutions hold many secrets and many doctors have hidden motives. For the insane who end up on the streets, disturbed mentors gladly take newcomers under their wing to initiate them in the Truth.

Suggested personal drives:

- Explore the Illusion.
- Expose the conspiracy.
- Take revenge on your doctors and other caregivers.
- Find out the truth about your relative.
- Find your missing mentally ill relative.

Occult Experience

You have witnessed occult proceedings, which changed your view of reality. You may have participated in arcane rituals, exposed cults serving disturbing entities, or seen things revealing that the world is not what it seems. Your experiences make it difficult for you to accept the Illusion that most others live in.

Suggested personal drives:

- Uncover more of the Truth.
- Seek atonement for your actions.
- Help others realize the Truth.
- Seek out more occult knowledge and power.
- Fight the demons.

Pact with Dark Forces

You have sealed a pact with a powerful entity. You may have made the pact willingly or been tricked into it. Regardless, you are now under the being's spell. You may have benefited greatly from this pact, but the cost could be your literal soul. Deep inside you understand you must find a way to trick the being into breaking the pact. The question is *how?*

Suggested personal drives:

- Find a way to break the pact.
- Cheat death.
- Slay the being.
- Achieve further power or success.
- Take revenge on whoever tricked you into the pact.

Responsible for Medical Experiments

You were responsible for or assisted in shady medical experiments, which ended in horrifying results. Regardless of whether the subjects were willing or not, the experiments destroyed their lives and they are now dead, missing, or transformed into something inhuman. In addition to your pangs of guilt, you may be pursued by your former test subjects, their relatives, the law, former colleagues, employers, or nameless forces trying to silence you.

Suggested personal drives:

- Avoid taking responsibility for the experiments.
- Seek forgiveness from subjects and/or their relatives.
- Gather evidence to expose your former employer.
- Conclude interrupted or failed experiments.
- Continue researching your findings.
- Restore the test subjects to their former selves.

Returned from the Other Side

You experienced an event where the Illusion shattered completely, and you were the only one who returned. Your apartment block may have slipped into another dimension, its existence wiped from history. An airplane may have disappeared and you were found twenty years later, without memories and having not aged a day. A company of soldiers in Afghanistan may have literally walked into hell and only you returned, covered in your comrades' blood. Deep down you

feel you were not meant to have survived, and that something is coming for you to restore balance and order.

- Discover the truth about the event.
- Expose what happened to you to the world.
- Elude your fate.
- Return to the scene.
- Find lost relatives or friends.

Rootless

Your family always moved around. Your parents never told you why, but the haunted look in their eyes and hushed conversations hinted that you were running away from something terrifying. They would rouse you in the middle of night, leaving behind everything you owned, simply to escape. Eventually, they even abandoned you. Maybe they're still on the run, or maybe whatever they feared finally caught up with them. The feeling of being followed never truly lets go, and wherever you end up it's not long before you're on the road again. You don't know exactly what would happen if you stopped, but you feel it's something terrible.

Suggested personal drives:

- Find out what is pursuing you.
- Find a place where you can stop and breathe.
- Escape what is pursuing you.
- Find your parents.
- Figure out why this is happening.

Strange Disappearance

Someone close to you disappeared after getting too close to the truth while investigating something. You have no idea what happened, but someone recently sent you cryptic information, urging you to finish what your colleague started. Since your associate disappeared, you've become the victim of unknown stalkers.

Suggested personal drives:

- Figure out whatever became of the missing person.
- Finish the investigation they started.
- Escape your pursuers.
- Bring the guilty to justice.
- Reveal the truth to the public.

Victim of Crime

You have endured a terrible crime. Your whole life is marred by this event and you cannot mentally suppress the violation, no matter how hard you try. Fear, shame, anger, and a sense of helplessness torment you, and in order to survive this trauma, you must find a way to heal your wounds.

Suggested personal drives:

- Get revenge on the perpetrator.
- Re-experience the crime again (as victim or as perpetrator).
- Find out why it happened to you.
- Stop similar crimes.
- Confront and forgive the perpetrator.

Victim of Medical Experiments

You were subjected to medical experiments with unexpected outcomes, with or without your consent and knowledge. The experiments have had enduring mental and/or physical side effects. They may have shown you windows into alternate dimensions – resulting in madness. The side effects still torment you, and ridding yourself of them requires you to find the responsible parties. It's also possible your parents were the test subjects and you inherited the experimental effects, as a result.

Suggested personal drives:

- Track down those responsible.
- Restore yourself to the state you were in before.
- Get revenge on the person(s) responsible.
- Find a way to accept the person you are now.
- Explore other dimensions.
- Expose the truth to the world.

Visitations

You have a history of encounters with beings from the other side. They could be family members or friends tracking you down post-mortem, entities discovered at haunted locations, or inhuman forces taking an interest in you. Regardless of what you do, you can't seem to escape them. Every time you think it's finally over, they reappear in your life – you are never truly free.

Suggested personal drives:

- Figure out why you are haunted in this way.
- Help spirits find peace after death.
- Fight evil beings.
- Help people communicate with the dead.
- Escape the entity pursuing you.

Disadvantages

Disadvantages are **Moves** representing destructive character traits, psychological damage, or external threats to the character.

Acquiring Disadvantages

Every character starts play with **two** Disadvantages, but PCs can also receive additional Disadvantages from the GM during the course of the game, if and when:

- The PC's **Stability** decreases all the way to *Broken*.
- The PC's actions create new, external threats; e.g., if they act in a way to make them ***Wanted*** by the police, or they leave an enemy wounded but still alive, allowing them to return later as a ***Nemesis***. It is up to the GM to decide the circumstances under which the PC acquires a new Disadvantage.

Overcoming Disadvantages

If a PC manages to overcome one of her two starting Disadvantages during the story, she removes the old Disadvantage and chooses another one appropriate to the situation or character. For example, if a PC kills their ***Nemesis***, they may become ***Wanted*** for the murder, start having ***Nightmares*** about the event, or attract the attention of other entities who become their ***Stalker***. An exception may be made for additional Disadvantages the PC earns through the story (like becoming ***Wanted*** for a crime committed during play).

Rules

Like other Moves, every Disadvantage has a *trigger* condition, which explains when it activates. The GM always has the last word on when this condition is fulfilled. Some Disadvantages only activate in particular situations, subject to the GM's judgement. As a guideline, the GM should not activate a Disadvantage if:

- The GM already has one or more Hold for that Disadvantage.
- Activating the Disadvantage in this situation wouldn't make the situation more interesting or exciting.

For example, the Disadvantage ***Mental Compulsion*** has the trigger, "*in situations where you could be distracted by your compulsion.*" A good guideline here is to consider the trigger in the context of the compulsion's exact nature, as chosen and described by the player. If the character is a hypochondriac, their compulsion might be triggered in environments featuring sick people, such as a hospital. If they are a kleptomaniac, the compulsion might be triggered when a risky situation would arise from stealing something, such as in the office of the chief of police. In situations where the GM determines the Disadvantage's activation wouldn't make the scene more exciting or interesting, it's better to trust the player to play out their character's Disadvantage rather than rolling for it.

Whenever a player rolls a **(10–14)** or **(–9)** result on a Disadvantage Move, there is either an immediate effect or the GM acquires **Hold** to spend later during the course of the story. The GM doesn't have to worry about spending these immediately, and can wait for an opportune moment. For example, if she has been given Hold on a PC through the Disadvantage ***Stalker***, she can let the PC's stalker wait until a calm moment in the story before making their Move, allowing the PC to relax and have a false sense of security.

• Bad Reputation

For some reason, you have attracted the public's disapproval – even animosity. Perhaps you've been spotlighted in the tabloids as a pedophile or murderer, falsely or otherwise. *In the first game session and whenever you attract the public's attention*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You blend in. Nobody is out to get you.

(10–14) You have been recognized. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) Several people have recognized you. Anger and fear control their actions. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make a Move representing how your bad reputation sticks to you. For example, people might react with fear and suspicion towards you, a lynch mob forms to bring you to justice, your property is vandalized, your allies turn against you, and you can lose your job, agreements, and relationships.

• Broken

Some experience in your past has broken your psyche so badly you've been unable to recuperate from it. As a result, your **Stability** can never increase beyond *Distressed* (6).

• Competitor

You have a competitor in the criminal underworld, whose business niche is similar to yours. *Whenever you neglect to protect your interests or are distracted elsewhere*, **roll +0** to see if your competitor managed to damage your business:

(15+) You are safe from your competitor, for the moment.

(10–14) You have been careless. Your competitor may strike against you. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) You hand your competitor a golden opportunity, and they move against your interests. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make Moves for your competitor. For example, your competitor may take control of some of your business dealings, learn one of your secrets, sabotages one of your assets, or harms or buys off someone you care for and trust.

• Condemned

Time: ○○○○○○○○○○

Your fate has already been sealed. Perhaps you're dying from a disease, been promised as the sacrificial offering to a forgotten god, or you've sold your soul to some entity, waiting to drag you off to hell when your time is up. *At the start of every game session*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You still have some time remaining.

(10–14) Your fate approaches. The GM chooses one of the following options:

- The player marks 1 Time.
- You're tortured by dreams or visions of your fate. Reduce **Stability (–2)**.
- You're haunted by the entity or event that sealed your fate.
- Someone in your vicinity is negatively affected by your fate.
- Something provides you with false hope of escaping your fate.

(–9) Your end approaches. The GM holds two options from the list above *or* marks 2 Time.

When you finally run out of Time, you meet your ultimate fate.

• Cursed

You are cursed. *In the first session and whenever you're confronted by the supernatural*, **roll +0** to see how strongly the curse influences you:

(15+) You temporarily avoid the curse's influence.

(10–14) The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make a Move for the curse. For example, you or someone you care about have an accident, something of yours is taken from you, you experience terrifying visions, or you're forced to take certain actions with risk of dire consequences, if you refuse.

• Depression

You are constantly struggling with depression, which is only worsened by dejection and discouragement. *Whenever facing personal setbacks*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You remain in control.

(10–14) You experience temporary anxiety, decreased self-confidence, or lack of will. You take *–1 to your next roll.*

(–9) You succumb to the sense of hopelessness or blame and punish yourself; reduce **Stability (–2)**. Your lethargy and self-destructive urges do not go away until you numb your depression with medicine, drugs, or alcohol.

• Drug Addict

You are addicted to hard drugs; name at least one. *In the first game session and whenever you have been using, or have the opportunity to use*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You are in control of the urge, for now.

(10–14) The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM may spend Hold to make a Move for your addiction. For example, you cannot resist using the drug, run out of drugs, become indebted to a dangerous person, put yourself in danger while under the influence of drugs, or ruin something important to you – like a relationship – while under the influence.

• Experiment Gone Wrong

You have carried out a scientific experiment, which went horribly awry. The experiment gave rise to something unnatural, which escaped and disappeared without a trace. Recently, the 'results' of your experiment tracked you down, reappearing in your life, and forcing you to either escape or confront it. *In the first session and whenever things seem in control*, **roll +0**:

(15+) Your experiment leaves you alone.

(10–14) Your experiment is close on your heels. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) Your experiment is in your vicinity and acts against you. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make Moves on the experiment's behalf. For example, the experiment gives you a lead on the Truth, sabotages or otherwise disrupts your research, demands something from you under threat of retribution, or kidnaps someone you care for – possibly returning them dead or transformed.

• Fanatic

You are a fervent adherent of an ideology. You interpret the whole world in accordance with your ideology, which must not be questioned. *Whenever someone questions your ideology*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You can keep your emotions in check.

(10–14) You become angry, confused, or frustrated. You take *–1 to your next roll.*

(–9) You are forced to choose between taking steps to changing the person or situation to adhere to your ideology, or reduce **Stability (–2)**.

• Greedy

You are driven by an unquenchable desire for money and wealth, and are prepared to sacrifice your health, family, and friends to fill the emptiness inside. *When an opportunity to increase your wealth arises*, **roll +0** to see if you are in control of your desire:

(15+) You keep your greed in check.

(10–14) The black void inside shrieks for more. As long as the opportunity exists and you do not take it, you suffer *–1 ongoing* to any rolls you make.

(–9) You must take advantage of every opportunity to further your wealth, or reduce **Stability (–2)**.

• Guilt

You carry heavy guilt for your past sins, having harmed one or several people through your actions or inaction. *In the first game session and whenever everything appears okay*, **roll +0**:

(15+) Your guilt isn't on your mind at the moment.

(10–14) You are reminded of your guilt. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) Your guilt catches up to you. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make Moves for your guilt. For example, relatives of the people you've hurt seek you out, demons and other creatures are attracted by your guilt, the dead haunt you with nightmares or visions, or you fall victim to anxiety and self-doubt.

• Harassed

For some reason, personal or otherwise, people tend to harass you; the authorities in particular. *In the first game session and whenever you draw attention to yourself*, **roll +0** to see if you're harassed:

(15+) You've managed to keep clear of harassment.

(10–14) The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make Moves for the harassers. For example, someone destroys your property or possessions, you are bullied and attacked by people with a prejudice against you, the authorities forcefully take something from you (rights, property, assets), someone you care about is harmed for associating with you, or you are denied your basic rights due to your identity.

• Haunted

You are haunted by supernatural forces. With the GM's assistance, determine the nature of what you believe is haunting you. *In the first session and whenever you are distracted or weakened*, **roll +0** to see if the entity gains power over you:

(15+) The entity leaves you alone.

(10–14) The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make a Move for the entity. For example, it requests a service from you and threatens retribution if you refuse, the entity possesses your body for the night, or the entity reveals a clue of what it is and what it wants from you.

• Infirm

You suffer from a dangerous physical disease or condition, such as heart disease, hypertension, morbid obesity, or serious gastric ulcer. *Whenever you are subjected to major physical or psychological stress*, **roll +0**:

(15+) Your condition is under control.

(10–14) Your condition triggers, causing pain and daze (*–1 to all rolls until the scene ends*).

(–9) Your condition is aggravated with life threatening results (***Endure Injury*** with **2 Harm**).

• Involuntary Medium

You are an open vessel for any spirits or demonic entities who desire a medium to speak through or need a corporeal body to use for their purposes. *Whenever you encounter spiritual entities or haunted places*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You resist the possession.

(10–14) The entity gains influence over you. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) The entity gains control over you. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make Moves for the being possessing you. For example, the entity may give you a vision, make use of your body, communicate with or through you, try to harm someone else through you, follow you unseen, demand something from you, or drag you into another dimension.

• Jealousy

There is someone who has the life you want to have, and you would do anything to possess it. *Whenever you encounter the subject of your jealousy or their life's trappings (possessions, family, friends, etc)*, **roll +0** to see if you can keep your cool:

(15+) You maintain control over your jealousy.

(10–14) You're afflicted by jealousy and take *–1 ongoing* for as long as you remain in the subject's vicinity, and you do not suppress your jealous desires.

(–9) Your jealousy takes hold of you. You must ***Keep it Together*** to refrain from harming, destroying, or stealing from the subject of your jealousy.

• Liar

You're a compulsive liar, who invents stories at every opportunity, especially when it's beneficial for you. *At the start of every session,* **roll +0** to see what trouble your lies have gotten you into this time:

(15+) You have kept your lies tangle-free.

(10–14) You've told one too many lies. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) Your web of lies has come completely unraveled. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold whenever a PC encounters someone they know to ask, "*What have you lied about to this person?*" or to invent a troublesome lie the PC has told in the past.

• Lost Identity

Your true identity has been lost to a military or private-run secret agent program. You do not remember anything about your pre-employment life. Recently, memories of your true identity have started coming back to you. *In the first game session and whenever you encounter something from your repressed past,* **roll +0**:

(15+) You repress your true identity, remaining in the present.

(10–14) Your true identity is catching up to you. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) Your true identity resurfaces. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make Moves for your true identity. For example, you recognize unknown people or places, organizations or individuals from your past life get in touch with you, your old identity influences your thought patterns or actions, or you suffer traumatic flashbacks.

• Marked

You are marked by the darkness. The mark can take the shape of a full-body tattoo, a demonic body part such as a vestigial arm, an extra eye or mouth, machine parts integrated with your flesh, or similar manifestations. *Whenever you consciously Harm someone,* **roll +0**:

(15+) You are still in control.

(10–14) You feed the darkness. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) The darkness gains power over you. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make Moves for the darkness living inside of you. For example, the darkness feeds on your life energy to sustain itself, forces you to commit murder in order to replenish its life energy, takes charge of your body and leaves you with only memory fragments of what transpired, forces you to harm someone in your vicinity, or temporarily transforms your body into something inhuman. You may have to ***Keep it Together*** to resist the darkness' influence.

• Mental Compulsion

You are fixated on a particular idea or action, to the point of it strongly impacting your life. Choose a compulsion when you take this Disadvantage. *In situations where you could be distracted by your compulsion,* **roll +0**:

(15+) You control your compulsions and can focus on other things.

(10–14) You become distracted and take *–1 ongoing* to all rolls until you have removed yourself from the situation or succumbed to your compulsion, taking any actions it demands of you.

(–9) You become completely obsessed with your compulsion. If you focus on anything else, reduce **Stability (–2)**.

List of possible compulsions:

- Cleaning
- Counting
- Triple-checking
- Showering
- Memorizing
- Pyromania
- Kleptomania
- Cursing
- Confessing your sins
- Eating
- Hypochondria

• Nemesis

Through some terrible act you have made an enemy, who does everything in their power to take revenge. Decide who your nemesis is and what you have done to earn their vengeance. *In the first game session and whenever you let your guard down,* **roll +0** to see if your nemesis moves against you:

(15+) You are safe from your nemesis for the moment.

(10–14) You have been careless and your nemesis moves against you. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) You have compromised your position and your nemesis strikes against you in full force. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make Moves on behalf of your nemesis. For example, your nemesis may strike when you're alone, use secrets they've uncovered to extort you, intimidate you, hire henchmen to capture you, or attack someone or something you hold dear.

• Nightmares

You suffer from recurring nightmares, probably connected to your Dark Secrets. *During any scene when you sleep,* **roll +0**:

(15+) You sleep in peace.

(10–14) The nightmares torment you. The GM may make a Move for your nightmares. For example, you are unable to sleep at all during the night (*–1 ongoing* until you sleep), something follows you back into reality, the nightmares provide you insight into the Truth, or you are forced to process some trauma (***Keep it Together***) when you wake up.

(–9) The nightmares take over completely. You are trapped in the dream until you find a way to wake up, and everything that happens there also directly affects your sleeping body.

• Oath of Revenge

You have sworn to avenge an unforgivable injustice. Decide who is the subject of your vengeance and what they have done to you. It could be a single individual, people who share a certain trait, or members of an organization. *Whenever the target of your vengeance (or someone/something associated with them) appears,* **roll +0**:

(15+) You remain in control of your vengeful nature and can act rationally.

(10–14) You can't focus on anything, other than the target of your vengeance. Take *–1 ongoing* until the target's involvement in the scene ends.

(–9) You become obsessed and can act only to further your revenge. Doing anything else requires you roll ***Keep it Together***. Your obsession cannot be assuaged while the target remains in the same scene with you.

• Object of Desire

There is just something special about you. You ignite deep unhealthy desires in others, which they are unable to keep in check. *At the first game session and whenever you meet one or more new people,* **roll +0**:

(15+) The desire is not awakened at this moment.

(10–14) Someone becomes desirous of you. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) A strong desire is awakened in one or several people. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to ignite a person's desires, influencing their behavior. For example, someone can be afflicted with an uncontrollable passion for you, attempt to force themselves on you, strongly proposition you, become intensely jealous of you, or harm themselves or someone else because of their desire of you.

• Obsession

You have discovered a conspiracy or supernatural phenomenon, and you can't stop yourself from getting to the bottom of it. *At the first game session and whenever you encounter something associated with your obsession,* **roll +0**:

(15+) You overcome your obsession for the moment.

(10–14) Your obsession influences your behavior. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) Your obsession takes over completely. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to let your obsession creep into your daily life. You may be forced to choose between either engaging in your obsession or losing **Stability**. You may forget about important tasks and chores, miss meetings, or neglect your interpersonal relationships to solely focus on your obsession. Your obsession may even influence your dreams, giving you visions and revelations. In turn, the object of your obsession may also take note of you and try to stop your investigations.

• Owned

You used to be a dangerous person's private property, willingly or not. Since your escape, your former owner has been looking for you. Decide who your former owner is. *In the first game session and whenever you draw attention to yourself in public,* **roll +0**:

(15+) For the moment, you are safe.

(10–14) Your former owner picks up your scent. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) Your owner finds you. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make Moves for your former owner. For example, they appear unexpectedly to convince you to return, send henchmen after you, kidnap or harm someone you care about, directly threaten you, destroy something important to you, try to mutilate you so nobody else would want you, or kill you outright so nobody else can have you.

• Phobia

You harbor an overpowering fear of something. Choose the stimulus that frightens you. *Whenever you're confronted by the object of your phobia,* you must ***Keep it Together***.

• Rationalist

You refuse to believe in anything not confirmed as fact by modern science, even when it is right in front of you. In addition to the standard effects, *whenever you* ***See Through the Illusion*** *and whenever the Illusion shatters,* the GM may choose one option:

- Your presence nurtures the Illusion, making it more powerful and impenetrable.
- Your bewildered psyche starts creating mirror images of familiar places and people in the Illusion.
- You attract extradimensional entities.
- You consciously deny what you see, even to your own detriment.

• Repressed Memories

You have repressed a particularly unpleasant event from your past, but the memory of it sometimes rises to the surface. It could be a crime or some horrible thing you have done, been subjected to, or witnessed. The GM decides the nature of your repressed memory, usually based on your Dark Secrets. *In situations associated with your repressed memories,* **roll +0** to determine if the memories resurface:

(15+) You continue to suppress the memories.

(10–14) The memories partly resurface, taking the form of flashbacks and/or hallucinations. You must ***Keep it Together***.

(–9) You are overwhelmed by your repressed memories, completely losing yourself to them. The GM makes a hard Move and you reduce **Stability (–2)**.

• Rival

You have an ambitious rival, who will do anything to be in your shoes. Choose who the rival is. *In the first game session and whenever you make a mistake or let down your guard*, **roll +0**:

(15+) All clear; your rival makes no moves against you.

(10–14) You've given your rival an opportunity. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) You've handed your rival whatever they needed to completely undermine you. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make a Move on behalf of your rival. For example, the rival may get an important person on their side, sabotage one of your projects, extort you with evidence damaging to your reputation, or take desperate measures to get rid of you permanently.

• Schizophrenia

You struggle with recurring psychotic episodes and terrifying hallucinations. *In the first game session and whenever you go through difficult experiences*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You maintain control of your insanity.

(10–14) The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) Schizophrenia overtakes you. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM may spend Hold to make a Move for your schizophrenia. For example, one of your hallucinations takes on physical form, you view your current surroundings as being hostile to you, you're afflicted by terrifying hallucinations, you're subjected to dark visions (true or false), or someone in your vicinity turns out to not actually be real.

• Sexual Neurosis

Your sexuality is a destructive, controlling force in your life. You compulsively seek out superficial sexual encounters and are willing to perform degrading acts – or even commit crimes – to satisfy your fantasies. *Whenever you have the opportunity to have consensual sex or take advantage of someone vulnerable to your advances*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You can control your urges.

(10–14) Choose between having sex with the person or reduce your **Stability (–1)**.

(–9) You cannot resist having sex with the person and the GM chooses one option:

- You hurt, or you are hurt by, your sexual partner (physically or psychologically).
- The boundaries between dimensions are weakened; an entity from beyond catches the scent of you or your lover.
- Your sexual partner becomes obsessed with you and starts stalking you.

• Stalker

You are hunted by a faceless enemy. Anyone you meet could be one of their minions – or even the stalker themselves. No one can be trusted. You must constantly change your address and be vigilant at all times to avoid leaving any tracks they can follow. *In the first game session and whenever you expose your current location*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You are safe for now.

(10–14) Your enemies are on to you. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) Your enemies have caught up to you. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make a Move for your pursuers. For example, a trusted associate has been paid off by them, one of your loved ones or allies disappears, something you are trying to do is undermined by your enemies, or they try to actively hurt you.

• Victim of Passion

You have an overwhelming passion for someone or something, seeking to possess it at any cost. *In the first game session and whenever you encounter the subject of your passions (or anything resembling it)*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You keep your passion in check.

(10–14) The passion awakens within you. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) You are completely in the passion's grip. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to let your passion steer your actions. For example, you yearn uncontrollably for the subject of your passion – you must seek it out or reduce **Stability (–2)**, your desire drags the subject of your passion into your dreams (perhaps trapping them there), your passion becomes tainted with jealousy and anger – making you want to control and damage it (***Keep it Together*** to resist), your longing leaves you feeble vis-à-vis the objective of this passion (*–1 to all rolls* while sharing the same scene), or your passion can attract creatures of lust wishing to feed off it or make pacts with you.

• Wanted

You are wanted by the authorities – local, state, or federal – for crimes you have committed. *Whenever you attract attention to yourself or forget to keep your head down*, **roll +0** to see if you've been discovered:

(15+) You are safe, for now.

(10–14) You have made a mistake. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) All eyes are on you. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend Hold to make a Move for the authorities. For example, your mugshot appears on the TV news and in newspapers, law enforcement officers attempt to trap and catch you, or the authorities detain and interrogate someone you care about, confiscate your possessions, or turn your friends/family against you.

Advantages

Advantages are unique abilities, properties, and skills the characters might possess. Each character receives **three** Advantages from their archetype list during character creation. As the PC improves through gaining **Experience**, they may acquire additional Advantages.

Edges

Some Advantages are particularly useful in physical conflicts and action scenes. Rather than rolling for these each time they're used in the story, these Advantages activate only **once per action scene** and provide the player with one or more **Edges**, which can be spent to activate the Advantage's effects. If another Move is triggered, providing the player with additional Edges, they forfeit any Edges not already spent. Also, any saved Edges disappear at the end of the action scene.

Example: Sam enters an action scene and rolls **(15+)** for his ***Streetfighter*** Advantage, providing him with three Edges. He spends one Edge in a fight with a gang member for a +2 to ***Engage in Combat***. Sam drops the guy to the ground with a rapid succession of strikes, but is surrounded by the hoodlum's three friends. Sam now wants to activate the ***Lightning fast*** Advantage to attack all of them simultaneously. However, by doing so, he will lose the two remaining Edges from ***Streetfighter***, which are replaced by any new Edges gained from ***Lightning fast***. As he cannot activate ***Streetfighter*** again during this action scene, he must decide whether it's worth switching or not.

Charisma

• Academic Network

You have academic contacts at universities around the world. *When it would be useful to know someone at a university*, provide the person's name, field of study, and how you got to know one another, then **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) The person is a friend (**Relation +1**).

(10–14) The person is an acquaintance (**Relation +0**).

(–9) You know one another, but there is an old enmity between the two of you (**Relation +0**).

• Artistic Talent

Whenever you perform your chosen art form or show your works to an audience, **roll +Charisma** to influence your audience at any time during the scene:

(15+) Choose up to two options any time during the scene.

(10–14) Choose one option any time during the scene.

(–9) Choose one option, but a complication/threat manifests. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- They want to see more of your art.
- They are affected by the emotion you wanted to convey (e.g., anger, sorrow, fear, joy, lust, etc).
- They look up to you (take *+1 ongoing* with the audience during this scene).
- Their attention is fixed entirely on you throughout your performance.

• Authority

You're an academic authority in your field and a well-known name in newspapers, debate shows, and scientific journals. *At the beginning of each game session*, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) During this game session, choose up to three options.

(10–14) During this game session, choose up to two options.

(–9) During this game session you may choose one option, but you also attract unwanted attention like stalkers, professional adversaries, competitors, or hostile forces. The GM makes a Move for them at some point during the session.

Options:

- ***Influence*** someone who has heard of your authority in your academic field, as if you had rolled a **(15+)**.
- Gain access to a university's resources, such as their facilities, researchers, or scientific archives.
- Make a statement about something or someone in mass media.
- Gain access to people or places under the pretense of engaging in your research or studies.

• Awe-Inspiring

Whenever you make a show of being the boss, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) People around you accept you as their leader and listen to you. Take *+1 ongoing* against people in this scene.

(10–14) People feel you're leadership material and show you respect. Choose one of them, in particular, who goes along with what you think. You have *+1 ongoing* against them during this scene.

(–9) People feel like you're the leader, but one of them tries to challenge you for it. The GM makes a Move.

• Elite Education

You have attended one of the world's most prestigious institutes of higher learning and have acquired contacts with power and influence. *Whenever you ask your contacts for a favor*, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) Choose up to three options.

(10–14) Choose up to two options.

(–9) Choose one option, but you've become indebted to someone. The debt can be called in during the story, whenever the GM chooses.

Options:

- Gain a favor from a country's administration (e.g., released from jail, skip a customs check, or get help from the police).
- Gain access to a location unavailable to the public.
- Locate or track a hidden or missing person.
- Receive both the means to escape and a safe hiding spot.

Erotic

Whenever you make moves to attract an NPC to you, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) Choose up to three options any time during this scene.

(10–14) Choose up to two options any time during this scene.

(–9) Choose one option any time during this scene, but the nature of the attraction is different than you had hoped. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- The person must have you, and will abandon their normally reasonable behavior to do so.
- The person is distracted by you for as long as you're in the vicinity, unable to concentrate on anything else.
- The person becomes jealous of anyone competing for your attention, and tries to dispose of them by any means necessary.
- You make them uncertain and confused. You take *+1 ongoing* against them during this scene.

Fascination

Whenever you use your art to seduce an NPC, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) Choose one option.

(10–14) Choose one option, but the GM also chooses one of the following:

- They become obsessed with you.
- They want you *right* now.

(–9) They are affected by you in a way you didn't anticipate, or the attraction is uncomfortably strong – you choose. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- They are attracted to you.
- They forget their woes when experiencing your art.
- They are totally captivated by your art and forget all about their surrounding environment.

Forked Tongue

Whenever you manipulate someone, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) Choose one option:

- They trust you (PC takes **+1 Relation** with you).
- They're spellbound by you (take *+1 ongoing* against them during this scene).
- They reveal a weakness, which you can exploit later.

(10–14) Choose one option from the list above, but there's also a complication, chosen by the GM or player:

- They see you as a friend they can turn to when in need.
- They fall in love with you.
- They will feel betrayed, spurned, humiliated, or manipulated whenever you abuse their trust in you.

(–9) They see right through you and will act as they please.

Impostor

You maintain relationships with numerous people who all believe you are their soulmate, yet are unaware of each other. *Whenever you need money, a safehouse, protection, or other help one of your victims can provide,* describe who they are and **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) They can provide you with whatever you require.

(10–14) One of them might be able to help, but it will take some convincing.

(–9) You know someone who can help, but they have already seen through your game. If you want their assistance it will require threats or blackmail to get them to provide it.

Influential Friends

You have friends with power and influence. *Whenever you need to acquire an object, gain access to a restricted location, or meet a specific person,* **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) Your friends can arrange for what you want.

(10–14) They can arrange for it, but you have to repay the favor later.

(–9) They arrange for what you want, but you get on a powerful person's bad side or attract negative publicity. The GM makes a Move.

• Moles

You have placed a number of moles in groups or organizations of interest to you, such as business competitors, governments, or cults. *Whenever you make contact with one of your moles to acquire info or services*, explain what group or organization the mole belongs to, name them, and then **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) You receive both options below.

(10–14) Choose one of the options below.

(–9) The mole's loyalties are questionable. Can you trust them? The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- The mole has penetrated the organization's inner circle; however, their influence is limited.
- The mole owes you one; however, you must meet their demands to get what you want.

• Network of Contacts

Whenever you check in with your contacts regarding an individual of your choosing, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) You may ask three questions from the list below.

(10–14) You may ask two questions from the list below.

(–9) You may ask one question from the list below, but the person you're inquiring about finds out you're snooping around. The GM makes a Move.

Questions:

- What resources do they have at their disposal?
- Who do they have business dealings with?
- Where can I find them?
- What do they want?
- What are they most afraid of losing?

• Notorious

You are famous in your trade. *Whenever you encounter someone who has likely heard about you*, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) They know of your reputation; you can decide what they have heard. The GM will have them act accordingly. You take +2 *to your next roll* to ***Influence*** them.

(10–14) They know of your reputation; you can decide what they have heard.

(–9) They know of your reputation; the GM decides what they have heard.

• Perpetual Victim

Whenever you appear defenseless during a dangerous experience, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) Choose three options. You may save up to two options for use later during the scene.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) Someone tries to take advantage of you and your position. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Make someone want to take care of you.
- Make an aggressive person want to not harm you.
- Make someone confide in you.

• Seducer

You can consciously make people fall in love with you. *Whenever you have an intimate moment with someone*, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) Choose up to three options, useable any time in the story.

(10–14) Choose up to two options, useable any time in the story.

(–9) Choose one option, useable any time in the story, but you also develop feelings for the person. Increase your **Relation** to them by +1.

Options:

- Give you something you want.
- Reveal a secret.
- Fight to protect you.

NPCs who fall in love with you cannot oppose you, as long as you haven't expended all your options.

Against PCs, you may only choose the following options:

- Make them feel bad for opposing you (they must ***Keep it Together***)
- They feel happy in your presence, and gain **Stability (+2)**.

• Street Contacts

You have contacts among the homeless, crazies, and other societal outsiders and outcasts. *Whenever you need to know something and check in with your contacts*, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) Ask up to three questions.

(10–14) Ask one question.

(–9) Ask one question, but someone becomes suspicious or aggressive. The GM makes a Move.

Questions:

- What do you know about the [building/person/organization/event]?
- What rumors are circulating on the street at the moment?
- How can I get into [location]?
- Who in this city would know more about this supernatural thing?

• Streetwise

Whenever you want to acquire items or services from the criminal underworld, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) No problem – you get what you're after. Someone will fix you right up.

(10–14) The GM chooses one option:

- It will cost you something extra, such as in-kind services, tasks, or an inflated price.
- You can get it handled, but only by dealing with someone you're already indebted to.
- "Shit, I had one, but I just let it go to [insert name] – maybe you can buy it from her?"
- "Sorry, that's a bit outside of my area, but maybe this will work instead?"

(–9) You think you find what you're looking for, but there will be costly stipulations, considerable flaws, or major complications. The GM makes a Move.

Coolness

• Ace up the Sleeve

Whenever someone's got you up against the wall or in a tight spot, **roll +Coolness**:

(15+) Get 2 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(10–14) Get 1 Edge. You may spend it at any time during the scene.

(–9) Get 1 Edge, but the situation is worse than you imagined. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- You have a small, concealed lethal weapon (stiletto or similar), which you can produce unnoticed.
- You realize your opponent has a weakness you can exploit (take *+2 to your next roll*, if it involves exploiting the weakness). Ask the GM what it is.
- You spot a way out. Ask the GM what it is. Take *+2 to your next roll* to make use of it.

• Backstab

Whenever you attack someone who's unprepared for it, **roll +Coolness**:

(15+) Choose two options.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) You expose your betrayal and your target gets to react to your attack as usual. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- *Aim for the sensitive parts:* Deal **+1 Harm**.
- *Knock out:* The NPC is rendered unconcious. PCs roll to ***Endure Injury*** and become neutralized on a **(–9)**.
- *Careful:* You act soundlessly and, if your victim dies, you leave no clues or traces behind.

• Boss

You have five to ten criminal henchmen who are loyal to you, usually for as long as you continue paying them. *Whenever you send your henchmen to do a risky job*, **roll +Coolness**:

(15+) They follow your orders and everything goes according to plan.

(10–14) They follow your orders, but GM picks one option:

- Someone got into trouble.
- The job isn't done, and needs something else to be completed.
- There will be repercussions later on.

(–9) The GM decides what went wrong, and whether it's immediately evident or will become apparent later on. The GM makes a Move.

• Burglar

Whenever you make use of your expertise in breaking and entering, **roll +Coolness**:

(15+) Get three options. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(10–14) Get two options. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(–9) Get one option, but a problem arises. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- You silently open a locked door within a few moments.
- You neutralize an alarm.
- You bust a lockbox or safe in less than two minutes.
- You avoid being discovered by someone.
- Trick someone into believing you belong here (e.g., pretend you're a security guard) for a limited time.

• Driver

You are a trained professional at operating motor vehicles (car or motorcycle). *Whenever you drive your vehicle under pressure and in dangerous situations*, **roll +Coolness**:

(15+) Gain 3 Edges. You may spend them anytime during the scene.

(10–14) Gain 2 Edges. You may spend them anytime during the scene.

(–9) Gain 1 Edge to spend any time during the scene, but the situation worsens somehow – maybe you speed past a police car, additional vehicles start pursuing you, or you or your vehicle is damaged. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- Make a risky maneuver to get out of the way.
- Shake off one pursuing vehicle.
- Use your vehicle as a weapon against a pedestrian (**2/3/4 Harm** depending on speed).
- Sideswipe another vehicle off the road.

• Escape Artist

You are a master at slipping away when the shit hits the fan. *Whenever you need to escape a dangerous situation*, outline your plan and **roll +Coolness**:

(15+) You escape without complications.

(10–14) You can choose to stay or escape at a cost, such as leaving something important behind or take something traceable with you. The GM decides what it is.

(–9) You are only half out the door when you're caught in a really bad spot. The GM makes a Move.

• Fast Talk

Whenever you talk to an NPC to get their attention, **roll +Coolness**:

(15+) Choose two options.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) Choose one option, but they grow suspicious of your motives. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Prevent the NPC from noticing something in her immediate vicinity.
- Get the NPC to disclose something important (the GM will provide the details).
- Distract the NPC. You take *+1 to your next roll* against them.

• Ice Cold

You keep your calm and cool, even in the midst of violence and chaos. *Whenever you are in a violent conflict*, **roll +Coolness**:

(15+) Get 3 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(10–14) Get 2 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(–9) Get 1 Edge, but you attract attention from the hostiles. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- Avoid an attack.
- Manage to snatch something.
- Maneuver into a better position.
- Put someone in a bad position (everyone gets +2 to any attack Moves).

• Improviser

Whenever you attempt to get out of a dangerous situation by winging it, **roll +Coolness**:

(15+) Choose two options.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) Your improvisation makes the situation worse. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Come up with a convincing lie.
- Find something you can use as a makeshift weapon (**2 Harm** chop/stab/crush).
- Hide from a pursuer.
- Set a trap that gives you a surprise advantage (+2 to your first attack Move).

• Parkour

You are deft at running and jumping, even over difficult terrain. *Whenever you execute acrobatic maneuvers*, **roll +Coolness**:

(15+) Choose two options. You may save one until later.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) Choose one option, but a complication, cost, or new threat emerges. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Scale a seemingly impossible obstacle.
- Make a seemingly life-threatening leap without suffering Harm.
- Successfully avoid a threat.

• Sneak

Whenever you keep hidden and try to avoid drawing attention to yourself, **roll +Coolness**:

(15+) Get 2 options. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(10–14) Get 1 option. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(–9) Get 1 option, but you manage to attract someone's attention. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Find a secure hiding spot for a while.
- Find an alternate route to avoid encountering people.
- Bypass a security system or other obstacle without being noticed.

• Weapon Master

You are a master of armed combat or gunplay. Choose your focus:

Armed combat: **Roll +Coolness** instead of **Violence** to ***Engage in Combat*** in close quarters, as well as add the following options for close combat weapons:

- Launching attack [2], [Distance: room]
- Precision attack [2], [Distance: arm, ignores armor]
- Tripping attack [2], [Distance: arm, targets falls prone]

Gunplay: **Roll +Coolness** instead of **Violence** to ***Engage in Combat*** in a firefight, as well as add the following options:

- Two shots in the chest and one in the head [4], [Distance: room, –2 ammo]
- Disarm [1], [Distance: room, –1 ammo, a targeted PC must ***Act Under Pressure***]

Intuition

• Animal Speaker

You are able to understand and control animals. *Whenever you attempt to control an animal,* **roll +Intuition**:

(15+) Choose three options. You may save up to two for later.

(10–14) Choose two options. You may save one for later.

(–9) Choose one option, but the animal is affected by your memories and Disadvantages. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Make the animal go against its instincts.
- Make the animal follow you.
- Make the animal protect you against an attacker.

• Chameleon

Whenever you imitate another's appearance or conceal your own identity to trick someone, **roll +Intuition**:

(15+) Your disguise is convincing, as long as you keep the act going.

(10–14) You manage to trick everyone who doesn't examine you in detail, but choose one complication:

- You can't keep this deception up for very long. You must act fast, if you don't want to risk getting exposed.
- You leave traces and clues behind, which can be connected to you later on.

(–9) Your disguise is only effective at a distance. If you attract any attention to yourself, you will be exposed.

• Character Actor

Whenever you try to blend into a place or crowd by adapting your appearance and behavior to the others present, **roll +Intuition**:

(15+) Choose three options. You may save up to two for later.

(10–14) Choose two options. You may save one for later.

(–9) Choose one option, but things don't go according to plan. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Placate someone who is becoming suspicious.
- Get access to a place outsiders aren't allowed to go.
- Get someone to tell you about this place's secrets.
- Get someone's assistance with something here.

• Crafty

Whenever you manipulate an NPC in a longer conversation, **roll +Intuition**:

(15+) Choose up to two options. You may save one until later during this scene.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) They're on to you. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- They become suspicious of someone else of your choosing.
- They view you as their ally, for as long as you don't betray them (*+1 to all rolls* against them).
- They willingly do a favor for you.

• Extortionist

Whenever you ***Read a Person***, you may choose from these questions in addition to the usual ones:

- What are you afraid of?
- What is precious to you?

• Interrogator

Whenever you ***Read a Person*** *and mention a name, person, or object,* you may always ask "Are you lying?" This doesn't count towards the number of questions you're allowed to normally ask.

• Intuitive

You can sense people's motives through subconscious readings of their body language, word choices, and behavior. *Whenever you* ***Read a Person****,* you may always ask one additional question, regardless of the outcome of your roll.

• Observant

Whenever you ***Read a Person****,* you may choose from these questions in addition to the usual ones:

- What sort of person are you?
- Is there anything odd about you?

• Vigilant

Whenever you ***Read a Person****,* you may choose from these questions in addition to the usual ones:

- Are you hiding anything from me?
- How do you really feel about me?

Perception

• Access the Dark Net

Whenever you search the Dark Net for forbidden information, rare items, or myths, **roll +Perception**:

(15+) You discover what you're looking for, and may also choose one option:

- You discover a portal to another dimension, and a path you can trace back to it later.
- You make contact with someone – or something – who can help you, for the right price.
- You find something valuable or important, in addition to what you were looking for. The GM will tell you what it is.

(10–14) You find what you're looking for, but you're also exposed to repulsive and frightening stimuli. You must ***Keep it Together*** to see how it affects you.

(–9) You find what you're after, but also contact something very dangerous. It might attempt to latch onto you or follow you back into reality. The GM makes a Move.

• Body Awareness

Your body and mind are as one. *Whenever you perform acrobatic or agile feats,* **roll +Perception**:

(15+) Choose one option.

(10–14) Choose one option, but you expose yourself to danger or incur a cost.

(–9) Choose one option, but something goes very wrong. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Escape bindings or restraints.
- Get past an obstacle (creature or object).
- Get into or make it through a space you normally wouldn't be able to.

• Daredevil

Whenever you're entering a dangerous situation, **roll +Perception**:

(15+) Choose three Edges. You may spend them anytime during the scene.

(10–14) Choose two Edges. You may spend them anytime during the scene.

(–9) Choose one Edge, but you are in over your head. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- *Keep your eyes open:* Discover a threat before it discovers you.
- *Get out of the way:* Avoid an attack.
- *Get the jump on them:* Harm your opponent before they can react.

• Exit Strategy

Whenever you have killed someone covertly and leave the scene of the murder, **roll +Perception**:

(15+) You get all three options below.

(10–14) Choose two of the options below.

(–9) Choose one option, but you risk discovery or face unexpected obstacles. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- You leave the scene of the murder unnoticed and reach a safe spot of your choosing in the vicinity. Describe how.
- You have left no clues that can be traced back to you.
- The body is well hidden and will not be found for quite some time.

• Eye for Detail

Whenever you have had time to study somebody for a while, **roll +Perception***:*

(15+) Ask three questions from the list below.

(10–14) Ask two questions from the list below.

(–9) Ask one question from the list below, but you expose your inquisitiveness to the person you're observing. The GM makes a Move.

Questions:

- Where are you from?
- Are you capable of violence?
- How could I seduce or tempt you?
- Why are you here?
- What are you working on?

• Hunter

Whenever you are hunting someone or something, **roll +Perception**:

(15 +) Get three options. You may spend them anytime during this scene.

(10–14) Get two options. You may spend them anytime during this scene.

(–9) Get one option, but you become the prey. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Set up an ambush for your enemy (deal your weapon's **Harm**).
- Camouflage (take +2 to ***Act Under Pressure*** while you are hiding).
- Move in shadows (take +2 to ***Avoid Harm*** dealt with a ranged weapon).

• Instinct

Whenever you ***Observe a Situation*** *and act on the GM's answers,* take **+2** instead of +1.

• Keen-Eyed

Whenever you ***Observe a Situation****,* you may choose from these questions, in addition to the ones normally acquired:

- What weaknesses do they have I can use to my advantage?
- What strengths do they have I should watch out for?

• Read a Crowd

Whenever you move through a small crowd to gather information, **roll +Perception**. Examples of a 'small crowd' include a party, bar/restaurant, or an office. You decide what specific information you are looking for, as long as it makes sense for the crowd to possess such information:

(15+) Ask three questions.

(10–14) Ask two questions, but you also draw unwanted attention to yourself.

(–9) Ask one question, but you've blown your cover. Those who have what you're looking for will be expecting you. The GM makes a Move.

Questions:

- Who here has information I want?
- Where can I find what I am looking for?
- Who is watching me?
- Is there anything else of interest?

• Shadow

When shadowing someone, **roll +Perception**:

(15+) You avoid discovery, follow your target all the way to their final destination, and learn something about them you can use to your advantage later.

(10–14) You avoid discovery and follow your target to their final destination.

(–9) You are spotted or encounter some sort of problem along the way. The GM makes a Move.

In contrast, *whenever you want to lose someone shadowing you,* **roll +Perception**:

(15+) You shake your pursuers and can choose to try to shadow them instead.

(10–14) You shake your pursuers.

(–9) Your pursuers are still on your tail, and they can set up an ambush, disappear without a trace (only to show up when you least expect it), or refuse to go away. The GM makes a Move.

• Survivalist

Whenever you utilize your survivalist skills, **roll +Perception**:

(15+) Choose up to three options, useable while you remain in this situation.

(10–14) Choose up to two options, useable while you remain in this situation.

(–9) Choose one option useable while you remain in this situation, but you've also overlooked something important. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Find water and something edible.
- Make it past an environmental obstacle.
- Find a safe spot to hide and rest.

• Wanderer

Whenever you are heading out to a community or another part of the city, **roll +Perception**:

(15+) You have been here before. Choose two options any time during your visit.

(10–14) You have heard of this place. Choose one option any time during your visit.

(–9) You have been here before, but something bad happened. Choose one option any time during your visit. The GM explains what kind of problem awaits you here and makes a Move.

Options:

- Ask the GM one question about this place.
- You have a contact at this place who could help you, with a bit of convincing.
- You have a hideout here, where you can put your head down and get some rest.
- You know something about this place. Tell the others what.

Reason

• Analyst

Whenever you ***Investigate*** *something,* you may also choose from these additional questions:

- Which organizations, groups, or people of interest may be connected to this?
- Is there a connection between this and another event?
- What could a plausible motive be?

• Battlefield Medicine

Whenever you stabilize an injured person's wounds, even if you don't have access to medical equipment, **roll +Reason**:

(15+) Choose two options.

(10–14) You may choose one option. However, you must also choose one complication:

- You leave cosmetic scars or defects (the patient loses **Stability (–2)**.
- There are lingering side effects (*–1 to all rolls* the wound could feasibly affect until it's fully healed).
- The patient remains knocked out until the GM determines that they awaken.

(–9) You stabilize the wound, even without access to medical equipment, but there are also unexpected and potentially dangerous consequences, such as infections, healing deformities, or other serious side effects. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- *Improvisation:* You stabilize one **Wound** without access to medical equipment.
- *Effective:* You stabilize two **Wounds** instead of one.
- *Careful:* The wound stabilizes and will heal much faster than normal.

• Collector

Whenever you search for an unusual or rare item, **roll +Reason**:

(15+) You know exactly where the item is, how to acquire it, and how to minimize hazards, obstacles, and/or costs.

(10–14) You know roughly where it is and what hazards, obstacles, and/or costs are associated with acquiring it.

(–9) You know roughly where to start searching for it, but not the hazards or costs involved in pursuing it.

• Crime Scene Investigator

Whenever you investigate a crime scene, **roll +Reason** and ask questions from the list below:

(15+) Ask two questions.

(10–14) Ask one question.

(–9) Ask one question, but your investigation leads you into danger or introduces additional problems later on.

Questions:

- What was the chain of events?
- What can I assume about the perpetrator?
- Which mistakes did the perpetrator make?
- When was the crime committed?
- When was someone here last?
- Does the crime remind me of something I am familiar with already and, if so, what?
- Who might know more about the crime?

• Data Retrieval

Whenever you look for information on a subject in a library, research archive, or on the Internet, **roll +Reason**. In response to the inquiries you make, the GM will tell you what you uncover, in as much detail as can be expected from the source you have utilized:

(15+) Ask three questions.

(10–14) Ask two questions.

(–9) Ask one question, but you also discover something unexpected. The GM makes a Move.

Questions:

- What is its origin?
- What is it meant for?
- How does it work?
- What do I have to watch out for?
- How can I stop or destroy this?

• Expert

You are an expert in certain fields of knowledge. *Whenever you* ***Investigate*** *something associated with one of your chosen fields*, you always get to ask one additional question, regardless of the outcome, and may ask any questions you want:

Choose two areas of expertise:

- Archeology
- Economics
- History
- Comparative literature
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Theology
- (Other)

• Explosives Expert

You can build and disarm bombs. *If you have enough time and resources,* you can build any kind of bomb you like. However, *whenever you're building an improvised bomb under time pressure,* **roll +Reason**:

(15+) You construct a functional bomb (see ***Explosives*** in *Chapter 4 – The Player Character*).

(10–14) The bomb's blast potential is lower than usual (decrease Harm dealt by –1).

(–9) The bomb is unpredictable. Maybe it doesn't detonate, detonates prematurely, or it is more powerful and volatile than expected. The GM makes a Move.

When you are disarming a bomb, **roll +Reason**:

(15+) The bomb is deactivated.

(10–14) Complications arise. Maybe you can't completely turn it off, just delay the timer, weaken the explosive effect, or something else turns up and makes thing worse.

(–9) *Fuck, that's not good!* The bomb may go off in your hands, the timer starts counting down from 10, 9, 8, 7..., or even bigger problems occur. The GM makes a Move.

• Hacker

Whenever you penetrate digital networks in the pursuit of confidential data, crack software, or disable security systems, **roll +Reason**:

(15+) You accomplish your task without a problem.

(10–14) Complications arise. Choose one option:

- Someone discovers the intrusion. You must take risks or compromise on how much you're able to accomplish.
- You leave traces of your intrusion.

(–9) Unbeknownst to you, your intrusion didn't work out as you wanted. Maybe you didn't succeed at your task as well as you imagined, or you may have been discovered by personal enemies, law enforcement, or something else lurking in the network. The GM makes a Move.

• Inventor

Whenever you are about to create or repair something, explain what you are about to do. The GM will tell you what you need to succeed, and once you have collected these materials, you may **roll +Reason**:

(15+) The construction is successful and you may pick two options from below.

(10–14) The construction has minor flaws. You may choose one option from below.

(–9) You complete the construction or repair, but it has significant flaws, some of which are hidden. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- *Durable:* The construction can be used multiple times and doesn't break easily.
- *Effective:* The construction confers *+1 on rolls* where it is used for its intended purpose.
- *Lethal:* The construction causes **+1 Harm**.
- *Protective:* The construction confers **+1 armor**.

• Manhunter

Whenever you're out to get information about someone, **roll +Reason**:

(15+) Ask the GM three questions from the list below.

(10–14) Ask the GM two questions from the list below.

(–9) Ask the GM one question from the list below, but someone figures out you've been snooping around.

Questions:

- What is their background?
- What or who do they love most of all?
- Who do they surround themselves with, like, and/or trust?
- Where are they located right now?
- How can I best gain access to them?

• Occult Library

Whenever you are in your library researching the supernatural, **roll +Reason**:

(15+) Ask the GM two questions from the list below.

(10–14) Ask the GM one question from the list below.

(–9) Ask the GM one question from the list below, but you have missed or overlooked something crucial. The GM takes 1 Hold, which can be spent at any time to make a hard or soft Move.

Questions:

- Which higher power does this have connections to?
- What do I need, or need to do, to exorcise or control this being?
- Which dimension is this associated with?
- What must I do to protect myself from this?

• Occult Studies

You are a student of the occult. *Upon coming in contact with a magical discipline, entity, or phenomenon for the first time,* **roll +Reason**:

(15+) Take both options below.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) You have a hazy memory of something like this, but can't say for sure if it's true or not. The GM explains what it is you remember.

Options:

- I know something about this (ask the GM what you know and take *+1 ongoing* while acting on the answers during this scene).
- I know where I can find more information about this (ask the GM where).

• Prepared

Whenever you investigate a location prior to visiting it, **roll +Reason**:

(15+) Choose three options.

(10–14) Choose two options.

(–9) Choose one option, but you have missed or overlooked something crucial. The GM takes 1 Hold, which can be spent at any time to make a hard or soft Move for the location.

Options:

- Find or create a map of the location.
- Uncover any security systems and other obstacles.
- Pinpoint the location of something you're after.

• Puppeteer

Whenever you execute a plan using other people as pawns, **roll +Reason**:

(15+) Everyone involved takes *+1 ongoing* to carry out the plan, and you get one **Experience** if the plan is successful.

(10–14) You get one **Experience** if the plan is successful, but you have overlooked or miscalculated something.

(–9) Your plan is inadequate, revealed, and/or misguided. The GM makes a Move.

• Quick Thinker

Whenever you commence a dangerous mission, **roll +Reason**:

(15+) Choose up to three options, at any time during the mission.

(10–14) Choose up to two options, at any time during the mission.

(–9) At any time during the mission, choose one option, but you've failed to account for something. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Remember something that's advantageous in a negotiation. Ask the GM what it is.
- You possess some equipment you can use to get out of a sticky situation. Ask the GM what it is.
- You have special field training that would be useful in getting past one of your obstacles. Ask the GM what it is.

• Scientist

Whenever you ***Investigate*** *an object or entity using the proper equipment,* you may choose from these following questions, in addition to those acquired through investigation:

Questions:

- What properties does this have? (take *+1 to any rolls* against entities or objects of a similar type next time you encounter it).
- How do I make use of this? (take *+1 to any rolls* associated with using the object).
- What is its purpose?

• Tracer

Whenever you utilize your intelligence networks to trace someone or something, **roll +Reason**:

(15+) Ask up to three of the questions below.

(10–14) Ask up to two of the questions below.

(–9) Ask one of the questions, but someone notices you snooping around. It might be someone you'd rather not be known by, or a traitor inside your network.

Questions:

- Where in the world was this seen last?
- What people have associated themselves with what I'm looking for lately?
- What tracks and marks has it left behind?
- Who else is trying to find what I'm looking for?

Soul

• Artifact

You own a seemingly mundane item, which actually possesses mystical powers. Its powers can be activated through certain methods, such as infusing it with blood or whispering forbidden words (you decide what is required). *Whenever you activate the object*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose one option (the GM determines what happens).

(10–14) Choose one option (the GM determines what happens). However, the artifact also exacts an additional price (the GM determines what is required).

(–9) The artifact does something unexpected, possibly dangerous. The GM makes a Move.

Suggested options:

The GM may wish to modify this list of options, either on their own or by working together with the player to come up with what exactly the PC's artifact can do.

- See the true form of a creature or location.
- Receive a vision of what threatens you.
- Get yourself out of a bind.
- Call on the entity bound to the artifact and bargain with them.

• Bound

You are bound to an extradimensional entity whose powers you can draw upon. Explain what you think it is. *At the start of each game session*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) You may choose up to three options at any time during the session.

(10–14) You may choose one option at any time during the session.

(–9) You may choose one option at any time during the session, but the GM makes a Move for the entity at some point during the session.

Options:

- See the true form of a creature or location.
- Disperse magic targeting you.
- Call on the entity.

• Charismatic Aura

You radiate an aura that makes people trust you and seek your company. *Whenever your aura is truly noticeable*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose two separate options.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) Choose one option, but you also attract unwanted attention. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Catch a stranger's attention. They become curious and approach you.
- Change a person's disposition towards you from either aggressive to suspicious, suspicious to neutral, or neutral to positive.
- Make opponents perceive you as harmless and ignore you for as long as you remain in the background and do not act against them.

• Contagious Insanity

Whenever you allow your madness to infect someone you're speaking with, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose two options.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) Your intended victim's own terrors and Dark Secrets manifest within you, instead. You must ***Keep it Together***.

Options:

- Afflict your victim with a temporary psychosis, in which they are haunted by their fears (NPCs only).
- Trigger a Disadvantage within another person (PCs only, roll for the Disadvantage).
- Affect an additional victim.
- Call for creatures of madness to haunt the infected.

• Cult Leader

Whenever you and your followers perform a ritual, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose to receive up to three visions from the list below.

(10–14) Choose to receive up to two visions from the list below.

(–9) Choose one vision, but the Illusion tears as a result. You may temporarily be transported into another dimension, attract a demonic being's attention, or receive a horrifying omen. The GM makes a Move.

Visions:

- A creature's true form.
- A portal between dimensions.
- The cult's enemies.
- The purpose of an object.
- Your deity's wishes (take *+1 to all rolls* while fulfilling their wishes).

• Dabbler in the Occult

You know a little of magical rituals, but have never gone beyond performing written instructions. *Whenever you attempt to perform a magical ritual from a set of instructions*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) You perform every step correctly; the ritual works as intended.

(10–14) You make a minor error. The GM chooses one complication:

- You do not have working protection against the forces or entities the ritual summons.
- The effects of the ritual are slightly different than what you had imagined.
- The ritual summons unexpected entities or forces.

(–9) You misunderstand the scripture and perform the ritual with no control whatsoever over the resulting outcome. The GM makes a Move.

• Divine

There is something about you that reminds your former servants of what you truly are. *Whenever you encounter a monstrous creature*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) The creature mistakes you for a god. Choose up to three options, useable any time during this scene.

(10–14) You are fascinating to the creature. Choose one option.

(–9) You may choose one option, but after using it the creature becomes determined to possess you. It might try to devour you or perhaps capture you. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Soothe an aggressive creature.
- Command the creature and force it to obey your order.

• Dreamer

You are a talented, self-taught dream wanderer. *Whenever you want to meet someone or find out the truth about something in the Dream*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) You meet the intended person or arrive at the specific place in the Dream.

(10–14) You meet the intended person, or arrive at the specific place. However, some element has changed, or something followed you or the person in question.

(–9) You are lost in the Dream and cannot wake up until you find your way back.

• Enhanced Awareness

When you focus your senses at a location where the Illusion is weak, **roll +Soul**. On a success, you have visions about the place and may be able to speak to entities tied to it:

(15+) You can discern clear details regarding the location.

(10–14) You get some basic impressions regarding the location.

(–9) The Illusion tears. The veil is lifted temporarily, revealing an alternate dimension – the GM determines which one. The PC could be sucked into it or something may cross over into our reality. The GM makes a Move.

• Exorcist

Whenever you perform an exorcism to banish a spirit or extradimensional creature, explain what the ritual looks like and **roll +Soul**:

(15+) The creature is banished. Choose two options.

(10–14) The creature is banished. Choose one option.

(–9) The creature resists banishment and something goes terribly wrong, such as the creature possessing you. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Nobody is harmed during the ritual.
- The entity will not reappear later.
- The entity will not become hostile toward you.

• Forbidden Inspiration

Whenever you dive deep into your art and allow yourself to be inspired by the Truth, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose two options.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) You have gazed too deeply into the abyss. Choose one option, but you also experience terrifying visions or encounter something horrible. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- *Enticement:* Entice an entity to come to you.
- *Visions:* ***See Through the Illusion*** into a specific place of your choice.
- *Inspiration:* Ask the GM if there is anything strange or supernatural about the situation you're in. The answer will be revealed through your art.

• Genius

Whenever you find yourself in a life-threatening situation, **roll +Soul** to see if you can discover a way out:

(15+) Choose up to three Edges, useable any time in the scene, while you're still in danger.

(10–14) Choose up to two Edges, useable any time in the scene, while you're still in danger.

(–9) Choose one Edge, but you also attract unwanted attention. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- *Logical:* You realize an effective way to dispose of the threat. Deal **+1 Harm** whenever you exploit it.
- *Quick thinker:* You realize how to protect yourself from Harm. Treat it as if you'd rolled a **(15+)** on ***Avoid Harm*** whenever you exploit it.
- *Rational:* You realize how to save yourself by sacrificing someone else. Pick the person you utilize to escape the threat.

• Implanted Messages

Whenever you experiment on a human, you may implant an order into them. **Roll +Soul**:

(15+) You hold 2 Power over them.

(10–14) You hold 1 Power over them.

For as long as you retain Power over them, they take **1 Serious Wound** should they refuse or attempt to go against your order, but this loosens your grip over them by 1 Power. If they fulfill your order, all your remaining Power over them is removed.

(–9) Something goes wrong, such as they get hurt in the process or the order's outcome is different than what you imagined. The GM makes a Move.

• Inner Power

You harbor a mysterious power, which you do not fully understand. The power can protect you, but you have no control over it. *Whenever you release your inner power*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) The power attacks all opponents in your vicinity, causing **2 Harm**.

(10–14) The power attacks your closest opponent, causing **2 Harm**.

(–9) The power attacks *all* living beings, including yourself, in the vicinity, causing **2 Harm**.

• Lay on Hands

You are able to heal others' wounds without using medicine or first aid, but you must channel the injuries onto yourself or another living victim. To transfer the **Wound**, you must be able to see the victim, but not touch them and they are not required to consent. The wound transferred is of the same type, severity, and condition as the original. *Whenever you lay your hands on a seriously or critically wounded person and pray*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) You fully heal the injured person, channeling the **Wound** onto yourself or a selected target.

(10–14) You stabilize the injured, channeling the **Wound** onto yourself or a selected target.

(–9) You may choose to stabilize the injured, but if you do, the powers break free from your control.

• Magical Intuition

You have an innate ability to perceive Kirlian auras and sense the presence of magic. *Whenever you utilize your magical intuition*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose up to three options. Up to two may be saved until later this scene.

(10–14) Choose up to two options. One may be saved until later this scene.

(–9) Choose one option, but you also get an unexpected vision or attract attention. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Learn something about a creature's true nature.
- Learn if something has a magical nature.
- Learn where the Illusion is weakest towards other dimensions.

• Magnetic Attraction

Whenever you attract everyone's attention, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose up to three options. You may save up to two until later in the scene.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) Choose one option, but someone present becomes obsessed, wanting to have you, keep you, and own you for themselves. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- People forget what they're doing and can do nothing but stare at you.
- Draw someone to you.
- Get someone to do what you ask.

• Sixth Sense

You have an intuition for things, both good and bad. *At the start of each game session*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose up to three options, useable any time during the session.

(10–14) Choose up to two options, useable any time during the session.

(–9) Your instincts will fail to trigger in a dangerous situation. The GM makes a Move at some point during the session.

Options:

- Act first in a threatening situation. This can include even acting prior to a surprise attack.
- Sense whether someone wishes good or ill towards you.
- Discover or sense a clue or lead when you're off track.

• Snake Charmer

Whenever you perform your chosen art form for an intelligent, monstrous creature, **roll +Soul** to awaken a desire within them:

(15+) Choose one option immediately, and you may choose up to two more any time in the future.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) The desire is beyond the creature's ability to regulate. It cannot help but attempt to devour or imprison you.

Options:

- Ask the creature for help with a problem.
- Ask the creature for something you desire.

• Stubborn

Whenever you push yourself to the limit to overcome a threat, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Get 3 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(10–14) Get 2 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(–9) Get 1 Edge, but you push yourself past your breaking point. Decrease **Stability (–2)**.

Edges:

- *Refuse to give up:* Postpone the effects of a critical injury until you have made it out of the threat's reach.
- *Will over skill:* **Roll +Willpower** instead of the normal attribute whenever you avoid or fight whatever is threatening you.
- *Steel yourself:* Break free from a supernatural effect.

• Voice of Insanity

Whenever you manipulate a crowd, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose up to three options, useable any time during this scene.

(10–14) Choose up to two options, useable any time during this scene.

(–9) Choose one option, useable any time during this scene. However, the crowd becomes uncontrollable and volatile, and cannot be dispersed. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Attract other people to join in the crowd.
- Have crowd members give you all their valuables.
- Unite the crowd to fight for you.
- Incite the crowd into an orgy of unbridled emotion: sexual lust, anger, sorrow, violence, generosity, or celebrating, depending on what concepts you are instilling into them.
- Have the crowd disperse and calmly return to their normal lives.

• Voice of Pain

The first time you are seriously or critically wounded by an opponent's attack, you can gain insight from your pain. **Roll +Soul**:

(15+) You get two options.

(10–14) Choose one option.

(–9) Choose one option, but the pain will overwhelm you eventually and make you black out.

Options:

- You realize how to get through your opponent's defenses (take +1 to ***Engage in Combat*** with them).
- You find your opponent's weak spot (deal **+1 Harm** whenever you ***Engage in Combat*** with them).
- You perceive your opponent's pattern of attack (take +1 to ***Avoid Harm*** whenever they attack you).

These effects are permanent against this opponent.

• Wayfinder

Whenever you travel between two places in the city and allow your madness to guide you through the alleys, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) You discover a shortcut through the alleys, which takes you to your destination within a few minutes, regardless of how far the distance actually is.

(10–14) You discover a shortcut, but there is also some sort of obstacle you will need to get past.

(–9) You discover a shortcut, but it leads you into a dangerous situation, such as the lair of some creature or an ambush set by some gang. The GM makes a Move.

Violence

• Deadly Stare

Whenever you find yourself in a charged situation, **roll +Violence**:

(15+) You make eye contact with an NPC, causing them to freeze up and be unable to take any actions until you break eye contact. You also get *+2 ongoing* against your target.

(10–14) You make eye contact with an NPC, causing them to freeze up and be unable to take any actions until you break eye contact.

(–9) Your opponents see you as their primary threat.

• Death Drive

Whenever you fight with no regard for your personal safety, **roll +Violence**:

(15+) Get 3 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(10–14) Get 2 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(–9) Get 1 Edge, but afterwards you discover you have been injured without noticing it (***Endure Injury***; the GM determines the amount of Harm based on who attacked you and how).

Edges:

- *Eager:* ***Engage*** an additional hostile ***in Combat***.
- *Vicious:* deal **+2 Harm** with one attack.
- *Frantic:* get within reach to attack a hostile.
- *Reckless:* frighten your opponents by laughing into the face of death (*+1 ongoing* during the fight).

• Enforcer

Whenever you credibly threaten someone directly or suggestively, **roll +Violence**:

(15+) They must decide to either do what you want or defy you with the knowledge that you can execute your threat.

(10–14) You must give them a third option. Choose one:

- They offer you something they think you'd rather have.
- Retreat from the scene.
- They are terrorized; you have *+1 ongoing* on all rolls against them until they've proven they're not afraid of you.
- They attack you from a disadvantaged position. You take *+2 on your roll* to ***Engage in Combat*** if you counterattack.

(–9) Turns out you didn't have the advantage you thought you did. The GM makes a Move.

• Field Agent

You have been trained by an intelligence agency to fight in the field. *Whenever you enter combat*, **roll +Violence**:

(15+) Get 3 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(10–14) Get 2 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(–9) Get 1 Edge, but you have made a bad call. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- *Take cover:* avoid a ranged attack by diving behind an object or a person.
- *Choke hold:* lock a human opponent in a grip they cannot get out of without taking **1 Harm**.
- *Disarm:* remove an opponent's weapon in close combat.
- *Improvised weapon:* execute a lethal, close-combat attack with a seemingly innocuous object (Surprise Strike [2] [Distance: arm]).

• Gang Leader

You're the boss of a small gang of criminals. *Whenever you give your gang orders that are risky and/or may result in them paying a high price*, **roll +Violence**:

(15+) They enact your orders without question.

(10–14) They do as you want, but there is a complication (choose one):

- One of them defies you in front of the others.
- They will all be disgruntled for some time.

(–9) Problems arise. Maybe something goes wrong when carrying out your orders, or they doubt your abilities as a leader. The GM makes a Move.

• Intimidating

There is something about you that instinctively makes others fear you. *Whenever you're trying to frighten another person*, **roll +Violence**:

(15+) They succumb to fear and give in to your demands.

(10–14) They run away from you or give in to you, GM's choice.

(–9) They see you as their primary threat and act accordingly. The GM makes a Move for them.

• Lightning Fast

Whenever you move unexpectedly fast in combat, **roll +Violence**:

(15+) Get 3 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(10–14) Get 2 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(–9) Get 1 Edge, but you also end up in a bad spot or face unexpected resistance. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- *Dodge:* avoid an attack.
- *Blinding speed:* ***Engage in Combat*** with every opponent within reach of your weapon as a single attack. If you're attacking with a firearm, this uses up all its ammo.
- *Uncanny precision:* hit your opponent's weak spot. Deal **+1 Harm**.

• Martial Arts Expert

Whenever you're fighting in close quarters, **roll +Violence**:

(15+) Get 2 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(10–14) Get 1 Edge.

(–9) Get 1 Edge, but you underestimate your opponents, who may be more numerous or skilled than you first assumed. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- *Block:* avoid a melee attack.
- *Roundhouse strike:* ***Engage in Combat*** against several opponents surrounding you, counting as a single attack.
- *Disarm:* remove an opponent's weapon.
- *Throw:* reposition an opponent or drop them to the ground.

• Officer

Whenever you are in combat with at least one ally by your side, **roll +Violence**:

(15+) Get 3 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(10–14) Get 2 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(–9) You misjudge the situation. Choose whether you have put yourself or one of your allies in harm's way. The GM makes a Move for your opponent.

Edges:

- *Attack!:* One ally gets *+2 to their next roll* to ***Engage in Combat***.
- *Coordinate fire!:* All allies get *+1 to their next roll* to ***Engage in Combat*** with firearms while in the fight.
- *Aim for the head!:* You or one of your allies' ***Engage in Combat*** deals **+1 Harm**.
- *Take cover!:* You or an ally receive **2 Armor** against a ranged attack.

• Ruthless

Whenever you sacrifice another to save your own skin, **roll +Violence**:

(15+) Get 3 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(10–14) Get 2 Edges.

(–9) Things turns out in a bad way for you instead. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- *Human shield:* force them to take all the **Harm** from one attack for you.
- *Bait:* expose someone to danger so you can flank an enemy (deal **+1 Harm**).
- *Sacrifice:* Leave them to the enemy while you slip away.

• Sniper

Whenever you fire at a distant target utilizing a scoped rifle, **roll +Violence**:

(15+) The shot finds its target. Choose two options.

(10–14) The shot finds its target. Choose one option.

(–9) The shot didn't go where you intended it to, or you reveal your position to the enemy – expect witnesses, opponents pursuing you as you leave the scene, or other problems. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Deal **+1 Harm**.
- Hit another target as well.
- Immobilize your target.
- Get the target to lose control of something.
- You don't reveal your position.

• Streetfighter

Whenever you fight in close combat, **roll +Violence**:

(15+) Get 3 Edges. You may spend them any time during the scene.

(10–14) Get 2 Edges, but the GM also gets to pick one complication:

- You risk losing control during the fight (***Keep it Together*** to prevent it).
- You earn an enemy, who will try to get back at you later.

(–9) You're unfocused and lose control. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- *Dodge:* avoid an attack.
- *Flurry of blows:* take *+2 on your roll* to attack an opponent.
- *Dirty strike:* momentarily stun an opponent by painfully striking them, e.g. on the eye, crotch, or ear...

• Survival Instinct

Whenever you suffer a serious or critical injury yet refuse to yield, **roll +Violence**. On a success, you may temporarily ignore the effects of the injuries, but you will need treatment to stabilize them as soon as the time limit expires:

(15+) You ignore your injuries until the conflict is over, as well as choose one:

- *Viciousness*: *+1 ongoing* to ***Engage in Combat*** rolls for the remainder of the fight.
- *Adrenaline rush*: *+1 ongoing* to ***Endure Injury*** rolls for the remainder of the fight.

(10–14) You ignore your injuries until the conflict is over.

(–9) You overexert yourself and after a few moments your injuries cause you to pass out and collapse. After your next action, the GM decides when and how you pass out.

No Associated Attribute

• Arcane Researcher

Whenever you venture into alternate planes of existence or meet entities from other dimensions, you may declare that you have read about this dimension or creature before. Ask the GM what you learned from your past studies.

• At any Cost

Whenever you truly desire something, you may take +2 to a roll by decreasing **Stability (–2)**.

• Code of Honor

You abide by a strict code of honor. Decide its nature. *Whenever you take risks or make sacrifices for your code of honor*, gain **Stability (+1)**.

• Dead Shot

You are a seasoned marksman. Any Harm you deal with a firearm is considered **+1 Harm**.

• Desperate

Whenever you try to make it through overwhelming odds, take *+1 on all rolls* until you're clear of the threat.

• Divine Champion

Whenever you fight your deity's enemies or *fight to protect a sacred object*, you do **+1 Harm** and take +1 to ***Endure Injury***. *If you lose such a battle*, your deity becomes irate, and you take *–1 ongoing* to all actions related to your deity until you have atoned for your failure.

• Elite Sport

You've competed professionally in a sport, through which you have received stipends to fund your studies. Choose a sport:

- *Fencing:* When using swords, you can make the attack, Riposte [3], [Distance: arm, attack immediately after parrying], and you have a rapier [Stabbing weapon] at home.
- *Baseball/Cricket/Football/Soccer/Tennis:* You take *+1 ongoing* while running, throwing, or catching objects.
- *Ice hockey:* You take *+1 to rolls* to ***Endure Injury*** against close combat attacks.

• Endure Trauma

You are not as easily affected by trauma as others. *Whenever you reduce* **Stability**, you always lose 1 fewer level than normal.

• Eye for an Eye

Whenever you suffer a serious or critical injury, name the person you feel is responsible. You get *+2 ongoing* to all rolls against them, forever. All rolls targeting the person count, but rolls targeting the person's family, friends, minions, and property only count if the GM feels they're applicable.

• Good Samaritan

Whenever you help another at your own expense, gain **Stability (+1)**.

• Gritted Teeth

Abuse, violence, self-harm, and assaults have become familiar, and the pain hardly affects you at all anymore. You suffer no penalties from wounds, whether serious or critical.

• Grudge

When someone directly or indirectly ruins your plans, you take *+1 ongoing* against them until you have taken revenge or received restitution of equal worth to what you lost.

• Hardened

You take *+1 ongoing* to ***Endure Injury***.

• Jaded

Whenever you roll **(10–14)** *to* ***Keep it Together***, you may suppress your emotions and postpone their effects until the next scene.

• Manipulative

Whenever you do someone a favor or *learn one of their secrets*, you may later choose one of the options below, by reminding them of your prior services or hint at the secret you know:

- Take +2 to ***Influence*** them.
- Take +2 to ***Hinder*** them.

• Opportunist

Whenever you sacrifice someone else to further your own goals, gain **Stability (+1)**.

• Rage

When in combat, you may awaken your inner rage. Lose **Stability (–1)** and mark 1 Rage. Every time you get a wound and every time you defeat a foe, increase Rage **(+1)**. Rage lasts until the end of the combat.

During combat, you may spend 1 Rage to choose 1 Edge:

- *Brutal assault:* take **+1 Harm** to your attack.
- *Ignore the pain:* take +2 to ***Endure Injury***.
- *Lost in frenzy:* shake off and ignore psychological or supernatural influence.

• Sealed Fate (requires the Disadvantage Condemned)

Whenever you are dealt a **Critical Wound**, you may mark 1 Time from Condemned to immediately stabilize the **Wound**.

Whenever you die, mark 2 Time from Condemned and reawaken, injured and weak, but alive. All your **Wounds** will be stabilized.

• Thirst for Knowledge

Whenever you learn new information about alternate planes of existence, a supernatural entity, or a Higher Power, gain **Stability (+1)**.

• To the Last Breath (requires the Disadvantage Condemned)

When you refuse to give in even if the odds turn against you, mark 1 Time to reroll the dice.

• Watchers

You are being watched over and protected by a group of mysterious people who intend on keeping you alive for their own obscure purposes. *Whenever you are in mortal danger*, you can activate your watchers. If you do, the GM takes 1 Hold. The watchers act as a small/medium/large gang (**2/3/3 Harm**, **5/10/15 Wounds**), dependent on how powerful the threat is. Their sole motivation is to keep you out of harm's reach. The GM can also spend Hold on the watchers' behalf to let them make a Move against you.

• Workaholic

Whenever you create something or carry out an experiment, gain **Stability (+1)**.

• Worldly

Whenever you arrive at a new location in the mundane world, decide whether you have been here before, and if so, name some detail about the place significant to you. Also, decide if you met someone there and what you left behind. The GM will say what has changed since then.

CHAPTER 4

THE PLAYER CHARACTER

WHEN THE PLAYER CHARACTERS INTERACT WITH THE world and try to push towards their goals, it's inevitable that they will sooner or later come into conflict with things stopping them from getting what they want. The player characters want to flee from their pursuers in a risky car chase through the city, someone wants to persuade a stubborn person to reveal what she knows, a cryptic crime scene shows to be a greater challenge than the investigator expected, the PC tries to convince the suspicious police officer with a convincing lie. The conflicts that can arise in a story are limitless. However, this chapter will give you rules, so called player Moves, that help you resolve the most frequently appearing conflicts in a story of *KULT: Divinity Lost*.

Attributes

There are ten Attributes, each with associated Moves. The Attributes modify the die rolls of player Moves and Advantages. Attributes and their Moves are either **passive** (triggered automatically when conditions are met) or **active** (triggered by a character taking a certain action).

Passive Attributes

Passive Attributes are used to resist external and internal influences. The player Moves associated with passive Attributes are triggered when the character is threatened. When creating the PC, the player distributes adjustment values of +2, +1, and 0 across the passive Attributes. There are three passive Attributes: **Fortitude**, **Willpower**, and **Reflexes**.

Fortitude measures the character's physical resistance, pain threshold, and stress response when suffering physical injury. A PC with high **Fortitude** is capable of enduring injuries that would drop a character with lower **Fortitude**.

Willpower measures the character's mental resilience, composure, peace of mind, and capacity for working through trauma. A PC with high **Willpower** can resist the terrifying influence of earthly and supernatural powers alike and remain sane.

Reflexes measures the character's quickness, responsiveness, and physical instinct when assaulted or when at risk of injury. A PC with high **Reflexes** is better at getting out of harm's way.

Active Attributes

Active Attributes are used when a PC acts proactively. The player Moves associated with active Attributes triggers when the PC takes a certain action in the story. When creating the PC, the player distributes adjustment values of +3, +2, +1, +1, 0, −1, and −2 across the active Attributes.

There are seven active Attributes: **Reason**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Coolness**, **Violence**, **Charisma**, and **Soul**.

Reason measures the character's analytical ability. A PC with high **Reason** is good at information gathering and investigation.

Intuition measures the character's empathy and gut feeling. An Intuitive PC is good at reading the intentions and hidden motives held by other intelligent creatures.

Perception measures the character's alertness. A Perceptive PC is good at scanning environments and taking notice of what others overlook.

Coolness measures the character's grace under pressure. A Cool PC is good at stealth, theft, and other situations demanding quick decisions under stress.

Violence measures the character's raw strength, fighting expertise, and viciousness. A Violent PC excels at inflicting harm on others.

Charisma measures the character's charm, leadership, and rhetorical talent. A Charismatic PC easily persuades and manipulates others.

Soul measures how sensitive the character is to supernatural forces. A PC with high **Soul** has an easier time perceiving Reality and is more attuned to their intrinsic powers.

Player Moves

Player Moves are Moves available to all PCs. When a character executes an action in the story triggering a Move, their player rolls two ten-sided dice and references the Move's instructions to determine what happens, depending on the roll's outcome. The gamemaster (GM) describes this outcome in the story, and in some cases make her own follow-up Moves.

How Moves Work

Trigger: Player Moves always begin with a phrase describing what circumstance triggers the Move, for example: "*When enduring injuries...*" or "*When you investigate something...*" Any time the character takes an action that matches a trigger phrase, the player executes the associated Move.

Roll: Player Moves include a roll modifier. These are bolded to make them stand out, for example: "**roll +Violence**" or "**roll +Fortitude −Harm**". The player rolls two ten-sided dice, adds up their results, and finally subtracts or adds the modifiers. Occasionally this value will be 0, in which case the roll remains unmodified.

Outcomes: A player Move will have different outcomes, depending on if the total is **15 or greater** (*complete success*), **10 to 14** (*success with complications*), or **9 or below** (*failure*). The player Move states what happens in the case of each level of success.

When the roll is a *complete success* **(15+)**, the character accomplishes their goal with no complications.

When the roll is a *success with complications* **(10–14)**, the character accomplishes their goal, but their success is accompanied by complications in the form of a hard choice, costs, or subsequent troubles. For example, if they're fighting someone in close combat, they might be able to inflict injury on their opponent, but not without also sustaining harm themselves; or they successfully uncover what happened to the crime victim while investigating the apartment, but are also caught in the act by the cops.

When the roll is a *failure* **(–9)**, the character's action may be unsuccessful and likely has negative consequences. Even with a failure, the character might partially accomplish their goal, but the GM may additionally make one of her GM Moves.

Moves must always push the narrative forward. Regardless of the outcome, the story takes a new turn after characters execute Moves.

All player Moves are described below. Following the presentation of each Move is an explanation of how its trigger and effects work in more detail. This is primarily useful for the GM to understand when to call for a Move and how to describe its effects in the story.

• Avoid Harm

When you dodge, parry, or block Harm, **roll +Reflexes**:

(15+) You emerge completely unharmed.

(10–14) You avoid the worst of it, but the GM decides if you end up in a bad spot, lose something, or partially sustain **Harm**.

(–9) You were too slow to react or you made a bad judgment call. Perhaps you didn't avoid any **Harm** at all, or you ended up in an even worse spot than before. The GM makes a Move.

Activation: "*When you dodge, parry, or block Harm*" means the PC must be under attack or in a situation where she's about to be attacked in order to ***Avoid Harm***. Some possible situations include ducking out of the way to dodge a blow, attempting to block an incoming axe with the barrel of your rifle, or running for cover just as a bomb is exploding.

Effect: On a *complete success* **(15+)**, the PC avoids the incoming **Harm** entirely. They may even end up in an advantageous position, if the GM finds it appropriate.

On a *success with complications* **(10–14)**, the PC has avoided significant **Harm**, but the GM chooses whether they end up in a bad spot, lose something, or sustain partial **Harm**.

Ending up in a bad spot means the PC avoids being harmed, but find themselves in a disadvantageous position. For example, she may avoid the attack but trip and fall with her opponent on top of her, get pushed into a corner, become surrounded by her enemies, or be forced to duck behind cover (or an ally).

Losing something means the PC loses something they have while avoiding harm. For example, her weapon might shatter as she parries the blow (loss of a weapon), something fell out of her pocket while she ducked to the side (loss of an object), or got separated from her allies as she ran out of the way of incoming gunfire (loss of allies).

Sustaining partial **Harm** means the PC suffer some of the **Harm**, perhaps a minor injury at **1 Harm** or a subtraction of 1–2 levels. For example, she might divert her opponent's weapon so the blow isn't as bad, leap to the side just in time but is struck by a ricochet, or manage to reduce the explosion's full impact by falling flat on the ground.

On a *failure* **(–9)**, the PC reacts too slowly or miscalculates. The GM can choose to deal the full amount of **Harm** to the PC, or allow them to get out of harm's way but not without ending up in a far worse situation. For example, the PC ducks out of the way of her opponent's punch but gives another one the opportunity to jump onto her from behind, she parries her opponent's blow but is pushed down a flight of stairs by the force of the impact, she leaps behind cover only to find something even worse lurking in there, or she avoids the bomb's explosion but realizes the ceiling is about to collapse. The GM could also impose a psychological consequence, such as the PC leaping out of the way of the explosion, only to hear his best friend screaming in shock, staring down at where her legs used to be.

• Endure Injury

When enduring an injury, **roll +Fortitude –Harm**. If you are wearing armor, add its rating to the roll:

(15+) You ride out the pain and keep going.

(10–14) You are still standing, but the GM picks one condition:

- The injury throws you off balance.
- You lose something.
- You receive a **Serious Wound**.

(–9) The injury is overwhelming. You choose if you:

- Are knocked out (the GM may also choose to inflict a **Serious Wound**).
- Receive a **Critical Wound**, but may continue to act (if you already have a **Critical Wound**, you may not choose this option again).
- Die.

Serious Wounds

Serious Wounds requires appropriate care and time to heal, but will not get worse on their own. Alcohol and painkillers can remove the penalty **Serious Wounds** impose, if only temporarily. A PC can suffer four **Serious Wounds** at most. Additional **Serious Wounds** are considered **Critical Wounds**.

Examples of **Serious Wounds** include: lacerated arm, facial contusions, broken ribs, bone-deep cut, concussion, profuse bleeding, broken fingers, or sprained ankle.

Critical Wounds

Critical Wounds will not heal on their own, and will get worse if left untreated. A critically wounded character must acquire urgent medical care if they wish to live. Once a **Critical Wound** has been stabilized and given time to heal, it's considered a stabilized **Serious Wound**.

Examples of **Critical Wounds** include: punctured lung, severed aorta, intestinal evisceration, severed genitalia, ruptured eyeball, shattered collarbone, internal bleeding, spinal cord damage, or cerebral hemorrhage.

Wound penalties

Any PC suffering from non-stabilized **Serious** or **Critical Wounds** are subjected to the penalties below.

The PC suffers from	Deduction
... **Serious Wounds** (non-stabilized)	*–1 ongoing*
... **Critical Wounds**	*–1 ongoing*
... both **Serious** and **Critical Wounds**	*–2 ongoing*

Activation: "*When enduring an injury*" means ***Endure Injury*** triggers in all situations where the PC is exposed to something capable of causing them physical injury.

Roll: **Fortitude** is added to the ***Endure Injury*** roll, but the Harm value of the attack is subtracted from it. If the PC is protected by some form of armor, its value is added to the roll as well. Some Advantages also provide bonuses to ***Endure Injury***.

Effect: On a *complete success* **(15+)**, the PC does not sustain any serious injuries. She might get away scot free or merely sustain a few scratches and blemishes, which don't impede her in any meaningful way.

On a *success with complications* **(10–14)**, the PC is still in action, but the GM chooses whether she is unbalanced, loses something, or sustains a **Serious Wound**.

Unbalanced means the PC is shaken or dazed. While in this state, they might fail to take notice of important details or must ***Act Under Pressure*** to pull off actions they'd usually have no problems with.

Lose something means the PC loses something of theirs or loses their grip on something they're holding such as a weapon, a phone, or their grip on someone's hand. This is determined by the GM.

A **Serious Wound** is any significant injury which disadvantages the PC but is not lethal. A PC can suffer multiple **Serious Wounds**. The wound requires treatment with first aid before it can start healing, and prior to this inflicts any PC with *–1 on all rolls*. If the PC has sustained multiple **Serious Wounds**, each of them needs to be stabilized with first aid before the penalty disappears. The PC can temporarily negate these penalties for the scene's duration by drinking alcohol or taking painkilling drugs.

On a *failure* **(–9)**, the PC has sustained an overwhelming and dangerous injury. The player chooses whether their character is *knocked out* (with the risk of sustaining a **Serious Wound**), sustains a **Critical Wound**, or *die*. A PC can only suffer one **Critical Wound**; if they already have one, they must choose either *knocked out* or *dead*.

Knocked out means the PC sustains an injury causing her to lose consciousness, panic, or become paralyzed by shock. At the GM's option, this could be a **Serious Wound**. The PC will be unable to act until stabilized with first aid, or until the GM deems them able to regain control. It is important the GM respects the player's choice and doesn't make being *knocked out* lead to an automatic death sentence. It should be considered as an opportunity for creating interesting obstacles for the PC and building tension. For example, if a PC is *knocked out* by a monstrous creature, they might be dragged back to its lair, a gangster might tie the character to a chair in a soundproof basement, and so on.

A **Critical Wound** is an injury causing unimaginable pain and shock, posing a serious obstacle to the PC's ability to act, and will probably lead to death, unless the injury is stabilized as soon as possible (ranging from mere seconds up to a few minutes, if the GM is generous and deems it reasonable). Although the player chooses for their character to sustain a **Critical Wound**, the GM determines the nature of the injury. Ensure they're excruciatingly painful, as taking a **Critical Wound** should not be a comfortable option to choose. For as long as the PC has a **Critical Wound**, they suffer *–1 on all rolls*. **Critical Wounds** often impose handicaps on the PC, even after they've healed but this effect is represented as narrative details, rather than a negative modifier. For example, an amputated hand might mean the PC has a harder time climbing, a cerebral hemorrhage might mean she gets blinding migraines from time to time, a shattered kneecap forces her to walk with a limp and cane, and so on.

Dead means the PC perishes from their injuries. The player describes how the PC dies and takes a moment to say a few last words and, if appropriate, even perform one last action before they die. If the characters have access to advanced medical equipment available, a GM should allow another PC to try to resuscitate the character, such as using a defibrillator to restart their heart.

First Aid Treatment of Serious and Critical Wounds

Providing first aid to another PC to stabilize **Serious** or **Critical Wounds** is considered ***Acting Under Pressure*** if the PC is working under time pressure, in distracting surroundings, or dealing with immediate threats. If that's not the case, the characters do not need to roll for giving first aid, it simply works. To provide first aid to someone, the character generally needs access to a first aid kit. If they do not, they must take –2 to stabilize the wound.

• Keep it Together

When you exercise self-control to keep from succumbing to stress, traumatic experiences, psychic influence, or supernatural forces, **roll +Willpower**:

(15+) You grit your teeth and stay the course.

(10–14) The effort to resist instills a condition, which remains with you until you have had time to recuperate. You get –1 in situations where this condition would be a hindrance to you.

Choose one:

- You become angry (–1 **Stability**).
- You become sad (–1 **Stability**).
- You become scared (–1 **Stability**).
- You become guilt-ridden (–1 **Stability**).
- You become obsessed (**+1 Relation** to whatever caused the condition).
- You become distracted (–2 in situations where the condition limits you).
- You will be haunted by the experience at a later time.

(–9) The strain is too much for your mind to handle. The GM chooses your reaction: cower powerless in the threat's presence, panic with no control of your actions, suffer emotional trauma (–2 **Stability**), or suffer life-changing trauma (–4 **Stability**).

Stability	Effect
Composed	
Uneasy	**Moderate stress:**
	−1 to Disadvantage rolls
Unfocused	
Shaken	**Serious stress:**
	−1 ***Keep it Together***
Distressed	−2 to Disadvantage rolls
Neurotic	
Anxious	**Critical stress:**
	−2 ***Keep it Together***
Irrational	−3 to Disadvantage rolls
	+1 ***See Through the Illusion***
Unhinged	
Broken	The GM makes a Move from the list below

Stability measures the PC's mental strength and condition. A character begins in a composed state, but her **Stability** may decrease upon experiencing traumatic events.

When the character is *Broken*, the GM makes a Move at a time of her choosing as follows:

- Activate a Disadvantage's failure **(–9)** effect.
- The Illusion crumbles around the character.
- Shift the character in Time and/or Space.
- Fragments from the character's Dark Secrets manifest in present-day reality.
- The character gets a new Disadvantage based on the event.
- The character becomes suicidal/self-destructive and must succeed at a ***Keep it Together*** roll to resist the impulse.

The choices above do not affect the PC's **Stability** level.

Instead, the GM may give the *Broken* character one of these options:

- You undergo change. Switch two Attributes with different values with each other. Improve **Stability** to *Anxious*.
- Your life changes direction dramatically. Choose a new Archetype. Improve **Stability** to *Neurotic*.
- You catch a glimpse of the Truth. Gain **+1 Experience**. Improve **Stability** to *Irrational*.

Desensitization: When a PC has repeatedly experienced a particular type of traumatizing event, they can become desensitized to its effects. The GM determines the circumstances under which the PC no longer needs to roll to ***Keep it Together***.

Activation: "*When you exercise self-control to keep from succumbing to stress, traumatic experiences, psychological influence, or supernatural forces*" describes a wide spectrum of situations where a PC's mental capacity can be affected.

Stress means subjectively dangerous situations in which the PC fears for their life or the lives of others. Failure to ***Keep it Together*** could mean the PC panics and reacts instinctively.

What constitutes a *traumatic experience* is also subjective to the PC, but a good rule of thumb is to assume anything terrifying or involving personal loss can also traumatize a person. For example, being subjected to violence, seeing a person close to them get harmed or harming someone themselves, experiencing supernatural events contradicting the PC's world view, or being profoundly humiliated can all incite trauma. Yet, a hardened criminal might injure people without batting an eyelash and a PC who has been through a lot can be desensitized to events capable of traumatizing normal Sleepers. Disturbing experiences often lead to a loss of **Stability**.

Supernatural forces include magical rituals and artifacts, weapons used by deities and devils, and demonic entities with the power to assault a PC's psyche. A demon might dig through the PC's past to uncover repressed guilt, a spirit might try to possess the PC's physical body, and so on. Failing to ***Keep it Together*** against supernatural forces means the PC is affected by them.

Effect: On a *complete success* **(15+)**, the PC can collect herself and force herself to ignore the stress, acting rationally and usefully during the scene.

On a *success with complications* **(10–14)**, the event has temporarily affected the PC's mood and well-being. The player chooses one of these conditions, which will have consequences for her now or later.

- *Angry:* The PC blames someone or something in her vicinity for the occurrence, and may lash out against them or harbor resentment. Her **Stability** is reduced by –1.
- *Sad:* The PC feels sorrow or grief over what she's gone through. She might want to seek solitude or the comfort of a loved one. Her **Stability** is reduced by –1.
- *Scared:* The PC feels threatened. She instinctively wants to retreat from the situation and seek out a hiding spot. Her **Stability** is reduced by –1.
- *Guilt-ridden:* The PC blames herself for what transpired, and seeks forgiveness from those around her. Her **Stability** is reduced by –1.
- *Obsessed:* The PC is enthralled by what is threatening her, finding it attractive and compelling. If it is a person, creature, or entity of some kind, the PC gains **+1 Relation** to it.
- *Distracted:* The PC is confused and sidetracked by what is threatening her. She cannot stop looking at it and is inattentive to everything else around her. The PC takes *–2 to all rolls in situations where being distracted is an obstacle.*
- *Haunted:* The GM gets 1 Hold she can spend later to haunt the PC with visions, dreams, or create actual encounters with whatever caused the trauma. It is the GM's choice whether to make this a hard or soft Move. Unlike the other options, this one doesn't activate immediately, and also cannot be overcome until the GM has used the Move.

In all situations where a condition limits the PC, they suffer *–1 to applicable rolls*, with the exception of *Distracted*, which imposes a –2. The condition is overcome after the PC has had a

chance to process the event, usually in conjunction with stress-free rest or therapy.

On a *failure* **(–9)**, the GM chooses whether the PC cowers in the threat's presence, panics with no control over their actions, suffers emotional trauma (–2 **Stability**), or suffers life-changing trauma (–4 **Stability**).

- *Cowering:* As long as the threat is present and active, the PC remains powerless to stop or avoid it, bearing the full brunt of it.
- *Panicked:* The GM gives the player the hard choice between letting her PC flee in senseless terror, uncontrollably attack the source of the trauma, or freeze and become paralyzed until the threat is gone.
- *Suffering trauma:* This means the PC's **Stability** is worsened proportional to the trauma's intensity, –2 in case of *serious trauma* and –4 in case of *life-changing trauma*.

The GM has several Move options to choose from when the PC becomes *Broken*. This flexibility allows the GM to choose what feels right for the scene and story being told. The Moves are very powerful and can have a major impact on the story, so the GM might want to take a moment to consider which would be appropriate. The chapters in ***Book III: The Truth*** offers deeper understanding for the GM about the KULT universe.

• Act Under Pressure

When you do something risky, under time pressure, or try to avoid danger, the GM will explain what the consequence for failure is and you **roll +Coolness**:

(15+) You do what you intended.

(10–14) You do it, but hesitate, are delayed, or must deal with a complication – the GM reveals an unexpected outcome, a high price, or a difficult choice.

(–9) There are serious consequences, you make a mistake, or you're exposed to the danger. The GM makes a Move.

Activation: "*When you do something risky, under time pressure, or try to avoid danger*" means ***Act Under Pressure*** can be activated in a great many different circumstances. The most important thing to remember is if there is no risk, pressure or danger, then the PC is not ***Acting Under Pressure***.

In situations where two PCs act against each other, it can be tricky to determine which of them is ***Acting Under Pressure***. Stop and reflect on what is actually happening in the story, and determine which one of them is threatening the other in this particular situation. The PC subjected to threat should make the roll.

Note: In some potentially dangerous or stress-filled situations where there are no threats – for example, picking a lock in a place with no patrolling guards or alarm systems – no rolls are called for. The PC simply accomplishes what they set out to do and there is no dramatic purpose to making the situation more complex by demanding rolls.

When the GM has a PC ***Act Under Pressure***, she should always present the threat causing the pressure. For example:

- An *open threat*, where its nature is not yet fully apparent ("the threat is you will call attention to yourself").
- A *specific threat*, outlining exactly what the threat will result in ("the threat is the guard will find you").
- A *soft threat*, which allows for follow-up reactions ("the threat is they will open fire on you").
- A *hard threat*, implying irrevocable consequences ("the threat is you will be shot").

The nuances in each type of threat the GM lays out either increases and decreases the PC's effort while ***Acting Under Pressure*** and in case of failure.

Effect: On a *complete success* **(15+)**, the PC carries out the action as planned.

On a *success with complications* **(10–14)**, the PC succeeds in her action, but there are factors she hasn't taken into account, which forces her to react, compensate, or compromise.

- *An unexpected outcome* could mean the PC fires at a target with a sniper rifle, but the bullet passes through their body and strikes an innocent person behind them.
- *A high price* could mean the PC manages to escape her pursuers, but loses her gun somewhere along the way.
- *A difficult choice* usually means the GM explains what the possible outcome for the PC would be if they carry on with their action, and then allows the player to decide whether or not to continue. For example, the PC is hidden outside a nightclub, waiting for her nemesis, Mr. Volkov. She prepares to roll a hand grenade under Volkov's car when the GM says, "You see Volkov's car park out on the street. The car door opens and Volkov steps out, but as you're about to toss the grenade, you see one of his henchmen emerge, dragging Beatrice behind him. Volkov must have taken her hostage after you left her apartment. Do you still want to go through with it?"

On a *failure* **(–9)**, there are consequences, you make a mistake, or you expose yourself to the danger. The GM makes a Move. As a rule of thumb, the GM should, at the very least, make the threat to the PC manifest itself somehow. Depending on what threat has been established, this Move can be hard or soft.

These examples explains different ways to use ***Act Under Pressure*** during play.

EXAMPLES

- **Attack an unsuspecting opponent:** The PC attacks one or several people from an ambush position or by sneaking up on them. The resulting threat here could be if the attack misses, the PC is discovered before the attack, or the target escapes and hunts the PC afterwards.

On a (**15+**), the PC just deals **Harm** to the victim or victims of the attack.

On a (**10–14**), the PC might kill one or several of them by mistake, a witness might spot them, their gun might jam, the PC might notice reinforcements arriving just before the ambush, or someone the PC doesn't want to harm walks into the line of fire – do they still carry on with the attack?

- **Execute:** The PC kills a defenseless opponent. The threat could be she only harms them, she hesitates and cannot go through with it, suffers from profound guilt afterwards, or is caught red-handed by police or one of the victim's allies. A (**10–14**) result might mean the execution takes much longer than planned, she risks being discovered by someone while in the act or shortly thereafter, she forgets something important at the scene of the crime, or there is a witness to the act – the PC must decide whether to deal with them or risk future consequences.
- **First aid:** When the PC stabilizes a seriously or critically wounded person she is ***Acting Under Pressure***. The threat might be the wounded person needs professional medical treatment before she can be stabilized, the PC is fired upon while bandaging the wound, the patient enters shock, or the patient dies from blood loss. A (**10–14**) result could mean the wounded person becomes heavily doped up by the painkillers, the player uses more medical supplies than normal, or the PC realizes, as she's bandaging her patient, someone has snuck up behind an oblivious ally with a knife – will she continue helping the wounded or stop the treatment to help her ally?
- **Stay hidden:** The PC skulks around, hides, or tries to blend into a crowd while being pursued by an enemy gang. The threat could be being discovered by the enemy, getting lost, finding herself in a blind alley, or getting trapped somewhere. On a (**10–14**), she may be spotted by a third party and forced to decide whether to silence them or wait and see what they do, leave behind something traceable to her, or be forced to wait for a guard to leave their post leading to a loss of initiative, positioning, or other desirable result.
- **Chase:** The PC chases a fleeing person through London's central station. The threat might be that the target slips away, manages to call for reinforcements, leaps onto the train right as it rolls away from the platform, or surprises the PC with a sudden counterattack. On a (**10–14**), the PC might get onto the last train car by the skin of her teeth by making a daring leap, she loses an object she was carrying in the commotion, or is forced to leave her allies behind to keep up with the pursued.
- **Climb:** The PC is climbing a drainpipe to reach the roof of a house. The threat could be she doesn't make it all the way up, risks falling down, or someone discovers her. On a (**10–14**), her ascent takes so long she doesn't make it up in time to notice something important, she is unable to assist her friend in following, or she drops some important equipment she had brought.
- **Drive:** The PC is driving a vehicle at high speeds when she is attacked. The threat could be she loses control over the vehicle, is harmed by the attack, or crashes into a tree. On a (**10–14**), she might be forced off-road and delayed, the vehicle is damaged and becomes difficult to maneuver, the gas tank springs a leak or a tire is punctured.
- **Lying:** The PC lies to a suspicious person, or improvises a credible story while being interrogated in order to get away. The threat could mean the deception failing, contradicting herself, or being beset by a crisis of conscience. On a result of (**10–14**), it takes excessive time for her to formulate the story, the PC can only get out of this by pinning the blame on their friend, or the lie is only credible for the moment and the truth will be revealed shortly thereafter. *Note: If the PC lies in order to get leverage over someone you should roll for* ***Influence Other*** *instead.*
- **Lock picking:** The PC picks a lock on a door or cracks a safe. The threat could be she's discovered by the night-shift security guard, an alarm is activated, or the lock is ruined, so the door can no longer be opened without extreme force. On a (**10–14**), typical complications may include one of her expensive picks breaks off in the lock, the door creaks loudly as she opens it, the door closes and locks behind her, or she opens the door slightly, only to realize someone has rigged a sawed-off shotgun to the door handle, muzzle facing the door.
- **Flee:** The PC runs across a field as her enemies open fire behind her, or she peels off on a motorcycle to escape from her pursuers. The threat could be that she gets hit, discovered, caught up to, hurt, or trapped. A (**10–14**) result could mean she loses an important object (wallet, weapon, USB-key with stolen files, phone), runs into a smaller force approaching from another direction, or the person she just rescued from the enemy's clutches disappears into the mist and she must choose to either escape unscathed or search for them.

• Engage in Combat

When you engage an able opponent in combat, explain how and **roll +Violence**:

(15+) You inflict damage to your opponent and avoid counterattacks.

(10–14) You inflict damage, but at a cost. The GM chooses one:

- You're subjected to a counterattack.
- You do less damage than intended.
- You lose something important.
- You expend all your ammo.
- You're beset by a new threat.
- You'll be in trouble later on.

(–9) Your attack doesn't go as anticipated. You might be subjected to bad luck, miss your target, pay a high price for your assault. The GM makes a Move.

Activation: "*When you engage an able opponent in combat*" means the PC Move will only activate if her opponent is prepared and capable to fight her. A PC attacking someone who is unaware of the attack, frozen in terror or similarly incapacitated, or is unarmed and defenseless does not ***Engage in Combat***; they simply apply **Harm** to them – no roll required. If there is a risk of the PC's conscience getting in the way, detection, back-up, or other problems, roll for ***Act Under Pressure*** instead (see examples above for *Execute* or *Attack an unsuspecting opponent*).

Ammo: When the PC attacks someone with a ranged weapon, she always marks ammo. Each type of ranged weapons have different ammo values, measuring how many times they can be used before the combatant must reload. Certain Advantages give the player the opportunity to save ammo when fighting multiple enemies.

Effect: On a *complete success* **(15+)**, the PC attacks her target without giving them an opportunity to counterattack. She's simply faster, stronger, and better than they are.

The different types of attack the players may choose from are variable based on weapon type. They will always provide advantages at the cost of the PC accepting some risk. Sometimes, it's unnecessary to rely on special attacks to defeat an opponent. Regular people are often neutralized immediately upon being harmed by a weapon with a **Harm** rating of 2 or higher.

On a *success with complications* **(10–14)**, the PC attacks her opponent but at the expense of being subjected to a counterattack, dealing less **Harm** than intended, losing something important, expending all her ammo, being beset by a new threat, or encountering trouble later on.

Her opponent's actions may entail harming the PC, but might also mean creating obstacles or problems for the PC in other ways. For example, she might knock the PC's weapon out of their hands, call for reinforcements, harm an NPC, toss a grenade in the PC's direction, or something else.

Being *subjected to a counterattack* means the PC's opponent manages to hit her as well during the attack. If it's the opponent's goal to harm the PC, the GM should have the PC roll to ***Endure Injury*** with a **Harm** rating based on her opponent's attack, and wait to describe the whole turn of events until she knows whether the PC is harmed as well and how bad it is. It's also possible the counterattack is intended to disarm, grapple, trip, or affect the PC in some other manner. Supernatural entities may also try to affect the PC with magical powers.

Dealing less damage means the PC didn't connect very well or her opponent managed to deflect the worst of the blow. The GM reduces the **Harm** value of the attack by –1 or –2.

Losing something important usually means the PC drops something during the fight, such as a weapon or an important object. It could also mean one of her allies is cut off by other enemies or in some other way disappears in the chaos.

Expending all ammo means the PC's firearm runs out of ammunition. Until the PC can reload the weapon, it is useless.

Being *beset by a new threat* means the PC's attack puts her in a new, immediately dangerous position. For example, reinforcements begin arriving, the police overhear the gunfire, she's gotten into the enemy's line of fire, or throwing the NPC off the roof causes the PC to lose her own balance. The threat usually (but not always) entails ***Avoiding Harm*** in order to escape the danger unscathed.

In trouble later on could mean the PC's target has powerful allies who will now be out to get her, a witness to the attack calls the police, or the person the PC attacked survives and returns to get revenge later on. Her attack creates subsequent problems. The GM doesn't have to be specific about what and how at the moment, but can jot down the circumstances now and manifest the problem later.

On a *failure* **(–9)** to ***Engage in Combat***, the consequences are often higher than for other Moves, as violence carries a high price. The GM can feel justified in making harder Moves as physical conflict often means irreversible consequences, such as grave injuries, destruction of property, and even lost lives. The way the GM adjudicates combat is effective at setting the tone for the particular story you're playing. If you let the PCs survive thrilling action sequences unscathed, you will set a very different tone than if the PCs regularly suffer painful injuries and grievous consequences. The GM Moves determine what role violence plays in your stories and whether it's something terrifying and dangerous, or exciting and fun, for the players to engage in.

• Influence Other

When you influence an NPC through negotiation, argument, or from a position of power, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) She does what you ask

(10–14) She does what you ask, but the GM chooses one:

- She demands better compensation.
- Complications will arise at a future time.
- She gives in for the moment, but will change her mind and regret it later.

(–9) Your attempt has unintended repercussions. The GM makes a Move.

When you influence another PC, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) Both options below.

(10–14) Choose one option below.

(–9) The character gets *+1 on her next roll* against you. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- She's motivated to do what you ask, and recieves *+1 for her next roll*, if she does it.
- She's worried of the consequences if she doesn't do what you ask, and gets –1 **Stability** if she doesn't do it.

No matter the outcome, it is always the PC's option whether to do as you ask or not.

Activation: "*When you influence an NPC through negotiation, argument, or from a position of power*" means the Move activates when a PC tries to get an NPC or another PC to do something in exchange for something else (negotiation), by convincing them with logical reasoning (argument), or by ordering the person from a position of power ("I am your boss!").

The GM should call for an ***Influence Other*** roll when she feels a PC is trying to convince someone else to do or believe something. Consider the following triggers when a PC speaks with someone else. It's a good candidate to call for an ***Influence Other*** roll, if she delivers:

- Promises of a reward if the person does something (e.g., money, sex, a valuable object, in-kind services, and so on).
- Arguments intended to change the person's perspective and position regarding the subject.
- A reasonable compromise, which makes the person cave in and do it.
- Convincing lies.
- A direct order to someone.

If a PC tries to convince someone to do something completely outside the norm ("point this to your head and pull the trigger..."), the GM shouldn't activate this Move. Instead, explain to the player it's clear the person would never voluntarily perform the action she's asking for and another approach would be necessary.

Influence Other activates only when there's reasonable uncertainty whether the PC could convince the other person to take the action or not. Don't activate ***Influence Other*** if an NPC has no reason to refuse the PC's request.

Effect: ***Influence Other*** works differently, depending on if the PC is influencing an NPC or another PC.

When Influencing an NPC

On a *complete success* **(15+)**, the NPC accepts the offer, reasoning, or authority and does as the PC asks.

On a *success with complications* **(10–14)**, the NPC does as the PC asks but the GM chooses a complicating factor suitable to the situation:

- *Demanding more compensation* means if the PC didn't offer anything, the NPC will request something as payment to do as she asks. If the PC already offered something, the NPC isn't satisfied and wants more.

  For example, the PC offers a fixer some money in exchange for info on someone. The fixer takes the cash and says she'll get the info, but also insists the PC owes them a favor.

- *Complications will arise at a future time* means the NPC does as the PC asks, but the NPC or some other party will remember it and bring it up again later.

  For example, the PC convinces a police officer she was at her lover's home on the night of the murder. The next time the PC visits her lover, the police officer shows up at the door to see if their alibi is sound.

- *She gives in for the moment, but changes her mind and regrets it later* means the NPC lets herself be momentarily convinced, but comes to her senses and reconsiders the request after she's had time to think about it.

  For example, the PC convinces the bouncer to let her into the nightclub by falsely suggesting she's a personal friend of the owner's. Later on, as the PC is stalking her mark inside the club, the doorman shows up again after having had second thoughts about her. "Seeing how I hadn't seen you here before, I checked in with the boss and apparently he's never heard of an 'Erin'..."

On a *failure* **(–9)**, the GM makes a Move. It's up to the GM if the person the PC is trying to influence still does as they wish, but regardless there will be a substantial complication of some kind. The NPC might become suspicious of the PC, or they use the opportunity to mislead the PC for their own hidden agendas.

When Influencing a PC

On a *complete success* **(15+)**, the target character chooses whether to play along or not, but gains *+1 to her next roll* if she does, and loses **Stability (–1)** due to doubts if she doesn't.

On a *success with complications* **(10–14)**, the influencing character picks only one of the options above to come into effect, either the *+1 roll* bonus for doing it or the **Stability** penalty for refusing. The target chooses whether to play along or not, but only after this choice is made.

On a *failure* **(–9)**, the target chooses whether to play along or not, and in either case will take *+1 on her next roll* against the influencing PC.

• Read a Person

When you read a person, **roll +Intuition**. On a success, you can ask the GM/player questions about their character any time during this scene, while in conversation with their character:

(15+) You may ask two questions.

(10–14) You may ask one question.

(–9) You accidentally reveal your own intentions to the person you're trying to read. Tell the GM/player what these intentions are. The GM makes a Move.

Questions:

- Are you lying?
- How do you feel right now?
- What are you about to do?
- What do you wish I would do?
- How could I get you to [...]?

Activation: "*When you read a person*" means when the PC studies the body language, manner of speech, and eye movements of the person they're talking to, in order to draw conclusions about their intentions, emotions, and motives. When a PC reads another PC, the target can always try to *Hinder* the reading by attempting to hide their true intentions.

Effect: On a *complete success* **(15+)**, the PC gains two questions.

On a *success with complications* **(10–14)**, the PC gains one question.

During the conversation with the person being read, the player can ask one or two of the questions listed in the Move description. If the player has gained several questions, she must continue the conversation with her target between questions. The questions cannot be saved beyond the conversation. The character may ask the same question again, as the conversation may have influenced the answer. When the player expends a question, she should signal that she uses ***Read a Person*** by using a previously agreed upon signal, for example by raising a finger. The target must answer the question honestly.

- "*Are you lying?*" Was the preceding statement they made truthful? They answer "Yes" or "No." Statements made earlier in the conversation cannot be interrogated, only the subject being discussed presently.
- "*How do you feel right now?*" What kind of emotion or emotions do they harbor presently? For example, "Angry," "Scared," "Wounded and sad," "Confused," and so on.
- "*What are you intending to do?*" What action are they considering taking at the moment? For example, "I want to hide my true feelings from you," "I'm trying to find an escape route," or "I'm trying to get you to trust me."
- "*What do you wish I would do?*" The target must reply with what they would like the reader to do most. For example, "I wish you would trust me," "I wish you'd let me go," and "I wish you'd take revenge on Mr. Volkov."
- "*How could I get you to* [...]?" The reader herself gets to think of something she would like her target to do. The target must reply honestly what would be required to get them to carry out the task, but if the request is completely unreasonable she's allowed to answer she would never do it. However, consider there are few things people won't do when their lives – or the lives of their loved ones – are in danger. Ask players whose characters are read to carefully consider and be totally honest when answering the question. When the reader receives her answer, their target must go through with the action if the proper conditions are met. For example, when asked "*How could I get you to tell me where you've hidden the cash?*" the target could answer, "*I'll tell you, but only if you promise to not hurt me afterwards.*"

On a *failure* **(–9)**, the PC reveals her own intentions, rather than reading her target's. The player tells the other player (or GM) what she's looking to get out of the situation, and the person they were trying to read is now aware of this.

When a PC reads somebody, the other person obviously does not know exactly what the PC learned about them. The questions are not explicitly stated in the story, rather, the affected target subconsciously reveals answers about themselves. The reader can absolutely use the answers in the conversation in order to get more information or steer the person in the direction they want. "*I can't help but notice how guilty you seem whenever I bring up Jessica. Surely there's more to her disappearance than you're letting on?*"

• Observe a Situation

When you observe a situation, **roll +Perception**. On a success you may ask the GM questions about the current situation. When you act on these answers, gain *+1 to your rolls*:

(15+) Ask two questions.

(10–14) Ask one question.

(–9) You get to ask a question anyway, but you get no bonus for it and miss something, attract unwanted attention or expose yourself to danger. The GM makes a Move.

Questions:

- What is my best way through this?
- What currently poses the biggest threat?
- What can I use to my advantage?
- What should I be on the lookout for?
- What is being hidden from me?
- What seems strange about this?

Activation: "*When you observe a situation*" means the PC considers the situation she's in or does reconnaissance of a location. This might entail her taking time to observe her surroundings in the middle of combat, or skulking around a building to get a sense of it before trying to break in. When the PC ***Observes a Situation***, she picks up details about her surroundings and any people or creatures present, detecting things she would have missed otherwise. The GM should always describe the location or scene first, and the PCs can then ***Observe*** it, if they so wish. You don't have to ***Observe a Situation*** to ask questions about aspects your character would normally notice, but for questions similar to the ones listed in the Move, the GM may not respond until the player has rolled for it.

Effect: On a *complete success* **(15+)**, the PC may ask two questions.

On a *success with complications* **(10–14)**, they may ask one question.

The player chooses the questions to ask from the list. When the PC acts on an answer provided by the GM, she gains *+1 to all rolls* related to the answer. The bonus is valid for the entire duration the PC remains at the location. If the PC leaves and come back later she still have the old information but things could have changed and she won't get any bonus until the PC ***Observe the Situation*** again. If the player starts inventing their own questions, the GM could rephrase them to align with the questions from the list, or decide to answer anyway but without providing a dice roll bonus.

- "*What is my best way through this?*" The player requests information on a way past an obstacle encountered at the location. For example, guards posted outside a building, a high wall, a locked door, or a group of adversaries block the PC's path. The GM provides the player with the best directions and may even reveal alternate routes, in addition to those already described.

For example, "You notice a ladder leaning against the building's far side, and there are skylights on the roof. This route doesn't appear to be patrolled."

- "*What currently poses the biggest threat?*" The GM honestly responds to what the biggest danger to the character is, be it a creature, an artifact, or something else in the area. It doesn't have to be the largest threat objectively speaking, but whatever poses the main threat to the observing PC. Maybe an enemy maintains some sort of hold over them, or there's a force present counteracting the PC's advantages?

For example, "On the aged throne of brittle plastic, metal junk, and other amassed garbage sits an emaciated man with all-white eyes and weeping open facial wounds. He garners a certain respect from the other vagrants, and you sense he is more than he appears."

- "*What can I use to my advantage?*" The GM provides details on any features of the PC's surroundings she might make use of, such as a suitable hiding spot, a chandelier she could drop onto an opponent's head with a well-placed bullet, a vehicle to escape in, a door they can lock behind them, a pistol under a stack of papers on top of a desk, etc.

For example, "You can take cover behind the desk, it's solid wood and can take a hit."

- "*What should I be on the lookout for?*" The GM provides details on anything in the area the PC ought to keep an eye on.

For example, "Maybe there's an escape tunnel used by the bobos to quickly disappear (assuming it's not blocked), or call in reinforcement through if they're overpowered?" "Perhaps the blind man on the throne possess a peculiar staff he uses to summon insanity demons?"

- "*What is being hidden from me?*" If there is anything hidden in the area, the GM gives the PC details about it.

For example, "You notice a movement on the water tower next to the warehouse. Seems like someone might have posted a guard there." "When you cross the carpet you hear a hollowness to the floor, as if there's a trapdoor or something underneath."

- "*What seems strange about this?*" The GM details whatever appears to be outside of the ordinary in the locale.

For example, "The little girl in the cage dangling from the roof is actually a demon controlling those around her, and anyone who ***Observes*** notices she seems elated about the brutal fighting around her, rather than being frightened." "The rusted staircase in the slaughterhouse is a portal into Inferno's torture chambers, and those who ***Observe*** can hear the distant echoes of people screaming in anguish from below."

On a *failure* **(–9)**, the player gets to ask a question anyway, but gets no modification to her roll acting upon it, and she misses something important, attracts unwanted attention, or exposes herself to danger. Perhaps one of her enemies notices the PC has discovered something important and targets her, she fails to notice her ally getting dragged in the building, the PC subconsciously glimpses through the Illusion, or the PC is discovered by a guard patrol while doing reconnaissance.

• Investigate

When you investigate something, **roll +Reason**. On a success, you uncover all direct leads and may ask questions to get additional information:

(15+) You may ask two questions.

(10–14) You may ask one question. The information comes at a cost, determined by the GM, such as requiring someone or something for the answer, exposing yourself to danger, or needing to expend extra time or resources. Will you do what it takes?

(–9) You may get some information anyway, but you pay a price for it. You may expose yourself to dangers or costs. The GM makes a Move.

Questions:

- How can I find out more about what I'm investigating?
- What is my gut feel about what I'm investigating?
- Is there anything weird about what I'm investigating?

Activation: "*When you investigate something*" means the PC spends some time examining something carefully for clues. Regardless of what the player rolls, she can acquire all clues the GM feels necessary to advance the story. The questions the player asks provide additional information she wouldn't have uncovered otherwise. Given time and opportunity, the PC can examine virtually anything – people, places, organizations, rumors, myths, objects, and riddles.

Hint: When the GM prepares locations, creatures, and objects appearing in the story, she can write down a few clues to hand out to players who opt to ***Investigate*** them. She can also specify some additional clues the players may receive in response to the different questions they get to ask. This approach enables multiple players to ***Investigate*** the same thing and yield meaningful answers, as they can choose to ask different questions in their investigation.

Effect: On a *complete success* **(15+)**, the player receives all direct leads and may ask two questions.

On a *success with complications* **(10–14)**, the player get all direct leads and ask one question, but the investigation will require a cost of some kind, as determined by the GM. The PC must pay the price prior to receiving the information.

- "*You need someone or something to get your answers*" means the PC must find a specific person or gain access to some special resource in order to finalize the investigation.

For example, "Vera Palmer, the artist rumored to have created the painting you are investigating," "The university library's archive, said to contain ancient lore on rituals," "A hospital CT scanner, needed to investigate the body," and so on.

- "*Expose yourself to danger*" means the PC must accept dangerous risks to complete her investigations.

For example, "You have to climb ten meters up the statue, in order to reach and examine the head in more detail," "You'd have to steal the files from the police archives," "You'd have to actually crawl in amongst the gears of the surreal machinery, in order to study its internal mechanisms," and so on.

- "*Expend extra time or resources*" means the investigations takes hours, days, weeks, or months before it's complete, or the PC would have to expend resources she does not already possess.

For example, "You can find the book's publisher through the IRS, but who knows how long it would take to get a response," "You can look for potential witnesses in the building, but since there are a few hundred apartments it will probably take at least a few days to talk to everyone," "In order to open the box you would have to either figure out how to solve the puzzle – which could take weeks – or get a diamond drill bit to force the lock," and so on.

On a *failure* **(–9)**, the GM can reveal any of the basic clues, if she feels it would make sense to do so. However, the PC will be exposed to unexpected dangers or costs. The GM makes a Move, depending on what the PC is investigating and how.

Example dangers: An object's previous owner finds out the PC now has it in their possession, the murderer finds out the PC is investigating the killing and goes after her, an object suddenly manifests unexpected and dangerous powers, or unknown enemies start paying attention to the character.

Example costs: The PC's equipment breaks or is lost, an ally gets into serious trouble, the object affects the PC in some manner, the PC must pay someone something in order to finalize the investigation, or an enemy attacks the PC.

• Helping or Hindering

When you help or hinder another player character's Move, explain how before their roll and **roll +Attribute**, where the Attribute is the same as the other player is rolling:

(15+) You may modify the subsequent roll by +2/–2.

(10–14) You may modify the subsequent roll by +1/–1.

(–9) Your interference has unintended consequences. The GM makes a Move.

With the GM's assent, a player may make a case for retroactively ***Helping or Hindering*** after a roll is made, but in stressful situations this can result in a hard choice between saving your ally or pursuing your own goal – not both.

Activation: "*When you help or hinder another character's Move*" means the PC actively performs an action to assist or impede another PC's chance to succeed at a Move. Since the circumstances can vary widely, the nature of the PC's action can also differ from case to case. However, the PC must describe how they help or hinder the action. It's not enough to say "I'm helping!"

Helping or hindering is a unique Move, in that the PC always rolls the same Attribute as the one used in the Move she's trying to help or hinder.

Effect: On a *complete success* **(15+)**, the PC can give the other character a +2 (when *helping*) or –2 (when *hindering*) to their roll.

On a *success with complications* **(10–14)**, the PC can give the other character a +1 (when *helping*) or –1 (when *hindering*) to their roll.

On a *failure* **(–9)**, the GM makes a Move, usually as a consequence for the PC's attempt to help or hinder the other.

• See Through the Illusion

When you suffer shock, injuries, or distort your perception through drugs or rituals, **roll +Soul** to ***See Through the Illusion***:

(15+) You perceive things as they truly are.

(10–14) You see Reality, but you also affect the Illusion. The GM chooses one:

- Something senses you.
- The Illusions tears around you.

(–9) The GM explains what you see and makes a Move.

Activation: "*When you suffer shock, injuries, or distort your perception through drugs or rituals*" means the PC seeing through the Illusion can happen when terrible things happen to you or you witness them happening to others, when you suffer intense pain, or when your senses get twisted or extended by conscience-altering influences. The average PC doesn't know exactly how to distort their perception to trigger such an event – typically, this transpires by coincidence or mistake.

The GM can have a PC ***See Through the Illusion*** with no roll necessary when she needs to expose demonic entities, alternate dimensions, magical forces, and other clues regarding the true nature of Reality.

Effect: On a *complete success* **(15+)**, the PC sees Reality as it truly is. A demon reveals its true visage, the shrieks of the dead emanate from the staircase leading down to Inferno, the magical mirror opens a passageway to the realm of dreams, and so on. A good rule of thumb is having the Illusion crumble away to reveal whatever dimension is closest to the PC's location. Subterranean locales are connected to the Underground, battlefields and murder sites reveal Inferno, and abandoned buildings and city alleyways lead to the labyrinths of Metropolis. If the Illusion tears around a specific creature, the GM can describe how it distorts the world around it. The lictor can pass through doorways unable to accommodate its grotesque giant body, as the Illusion warps around it accordingly.

On a *success with complications* **(10–14),** the PC sees through the Illusion, but exposes herself to danger in the process. The GM chooses between the following options:

- "*Something senses you*" means one of the Illusion's guardians, the creature the PC encountered, or some other extradimensional being senses the divinity within the PC and knows she glimpsed the Truth.
- "*The Illusion tears*" means the PC temporarily disturbs the Illusion in this location. When the PC witnesses the demon's true form, the Illusion starts breaking down and revealing Inferno; the staircase to hell distorts the entire house into a decrepit purgatory; the mirror opening towards the dream world sucks everyone present into Limbo; and so on.

On a *failure* **(–9)**, the GM makes a Move. She should usually allow the PC to ***See Through the Illusion*** anyway, but with terrible consequences.

Relations

The player characters have **Relation** values to all other PCs, in addition to some of the more important NPCs they encounter. The PCs gain **Relations** with NPCs when established during character creation or during the course of the story.

Relation values between PCs are initially established at character creation, but can change and fluctuate during the game. Each player should also create three relations with NPCs: a *neutral* relation, a *meaningful* relation, and a *vital* relation.

Relation Strength

Neutral (0): Applies to most relations. Acquaintances, friends, coworkers, and others you don't have much in common with.

Meaningful (1): Close friends, family members, romantic interests, beloved pets, personal mentor, guru.

Vital (2): Passionate lovers, your own children, the only friend you have left, your 'true love,' an obsession, your soulmate.

Increase & Decrease

After each game session, you may modify a single **Relation** by +1 or –1. Explain why.

A **Relation's** strength can also be raised or lowered due to events occurring in play.

Example Events:

- Betrayed by a meaningful or vital relation: **Relation –1**
- Seduced by a neutral relation: **Relation +1**
- Unexpected assistance from a neutral relation: **Relation +1**
- Influence by magic or supernatural powers: **Relation +1/–1**

Relation Moves

These Moves are applicable to **Relations** at strength 1 or 2.

Wish no harm: If you intend on *harming or killing your Relation* – whether directly or indirectly – you must ***Keep it Together*** with the influence being an unwillingness to cause injury. In case of *success with complications* **(10–14)**, in addition to the normal outcome you also get a **–Relation** modifier to your damage-inflicting Move. In case of *failure* **(–9)**, in addition to the normal outcome when missing your roll, you cannot bring yourself to harm your **Relation**.

Regain Stability: In a scene where you *experience closeness, assurance, and affirmation from a Relation*, your **Stability** is improved a number of steps equal to the strength of the **Relation** value.

Lose Stability: *If a Relation of yours is seriously injured*, your **Stability** is decreased a number of steps equal to the strength of the **Relation** value. Double that number if the **Relation** dies.

Dramatic Hooks

A *dramatic hook* is a player request for their character to take a certain action during the story. During each game session, each player should have two dramatic hooks for their character. At the beginning of the first session, the player gets to choose two dramatic hooks on her own. In later sessions, the PC receives dramatic hooks from the other players and the GM. At the end of a session when she's fulfilled a dramatic hook, she asks the other players to think of a new one.

When a dramatic hook is fulfilled, the players marks **1 Experience**. A player can ask to exchange a dramatic hook for another one, if a game session passes without any dramatic hooks being fulfilled.

When the players think of dramatic hooks, they may use the following verbs for inspiration and then finish the sentence with something appropriate ("You should..."):

- Finish
- Reveal
- Tell
- Visit
- Complete
- Confront
- Investigate
- Develop

For example, "You should *visit* the place where the kidnapper took you" or "You should *reveal* your infidelity to your wife." The PC has fulfilled the dramatic hook, regardless of what transpired in the scene, as long as the character executed the verb. Don't dictate what the outcome of the scene should be when determining a dramatic hook. That should be discovered in play.

Experience and Character Development

After each session, the players answer the following questions:

- Have we discovered anything new about the Truth?
- Have we learned anything new about our characters?
- Have we challenged ourselves?

For each question the players can justify answering "**yes**" to, every PC receives **1 Experience**. This implies the PCs can gain up to **3 Experience** from these questions after each session, but they can gain more **Experience** through dramatic hooks and certain Advantages.

When the PC has accumulated **5 Experience**, the player may choose an advancement available on their character sheet. Advancements increase Attribute values or give the PC additional Advantages. When an advancement has been chosen, it is crossed off; this means some advancements may only be chosen a few times. By the sixth advancement, the player unlocks a new set of advancements, which may mean Attributes can increase even higher or the character might even change their Archetype.

Aware Advancement

When an Aware Archetype advances she gets to choose from the following advancements.

Choose One of These:

☐☐☐☐☐☐ Increase one active Attribute +1 (to max +3).

☐☐ Increase one passive Attribute +1 (to max +3).

☐ Increase any one Attribute +1 (to max +4).

☐☐☐ Select a new Advantage from your Archetype.

After 5 Advancements You May Also Choose:

☐☐ Increase any one Attribute +1 (to max +4).

☐☐ Select a new Advantage from any Aware Archetype.

☐ End your character's story arc as you see fit, and create a new Aware character, who starts with 2 Advancements.

☐ Replace your current Archetype with another Aware Archetype, and erase one of your starting 3 Advantages.

After 10 Advancements You May Also Choose:

☐ Advance your character to an Enlightened Archetype.

Here are explanations for every advancement:

Increase one active Attribute +1 (to max +3): The player raises one of the following Attributes with +1: **Reason**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Coolness**, **Violence**, **Charisma**, or **Soul**. The Attribute can't be raised above +3.

Increase one passive Attribute +1 (to max +3): The player raises one of the following Attributes with +1: **Fortitude**, **Willpower**, or **Reflexes**. The Attribute can't be raised above +3.

Increase any one Attribute +1 (to max +4): The player raises any Attribute (active or passive) with +1. The Attribute can't be raised above +4.

Select a new Advantage from your Archetype: The player chooses a new Advantage from her Archetype's selected Advantages. If the Advantage gives the PC followers or new contacts, the GM may choose to let time pass in the story or ask something of the PC that explains this new allies.

Select a new Advantage from any Aware Archetype: The player chooses any Advantage from the Advantages in *Chapter 3 – Character Traits*. If the Advantage gives the PC followers or new contacts, the GM may choose to let time pass in the story or ask something of the PC that explains these new allies.

End your character's story arc as you see fit, and create a new Aware character, who starts with two advancements: The player creates a new PC and immediately chooses two advancements.

Replace your current Archetype with another Aware Archetype, and erase one of your starting three Advantages: The player keeps her current Attributes, erases one of the three Archetype Advantages her PC started with but gets to choose three Advantages from the new Archetype. If the new Archetype has a locked Disadvantage (like *The Avenger's* ***Oath of Revenge***), the player erases one of her old Disadvantages and takes the locked one instead. Sometimes time has to pass in the story to properly explain the PC's new skills and Disadvantages, or the PC will have to change in the story to fit the new Archetype. Discuss this with the GM.

Advance your character to an Enlightened Archetype: The player keeps her current Attributes and Advantages but also gets to choose three Abilities and 1 Limitation from the Enlightened Archetype. To change into an Enlightened Archetype means mental illumination and sometimes physical changes. Discuss the change with the GM. Will the change take place in downtime or be played out in the story? Sometimes the GM will want the PC to do one or more things in order to get enlightenment. Maybe the PC has to find a teacher to learn magic from or an entity to swear fealty to. The Enlightened PC will get one power broker to be allied with and one that is her enemy. Choose between the power brokers and enemies the GM presents for you.

Equipment

The players select the property their characters own, but need to justify why they would own very obscure or illegal items. These rules describe weapons, armor, drugs, and special equipment the PCs may find useful. Players can feel free to come up with their own items, as well. In many cases, no special rules are necessary, while in other cases the GM can use the examples here and their own creativity to invent any additional rules the group requires.

Weapons and Armor

These rules explain how weapons, armor, and other equipment work. It is up to the GM to decide if a particular PC's concept, and/or the story's setting, justifies their access to weapons and armor or not.

Weapon Types

Base Harm: This is the **Harm** the weapon type causes before any Advantages and Edges have modified it. The **Harm** mechanics have two effects:

- PCs subtract the **Harm** value when they make the ***Endure Injury*** Move.
- NPCs take the **Harm** value directly after subtracting any armor.

Ammo: A resource value indicating how many times a firearm can be fired before it needs to be reloaded. The value doesn't literally indicate how much ammo is in the weapon, but is symbolic of how many rounds are being discharged in a typical attack. To use an attack, you must first ensure you have the required amount of ammo to spend. After using the attack, check off the appropriate amount of ammo on the weapon's ammo track.

Distance: A rule of thumb for how close or far a given weapon or attack could feasibly hit its target.

- *Arm:* When you're close enough to attack with a leap, roughly arm's reach.
- *Room:* When you're just several steps apart.
- *Field:* When you're within a hundred meters of one another.
- *Horizon:* When you can barely see your target with the naked eye.

Attacks: Different forms of attacks the PC can make with the weapon. The first underlined attack is the default, unless the player specifies otherwise. The value in the first square brackets [X] is the amount of **Harm** caused by the attack, and the additional square brackets contain special rules for the attack.

Close Combat Weapons

Unarmed

Distance: arm

Attacks:

- Punch, kick, and tear [1]
- Lock [0] [you are in control of the target until they break free]
- Shift [0] [you create distance between yourself and the target through a throw, body check, or push]
- Disarm [0] [you remove an object your opponent held in their hand]
- Excessive force [2] [focus entirely on killing your target, disregarding your own safety]

Edged Weapons

Examples: knife, stiletto, dagger.

Distance: arm

Attacks:

- Cut, slice, and stab [2]
- Edge at the throat [0] [you are in control of the target until they break free]

Crushing Weapons

Examples: baseball bat, hammer, crowbar.

Distance: arm

Attacks:

- Pummel, maul, and crush [2]
- Knock down [1] [the target falls to the ground]
- Knock out [1] [target is knocked out; PCs must successfully ***Endure Injury*** to avoid getting *knocked out*]

Chopping Weapons

Examples: machete, axe, sword.

Distance: arm

Attacks:

- Hack, slash, and chop [2]
- Momentum [1] [may hit one additional target]

RANGED WEAPONS

Handgun

Examples: Beretta M92FS, Colt M1911A1, CZ P-10 C, FN Five seveN, Glock 19, Glock 23, H&K USP45, H&K VP9, S&W Model 10, S&W MP40 Shield, SIG-Sauer P226, Walther P99.

Distance: arm/room

Attacks:

- Combat shooting [2] [–1 Ammo]
- Overkill [3] [–2 Ammo]
- Multiple targets [2] [hit up to one additional target] [–3 Ammo]

Ammo: ○○○○

Magnum Handgun

Examples: Colt Python, FA Model 83, IMI Desert Eagle, Ruger GP100, Ruger New Model Super Blackhawk, Ruger Super Redhawk, S&W M586, S&W Model S&W500, Taurus Raging Bull.

Distance: arm/room

Attacks:

- Combat shooting [3] [–1 Ammo]
- Overkill [4] [–3 Ammo]

Ammo: ○○○

Submachine Gun (SMG)

Examples: FN P90, Glock 18, H&K MP5, H&K MP7, H&K UMP45, IMI Uzi, Ingram MAC-10, KRISS Vector, Skorpion vz.61, Steyr AUG A3 Para XS.

Distance: room

Attacks:

- Short bursts [2] [–1 Ammo]
- Focused full auto [3] [–2 Ammo]
- Spray and pray [2] [hit up to two additional targets] [–3 Ammo]

Ammo: ○○○

Assault Rifle

Examples: AK-47/AKM/AK-103, Colt M4A1, FAMAS, FN SCAR-L, H&K G36, HK416, IWI Tavor TAR-21, QBZ-95-1, SA80, Steyr AUG.

Distance: room/field

Attacks:

- Controlled fire [3] [–1 Ammo]
- Mow down [4] [–2 Ammo]
- Empty the mag [3] [hit up to two additional targets] [–4 Ammo]

Ammo: ○○○○

Machine Gun

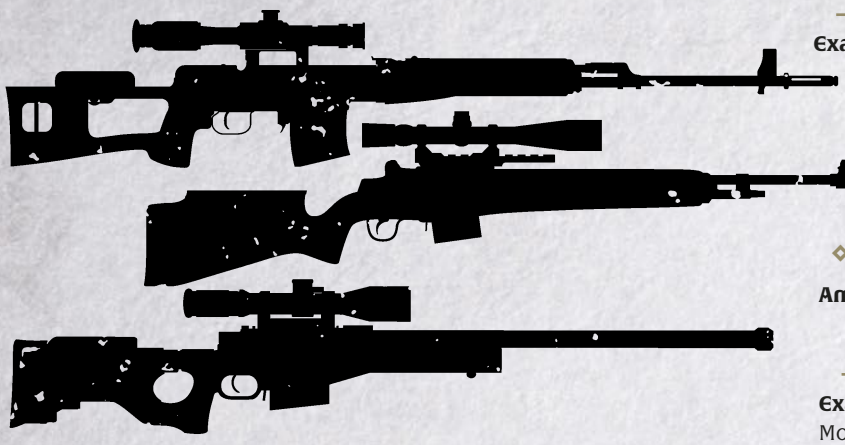
Examples: FN MAG, M249, M60, MG5, RPK-74.

Distance: room/field

Attacks:

- Burst fire [3] [–1 Ammo]
- Sustained fire [3] [hit up to three additional targets] [–3 Ammo]

Ammo: ○○○○○○



Rifle

Examples: Various hunting rifles, marksman rifles (like FN SCAR-H, Mk 14 EBR, SVD, etc.), and sniper rifles (like AI Arctic Warfare, H&K PSG-1, McMillan TAC-338, etc.).

Distance: room/field/horizon

Attacks:

- Aim & fire [3] [–1 Ammo]

Ammo: ○○○

Combat Shotgun

Examples: Benelli M3 Super 90, Franchi SPAS-12, Mossberg 500, Remington M870, Saiga-12, Winchester M1300.

Distance: room/field

Attacks:

- Snapshots [3/1]* [–1 Ammo]
- Pellet storm [3/1]* [small close group all hit at once] [–2 Ammo]

* Base Harm is 3 against target(s) at Room distance, and 1 if beyond.

Ammo: ○○○

Explosives

Examples: Hand grenade, demolition charge, bomb.

Distance: room/field

Attacks:

- Detonation [4] [hits several targets] [–1 Ammo]

Ammo: ○

ARMOR

PCs who wear armor receive a positive modifier to their ***Endure Injury*** roll. NPCs who wear armor subtract their armor rating from the amount of **Harm** they take each time it applies.

Armor	Rating	Example
Light	+1	Ballistic ('bulletproof') vest
Heavy	+2	Police or military heavy duty full-body armor

Special Equipment

Most items a PC possesses can simply be written down on the character sheet by name. What follows is a list of equipment items, which sometimes appear in a story and demand special rules.

Type	Rules
Dog	A dog can take 1–3 **Wounds** (depending on the size of the dog). An attacking dog can: ◇ Knock over [1] [Distance: arm, no small dogs]. ◇ Bite [1–2] [Distance: arm, the dog can lock jaws and not let go].
Teargas spray	◇ Spray [0] [Distance: arm, NPC target is *neutralized*, PC target ***Endures Injury*** and is knocked out on a **(–9)**].
Lockpicks	The PC can open a locked door. Depending on circumstances, the PC may be ***Acting Under Pressure***.
Crowbar	The PC can open a locked door but will be making a lot of noise in the process. Depending on circumstances, the PC may be ***Acting Under Pressure***. Crowbars can be used as crushing hand-to-hand weapons.
First aid kit	The PC can stabilize **Wounds**. If the **Wound** is **Critical** (or if circumstances otherwise suggest it), the PC rolls ***Act Under Pressure***.
Stun gun (taser)	Stun guns of the self-defense kind might require the attacker to physically touch her victim, while those used by law enforcement can eject electrodes up to a few meters distance. The latter kind requires recharging before repeat use. ◇ Shock [1] [Distance: arm/room, NPC target is *neutralized*, PC target ***Endures Injury*** and is knocked out on a **(–9)**].
Silencer	A silencer is a gun attachment, which muffles the noise of firing the weapon. The noise *doesn't* disappear entirely and the effect is highly dependent on the weapon's type and caliber. As a general rule of thumb, the noise is only detectable in the immediate surroundings (room).
Flashbang	A flashbang is an explosive used to daze people in the vicinity by emitting a blinding flash of light accompanied by a loud bang. It causes no bodily harm. ◇ Detonation [–] [Distance: room/field, hits multiple targets, NPCs are momentarily *neutralized*, PCs may ***Avoid Harm*** and are momentarily neutralized on a **(–9)**].
Knockout gas/drugs (e.g. desflurane, isoflurane, sevoflurane)	Knockout gasses or drugs can be used to force characters into unconsciousness by making them breathe in the fumes or ingest the drug. A PC might for example fill the target's inhaler with the gas or soak a rag and cover the target's mouth and nose with it. ◇ Knockout [–] [Distance: arm/room, NPC target is momentarily *neutralized*, PC target ***Endures Injury*** and is *knocked out* on a **(–9)**].
Torch	In addition to illuminating the surroundings, a torch can be used as a weapon: ◇ Fire [2] [Distance: arm].

Bible

II. Madness

CHAPTER 5
THE GAMEMASTER

THIS CHAPTER EXPLAINS HOW THE GAMEMASTER (GM) adjudicates the conversation in-game, makes her own Moves, and upholds the horror contract of *KULT: Divinity Lost* stories. During each game session, the GM describes the story's setting and – with the exception of the player characters – personifies all the people and creatures inhabiting it. The GM is also responsible for adjudicating what might reasonably happen in every situation arising during the game. To assist the GM in these tasks, she has *agendas* outlining how the game ought to be played, *Principles* providing guidelines for what actions to take, and *Moves* to provide inspiration for creating memorable moments in scenes.

THE CONVERSATION

To play *KULT: Divinity Lost* is to engage in a conversation between players and gamemaster. The players' primary job is to speak for their characters and describe what they do and how they act. They also relay what their characters think, feel, and remember, as well as answer questions posed by the GM about their characters and how they live. The GM's job is to explain everything else: portraying every other person in the world, and narrating what transpires during the story. Whenever the player characters (PCs) enter a new environment, the GM describes any notable details and answers any inquiries the players have about the scene.

When the PCs speak with somebody, the GM takes on the role of that person for the scene. All people, creatures, and entities who aren't player characters are called non-player characters (NPCs), as only the GM portrays and controls them.

Agenda

When creating stories in *KULT: Divinity Lost*, the GM should be checking off three agenda items over and over. The rules of the game are designed to help...

- tear back the Illusion to reveal the true Reality behind it.
- keep the PCs on edge, only allowing them moments of respite.
- let the PCs' actions make an impact, regardless of consequences.

Every story in KULT should strive towards tearing the Illusion apart, and revealing the true Reality behind it. Whenever the PCs' misunderstanding of the world and what they believe to be real collide with the dark Truth in violent conflict, madness and horror emerges. By allowing the PCs to confront Reality, you also put them in a position to finally confront their lost divinity.

The characters in these stories are haunted; occasionally by external elements, but just as often by internal forces and conflicts, which drive them towards madness. As GM, it is your job to challenge the PCs and drive them towards action. In KULT's dark, horrific stories, any respite is fleeting and new threats lurk behind every corner. The rules will assist you with representing this: Disadvantages allow you to invent new threats, Dark Secrets anchor the PCs to terrors in their pasts, and GM Moves naturally escalate danger and drama into a crescendo and, eventually, climax.

In KULT's stories, the PCs are the core protagonists. The story revolves around their activities, whether those activities occurred in the past, present, or future. The GM's job is to encourage the players to act, and – through the rules – the characters' actions will make an impression on the story. You should place obstacles in the player characters' path, yet support their efforts to discover solutions to the situations they're in. Never tell them "no," but rather say "yes, and...," or in some cases, "yes, but how...?"

When the PC says she drives her dagger into the lictor's eye, the GM doesn't say "you can't." Instead, encourage their action, such as "Her eyeball bursts like a cherry tomato popping. Its white, goopy insides bloom from the ruined eye-socket, pooling around the dagger before trickling down Laura's face. Ignoring the grievous wound, she grabs you and lifts you into the air like a small child. A wicked smile plays across her lips as she whispers, 'So, you want to play with me?'"

The Fiction

The fiction is mentioned occasionally in this chapter, and this concept might demand some explanation. The fiction consists of the established facts within the game world's narrative. These constitute the laws regulating what makes sense in the setting. These are rules known only to and agreed upon by the game group.

For example, the player's character having the attribute **Coolness** +3 is not an aspect of the fiction. But, if the same player describes their character as having nerves of steel and being awesome at stealth, then this is a part of the fiction. Game rules affect the fiction and provide guidelines for what might happen in the story, but only the players know about these rules on the meta-level. However, the PCs have as little knowledge about their precise Attributes, Advantages, and Disadvantages as they are aware they are imaginary personas controlled by the players. The player characters' reality is 'the fiction.' The GM's job is make sure the fiction is equally 'real' for the players.

When the GM asks a player what their PC's ***Deadly Stare*** advantage looks like and the player describes her character's piercing, ice-cold eyes make people feel uncomfortable, it becomes a fact established in the fiction. It affects what the PC is capable of and how other characters in the game world react to the PC.

This is meaningful to the game because the fiction guides the GM's and players' Move choices. The next time the player describes how his *Criminal* character tries to intimidate a bouncer by transfixing him with his gaze, the GM will remember the PC's ***Deadly Stare*** and take the fiction into account when describing how the bouncer reacts. Perhaps he's frightened and lets the PC through without hassle, while another PC might have been denied entry.

The GM's Moves are always derived from the fiction. If a PC is shot in the leg, he will be in pain and any actions requiring two fully functioning legs are now an ordeal. If the GM is unsure whether or not to make a certain Move, they should always consider the fiction and what's already been established to determine if it makes sense. If the rules of the game contradict the fiction the group has established, the GM should give precedence to the fiction.

PRINCIPLES

Principles serve as the GM's guidelines for running the game. Whenever she picks and describes a Move, the GM should also remember her Principles.

Insinuate the Supernatural

As GM, you will want to create a world in which the characters suspect something is terribly wrong – although they cannot tell what. From time to time, you should introduce odd occurrences and weird details, suggesting to the player character there's something questionable about their concept of reality. They should frequently question aspects of the world – if not their own sanity.

Where does the homeless man who dances in the park fountain disappear to? One moment he is visible to everyone, but somehow vanishes in the next.

What forgotten subway station does the train pass between 50th and 42nd street? Who are the people standing there, waiting?

How could the well-dressed man have fallen from the sixth floor onto pavement without getting crushed?

Who sent the message to your voicemail, where someone who sounds exactly like you warns of dire events they say will occur in the future?

The true Reality exists on the periphery of the characters' awareness, ready to burst forth when the Illusion tears. By suggesting a fundamental wrongness with minor details in the story, the GM can incite the sense that the player characters' concept of reality is falling apart and something awful might be revealed at any moment.

Address the Characters, Not the Players

Rather than ask the player, "*Sara*, what does John do during the evening?" instead say, "What are you doing this evening, *John*?" Describe the world to the player character, "She observes you with lustful eyes as she releases one of the hooks of her macabre dress from her skin. With one hand, she motions to you, and without uttering a word makes it clear she wants you – she'll make all your dreams come true. She knows exactly who you are and what you desire." It is the PCs dreams the demon wishes to fulfill. By speaking directly to the character, the GM and the player are present together in the story, instead of acting as two players viewing the fiction from the outside.

Make Your Moves, But Use the Fiction to Disguise Why

The GM makes Moves based on real-world events rather than what transpires in the fiction. When a PC enters a new location or otherwise transitions to a new scene, when a player misses their roll (usually by rolling a **[–9]**), when the text for a player Move instructs the GM to make a Move, when the players looks to the GM for input, then the GM makes a Move. Yet the GM should act as if the reason is because of events in the story!

For example, if the GM's Move is ***Capture Someone*** she should never say, "Since you failed your ***Act Under Pressure*** Move when sneaking into the factory, you make it only halfway before they catch you." Instead say, "After you climb through the broken window, you drop down onto some old glass panes, which break with a loud crash. After a few seconds, it seems like you are in the clear, but as you exit out into the main hallway, you only make it a few feet before there are footsteps behind you. Two security guards stare at you down the barrels of their rifles. Another two guards emerge from the rooms. What do you do?"

The final outcome is the same, the PC will be captured in the factory. However, the GM has presented the Moves to the players as if they were triggered by events in the fiction.

Make Your Moves, But Describe Them in the Fiction

When the GM's Move is to deal damage to PCs, you don't say "you take damage." Instead, describe how the creature's teeth sink deep into their flesh. Even if your GM Move turns the PC's Move against them, you don't say, "I turn your Move against you," but instead explain, "You aim your pistol at the back of her head and she slowly raises her hands. Suddenly, her elbow strikes you in the face, and in a disorienting flash she tears the gun from your grip. With a wicked grin, she points it directly at your forehead and says, 'Who did you say should put their hands up?'"

Assign Motivations to All Your NPCs

All NPCs, human or not, should be given their own straightforward emotional drives and self-interests.

For example, Captain Ben Harrison willingly risks his own life to get his hands on one of the PCs, so he can drag her back to the military research compound she escaped from. He is convinced it was his fault she got away, so it's now his duty to ensure she returns – even if it ends up killing him.

There's no need to get overly complicated. Assign simple, straightforward reasons for why people act the way they do. If the GM knows that the reason the club bouncer fulfills his duties is only for the money, she knows immediately he'd act differently if one of the characters tries to bribe him, rather than if he had been working out of loyalty to his boss.

Give Your Creatures Their Own Internal Logic

All entities in *KULT: Divinity Lost* have their own personal backstories, their place in the cosmology, and their own purposes and motivations, despite how alien and inhuman they may appear. They're driven by urges in the same way humans are, and aren't just introduced into their locales as obstacles for curious PCs. It's the GM's job to ensure the entities the characters encounter are exciting and true to life, no matter how bizarre they may be. Nepharites seek out people wracked with guilt, creating personal purgatories for them. To the nepharite, these

purgatories are not 'evil,' but rather a gift granted to their victims, allowing them to experience the gospel of pain. Lictors impose their control mechanisms on people, because they know first-hand what fearsome and ruthless gods humanity would become, should they be released from their prison. A wraith haunts someone because they desire something from them – be it to regain their physical form or carry out a task in the land of the living.

Every entity's actions should have an internal logic to them, however twisted or weird, and it's the GM's job to develop this logic and reveal it to the characters. She doesn't tell the players directly, but allows it to saturate and become apparent in the actions the creature takes.

Ask Questions and Build on the Answers

Start with simple questions for the players. "What does your apartment look like?" "Who among you have known each other the longest?" As the story progresses, the GM can start asking more direct and intimate questions about the PCs' experiences, emotions, memories, and opinions. Sometimes, it can be interesting to zoom in, such as "Do you keep photographs on your office desk?" On other occasions, the GM is only looking for big picture overviews, "How is your office furnished and decorated?" This depends on the narrative pacing at the time. When a PC takes an unanticipated action, the GM can ask questions about it: "Oh shit, you beat him to death with a hammer?! Is this really the first time you've assaulted someone?" This gives the player an opportunity to contextualize their actions to the rest of the group and give their character more depth, while providing the GM more information to determine what happens next.

When an answer has been provided, the GM should follow up on it. Following up means three things:

- Things might not be as they seem; the GM can throw in details causing the PC to doubt their reality.
- The GM can incorporate the answer into the story later on.
- The GM uses the information to develop her own threats, incorporating the answer into their own vision of the world.

For example, if the question is "Who do you think your pursuers are?" and they respond "They're inhuman – they travel through doorways and disappear without a trace," the GM can use it in the following ways:

- "One time, when you opened the door a pursuer had gone through, you saw another world beyond it. What was supposed to be a bathroom, instead appeared to a decrepit gallery filled with exotic mosaics and old, broken statues of angels."
- The pursuers and their doorways appear to the PC later in the game, be it directly, such as a door cracked open to another dimension, or indirectly, such as hearing myths or stories relating to creatures able to travel between doorways.
- Consider what sort of creatures the pursuers might be and to where their doorways lead.

It's particularly important to ask questions the first time a PC utilizes a supernatural Advantage. For example, how does the character with ***Enhanced Awareness*** experience their visions? Do they come on suddenly when the character is unprepared, or does she conjure them consciously? Are they terrifying to her? After the first time it's happened, the GM should add her own details when the character makes use of the Advantage.

Be a Fan of the Player Characters

Being a fan of the characters means the GM offers the PCs opportunities to be cool, as well as vulnerable, and not to thwart the progress and successes they've earned through hard work. The worst thing a GM can do is remove or inhibit what makes a character cool. If a player has put in time into describing their character's faithful German Shepherd and pointed out how the dog is their character's entire life, it's not okay to have the dog get run over and killed during the first game session for no reason. It's a different story if some of the character's enemies kidnaps the dog, giving the character an opportunity to fight to get it back. In the latter case, the GM is validating the player's character concept regarding their relation to the dog, while in the former case she's just destroying it.

Another thing to avoid is denying the PCs successes they've fought for and won. It's more interesting to let consequences arise from the characters' successes. Have NPCs react to the character achieving one of their goals. What threats might now view the PC as a possible ally? What threats now perceive her as a dangerous enemy? Allow the PCs to affect the world. Let their choices matter. If the characters depose a lictor from its position of power in the city, it would be pretty strange if there were no consequences. And what player enjoys playing a story where their actions don't matter?

Think Beyond the Scene from Time to Time

When the GM is about to make a Move, she might consider what her NPCs have been up to. Have any of them done or planned something that might become apparent right now? Is something taking place elsewhere deserving of the GM's attention? Maybe the death cult is opening a portal to Inferno to release the living dead into the city, while the PCs are busy snooping around the mafia hideout down by the docks. When the GM makes her Move, she describes the characters hearing sirens and helicopters in the city, pillars of smoke rising from the downtown districts. This method makes the world feel real, and by frequently recalling her threats the GM also makes the characters' lives more interesting.

SCENES

A *scene* is an uninterrupted section of the story, transpiring in a single place and/or continuous span of time. For example:

- Pillow talk between the PC and her lover.
- A car chase through the streets of Manhattan.
- Talking with a witness for information.
- Investigation of a murder scene.
- A firefight between the PCs and the bad guys.

A *story* consists of many distinct scenes, and the GM's duty is to present these scenes, keep track of time, and move on to the next when appropriate. Typically, the GM cuts to a new scene when the story moves to another place or time. For example:

- Later that morning, after James has gone to work, the phone rings. What do you do?
- You lay low in the parking garage for a while. Your pursuers don't appear. What do you do?
- After searching the apartment for clues for a few hours, you started getting hungry. You've all headed to the fast food joint across the street. This seems like a good opportunity to discuss what you found at the murder scene. What do you talk about?
- After escaping from the warehouse, you all meet up at Andy's place. Sam is bleeding heavily from the bullet wound in her arm and seems about to go into shock. What do you do?

The moment to end a scene often arrives naturally. Sometimes, the players initiate this by taking actions to leave a locale or move forward in the story:

- "I'm going to head over to [location]."
- "I take it easy for a while and wait for sunset."
- "I want to skip ahead until [situation]."

Sometimes, the GM will feel it appropriate to conclude a scene because nothing much is happening. The GM can always ask the players if it's okay to cut the scene short, or if they plan on doing something else, so the players don't feel like their actions don't matter.

The setup and pacing of scenes can be highly variable. Sometimes, the GM simply wants to describe a location and let the PCs interact with it without worrying about establishing a high concept or introducing important NPCs. At other times, the GM will want to nurture tension and drama through making Moves, introducing threats, or presenting obstacles the PCs are forced to react to.

When the GM describes locations and NPCs, it can be helpful to focus only on the general impression and some notable details. Let the players take the lead on what aspects they're interested in getting more details on.

For example: "You enter an enormous hallway with red walls and black carpets with gilded patterns covering the marble floor. Several large, closed double-doors built from aged wood line both sides of the hallway, and from the far end you can hear a piano echoing from a bright, white salon. In the door opening stands an old, black man dressed in a white tailcoat. Despite the doorway being probably three meters tall, you get the sense the old man is hunched over, in order to fit it. What do you do?"

THE GAMEMASTER'S MOVES

The GM's Moves are meant to create obstacles for the PCs to overcome during the course of the story. Unlike the players, the GM never makes dice rolls for their Moves.

WHEN?

The GM makes a Move when one of the following takes place during a game session:

- When the GM wants to increase tension.
- When a player Move tells that the GM may make a Move; *note the 'may,' as the GM always has a choice whether to make a Move or not.*
- When a character's actions grant an opportunity for the GM to make a Move.

HOW?

The GM follows this sequence when making a Move:

[1] The GM describes an obstacle and asks what the PCs do about it.

[2] The players describe their characters' responses to the event. Sometimes, these responses involve rolling for one of their Moves.

[3] The GM describes the outcomes of the responses, based on established fiction and any Moves the players made.

As the GM makes her Moves, she keeps her Principles in mind and describes the environments the PCs find themselves in.

An obstacle is a creature, object, or event hindering or opposing the character from reaching their goals. The GM Move descriptions, and the threat section in ***Chapter 9*** provides plenty of inspiration for obstacles the GM can put in the characters' way.

Some examples of obstacles are: a storm, a hostile witness, a psychotic killer, an inquisitive police inspector, a mysterious object, a curse, a locked door, the sound of approaching footsteps, a revelation that the murderer is one of the character's best friends, a rusty old fire-escape, a fire, a riddle, a vision of the Illusion ripping apart and Inferno intruding upon the cityscape.

Soft and Hard Moves

The GM's Moves are sometimes described as *soft* or *hard*. The distinction is drawn based on the Move's impact and whether or not the PCs can prevent them or not. A *soft Move* is a setup for a consequence, which is still preventable. *Hard Moves* are consequences crashing down on the PCs directly and irreversibly. Hard Moves often entail the characters suffering injuries or other afflictions, or having something taken from them. As another example of how soft and hard Moves differ, consider "the man raises his pistol and points it at you, what do you do?" versus "the man raises his pistol and shoots you in the chest."

As a soft Move, the Gamemaster could describe how a misshapen, burnt dog lunges at one of the PCs. If the PC is unsuccessful at avoiding the dog's jaws, the GM makes a Harm Move and describes how the dog's teeth sink into her arm. Once the dog has bitten the PC, she must ***Endure Injury*** – this consequence is immediate and irrevocable.

Hard Moves are often follow-up consequences to a PC mishandling their reaction to a previous soft Move. The GM decides freely whether a Move should be soft or hard. Sometimes the consequence of a soft Move can be another soft Move. Sometimes hard Moves follow immediately as the result of a PC's actions. Be judicial about making multiple consecutive hard Moves. You run the risk of the players feeling like you're trying to shut them down or 'win,' if they're not given a chance to avoid the obstacles you set up.

• Separate Them

The GM separates the PCs from each other and/or from their allies.

Examples:

- "You hear the rotted floor start to give way, and behind you Jessica emits a shriek. A gaping, dark hole has opened up and Jessica is nowhere to be seen. What do you do?"
- "The others don't appear to see the rusty pipes, or hear the pained creaking of the machinery. They take off down the stairs, as if everything seems normal. When they pass through the door, you spot the mechanisms along the walls. They look like torture instruments. The others have already gone on ahead, but their voices sound as if coming from somewhere far away, 'Where did Sandra go?' What do you do?"
- "John, you're in Ray's Bar drinking a black coffee. Cassie still hasn't checked in with you since you parted at the factory three days ago. What do you do?"

• Capture Someone

The GM introduces an obstacle that keeps the PC in place.

Examples:

- "When you're about the leave the room, the enormous guardian steps in front of the door. He grins evilly at you, and you're certain he has no qualms about injuring you. What do you do?"
- "The car door clicks locked behind you. What do you do?"
- "You notice they have you surrounded. Some have taken cover out in the corridor, two are crouched behind one of the pool tables, and yet another man with a rifle is waiting for you by the exit. As soon as your head pops out, the bar counter is peppered with bullets. What do you do?"

• Put Someone in a Bad Spot

The GM sets up a difficult situation or a hard choice for one or more PCs, applies additional pressure and urgency to the current situation, and then observes the result.

Examples:

- "You wake up feeling urgently nauseous. Everything is sore and your clothes are sticky. You retch and vomit over the side of the bed. Blood, flesh, and chunks of hair. You don't remember anything from the night before, except you saw the demon in the mirror just before you went to bed. What do you do?"
- "You've walked a block or so when you hear footsteps behind you, approaching rapidly. When you glance over your shoulder, you spot the grotesquely contorted figure limping after you. She's back. What do you do?"
- "Your hands are bloody and your face swollen after the beating you took. Masrov's body lies immobile on the table, the knife protruding from his back. You hear the doorbell. What do you do?"

• Exchange Harm for Harm

One of the GM's threats, or something else in the environment, deals **Harm** to a character in exchange for taking some herself. This works in much the same way as the listed outcome at **(10–14)** in the player Move ***Engage in Combat***.

Examples:

- "You launch yourself at him, only to both fall and tumble down onto the wet cobblestone. He manages to get on top of you, landing punches down into your face before you manage to roll over and grasp him by the head. You bring it down on the hard stone over and over until he stops struggling. That's the moment you notice the bloody knife in your side. ***Endure Injury*** with –2."

- "You release a couple of rounds blindly around the corner at the cops out in the street. The tall mustached one falls over onto the pavement. The dark-skinned one you spoke with earlier fires back at you, and pain courses through you. ***Endure Injury*** with −2."

• Announce Off-Screen Problems

The GM describes a potential threat manifesting outside the area the PCs are at.

Examples:

- "When you pick up, you hear Kelly's frightened voice on the other end. 'They're here in the apartment. I hid in the bedroom.' You hear a door opening and Kelly goes quiet. Someone seems to be looking around the room. Kelly's breathing is heavy and rapid. 'Please God, don't let them find me,' she whispers. Then you hear someone tearing the closet door open and Kelly's screams. What do you do?"
- "When you look over towards Ginza, you see how Nakamura Tower seems to have grown. It reaches up to the clouds. Huge flocks of those deformed birds circle the building and the sky is a shade of sickly red. Sakamoto's ritual must have been completed before she was sucked into the rift. What do you do?"

• Announce Future Problems

The GM describes a threat that will manifest in the future, if the player characters don't do something about it. This is a great soft Move you can use as a setup for building tension in a great variety of scenes.

Examples:

- "You hear voices outside. They sound Russian. The speakers stop outside the office door and start working a key in the lock. What do you do?"
- "The skin around the wound has taken on a dark, sickly color. It smells bad and pus oozes out of it. The pain throbs constantly now and you feel mildly nauseous. What do you do?"
- "It's evident he doesn't believe you and it's only a matter of time until he summons security. What do you do?"
- "'You're not allowed to leave me again,' she says. Her beautiful face splits into a wide smile. The corners of her mouth stretch unnaturally far, nearly up to her earlobes, and her face contorts. She looks taller now – bending her neck to clear the ceiling – and the previously perfectly manicured nails look like they could rip through your skin as easily as newsprint. What do you do?"

• Deal Damage

The GM harms the character or someone in her vicinity; dealing damage is always a *hard* Move. Normally, the player would roll to ***Endure Injury***, but sometimes a character is affected by **Harm** they are unable to avoid. For example, if someone pulls the trigger on a gun pressed directly to their temple, they fall from the roof of a skyscraper, or they are sucked into the gaping maw of an enormous monster, it's perfectly acceptable to hand out a **Serious** or **Critical Wound**, or even say the character is dead or dying. In this case, the **Harm** should be derived from actions the PC made of their own free will, not just a random hard Move she had no opportunity to avoid. You should take care to signal the danger to the player before activating this Move. If the **Harm** inflicted is fair, the player will accept it. By abusing this power, the GM risks unnecessary conflict with their players and violates the Principle of *Being a Fan of the Player Characters.*

Examples:

- "He smiles at you, the gun resting against Kelly's head, and says 'It's too late to apologize now.' You hear a bang and watch as Kelly's left eye explodes. She watches you in shock and surprise until the right eye fills up with blood and her body falls limp to the floor. What do you do?"
- "It feels like forever before you reach the pavement. You glimpse the giant's contorted face up there in the broken window on the fifth floor. Glass shards sail through the air around you. You recall Jason and the kids at home. You wonder if they're still looking for you, or did he give up already? And then your body hits the asphalt."
- "You duck the left hook, but you're not fast enough to avoid the right. When you're off-balance, he continues raining blows down on your body and face. ***Endure Injury*** with −1."

• Decrease Stability

Sometimes the PCs experience something so horrifying the GM feels there's no way they wouldn't be affected by it. In these situations it's okay for the GM to automatically decrease their **Stability** by one, two, or even four steps, rather than ask them to make a ***Keep it Together*** Move.

Examples:

- "The razide starts sawing your hand off with the rusty knife. You can hear the bones crunching as they give way. Someone is screaming in the room. Then you realize the screams are yours. Decrease **Stability** by −4."
- "As you step into the bedroom, James meets your gaze, madness in his eyes. His arms and legs are hooked into long, iron chains attached to the walls, and someone has neatly cut into his chest, splaying the ribs out like wings. You can still see his heart beating, exposed inside the chest cavity. Decrease **Stability** by −2. What do you do?"
- "When you come to, you're hanging upside down. Around you, the bus is a massacre of broken, shot up bodies. Tree branches have smashed the bus's windows, impaling any passengers in their path. You and a few others are still alive, but from the mountain road you can hear the rebel soldiers shouting excitedly. As moment later, new volleys of automatic fire clatter against the steel roof and the jungle surrounding you. You all decrease **Stability** by −2. What do you do?"

• Take Their Stuff

The GM takes away, or prevents access to, something in the PC's ownership. They can possibly regain the possession or resource, but there's often a risk or cost involved.

Examples:

- "You leap on top of him and both of you tumble into a table, flipping it; glassware and plates smashing against the floor. At first, he nearly gains the upper hand, but you manage to throw him off and sit astride his chest, pinning him down. After several punches, you feel his body cease struggling as he loses consciousness. You hear footsteps approaching, and when you get up you realize your gun isn't tucked into your pants anymore. What do you do?"
- "The enormous, bovine creature charges your car at preternatural speed. As its muscular body smashes into the hood, there's a bang as airbags explode into your faces. Your head is swimming from the impact, your ears ringing. As you are fighting your way out of the airbags, you notice the hood is completely bashed in and the engine is smoking. The beast staggers and turns to fix its furious attention in your direction. What do you do?"
- "You reach for the cellphone but suddenly realize – shit! You must have left it on Engström's desk. What do you do?"
- "As you drive up the street outside the house, you see a black BMW with tinted windows parked outside. You spot movement in your office window. They must've gotten here before you! What do you do?"

• Give the Possible Consequences and Ask

The GM simply informs the player of what consequences their character's action are likely to have, giving the player an opportunity to change their mind. This ensures there's no miscommunication and the player is fully aware of the situation before committing, or allows the player to double-down on a risky course of action.

Examples:

- "If you fire at him, you will probably attract every security guard in the building. Are you doing it anyway?"
- "Of course you can attack the demon, but to get past the chain it's brandishing, you'll have to ***Act Under Pressure***. Are you going to?"
- "You have your pistol pressed up against his daughter's temple, so naturally you can use this as leverage to influence him. But you know doing this will make him an enemy. Are you doing it anyway?"

• Offer an Opportunity, With or Without a Price

The GM describes an opportunity, as well as the potential obstacles or dangers associated with the opportunity, and then provides the PC a choice of whether to accept it or not.

Examples:

- "Suddenly, Natasha's bodyguard leaves the table. The gigantic man lumbers towards the bathroom. Now is your chance to speak with her in private. What do you do?"
- "The moment you're about to leave the warehouse, you hear a voice from inside one of the shipping containers. 'Papa?' You can open it, but the noise might attract one of the night guards. What do you do?"
- "You see a key hanging inside the bowels of the machinery, surrounded by spinning cogwheels and thrusting crankshafts. Reaching inside there and grabbing it would be risky, but not impossible. What do you do?"

• Turn Their Move Against Them

The GM interrupts the PC's planned action in such a way as to turn it around against them.

Examples:

- "You emerge from your hiding spots and point your guns at the seemingly solitary Mr. Volkov. He simply breaks out in laughter. 'You really thought I'd be on my own?' he says with a malicious smile. Heavily equipped soldiers armed with Kalashnikovs start streaming in through the hall doors. What do you do?"
- "You wrestle her to the ground, but despite your strong grip she manages to slip away. She grabs your arms painfully and pulls one of her legs up. Before you know it, one of your arms and your neck are caught between her legs in a triangle – as she tightens her grip, your breath weakens. Somehow, she's managed to completely dominate you. 'So what was it you said? You were going to beat me to death?' she inquires with an ice-cold glare. What do you do?"
- "He doesn't appear bothered by your threats, lowering his pistol. With a smug smile, he says, 'Eliza, I know something you don't. Your sister is alive, and being held captive here in town. Help me escape your friends, and I will let you know where she is.' If you don't help him, you must decrease **Stability** by one step. After all, he's likely your only chance at getting your sister back. What do you do?"

• Make a Threat Move

The GM can give her threats unique Moves to use instead of their regular Moves.

Examples:

- **Influence:** Buy someone's allegiance. "You're just about to put a bullet in Mr. Volkov's face, when you feel an ice-cold gun barrel against your neck. 'I'm sorry to do this, Sam, but they have my wife.' You can hear him sobbing behind you. 'I have to stop you. I'm sorry!' What do you do?"
- **Object:** Summon a demon. "Your blood drips down onto the cube. It starts emitting a black fog, as if something was devouring the light around it. The ornate patterns start moving and the cube floats up into the air. The darkness around it becomes so thick, you cannot see past it. All the children stand silently, staring into the pitch-black sphere. Then, something emerges. It is only vaguely human, twisted and contorted with a smile plastered onto its disfigured, child-like face. You feel your bowels loosen as the creature's dead eyes stare at and through you. What do you do?"

• Make a Move for a Higher Power or Plane of Existence

In *Part III – The Truth*, you will find Moves for the higher powers and the influence of several planes of existence. These Moves are also available to the GM, in addition to the standard ones.

Examples:

- **Passion Move:** Peer into the soul of another. "You feel his sinewy body pressing down on top of you. Your lips meet, tongues reaching out for each other. As your mouths part again, you hear him moaning. He thrusts into you, time and again, and your moist sex pulsates hot in response. Uncontrollably, your own moans join with his. Despite this intimacy, this pleasure, you suspect he has come to make you talk. You know where the gate is. But is he aware of that? You arch your back spasmodically, screaming, and moaning as he comes deep inside of you. You climax together as one, and the knowledge of his true desire enters you simultaneously."
- **Move for Inferno's influence:** Shadow of the past. "The floor is slick with blood, so slippery you need to shuffle forward to avoid falling. The stench of singed flesh penetrates into your nostrils, and here and there you spot bodies stuck in the steaming machines. The heat is inescapable and your clothes are drenched in sweat. Occasionally, you hear ancient gears turning, accompanied by the sound of breaking bones. A saw blade spins up. Someone moans, gurgles, or screams from within the torture devices. You have almost reached the spiral staircase leading out when you hear Lena's voice, hoarse and broken with a mad desperation 'Tom...' When you look towards the machine you can see her face, barely visible inside it."

• Use Disadvantages/Hold

There are two ways in which the GM can use Disadvantages. Either by framing a scene in which a PC's Disadvantage is activated, or by spending a hold she's received from an earlier such scene to make a Move against that PC.

When spent, holds acquired through Disadvantages allow the GM to freely choose what soft or hard Move she should make, but feel free to take inspiration from other GM Moves.

Examples:

- **Schizophrenia:** "You can tell someone is tailing you onto the subway car. He's only a few steps behind you; a middle-aged man with thinning hair and a cheap, brown suit. He pretends to be reading a newspaper, but as soon as you look away you feel his eyes on you. What do you do?"
- **Liar:** "All of a sudden, you spot your supervisor Janet through the crowd on the dance floor. She's seen you as well and approaches at a rapid pace. 'I thought you said you had a broken leg? What are you doing here?' She makes no attempt at hiding the disappointment in her eyes."
- **Wanted:** "Inside the crowded train station, you spot several police officers. You're just about to turn around when you see two of them head right towards you. One of them, a tall white man, is talking into a police radio while the other, a middle-aged black woman, fixes you with her gaze. What do you do?"

After Every Move, Ask "What Do You Do?"

Whenever the GM makes a Move, she asks the players what they do – giving them an opportunity to respond to the Move. This grabs the players' attention and prompts them to respond in the here-and-now, so they don't trail off and lose the scene's focus. Sometimes, they will want additional information about the situation before making their decision. In this case, provide the information unless it would be better to activate a player Move to discover it instead.

A Few More Things to Consider

Describing Minor Details Makes the World Feel Real

Details are an important tool to highlight the macabre, beautiful, and misshapen aspects of the world. Describe how as the PCs' subway train barrels through a deserted station in the middle of the night, they notice figures crouching on the platform – one of them cradling a baby wrapped in newsprint. Describe how the PCs spot numerous dancing silhouettes on the 6th floor of the old, ruined house opposite their bedroom window. Describe how, in the middle of a vicious battle to the death against warped nightmarish creatures, a little girl peers into the alley from the busy sidewalk and exclaims, "Mommy, mommy, there are monsters over there!" as her mother absently pulls her along, paying no mind. These small details root the players in the world.

Zoom Out, Zoom In

The GM can detail an entire day for the players, or she can fast forward days, weeks, or months. Don't be afraid to let time pass. Players often feel comfortable staying in the present, playing out minute by minute. However, stories often benefit when you allow some time to pass occasionally, letting the PCs develop, and providing the story more room to take shape. Advancing the story five months forward takes as much effort as skipping an hour for the GM and players.

One moment, the GM can have the PCs surviving minute to minute in the dark alleys of Metropolis, and the next she could say, "You wander all night down streets lined with dark stone houses. From time to time, you hear rustling, echoing steps in dark alleys, but you never see anybody. By twilight, you reach what appears to be a temple, constructed from corroded metal and plastics. Hung in its entrance are human corpses in varying stages of decomposition. What do you do?"

Share Spotlight Between All PCs

Make sure all PCs have equal share of play time, even if they're split up. Jump back and forth between scenes, so nobody has to wait too long for their turn, using these jumps to build additional tension. The GM can cut in tense moments to give the player time to think about their next action while putting the spotlight on another character. Let the players know to remind you if they feel like you've forgotten about them, and ensure no one person hogs too much of the total game time. Also remember to introduce and use what the players have told you about their characters. Activate Disadvantages to put a PC's secrets and fears into play. Note down a PC's important Relations and insert them into the story on a regular basis.

Take Breaks and Contemplate Until You're Ready to Go Again

When the GM feels a bit weary, unfocused, or unsure of what to do next or what Move to select from a list of options, she can call for a break and give herself some time to rest and consider. Sometimes a short walk can be useful in increasing everyone's energy reserves and discuss what's happened. Listen to the players' hopes, expectations, and plans and make use of them when the game starts up again.

Conflicts

Conflicts between PCs and other individuals or groups are a frequent source of tension, drama, and action in *KULT: Divinity Lost*.

A conflict takes place when two (or more) parties with differing and irreconcilable goals encounter each other in the pursuit of those goals. *For example:* A PC wants to enter an office building, but the guards in the lobby have been told to stop unauthorized people from entering.

Conflicts most frequently arise between PCs and NPCs, but can also be between player characters. In such conflicts, it's the GM's job to determine what Moves are being activated. She also makes her own Moves as usual. The GM can also have NPCs interfere in conflicts between PCs, supporting one side or the other, or in pursuit of their own goals.

There are a few important things to consider when the GM initiates conflicts and executes Moves.

Conflict Resolution Rules?

KULT: Divinity Lost doesn't have a distinct set of rules for handling combat or other conflicts. Every conflict is resolved using the standard player Moves. Regardless of whether the PC opts to convince or attack their opponent, conflict resolution is handled no differently than any other activity – the players describe what their characters do, making Moves as they are triggered, the GM describes the outcome of the Moves and consequences of their actions, making her own Moves as necessary, which in turn incites responses from the players. The game continues on as a conversation between GM and players, where the fiction determines how much detail is necessary.

Conflict resolution of a brawl between a character and an NPC could look like this:

1.

Player: "I run towards Volkov to tackle him to the ground."

GM: "Okay. He's got a large-caliber revolver, which he's about to unload into you. Still going ahead with that?" [Note: the GM is ***Giving the Possible Consequences and Asks***.]

Player: "Yeah, I'm blind with anger. Right now, I don't care if I get shot."

GM: "He empties the cylinder in a series of loud bangs while you run towards him. Roll to ***Act Under Pressure***. The pressure here is the bullets might stop you in your tracks."

Player: "Okay. Haha, that's a 16."

GM: "Cool! You rush straight at him, you can feel the bullets fly by. You hear clicking from the revolver right as you're on top of him. Can I assume you're tackling him, then?" [The GM is ***Offering an Opportunity,*** in this case ***Without a Cost***.]

Player: "Yes!"

GM: "You connect with his abdomen and the two of you fall down onto the floor. You're on top of him and he's trying to fend you off. What do you do?"

Or it could have gone like this:

2.

Player: "I leap forward and try to pummel him to death."

GM: "Okay, sounds like you're using *Excessive force*, unarmed attack?"

Player: "Yes, definitely."

GM: "He's obviously planning to attack you back. Roll to ***Engage in Combat***."

Player: "11."

GM: "Okay. You run up to him and sucker-punch him right in the jaw. He teeters backwards, but regains his balance, ducking out of the way of your next blow. His elbow hits you in the face, but it doesn't bother you. You get in two rapid blows on his kidney and liver area. He gasps painfully and lowers his guard for a moment. Your bloodied fist hits him in the chin and he falls to the stone floor, limp. You keep bashing his face in until no human features remain. Everything is blood and your knuckles hurt like hell. Roll to ***Endure Injury*** with a –1 modifier."

In *Example #1*, the GM frames the struggle so tackling the man to the floor triggers ***Act Under Pressure***. More Moves will be activated before either of the parties have won. In *Example #2*, the GM zooms out a bit, and lets one attack roll determine the entire fight. In this way, the GM can easily emphasize a given conflict more or less depending on how important it is to the story. Depending on the Moves you make and the Moves you let the players activate, you can control the tempo and narrative details of a conflict.

It's okay for the players to use any Moves they want, as long as it makes sense in the story. Maybe the character starts negotiating after she realizes she's not going to persevere in a violent conflict. All that's needed is for the Move's trigger to be activated in the fiction, as usual.

Example:

"Wait, stop, wait, I give up! Will you stop shooting, if I put my gun down?" The trigger for ***Influence Other*** is *"When you influence an NPC through negotiation, argument, or from a position of power..."* In this case, the PC would have to actually negotiate (as they do here), offer a strong argument (e.g., "if we don't stop shooting, this ceiling will collapse and we'll both die!"), or be in a position of power (e.g., proven superior firepower) in order to make the Move.

An NPC can yield, negotiate, run away, or take any other appropriate action in much the same way, if they feel it's their best option. Make conflicts feel fluid and alive. Transition between talking, violence, and back to talking again. Charismatic characters make the most from negotiation, while tough characters would rather solve conflicts with violence. Remember the consequences for failing a negotiation are rarely as grave as being on the losing side of a violent exchange, even though they both technically result in the GM making a Move. Remember your Principles and base all your Moves on the fiction.

Conflict Escalation

A conflict can be considered to be one of several stages of escalation.

Discussion is the first stage in many conflicts. The parties negotiate with each other, each trying to achieve their goals, or compromise with each other to arrive at a satisfactory solution.

Common player Moves activated during a discussion are ***Influence Other***, ***Read a Person***, and ***Act Under Pressure*** (e.g., when lying). For example, the PC tries to convince the guards in the lobby to let them into the building by offering them a bribe.

Intimidation is the next step of escalation, after discussion is ruled out. The parties now threaten violence or future repercussions in order to force the other to bend to their will. Common player Moves activated during intimidation are ***Influence Other*** and ***Observe a Situation***. For example, the PC tells the guards in the lobby he will beat them up, if they don't step aside.

Violence is an escalation beyond intimidation, consisting of one or both parties assaulting each other with physical violence in order to accomplish their goal. Common player Moves activated during acts of violence are ***Engage in Combat*** and ***Act Under Pressure***. For example, the PC and his buddies attack the guards in the lobby.

In addition to the common player Moves, many of the PCs' Advantages can be used in the course of a conflict.

Conflicts and the Individual

How the conflict escalates depends on the choices the GM and PCs make. At any time, the GM and players can escalate the conflict any number of tiers. Most normal people wouldn't escalate conflicts beyond discussion, and if threatened they sooner back down than resort to violence. In most civilized countries, the state has a monopoly on exercising violence, meaning only those who are employed in a capacity such as police, military, or security forces can utilize it legally. Civilians are forbidden from exercising violence, other than in self-defense. Sometimes, the NPCs threatening the PCs are people who aren't concerned about the law and aren't worried about using violence to get what they want. Even among such people, the majority would yield rather than risk being seriously injured or killed. Only insane, desensitized, or inhuman NPCs fight to the death, unless what they're fighting for is extremely important to them. A mother might be willing to die to protect her child, but likely wouldn't go to such extremes for her job, reputation, car, or some other material and replaceable thing.

The GM can set the tone of a story by determining how NPCs would act during conflicts. NPCs who would resolve conflicts with discussion rather than violence make for more low-key stories where the drama is dialogue-focused, while NPCs who solve problems with threats or violence make for more action-oriented stories where the PCs are forced to fight to meet their objectives.

When the PCs resort to violence to solve their conflicts, the GM can set the tone through the natural consequences she enforces in the story. If the PCs seriously injure or kill people, the GM can show them the consequences in the form of police, wanted ads, and others treating them with fear, suspicion, and aggression. The GM can also let them go on largely consequence-free rampages, encouraging the brutality, and making the violence an integral aspect of the story. It all depends on what kind of story the GM wants to nurture.

Conflict Flow

The order of action between player characters and NPCs is primarily determined by the fiction. When the conflict is limited to conversation and intimidation, there's no need to formally track the order, as it will emerge naturally. During violent physical conflicts, the GM might need to decide who acts next. If a PC initiates the conflict, they will act first. If an NPC starts the conflict, then they take action first. When the PCs trigger Moves, these Moves generate a natural flow, where opportunities to act and react switch back and forth between the PCs and NPCs involved.

The GM has two methods to determine which PC should be acting next: a *fixed order* or an *order based on the fiction*. If it doesn't directly affect the story, the GM can simply go around the table in a fixed order, asking the players to describe and execute their characters' actions, one by one. Rather than executing each action as described, it's often more flexible and cinematic to ask for all of the PC actions up front, then determine the execution order based on what best makes sense for the fiction. Someone might be firing their pistol, while another wants to run away and take cover, and a third wants to take stock of the situation before acting. The GM might determine the shooter acts first, since this would be instantaneous. Afterwards, the person observing the situation could get to make their Move. Finally, the character diving for cover gets to roll to see if they're successful. Or any other order, depending on the situation's context and details.

From time to time, the GM will want to create tension by jumping back and forth between different conflicts in the scene, constructing mini-cliffhangers where the players are forced to wait to discover the outcome. A PC might have missed their attack, and the GM describes their opponent swinging an axe at them – only to skip to the character's ally, who is fighting somewhere else, and then returning focus to the axe-wielding lunatic and the outcome of their attack. One reason to do this is to build tension, while another is to allow other characters to affect the situation by giving them an opportunity to assist their friend. This is only possible when using an order based on the fiction.

EXAMPLE:

Three player characters, *Ashley*, *Hadi*, and *John*, find themselves inside a deserted bazaar in Istanbul. They're searching for the basement workshop of *Bahadin*, the clockmaker, to follow up on a clue.

GM: "You walk slowly down arched pathways, dimly illuminated by moonbeams through skylights. Lining the paths are carts and semi-permanent constructions with spices, clothing, and every sort of handicraft. Ashley, you notice a staircase leading down with a wall clock hanging above it. At the same time, John and Hadi, you see three figures approaching farther down the path. Glancing over your shoulder, you realize two additional figures are approaching from behind [Note: the GM is ***Announcing Future Problems***]."

Fixed Order, from Player 1 to 3:

GM: "John, what do you do?" [Note: the GM is always ***Addressing the Character, Not the Player***]

John: "I draw my revolver and try to determine whether or not they're a threat."

GM: "You're ***Observing the Situation*** then. Roll and add **Perception**."

John: "I got a 12, so I can ask one question. I want to know what seems strange about this."

GM: "As you focus on them, you can tell the figures are stooped and muscular. They appear naked, hunched over, and are loping forward, as if they are running on all fours. Remember you get to take +1, if you act against them now."

GM: "You see the figures approach. Ashley, what do you do?"

Ashley: "I run down the staircase."

GM: "Okay. It's dark down there, so you'd have to use your cellphone for illumination."

Ashley: "Sure, I do that."

GM: "At the bottom of the stairs is a closed door."

Ashley: "I check it to see if it's locked."

GM: "Yes, it's locked."

Ashley: "I pull out my lock-picks and try to pick the lock."

GM: "You'd be ***Acting Under Pressure***, the pressure being the figures will reach you before you manage to unlock the door."

Ashley: "I got a 15."

GM: "Within a few seconds, the lock goes 'click' and opens."

GM: "The figures are approaching. John is looking them over and Ashley has descended the staircase. Hadi, what do you do?"

Hadi: "I get the shotgun out of my bag and yell, 'Stop, or I'll shoot!' first in Arabic, and then English."

GM: "They don't even flinch, just keep going like they don't understand or care. Do you actually fire at them?"

Hadi: "Yes, I blast the two figures coming up from behind us."

GM: "You fire the shotgun with loud bangs, and see how both figures fall over. As they turn and twist in agony on the ground, they emit loud, inhuman growls which echo down the passage. Simultaneously, the figures on the other side of you start loping towards you. By the way, don't forget to mark off two ammo." [The GM knows, even while the players don't, the creatures are unfamiliar with the concept of firearms and don't

know to take cover – they are not 'able' opponents and thus won't trigger the ***Engage in Combat*** Move. As the weapon's Harm value is sufficient to eliminate both enemies, they're both blown away.]

GM: "So, John, what do you do now?"

Order Based on the Fiction:

GM to player 2: "You open the door. Inside is a shop filled with all kinds of clocks. At the far end, you see a workbench, where a man is slumped over in his chair, surrounded by clock parts and tools. Where the man's face should be, there's now only a wet mess of flesh and cartilage. Suddenly, rifle shots sound from outside, where the others are." [The GM describes the environment and emphasizes Ashley can hear the gunfire from above]

Ashley: "I ignore the sounds from above and examine the man. You said his face is missing, gross. Should I roll to ***Keep it Together***?"

GM: "Oh, yeah definitely. It's a horrible bloody mess, partly coagulated, and you think you can see movement in there. Maybe maggots."

Ashley: "I only got a 12. I feel terrible examining him, thinking he died because of us somehow. Violated like this in his own shop. I become guilt-ridden." [Player 2 lowers Ashley's **Stability** by 1] "I'm at *Shaken* now."

GM: "Okay, good to know. Note, you'll suffer –1 to all ***Keep it Together*** rolls from now on, and –2 to all Disadvantage Moves. Alright, it's going to take a while, but roll to ***Investigate***."

Ashley: "17. I want to find out more about it, and I want to know if there's anything weird about it."

GM: "Alright. I'll let you know what you discover in just a moment."

GM: "John! After Hadi discharged her shotgun, the three figures up ahead start loping rapidly towards you. Their movements are animalistic and they emit distorted growls and snarls. What do you do?" [The GM is ***Putting John in a Bad Spot***]

John: "I draw my pistol and fire at the foremost of them, while I back up towards the staircase."

GM: "Okay. You are ***Engaging in Combat***, go ahead and roll **Violence**."

John: "Shit! I only got a 9."

GM: "You fire a few shots at the creature – reduce ammo, by the way – but the bullets don't appear to slow it down. It leaps on top of you, slamming you down to the ground with enough force to knock the wind out of you." [The GM sets up a Move to ***Capture John***, but then turns to Player 3.]

John: "Okay, I..."

GM: "Just wait a moment, John, I'm cutting over to Hadi now."

John: "Okay."

GM to player 3: "Hadi, you see John fall over with one of the creatures on top of him. The other two are rushing towards you, but the creature on top of John is about to tear into him. What do you do?" [The GM ***Offers Hadi an Opportunity With a Cost*** to help John; the cost being he might get overrun by the other two creatures, if he takes it]

Hadi: "I fire my final shot at the beast attacking John."

GM: "Roll to ***Help***, using **Coolness**."

Hadi: "I got a 12, which gives him +1 to his roll. That makes it a 10, right?"

GM: "That's right. Hadi, your shot throws the creature off John. The other two launch themselves towards you, slashing with slavering jaws and fingers twisted like claws. What do you do?" [As before, the GM knows the shotgun does enough damage to neutralize the beast. The GM picked "run into problems later" from the **(10–14)** list, making a mental note to have this close encounter come back to haunt John and Hadi.]

Hadi: "I roll to the side and down the stairs."

GM: "Roll to ***Avoid Harm***."

Hadi: "11."

GM: "As you jump to the side, one of the beasts manages to grab hold of your shotgun. You lose your grip of it as you tumble down the stairs, landing in the clockwork's doorway, staggered." [The GM chooses for Hadi to *Lose something*, namely his shotgun]

GM to player 1: "John, the beast that was perched on top of you is now lying immobile in a pile, a few paces away. It's a female, sporting a large hole in her back from Hadi's shotgun blast. Behind you, two contorted, naked people ravenously claw at Hadi's shotgun, as if it were a piece of meat. They completely ignore you. What do you do?" [The GM ***Offers an Opportunity, With or Without a Cost***].

Moves and Conflict Escalation

Minor differences in what Moves the GM selects, and how hard or soft she makes them, can make a big difference to the way a conflict escalates. Compare "you see a faint outline in his jacket, possibly some kind of handgun" and "he pulls a pistol on you." In one instance, the GM suggests there's a potential threat, notifying the players the NPC may have some firepower which they have to consider when dealing with him. On the other hand, when we describe how he pulls out a pistol, we have rapidly escalated the conflict into one that is potentially lethal. The GM's decisions while making her Moves influences whether a conflict becomes a tense negotiation or a violent fight. The players can also escalate conflicts through their PCs' actions, but the GM can always put a stop to it by having their opponents yield or try to flee.

Harm in Conflicts

When the PCs are harmed, the GM can reference the following list of common injuries to determine how much **Harm** would typically be inflicted.

Circumstance	Harm value
Tumbling down a flight of stairs, tipping over on a motorcycle	1
Collision when travelling 50 km/h (30 mph), thrown through a window	2
Getting your arm stuck in a lathe, drop from the 3rd floor onto pavement	3
Highway-speed collision, high-voltage electrical burns	4
Hit by a weapon or other attack	dependent on weapon

If the PCs are attacked by opponents the GM doesn't have numbers for, she can use the following Harm values as a guideline, depending on the weaponry used.

Weapon	Harm value
Unarmed brawl	1
Melee weapon, improvised weapon	2
Light firearms	2
Heavy firearms	3
Explosives, chainsaw	4

Conflicts and Gangs

Conflicts involving several people proceed in the same way as other conflicts in *KULT: Divinity Lost*. If a PC has a gang on her side, she still makes her usual player Moves and Advantage Moves, sometimes getting the gang to act as she'd like them to.

Gangs and Harm

Generally speaking, a gang is capable of dealing greater **Harm** than a single person can. The **Harm value** of the gang's weapons is increased by one, two or three steps, depending on the size of the gang relative to those they're fighting. For example, a gang of five people attacking a single person increases the **Harm** by +1, while fifteen people increase it by +2. In effect, this means a single PC brutalized by fifteen unarmed thugs would take –3 to their ***Endure Injury*** roll rather than –1.

When two gangs attack each other, the larger gang deals bonus **Harm** to the smaller group, based on their size difference. A medium-sized gang attacking a small gang with pistols, knives, and chains deals **2+1 Harm** to the smaller. Two gangs with the same size negate each others **Harm bonus**.

Gangs and Harm bonus rules should be considered adjustable by the GM depending on the situation.

Numbers	Size	Harm
4–9	Small	+1
10–19	Medium	+2
20+	Large	+3

Gang	Versus	Harm
Small	Individual	+1
Small	Small	+0
Small	Medium	+0
Small	Large	+0
Medium	Individual	+2
Medium	Small	+1
Medium	Medium	+0
Medium	Large	+0
Large	Individual	+3
Large	Small	+2
Large	Medium	+1
Large	Large	+0

PCs with Gangs

If a PC has minions on her side during a fight she increases the **Harm** she makes against any opponents who are fewer in number. The PC still rolls for all their Moves, but when they ***Engage in Combat***, it is treated as an engagement by the entire gang. This means a PC with a gang can attack several people simultaneously or overpower a single person.

When the PCs Fight Gangs

A group of PCs are never treated as a gang, as they are superior to the average NPC, even on their own. However, their numbers do matter when they're attacked by several people at once. For the opponents to gain a Harm bonus, their numbers must be at least twice as many as the PCs. For example, a group of five PCs do not suffer bonus **Harm** from groups numbering fewer than ten NPCs.

As the GM, you should also consider whether your opponents outnumber the PCs whenever you make your Moves. It should be more difficult to fight people who outnumber you. The PCs would have a harder time defending themselves from more than two or three people at a time, and would be at a serious disadvantage in such a situation. Have the PCs ***Act Under Pressure*** to avoid being surrounded and ensure that offensive Moves made in such situations are appropriately risky. Opponents with superiority in numbers typically try to flank their target to attack their off-side or from behind. A careless and slow PC can easily be grabbed or pushed to the ground and pinned. In firefights, opponents with superior numbers will flank and surround a PC to force them out of cover. The PC can expect attacks to come from all directions if she doesn't keep mobile or manages to occupy a spot where her flanks are protected.

Conflicts and Advantages

PCs who have Advantages providing them with Edges can spend these during violent conflicts to gain bonus effects. Examples of such Advantages are *The Criminal*'s ***Streetfighter***, *The Scientist*'s ***Genius***, and *The Veteran*'s ***Officer*** or ***Martial Arts Expert***.

Conflicts Between Player Characters

When PCs end up in conflict with each other and one or several of them physically attack one another, the GM should use the following rules:

[1] *If only one PC attacks and the other merely tries to avoid*, the latter should roll to ***Hinder*** using **Violence**, while the aggressor rolls to ***Engage in Combat***. On **(10–14)**, the **Harm** is reduced and on a **(–9)**, the attack misses.

[2] *If both PCs attack each other*, the GM decides which of them strikes first (normally the PC who initiated the fight) and have her roll to ***Engage in Combat***. The other PC ***Hinders*** using **Violence**. In case the attacker fails **(–9)**, the other PC acts as if she rolled **(15+)** to ***Engage in Combat***.

[3] *If several PCs attack a single PC*, one of them rolls to ***Engage in Combat*** while the remainder rolls to ***Help*** (using **Violence**), and the defender gets to ***Hinder*** (also using **Violence**). The attacks get **+1 Harm**.

[4] *If a single PC attacks several others*, the GM should ask each character what they do. The attacking PC uses ***Engage in Combat*** and those who want to dodge the attack roll for ***Hinder*** using **Violence**, exactly as in [1]. If any of the PCs fight back, they roll to ***Hinder*** using **Violence** with results as in [2].

[5] *If two groups of PCs attack each other*, you ask what the PCs do and split up the conflicts in accordance.

[6] *If a PC attacks a completely unprepared PC*, the attack deals **Harm** with no roll required. If there's a question of if the victim should have a chance to notice the attacker you can let the player roll for ***Act Under Pressure*** (the threat is that the PC is dealt **Harm**).

Harming NPCs

When a PC or NPC successfully attacks a non-player character, as many **Wounds** are inflicted equal to the total **Harm** minus any armor rating.

Wounds = **Harm** – **Armor**

Normal human NPCs die upon suffering three **Wounds**, while tougher opponents and creatures can withstand far more injury. When an NPC takes one or more **Wounds**, the GM makes a Harm Move – describing what happens in the story. The Harm Move could involve the opponent becoming neutralized, or even dying, before all their **Wounds** are crossed off.

Normal human NPCs have the following Harm Moves:

- Subdued
- Dying (but can be saved)
- Death

For example: When a normal human NPC is punched by a PC (unarmed attack, **Harm 1**), the GM can choose the Harm Move *Subdued* and have the NPC immediately go unconscious, as a result.

As most of the minor characters in the game world are normal humans, the GM doesn't need to track **Wounds** for them. They can always simply assume three **Wounds** will take them out, and use the Harm Moves *Subdued*, *Dying*, and *Death*.

Creatures and tough human NPCs can withstand more **Wounds**, and thereby survive attacks which would neutralize or kill a regular human.

Harm and Gangs

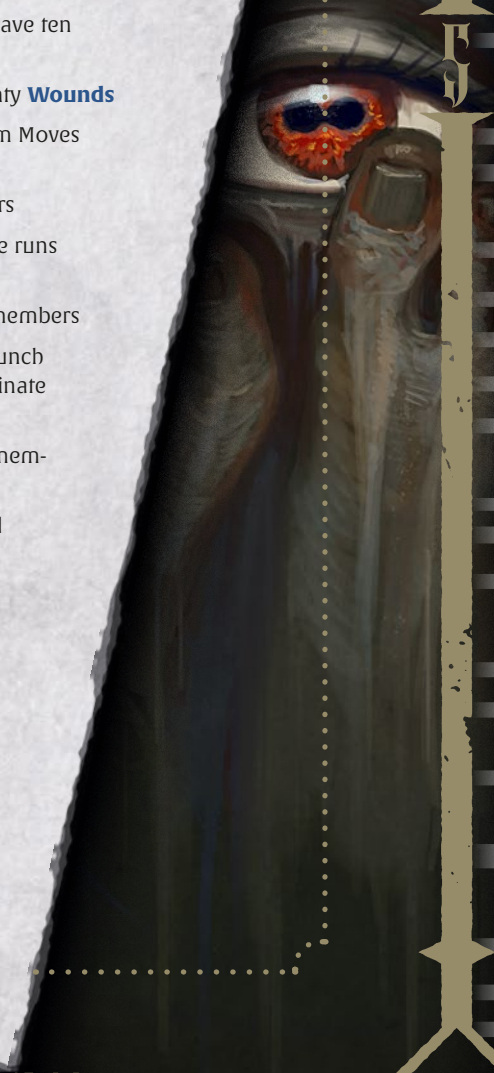
The GM can supply an entire group or gang of minor antagonists, such as a group of minions or a pack of monsters, with a set of communal **Wounds** and Harm Moves. These work the same as they would with individuals, but are shared between them. When all of the gang's **Wounds** are checked off they are eradicated or defeated. Of course you could also have individually tracked **Wounds** for each of the members of the gang, but using communally tracked **Wounds** can be useful when the individuals aren't very important or when gangs attack one another.

- A *small gang* can have five **Wounds**
- A *medium-sized gang* can have ten **Wounds**
- A *large gang* can have twenty **Wounds**

Some examples of suitable Harm Moves include:

- A few injured gang members
- Decreased morale, someone runs away
- One or several dying gang members
- Someone dies. The others launch an immediate and indiscriminate counterassault.
- Total morale loss: The gang members run away or give up
- Several dead, many wounded
- Someone makes a desperate attack
- The gang is neutralized down to the last man

For example: The PC lobs a grenade against the distorted humanoids chasing her in the sewer system; she deals *four* **Harm**. The gang can take up to *five* **Wounds**, so the GM decides most of the creatures die, while the others are badly injured by the explosion.



THE HORROR CONTRACT

More than any other roleplaying game genre, the horror genre relies on the players agreeing to its underlying premise – in this case, they want to be frightened. If the players aren't on board with the premise, the game won't work. All descriptions and portrayals in the pursuit of an atmosphere of discomfort and dread will simply fall flat. Due to this, it is important that the players consent to a *Horror Contract*, in which they agree to help frighten themselves. This provides the GM an open door into the players' imagination, which they should utilize in techniques to help build and maintain the horror genre's mood.

Know Your Players

If the GM knows what scares the players, it's clearly going to make it easier to frighten them. Find out what makes your players tense up by talking to them about their fears and anything relating to them. If there's something in particular they're scared of, consider including it in the story. Even if their characters wouldn't be afraid, the players unconsciously will be.

Quality Before Quantity

When the horrors reappear too frequently, when there are demons around every corner, and you run into dismembered, mutilated corpses everywhere you go, the story loses its edge. By overwhelming the players with a stream of horrific events, one after another, they will quickly become desensitized. It's sometimes important to hold back and dispense the horrors sparingly so as to provide the players time to recover. As an analogy, consider yourself as GM to be a coachman. The horse is horror, and it is constantly trying to dash off. Your task as the GM is to hold tightly onto the reins, restraining the horror before it starts losing its impact. Ensure the players are given time to recover, breathe, and regaining a sense of control and comfort. At this point, you can start threatening them again. Proper pacing is key to successful horror.

Build the Atmosphere

Building an atmosphere means creating the prerequisites for horror with the players. It could mean choosing the right environs for unpleasant scenes. For example, compare an abandoned subway station at night to a packed café at lunchtime. In the subway station, the players are tense from the moment they enter the place, while in the café they feel safe. This will help GM introduce the sense of *wrongness* to the scene. If a player notices a five-year old girl through the subway station's darkness, she will think twice before continuing. If she spots the same girl at the crowded café, she will have little to no reaction whatsoever.

Atmosphere is also about creating the prerequisites for horror in the game-play environment. If you play in a dark room with lit candles and dark-ambient music, it's much easier to achieve a horror mood than if you played at the kitchen table in a lit apartment with the TV blaring from the living room.

Stay in the Scene

When you notice a scene starts to get scary and effective, try to hold onto the moment. As GM, you control the scene's time and space. When a character flees in a panic through the dark cellar and the mood is perfect, stretch out the scene. Don't allow them to escape in a mere moment. The character stumbles, drops her phone, feels something grabbing onto her, and notices the stench of whatever's coming up behind them. When a PC is injured, describe the sensation of their skin peeling back, how the blood trickles slowly down their abdomen. Bones breaking, teeth being knocked out. When the PC emerges from a tunnel leading to Metropolis and the tension is heavy in the air, take a moment to describe the smells, the coldness of the walls, the persistent sound of dripping liquid, and the tangible presence of someone or something in the darkness.

Suggest Rather than Overwhelm

It's always better to let the players imagine the horror themselves rather than describe it for them. Given a certain amount of information, the imagination starts filling in the gaps for us – usually much worse than you could possibly describe. Human brains are constructed such that we're more prone to exaggerate threats than downplay them. Because of this, it's often scarier to hear a horrible sound or spot a fleeting figure than seeing the monster directly. When the GM creates a horror atmosphere, she should avoid providing the players too much information or too quickly, rather offering small snippets they must piece together into a terrifying whole. For example, she can describe the clamor of screams from the insane, tortured moans, gurgling and the snapping of bones, and the wet, sloppy sound of something enormous dragging itself onwards as the cairath approaches. The player gets to create an image of what is making those sounds on her own.

The Inexplicable

It's uncomfortable to encounter something you cannot explain. When you have the gnawing feeling something is off, even the most mundane things appear threatening. This is frequently used in Asian horror films where ghosts appear human, but move in strange, jerky ways, or in David Lynch's movies and TV-series where situations and locations seem familiar but some small detail makes it apparent something isn't right.

People: The girl at the end of the corridor moves spasmodically. The man in the nice suit smells of iron and blood. The doctor never removes his surgical mask. It's as if something is bulging and moving under the fat man's clothes. The old lady threateningly rattles her teeth. The stranger greets you as if you're close friends, yet every sentence seems to contain a veiled threat. A child is standing in an abandoned industrial site in the middle of the night.

Situations: Your missing daughter's diary lies open on her bed when you get home. All the food in the fridge has rotted overnight. You notice someone's made four calls from your cellphone while you've been sleeping. There are strange sounds on the other side of the wall. Your body feels cold and alien when you wake up in the morning. You smell the scent of your dead father's deodorant in the car.

Places: The corridor continues onward, even though the house's design should logically be at an end. A door lead ups to the fourth floor of a three-story building. A doorway in a deserted building

opens to a bright kitchen smelling of freshly baked pies and a smiling woman in a checkered apron. A decrepit yet mundane apartment with a rusted steel door in one wall, which doesn't belong there at all. A modern office with a mosaic floor depicting obscure machinery.

When things are not as they should be, the players become suspicious and guarded. Use this unease to make them feel threatened and vulnerable.

Create a Feeling of Exposure

A simple rule of thumb for horror is the bigger the crowd, the more protected you feel. This includes both the number of PCs in the scene and the number of other people in the location. A solitary character will feel more exposed than if five of them are together. A PC alone in dark woods feels more exposed than one on a city plaza with other people.

It can be hard to isolate characters, as players usually aren't to keen on splitting up – especially in horror-genre games. Their natural instincts are to stick together to feel safer. A trick the GM can use to isolate PCs from each other is through spending Hold on Disadvantages. For example, Disadvantages like ***Repressed Memories*** and ***Nightmares*** provide the GM full control over where the character is and what the scene looks like. ***Repressed Memories*** gives the player character flashbacks, where they remember and play out events from their past. ***Nightmares*** create terrifying scenes played out in the dream world. The GM can also separate the characters in regular scenes by having antagonists cut them off or use the environment against them such as having a character fall through the rotted floor of an old house while the rest remain on the floor above. Failed rolls to ***Keep it Together*** can also lead to the player losing control over their character. The character might panic and flee a situation, only to later realize she's run away from all her allies as well.

Getting the PCs to venture to clearly unsafe places is all about motivating the character. If there's something sufficiently important and interesting at the place, the characters will go there. If the GM base her stories on the characters' Dark Secrets and motivations, the players can generally be trusted to find a reason to have their characters investigate.

Dare to be Unpleasant

Exposure isn't just about particular places where the PCs experience isolation; the character's inner life should also be afflicted. Take the players to places you don't normally want to go, where it's sensitive, difficult, and disconcerting. Violence and death can easily be oversimplified in movies, games, and novels where people are shot, stabbed, and beaten to death without pause and reflection. Instead, make sure to set up distressing and unnerving moments. These scenes are often tied to intimacy, family, and sex and how they produce feelings of shame, guilt, and helplessness. Have no mercy. It should be difficult, offensive, and transgressive to the player character.

- You're held in place while the bookie you're in deep with undoes your pants and slips his rough fingers around your cock. He strokes it, almost tenderly, grinning. "When do I get my money," he asks, while the laughter rings in your ears.
- You scroll through the webpages. Your name and picture are featured everywhere, alongside grainy, security camera footage. The creature you unleashed, which looks exactly like you, is gunning people down in a mall. It's all a blur of newspaper headlines, wanted alerts, and close-ups of your mother crying while paparazzi and reporters scream at her.
- You feel like you can't control your own body. The lictor's commanding voice has entangled your mind. You feel your newborn son's warm, soft skin. You lift him up and he babbles and coos happily, unaware of what is about to transpire. You start walking towards the oven, your feet betraying you with every step.
- There's a taste of blood in your mouth. Your head spins and one of your front teeth comes loose as he throws you onto the asphalt. There's a ripping noise as he tears your pants down. He pushes his dick into you. You scream. He keeps going.
- You can't get away. One of the police officers hold your head still while the other reveals a pocket knife that he puts up against your eye. The tip rests against your cornea. Suddenly, he applies pressure. The world becomes darkness and pain. All you can do is scream as the wet bloody mess that used to be your eye drips down your cheek.
- You wake up coughing. It's difficult to focus your vision and your face feels swollen and smashed. You're in fetal position in the bed of a cheap motel room. Hardcore porn is on the TV. There's a taste of semen in your mouth. The bed is drenched in blood. One of them got everything on camera.

Important! Discuss any sensitive subjects with the group to ensure they can be included in the story. Certain subjects can cross a boundary for certain players (as opposed to their characters). It's better to ensure participants have the opportunity to make sure certain subjects are off-limits rather than potentially traumatize players during the session. As a group, you may decide upon a 'stop-phrase,' which allows the players to end any scenes they'd be uncomfortable with.

Create Interesting Monsters

It's insufficient to simply present a vile creature and elaborate based on its horrific visage. A monster revealed in broad daylight is never as terrifying as one that isn't seen at all. Your monsters should be both fascinating and fearsome. Encountering a nephalite, razide, or lictor should make the players feel existentially threatened, and be a memorable moment in the game. Before encountering it, the monster's presence must have made itself known in the story, so the encounter is anticipated. If the PCs discovered multiple tortured and mutilated bodies a razide has left in its wake throughout the story, they will expect the worst when they meet the creature face-to-face. Prior to the encounter, it's good to plan what the being looks like, both as obscured by the Illusion and in its true form, and how it behaves, to ensure it provides the most unpleasant and disturbing impression possible. Try to imagine little details the players have problematic associations with. For example, describe how the razide's human form in the Illusion is constantly adjusting the skin on its face, as if it doesn't fit properly. If they pierce the Illusion and see its true form, they see how its face has actually been surgically removed from its original host and strapped onto the monster's head like a mask.

As you describe monsters, you can put their supernatural nature on display by highlighting the influence they have on the characters and the Illusion, not merely their physical appearance.

Distort perceptions: Creatures from other planes don't belong in the Illusion, and the PCs' senses may be distorted by their presence.

- A sour stench causes the eyes to water.
- Their skin crawls as if thousands of tiny parasites are swarming across it.
- Colors turn muted and diffuse, and bloom out like ink in water.
- It suddenly gets extremely cold, as if you were submerged into ice water.
- All sounds sharpen and reverberate, as if you're inside an enormous oil tank.
- Your saliva turns thick and slimy, and your skin feels feverish, clammy, and heavy.

Use metaphors and comparisons: Create a surreal, alien atmosphere through use of metaphors.

- The demon harbors enormous power, as if a roaring storm is gathering just below the surface.
- Having her penetrating gaze upon you is like being flayed alive. Her eyes cut through layer after layer, looking into the core of your very being.
- The spectral figure hovers in the air like a mirage. You sense if you were to glance away, even for a moment, it would vanish forever.

Pervert their thoughts and feelings: When monsters are in their presence, the PCs' minds are influenced – as if contaminated – by wills not their own. This is particularly true for beings with close ties to Archons and Death Angels, and their principles.

- The nepharite pulls her clothing aside to reveal her glistening sex. You're struck with the strong desire, a lusty pull, to put your tongue on the moist slit, to be permitted to kneel in front of her, to please and worship her.
- You feel weak, abandoned, and realize nobody has ever been on your side, ever supported you. But now the creature looming before you offers its flayed hand in acceptance.
- You're overcome with a burning hatred. All your memories from Iraq bubble to the surface like bile, your skull swimming with fury, terror, and the stench of white phosphorous.
- The swollen, soaked beast stares at you and you're filled with a gnawing hunger. To devour it, to tear into it with your jaws and feast upon its soft flesh and greasy intestines.

Create a Horror Contract

Forbidden Subjects

Ask every player to write a list of things they do not want to experience in the story and give it to you.

Don't discuss this verbally as there may be subjects players would like to keep quiet from the other players. But tell the group about the topics that are forbidden in your story. It's your role as GM to see these subjects are kept from the story. When other players bring up any forbidden subject you discreetly ask them to refrain from its use.

Example:

Player: "I rip up his jeans with my knife and push him down on the bed."

GM: "Rape is a forbidden subject, so please alter your action."

Stop-Phrase or Sign

Decide a special word or sign the players can use to stop the game when they feel uncomfortable with a scene.

When the stop word or sign is used the scene is immediately cut. Ask the player who stopped the scene how they feel and don't start playing again until everyone feels okay. The scene can either be discussed and altered or skipped and summarized by the GM.

Scary Things

Ask each player to tell you about things that frighten them and would be fun to have in the story.

Advise the players to integrate some or all of these things in their PC Dark Secrets and Disadvantages. Be sure to get every player involved as their cooperation will make the build-up and creation of scary scenes easier.

When the Lie is Revealed

After you have played a few stories with your players, they will come to understand the world is an Illusion, and will have likely accumulated some insight and knowledge about the Truth. Even though the Illusion is an important part of KULT's cosmology, there is nothing preventing you from continuing to play, despite the players now being aware of its existence. Don't frame the Illusion as a plot-twist which, when revealed, makes future play of *KULT: Divinity Lost* impossible. Even though the players know more of the Truth, it doesn't mean PCs in future stories are equally aware – this depends on the type of scenario and the Archetypes they play.

You can feel free to let the players create PCs with more knowledge of the Truth, and this would work best with, or lead up to the players taking on the roles of *Enlightened Archetypes*.

Utilize the players' knowledge to create campaigns where they have more influence over their PCs and their Dark Secrets. Playing stories using unaware characters also works well with players familiar with KULT's cosmology, as it means you can collaborate on creating PCs suitable for the setting and explore parts of the KULT universe the players are particularly interested in. Often, single stories don't reveal everything, only exposing PCs to parts of the overall puzzle.

If you have previously played a story centered on Inferno, you can mix things up by setting the next story around one of the other dimensions. Let the PCs wander into the depths of the Underworld, get trapped in Limbo, or lose themselves in Metropolis. Anything is possible.

CHAPTER 6
SETTING UP A STORY

THIS CHAPTER OUTLINES HOW TO CREATE a story in *KULT: Divinity Lost*, providing you with step-by-step instructions for creating your stories, developing suitable PCs, and collaboratively designing an Intrigue Map to kick off your campaigns.

CHOOSE A SETTING

The setting is the environment in which the story takes place. The first step in creating a story in *KULT: Divinity Lost* is discussing as a group what environment you think would be a cool setting for the story you want to play out. The setting is defined by two factors: *location* and *time*.

Location

The location of your *KULT* story could be a particular city, such as New York City, London, or Berlin, or regions thereof, such as Manhattan in NYC or the French Quarter of New Orleans. The setting can also feature more localized and specific places, such as an Atlantic freighter, an Antarctic research station, or a military base in the Nevada desert. The location affects what PC Archetypes are available and what sort of story you're telling. In *KULT: Divinity Lost*, a PC will be spending most of her time in urban environments, as cities are regularly influenced by otherworldly powers, but don't feel limited to telling stories only in crowded downtowns or back alleys. Desolate wilderness, dark highways, and Levinesque suburbs are all also appropriate for a *KULT: Divinity Lost* story.

Time

KULT: Divinity Lost is primarily meant to support stories taking place in modern urban environments. You may wish to set your story a few years prior to the current date, but it's also possible to set your story in the past, in order to play with particular moods or themes. You might be interested in playing in Berlin after the end of World War II, in Manhattan's gay community during the 1980s AIDS-crisis, or in London at the turn of the century, as Jack the Ripper stalks the slums.

A story in 1950s Tehran is likely to play out quite differently than one set in Tehran in 2010. Playing in Hong Kong versus playing in Stockholm will provide very different, yet equally enjoyable, experiences. Take some time to discuss and decide what would be most fun. Invite everyone to make suggestions and contribute to the first session.

Choosing Archetypes

Each player now selects an *Archetype* to play. Only one of each Aware Archetype can be present in a story – no doubling up! Every Archetype includes specific rules for creating a PC with that concept. In addition to the Archetypes in this book, you may create new ones, if the need arises.

All Archetypes except one – *the Sleeper* – are considered to be *Aware*. Aware Archetypes have various Advantages, and also possess knowledge, somehow, that the world is not quite as it appears.

Aware Archetypes

Aware characters are people who sense reality is not as it appears. Their Dark Secrets pursue them, reminding them of the horrors of their pasts and making their futures uncertain.

The Academic: Academics are subject matter experts, intellectual authorities, and students whose search for knowledge has caused them to question everyday reality.

The Agent: Agents are intelligence analysts, spies, and special agents for governmental authorities or private organizations.

The Artist: Artists are creative individuals, whose works walk the line between genius and madness.

The Avenger: Avengers are victims of real or imagined injustices, who willingly employ brutal and bloody methods in their quest for retribution.

The Broken: The Broken are ordinary people who have experienced horrible things and suffer major traumatic stress as a result.

The Careerist: Careerists are manipulative leader types, whose shrewd ruthlessness allows them to step on others to reach the top with a minimum of guilt.

The Criminal: Criminals are hardened offenders who use cunning, threats, and violence to get others to do what they want.

The Cursed: The Cursed are living on borrowed time, aware that death or something even worse will eventually claim them. They desperately try to find a way to avoid their fate.

The Deceiver: Deceivers use their good looks, natural charisma, and talent for manipulation to get others to give them whatever they want.

The Descendant: Descendants are cursed by inheritance, destiny, or the sins of their ancestors. Something is trying to get them for something they didn't do.

The Detective: Detectives are highly perceptive professionals who are masters of investigation and casework.

The Doll: Dolls possess a kind of magnetic attraction, which unconsciously evokes desire in others. This often leads to unintended consequences.

The Drifter: Drifters are usually people living on the fringes of society, longing for acceptance. They may also just as easily be subversives who despise the society they have escaped from.

The Fixer: Fixers are sly, clever, underworld businessmen and operatives.

The Occultist: Occultists are seekers of knowledge and power, who have begun experimenting with magic, parapsychology, and spiritualism to solve the riddles of existence.

The Prophet: Prophets are charismatic religious leaders, preachers, and ecstatics.

The Ronin: Ronin are professional murderers for hire.

The Seeker: Seekers are urban explorers, hackers, and conspiracy theorists, who use the internet to poke holes in the fabric of the Illusion.

The Scientist: Scientists are genius researchers and inventors, whose experiments might be above board or of questionable ethics.

The Veteran: Veterans are normal people hardened into terrifying warriors by violence and death.

Sleeping Archetype

The Sleeper: A Sleeper is a person living out their lives blinded by the Illusions. Sleepers represent the regular people of *KULT: Divinity Lost*.

Playing Sleepers

When players opt to play *Sleepers*, some adaptations must be made to the story's structure. Sleepers are less capable than the other Archetypes and aren't aware that something is very wrong. When a player creates a Sleeper, they should base this character on one of the Aware Archetypes. As the PC gains experience, they gradually awaken from their lulling dream and eventually become the Aware Archetype they're based upon.

It's particularly suitable to play Sleepers in longer stories. The PCs will be thrown into *KULT: Divinity Lost*'s dark world, gradually coming to understand more about themselves and their environment, until they eventually develop into Aware Archetypes. Sleepers are also good Archetypes for horror stories featuring vulnerable and confused protagonists.

Due to how distinct Sleepers are from the other Archetypes, it's recommended to have all PCs begin as Sleepers if they're used in your story.

Dark Secrets

Each player now selects one or more *Dark Secrets* for their PC. Dark Secrets create a skeleton of a story and determine what threatens the PCs, what forces them to question the Illusion. Make it clear that their Dark Secrets will be the source of much of the story's horrific content, and that it is important that the players choose Dark Secrets they are comfortable with, but will also make play scary and interesting.

Each Archetype has *five* suggested Dark Secrets to choose from, but the player is not bound to those five if they prefer another. Before the players select Dark Secrets, you should discuss the following options:

- A single Dark Secret shared among all PCs,
- A predetermined theme for the Dark Secrets you choose,
- Choosing freely and allowing the GM to draw connections between the Dark Secrets retroactively.

When players have chosen their Dark Secrets, it is the GM's job to ask questions in order to help the players develop their secrets. You should avoid yes or no questions, as open-ended questions will reveal more details. Players should know only what their PC knows about the Dark Secret. They will discover the rest over the course of the story.

The players should also choose a *personal drive* for their Dark Secret. The personal drive gives the PC a goal in the story, serving as an inspiration for story events. Several personal drives are suggested with each Dark Secret.

Don't forget to note down any important details while discussing the Dark Secrets with the players.

Shared Dark Secrets

Utilizing the same Dark Secret for all PCs can encourage a tighter story, where the PCs have strong ties with one another and good reasons to cooperate. This is a good option, especially if you want to play a shorter story with a unified group of characters. Some story types with shared Dark Secrets include:

- ***Guilty of Crime***: The characters committed a crime together, which has now returned to haunt them.
- ***Returned from the Other Side***: The characters are all adopted children from a small town. Having reached adulthood, they begin suffering the exact same nightmare.
- ***Occult Experience***: The characters' high school clique performed a ritual for fun, but ended up conjuring something terrifying that night. The PCs survived, but several of their friends were killed or later disappeared without a trace. Five years later, the demon is still loose and has come back to haunt them.
- ***Survivor***: The characters are related to journalists for a local paper, who were all found brutally murdered. Recently, they have received letters containing their relatives' notes. Each letter provides clues to what their relatives discovered.

Predetermined Theme

You can also select Dark Secrets based on an agreed upon theme, ensuring they have built-in connections. It's important to ensure the theme is appropriate for a horror story. Although action or thriller scenes may occur, *KULT: Divinity Lost* is primarily intended to be a horror game.

For example, the players agree that the story is about cults and the twisted gods they serve. One of the players selects the Dark Secret ***Chosen***, since she's been 'chosen' by a mysterious cult to be sacrificed to their deity. Another player selects ***Guardian***. Her PC belongs to a secret society, which tasked her with protecting the ***Chosen*** PC from the cult. The third player choses ***Survivor***. Her PC had a friend who investigated the cult and disappeared in the process. Now, she allies herself with the ***Chosen*** character and the ***Guardian*** to stop the cult.

By discussing each other's Dark Secrets and making connections, you can create a shared background before the story has even begun.

Choose Freely

The players can simply pick Dark Secrets based on what they feel is most suitable for their character concept. In this case, the GM invents connections between the different players' Dark Secrets during the course of the story.

For example, one character has the Dark Secret ***Heir***, another ***Mental Illness***, and a third ***Returned from the Other Side***. As the story begins, it appears as though the Dark Secrets lack any connection with one another. One PC has inherited an archaic video camera (***Heir***), another has suffered hallucinations and been hearing voices since her childhood (***Mental Illness***), and the third is a sole survivor from a ship that disappeared off the coast of northeastern Florida during a hurricane twenty years ago (***Returned from the Other Side***).

Sleepers and Dark Secrets

Sleepers aren't aware of their Dark Secrets when the game starts. Instead, they gradually recover the memories of their Dark Secret through play. The player still selects their character's Dark Secret, but if they prefer, they can let the GM pick it instead. Eventually the PC remembers their Dark Secret and awakens to a new Archetype.

You can still have a shared Dark Secret, select them in accordance with an agreed upon theme, or select Dark Secrets freely. For Sleeping PCs, what their Dark Secrets actually entail will be defined during the course of the story.

However, over the course of the story, it becomes evident the camera's previous owner was a passenger on the doomed ship, and the mentally ill PC was a child actor in a series of obscure art films, recorded using the same video camera. Now we have connected the first character's inherited camera, the potential origins for the second's mental illness, and the third character's supernatural experiences on the vessel that disappeared. It is now up to the GM to determine how these connections are related to the backstory.

Disadvantages

After Dark Secrets, players choose their character's *Disadvantages* from the options available to the Archetype. The player has to pick *two* Disadvantages. Disadvantages are Moves which cause obstacles or complications to be inserted in the story. The description of each Disadvantage contains an *activation trigger*. Generally, these triggers are based on scene transitions, the character's behaviour, or time passing in the story.

When players select their Disadvantages, they should attempt to connect them to their Dark Secret. The Disadvantage ***Stalker*** is appropriate, for example, if a Dark Secret involves being watched and chased by a malicious person or being. Sometimes, Disadvantages develop naturally from the PC's profession or living situation; for example, having a ***Rival*** as *The Careerist*. Some Disadvantages just provide interesting personality traits and can be selected by the player simply because they sound like fun to play out and explore in the story. A *Careerist* character might have the ***Liar*** Disadvantage because it fits her concept.

There are two types of Disadvantages to choose from: *internal* threats and *external* threats.

Internal threats are often expressions of the PC's traumatic stress, like ***Depression*** or ***Nightmares***. These Disadvantages influence the PC's behavior and, in some cases, how they interpret the world around them.

External threats are Disadvantages representing other creatures or forces that mean the PC ill will, like a ***Nemesis*** or a ***Competitor***.

The GM should ask questions about the characters' Disadvantages. What or who is the PC ***Stalked*** by? What is the nature of their ***Nightmares***? Who is the subject of her ***Jealousy***? How does she manage her ***Depression***? Note down the answers for later.

The Intrigue Map

The *Intrigue Map* is a tool for the GM to use during the course of the story. It takes the form of a web of people and places which are connected to the characters. Prior to the story's beginning, the GM can use the Intrigue Map to come up with conspiracies based on the Dark Secrets selected by the players.

The Intrigue Map consists of *Hubs* and *Links*.

Hubs

There are nine types of hubs to include in the Intrigue Map: player characters, events, places, objects, leaders, monsters, organizations, groups, and contacts.

Player characters are self-explanatory. The player characters form the initial hub marked on the Intrigue Map.

Events are major occurrences affecting the PCs and the story as a whole. Dark Secrets produce the most common type of event, but new ones can arise over the course of the story.

Places are important locations that provide clues, portals to alternate dimensions, or some connection to other hubs. The PCs will likely return to these places during the story. They can include the house an ***Heir*** has inherited, the antagonist's headquarters, or the subway station where one of the PCs pierced the Illusion for the first time.

The Sleeper's Disadvantages

As Sleepers aren't aware of their Dark Secrets at game start, it can be tricky to nail down some Disadvantages perfectly. Instead, draw connections between Dark Secrets and Disadvantages during the course of the story. If a PC is ***Stalked***, you don't know at game start by who or what, but as the PC starts recalling their Dark Secret, the GM will get a better idea of the stalker's identity.

Some Disadvantages can also lie dormant until the PC is Aware. A PC with ***Schizophrenia*** can keep her condition in check, for as long as she's in her Sleeper state. As a GM, you can make softer Moves for the player's ***Schizophrenia*** during this time, allowing the hallucinations to take a milder form, which then worsen gradually as the PC recalls her dark past. Let Sleeper characters be confused and uncertain. They have no idea how reality actually works.

Objects are items with particular meaning to the story. They're connected to several of the other hubs on the map, and contain information or supernatural properties. Magical artifacts, possessed objects, valuable evidence, and occult tomes are typical objects.

Leaders are powerful individuals with sizeable resources at their disposal. Typical leaders are power-hungry politicians, greedy business owners, ruthless gang bosses, or powerful entities who have adopted human form to influence our society.

Monsters are humans whose humanity has been compromised or creatures from one of the alternate dimensions. They could be bloodthirsty demons, haunting spirits, perverted serial killers, twisted monstrosities, and other fearsome opponents.

Organizations are large collections of individuals, each performing a specific function and organized communally for internal synergy. Typically, an inner circle makes the important decisions and delegates the implementation details throughout the organization. Distinct individuals often play a lesser part in an organization and tend to be interchangeable. Due to this, organizations are difficult to eradicate – they're like hydras, you can cut off one head and three new ones sprout in its place. Organizations include corporations, professional associations, religious communities, and national institutions.

Groups are groups of creatures that take actions together as a team, due to conscious decisions or base instincts. A group might be a family, a squad of police officers, a cult, or a pack of hungry borderliners in the city sewers. It's common for groups to be linked to *leaders* and *places*.

Contacts are people such as the PCs' relatives, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, and allies. They are often peers the PCs turn to for comfort, assistance, information, and closeness. Contacts who turn hostile as a result of events during the story are converted into *leaders* or *monsters*, or become part of *groups*. Generally, only the most prominent contacts are written down on the Intrigue Map. The GM notes down each player's contacts separately, and includes them on the map if they turn out to be of particular importance to the story.

Example of an Intrigue Map

Links

Links are lines drawn between hubs. Links are detailed using short descriptions next to the line to make the nature of the relationship between the two hubs obvious. It's often appropriate to use Disadvantages as links. For example, you might draw a line between a player character and an event, and then write ***Wanted*** next to it, showing the PC's Disadvantage is connected to that specific event.

Step 1: Dark Secrets

Once the players have selected their Dark Secrets, the GM begins drawing up the Intrigue Map. Take a blank piece of paper and start by writing down the PCs' Archetypes. They should leave enough room for writing down the characters' names as well.

Draw links between all the PCs, ensuring they're all connected to one another. If you have two players, draw a line between them, for three players draw a triangle, and for four players draw a rectangle. Each one of these links will later be labelled with the connections the players make between their characters.

Next, write down the PCs' Dark Secrets and link them to each character. If they have a shared Dark Secret, you can draw links from it to all the PCs. If the Dark Secrets have *objects*, *places*, *people*, or *monsters* associated with them, you may want to note them down as hubs immediately. You don't need to decide what type of hub they are yet, just write them down and link them to the Dark Secret. For example, one of the PCs has selected the Dark Secret ***Heir*** and decides she's inherited a lonely plot of land in northern British Columbia. The GM would write down "the estate" on the Intrigue Map, linking it up with ***Heir***.

Step 2: External Threats

The next step is to note any Disadvantages that are suitable candidates for hubs or links. They can either be a hub of the *leader*, *group*, or *monster* type, or they can be used to describe a link between Dark Secrets and player characters.

Below is a list of Disadvantages that present external threats to the PCs, as well as suggestions for how they could be represented on the Intrigue Map:

- ***Nemesis*** (Hub: Leader or Monster)
- ***Wanted*** (Link: Could connect to a Leader, Organization, or a Dark secret)
- ***Curse*** (Link: Could be linked to a Leader, Monster, Object, or Location)
- ***Stalker*** (Link: Could be linked to a Leader, Organization, or Group)
- ***Haunted*** (Hub: Monster)
- ***Competitor*** (Hub: Leader or Monster)
- ***Rival*** (Hub: Leader or Monster)

SLEEPERS AND THE INTRIGUE MAP

If the PCs are playing Sleepers, you don't have to draw up anything other than Dark Secrets and the Disadvantages connected to them. You will figure all this out as the Dark Secret's nature is revealed during the course of the story.

You should, however, define any and all hubs not connected to the Dark Secret, but are still linked to the PC through Disadvantages, such as ***Jealousy***, ***Competitor***, and ***Rival***.

Sometimes Disadvantages are their own hubs. For example, if a PC is ***Wanted*** for murdering their family, the GM notes down a police captain in charge of the case. They would be recorded as the leader hub, and ***Wanted*** would be the description of the link between them and the PC.

ADVANTAGES

The players now select their PCs' *Advantages*. Each player gets to pick *three* Advantages from those available to their chosen Archetype at game start.

The Structure of Advantages

Advantages are abilities that give the PC an occasional upper hand in the story. Advantages can be either *active* or *passive*.

ACTIVE ADVANTAGES

Active Advantages are Moves which grant the PC unique abilities or powers. They each have a *trigger*, something that needs to happen in the fiction for the Advantage to be activated. For example:

• Exorcist

Whenever you perform an exorcism to banish a spirit or extradimensional creature, explain what the ritual looks like and **roll +Soul**:

(15+) The creature is banished. Choose two options.

(10–14) The creature is banished. Choose one option.

(–9) The creature resists banishment and something goes terribly wrong, such as the creature possessing you. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Nobody is harmed during the ritual.
- The entity will not reappear later.
- The entity will not become hostile toward you.

SLEEPERS AND ADVANTAGES

Sleepers don't have Advantages. When characters transition from Sleepers to Aware Archetypes, they may select *three* Advantages.

PASSIVE ADVANTAGES

These provide the PC with modifiers in particular situations, such as increasing **Harm** inflicted when attacking, boosting the effects of basic Moves, and enhancing Moves so they are always in effect. For example:

• Hardened

You take *+1 ongoing* to ***Endure Injury***.

What the Advantages Represent

Ask the players questions about their Advantages, as each one says something about the character. A *Fixer* who is ***Duplicitous*** has in all likelihood betrayed some people in the past. Who are they?

Companions

Certain Advantages provide the characters with henchmen or followers, such as ***Gang Leader*** (for *The Criminal*), ***Boss*** (for *The Fixer*), and ***Cult Leader*** (for *The Prophet*). Ask the players more about these Advantages and don't forget to develop them into interesting NPCs during the course of the story.

Supernatural Abilities

Advantages based on the **Soul** Attribute are typically supernatural abilities. It's useful to determine when the PC acquired or perceived them, and how this changed her life. The first time the PC makes use of the Advantage, ask them how the ability works and what she experiences when using it.

ATTRIBUTES

The players now select their characters' *Attribute values*. As the players mark high or low values, ask them to inform you and ask them questions to determine why. What does a **Violence** of +3 mean for a PC? Or a **Charisma** of –2? For more information about the Attributes, refer to ***Chapter 4 – The Player Character***.

NAME

The players are free to assign names to their characters on their own, based on their cultural origin and nationality. Since the story can take place anywhere in the world, the Archetypes do not feature any preset options to choose from.

GM Note: Try to avoid picking the same names as celebrities or well-known characters from media. This often turns silly and can be obnoxious to the other players.

Equipment

Discuss amongst the player group what types of equipment are appropriate for the characters to own. Players may choose freely what sort of important things their characters keep on their person and if they own a car. If anyone specifies an item that seems outside the norm, the GM can ask the player to justify how she's acquired an object like that.

The GM will decide what the item is capable of. In ***Chapter 4 – The Player Character***, you can find lists of weapons and other gear with defined effects, but the GM may freely modify or add to the list of items, their abilities, and their limitations to suit the story.

Presentation

When the above is finished, the players will present their character to the rest of the group. In turn, each player states their character's name, her occupation, any notable features (such as the choices the player made during the *Looks* step of character creation), and what impression she usually makes on others.

The GM, as well as the other players, may then ask questions about things they're curious about. Examples of good questions to ask:

- How old are you?
- Who or what are you most passionate about?
- Do you live with someone else? Where and how do you live?
- Where do you hang out in your spare time?
- Who is your best friend? If you don't have any friends, why not?
- Have you ever hurt another person? Do you feel bad about that?
- Who do you have sex with? You don't? What do you do when you have those needs, if you have them at all?
- Who or what do you hate most in the world? What did they do to earn your hatred?

If you get some interesting answers, you may ask follow-up questions, as well as note down additional questions to be brought up later in the story. The point of this step is to ensure the players get a handle on who the other characters are and come up with fresh ideas about their own characters. It shouldn't take all night though, so keep it short, maybe ten minutes per character.

Relations

The last step when setting up a story and defining the characters is to establish relationships between the PCs and the NPCs in the setting.

Relation represents this social strength, measured with three degrees.

If you have a **neutral Relation (0)**, the PC only has a surface-level relation to the person or has no strong feelings one way or another for them. It might mean an acquaintance, a co-worker, neighbour, a friend of a friend, or someone you know but dislike.

A **meaningful Relation (+1)** means the PC has strong feelings for the person. It's someone she needs to be present and active in her life, who helps, supports, and provides comfort for her. Examples include family members, friends, and lovers.

A **vital Relation (+2)** is someone the PC's life revolves around. Without them, life would feel empty and meaningless, and losing them would result in severe psychological trauma for the character. Examples of **vital Relations** can be the love a parent feels for a child or spouse, a soulmate, an object of obsession, or the Best Friend Forever she simply cannot live without.

Relations Between the Player Characters

Each Archetype provides a number of suggested relationship descriptions you can use to establish ties between player characters. Players are always free to establish their own relationships at any degree – **neutral**, **meaningful**, or **vital** – if they prefer. However, the degree of Relation does not need to be shared between the two characters. One PC might love another with their heart and soul (**vital**), while their beloved find their bond to be of lesser importance (**meaningful**). This is commonplace, for example, in situations where one person is courting another who is relatively uninterested.

If the player characters do not know one another prior to the start of the story, do not establish any **Relations**.

Work out the details of the relationships, as necessary. If, for example, another player character "*assisted you with removing a company rival*," the players should obviously determine who the rival was and what happened. Was the PC compensated financially by *The Careerist* for the services rendered, or were there other motives? The GM should ask questions of both players until she's satisfied with the level of detail.

Example of character Relations:

The Careerist

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters assisted you with removing a company rival. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters opposes your business ventures.
- One of the characters knows your Dark Secret.
- One of the characters also works for your boss.
- You are in love with one of the characters. Take **+2 Relation** with them.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: One **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

Relations to Non-Player Characters

Each player also develops up to three NPCs with whom they have **neutral**, **meaningful**, and **vital Relations**, respectively. Write down their names and brief descriptions of each. Ask questions why the PC's relationship with each NPC is as important as it is. You might already be able to tie NPCs to hubs on the Intrigue Map, if there are suitable links to be made.

The GM should also ask the players about the NPCs they establish Relations to during character creation; who are they, what are their names, what is the PC's past with them, etc.

Antisocial Player Characters with No Family or Friends

In exceptional cases where PCs lack close relations to fellow humans, the NPC Relations can be assigned to pets, objects, or locations. In those cases, they would be the PC's beloved dog, the old car she inherited from her dad and cared for as if her life depended on it, or the house the PC bought with her husband prior to his disappearance.

CHAPTER 7
FIRST SESSION

ONCE THE PLAYER CHARACTERS (PCS) ARE complete and the gamemaster (GM) has established the basics for the story (or scenario) you will be playing, the players get comfortable with their new roles while the GM gets a feel for the setting. This is done during the first session, which begins the PCs' story.

PREPARATIONS

The entire gaming group would be wise to make the following practical preparations:

TIME PLANNING

Plan to start playing at a certain time and potentially also decide on a fixed time when the game session will end. For the first time you play, it's recommended to plan to meet roughly an hour before you start playing, play for about three hours, and then take one additional hour at the end to discuss what transpired during the session and address any thoughts about the game.

PENCILS & ERASERS

Everyone should have access to pencils and erasers to make notes and update their character sheets.

DICE

You should have at least two ten-sided dice; it helps if there's one pair per player. The GM doesn't need any, as they never need to roll dice during the game.

LOCATION

Use a space where you won't be disturbed by noise and other people. If you're able to keep the lights dim and use mood lighting, it will help the players immerse in the game.

BREAKS

It's not unusual for a game session to continue several hours, so plan for snack- and coffee breaks. Maybe take an intermission walk/stretch to regain energy. In particular, the GM might benefit from breaks, as she has to be present and acting in every scene, which can become mentally exhausting.

Player Preparations

The players should consider the following before the first session:

CONSIDER THEIR CHARACTER

Who are they? How do they behave in different situations? What important events happened in the character's past? How do they perceive the world around them? The players don't need to know the answers to these questions before the first session, but imagining their character's personality and outlook makes adopting the role during the game easier.

CONSIDER THE SETTING

Where is your game set? Are you in Harlem, New York City's Harlem, circa 1981? When you close your eyes, can you imagine the dilapidated, concrete tenements? The graffiti-streaked walls and trains? The insistent police sirens screaming a few blocks in the distance? To reinforce the player's shared image of the setting, the group might watch movies set there and discuss their ideas of it with each other.

Gamemaster Preparations

The gamemaster should prepare as follows:

READ THE RULES

It is particularly important the GM has read through *Chapter 1 – A World in Darkness*, *Chapter 4 – The Player Character*, *Chapter 5 – The Gamemaster*, and *Chapter 8 – Influences* prior to the first game session. These chapters provide insight into what role the rules should play in the game, how to handle player Moves and GM Moves, and how the PCs interact with non-player characters. The GM should also read through the Archetypes the players have selected and ensure they are familiar with the Advantages and Disadvantages the players have chosen.

GET ACCUSTOMED WITH KULT'S COSMOLOGY

Reading *Chapter 1 – A World in Darkness* and skimming through the chapters in ***Book III: The Truth*** will provide the GM a feel for how the KULT universe differs from our own, and the nature of the horrors players may experience while playing. The GM doesn't have to memorize these chapters, but can use them for inspiration and information about the setting's underlying logic, Higher Powers, dimensions, and creatures.

CONSIDER THE STORY SETTING

What aspects of the setting should be fleshed out and emphasized? If the story takes place in an expedition into the Amazon jungles the GM might want to paint a picture of hot, sweaty moisture, sticky plants, thick undergrowth, creepy-crawlies and slithering reptiles, the cacophony of birds, shrieking monkeys, and the distant growls of predators. The GM can write down any of the setting's most important aspects, ensuring she remembers to bring them out during play.

CONSIDER THE SUPERNATURAL

The GM should think about the PCs' Dark Secrets, Disadvantages, and Advantages and based on them determine what Higher Powers, supernatural dimensions, and entities the story should focus on. What is ***Haunting*** the PC? What caused the ***Curse*** the PC is afflicted by? The boundaries between *Elysium* – the plane where humans live – and the other dimensions can be thin or nonexistent in some locations or at certain times. In these places in Time and Space, the characters can influence our world and entities from the other dimensions may cross over. In ***Book III: The Truth***, you will find inspirations for locations, atmosphere, and events in these dimensions bordering ours. *Limbo* addresses the dream world, *Inferno* the realm of death, *Metropolis* covers the Eternal City and the Citadels of the Archons, the *Underground* are those dimensions bordering sewers, caves, tunnels, and catacombs, and *Gaia* describes the original wilderness.

MUSIC

Using suitable background music during the session can help increase the players' immersion into the environment or atmosphere. The GM can make use of several different playlists for the story's various locations and situations. With the Internet, the GM has access to numerous movie/video game soundtracks and dark-ambient artists to use for their game sessions, and can switch tunes depending on the story's mood – be it calm, tense, action-packed, or scary.

MAKE AN INTRIGUE MAP

Chapter 6 – Setting Up a Story covers how to develop an *Intrigue Map*, based on the characters and their Dark Secrets, Disadvantages, and Relations. The Intrigue Map is a useful tool to get a quick overview of the story's important elements, and can be utilized even if the GM has developed all the characters on her own, e.g., for a specific scenario. During the course of the game, the GM should note down important events and new NPCs on the Intrigue Map, keeping track of how the PCs' actions affect their surroundings and the story's progression.

BOMBS

To kick the story off with an exciting and formative challenge, it can be useful to put the PCs through a kind of trial-by-fire situation, known as a *bomb*. The GM prepares a few bombs prior to the first session. They never have predetermined endings – their outcomes are always based on how the PCs react to them. The best bombs put the PCs in the position of making difficult choices between two or more decisions, and have a personal connection to the characters. For the first session, the GM may have to put extra thought into crafting good bombs. However, as she becomes accustomed to the GM Moves, it becomes easier to improvise bombs during play. Here are some examples of bombs:

- A cowardly and physically weak PC and their beloved are assaulted by robbers. The PC is put in the position of either making a pain-free and safe escape or staying behind to help their lover.
- A PC awakens with no memories, after being possessed by the entity currently haunting them. They discover an innocent person tied up and tortured in their bed. What do they do?
- *The Avenger* is behind the wheel of their car when they spot one of the targets of their oath of revenge. They step out into the pedestrian crossing up the street – offering the perfect opportunity for vengeance – only to be immediately followed by a parent pushing a baby stroller. What do they do?
- The PC is watching a live-feed of their best friend, body parts strapped to two machines – moments from being torn asunder, piece by piece. They receive a text-message reading, "Draw your pistol and shoot [another PC] immediately... or your friend will be torn apart!" What do they do?

ASK THE PLAYERS TO ROLL FOR THEIR DISADVANTAGES

Before beginning the session, the GM should get the players to roll for the Disadvantages that should be rolled prior to game start. If the players get **(10–14)** or **(–9)**, the GM gets Hold for that Disadvantage to be activated anytime during the session (should she wish to). When the GM gets Hold, the player knows the Disadvantage can come into play at anytime, which creates a sense of insecurity and tension right from the start. Hold for Disadvantages are noted down and saved until the GM spends them.

TO CONSIDER DURING PLAY

Once the game has started, the GM can use the following guidelines for running the first session:

PRESENT THE WORLD TO THE PLAYERS

Begin by giving an overview of the current setting to the players. Tell them what date and time it is, and what is going on in the world around them.

For example: "It's Tuesday, October 7th, 2014. New York is cold and rainy, and it's approaching 7am."

In each scene, the GM is responsible for describing any important aspects of the character's situation. She doesn't have to lay everything out at once, but can work a few notable aspects into her descriptions over time.

For example: "As you enter the alley from the street, you notice this side of the house is dilapidated, nearly lost and forgotten

in the shadows cast by the surrounding skyscrapers. A few unlit windows face the alley, and in the middle of the lone house is a boarded-up door. The building on the other side of the alley is just a dirty, grey wall with no windows or doors, rising five stories up. A group of tattered figures huddles by a set of stairs at the end of the alleyway. They glance over at you anxiously, and begin whispering to each other."

Introduce the Player Characters into the Story

During the first session, the players get to portray their characters for the first time, revealing how they behave and act in the game-world. In longer stories, the players generally decide where their characters are and what they do. In this case, the GM should ensure the spotlight is shared equally between the players, scene by scene. If you're playing a pre-written scenario, the GM may have the first few scenes prepared in advance to introduce the PCs to the players or set up important story elements.

For example:

- The first PC is working late in her office on the 86th floor of a financial district tower.
- The second PC, a police officer, and his partner are in their patrol car, sirens blaring, en route to a reported break-in in Buschwick.
- The third PC sits in a bar in NoHo with a half empty bottle of whiskey, listening to a hoarse jazz singer while waiting for her friend to arrive.

The players elaborate on how their PCs act in the scenes, while the GM describes their surroundings and any NPCs present. By placing the PCs in an assortment of different situations, the GM can provide the players several opportunities to explore and explain what kind of people their characters are.

For example:

- The PC is hard at work preparing a contract when she suddenly hears the ding from the lobby elevator doors. All her coworkers have left for the day, and she hadn't anticipated anyone else staying this late. What does she do?
- The PC and his partner park the patrol car outside an old three-story, brick tenement. As they get out of the car, they hear gunshots from the top floor. What does he do?
- The PC's friend is nearly thirty minutes late and can't be reached on her cellphone. All of a sudden, she sees her friend staggering into the bar. His face is covered with blood. What does she do?

Get to Know the PCs' Most Important Relations

You might wish to introduce the characters' important Relations into the story. If you like, you can allow their player to determine what they look like and describe any notable features. Establishing these Relations early is a good idea, as it enables the GM to utilize them later in the story. During the first session, only short scenes are needed, enough to establish the nature of the relationship.

For example:

- As you walk in you see your wife, Mary, sitting in the dining room. Can you describe what she looks like for us?
- You've emptied half your pint when suddenly you feel a hand on your shoulder, "Hey buddy, what's up?" It's your old pal, Bobby.
- Sam steps out of the patrol car, hand resting by the holster, and looks over at you. "What do you think we should do, partner?"

Have the Player Characters Meet Up

If the PCs have established preexisting relationships with each other, it makes sense for the GM to let them get together naturally. If they don't already know each other, the GM can arrange circumstances where they encounter each other, creating a relationship during the story's progression. It's also completely okay to allow the PCs to remain on their own for the first session. There will be plenty of time to get the PCs to join up later. If you're struggling to get the characters to meet up, here are some ideas for these encounters:

- A *contact in common*, such as a mutual friend of yours arranging a meeting at her place, an employer bringing you together, or bumping into each other at a mutual acquaintance's get-together.
- A *common interest*, such as a common enemy, a shared Dark Secret, all the PCs individually acquire a clue leading them to the same place, or two PCs attend the third PC's art exhibit.
- *Opposed goals*, such as one PC is a gangster and another is the police officer trying to collect evidence to use against him.
- *External influence*, such as the PCs are kidnapped and brought to the same location, the PCs share the same dream and meet inside of it, or the PCs are afflicted by the same curse.
- *Coincidence*, such as the PCs happen to be at the right place at the right time when something interesting transpires, bringing them together.

Try Out the Rules

The GM lets the players activate player Moves and Advantages, rolling the dice to see what happens. The GM makes some Moves of her own and the situations escalate. The rules might take a bit longer to execute the first few times before everyone has internalized them, but this should not be an issue. Take it easy and try them out, and you'll quickly get a handle on how the Moves work. The GM should be on the lookout for players taking actions that activate Move triggers, and ask if they'd like to ***Read a Person***, ***Influence Other***, and so on. She should also make them roll for defensive Moves like ***Avoid Harm*** and to ***Keep it Together*** in suitable situations.

Activate Disadvantages

The GM can spend any of the Hold she's collected for Disadvantages at anytime to make the Disadvantage Move's effects occur in the story. Don't go full throttle spending Hold for Disadvantages the first session though. It is often better to suggest future problems – like shadowy figures stalking the character – than have them attack the PC from ambush. It's up to the GM to determine what makes the most sense for the story.

For example:

- The entity haunting one of the PCs leaves a cryptic message behind.
- The PC catches a glimpse of her pursuers.
- A nemesis has intimidated one of the PC's relatives.

The GM can also activate Disadvantages that trigger in particular situations, such as ***Phobia*** (the object of the PC's phobia appears), ***Repressed Memories*** (the PC is exposed to something connected to the repression), or ***Nightmares*** (a scene starts with the PC going to sleep) and see what comes of it. The GM should be prepared for the eventuality that major effects might be called for if the player misses a roll **(–9).**

Suggest Supernatural Phenomena

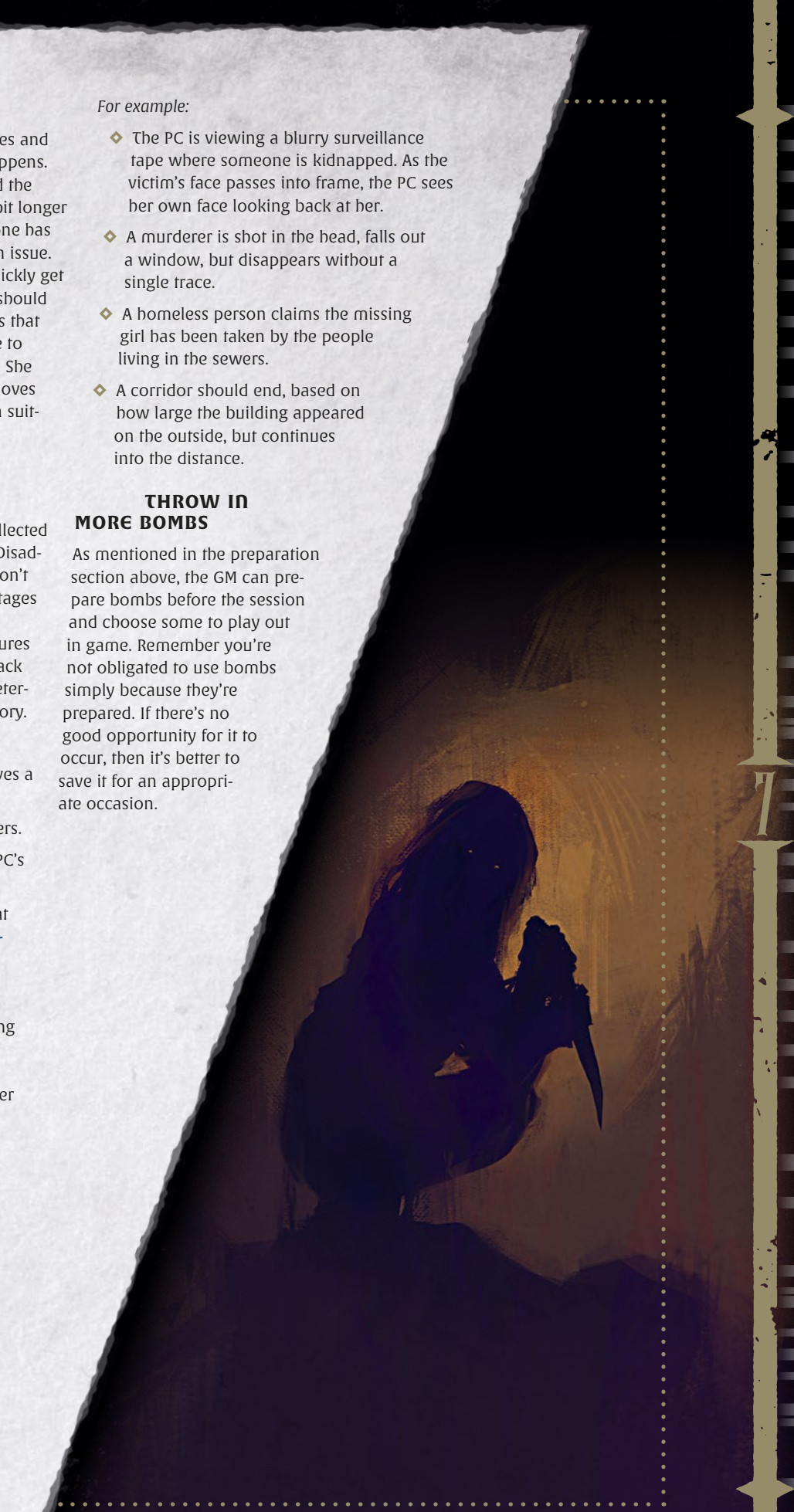
It's usually best to refrain from introducing too many supernatural phenomena during the first session, in favor of building mystery and mounting tension. The GM can suggest a few things to cause the players to ponder what happened after the encounter. The fewer clues to its true nature the GM provides, the more the players will want to understand what happened. The phenomenon can be connected to a Higher Power or to one of the other dimensions.

For example:

- The PC is viewing a blurry surveillance tape where someone is kidnapped. As the victim's face passes into frame, the PC sees her own face looking back at her.
- A murderer is shot in the head, falls out a window, but disappears without a single trace.
- A homeless person claims the missing girl has been taken by the people living in the sewers.
- A corridor should end, based on how large the building appeared on the outside, but continues into the distance.

Throw In More Bombs

As mentioned in the preparation section above, the GM can prepare bombs before the session and choose some to play out in game. Remember you're not obligated to use bombs simply because they're prepared. If there's no good opportunity for it to occur, then it's better to save it for an appropriate occasion.



CHAPTER 8
INFLUENCES

THE HIGHER POWERS OF THE *KULT: DIVINITY LOST* UNIVERSE are at war. Each faction in this war can be an Influence in a game, and can be mapped, representing the Higher Power's willing and unwitting minions serving in that conflict, as well as the places, objects, and forces which contribute to furthering the Higher Power's goals.

USING INFLUENCES

Influences are a tool the gamemaster (GM) can use to focus on the story's most important themes, as well as to serve as a quick overview of the threats the player characters (PCs) are opposing. Creating an Influence is quick, and can be expanded upon to whatever degree the GM wants.

Creating Influences

The GM creates an Influence by completing the following two steps:

- Pick a Higher Power
- Create and/or categorize Threats belonging to the Higher Power

How many Influences the GM brings into a story depends on which Higher Powers she'd like to involve, and how many Threats she's already created.

Higher Powers

Higher Powers represent powerful inhuman entities, ancient pacts, and great interests, whose influence reaches all the way from other dimensions into the human realm. The Higher Powers can only be defeated by extremely powerful beings, and even then it's uncertain if they have truly met their final annihilation. They act via unwitting marionettes, devoted servants, invisible forces, magical objects, and places where the Illusion is weakened. As each Higher Power influences regions in the world, those places transform both physically and emotionally to resemble the Higher Power's domain. For more information about the Higher Powers discussed here, see ***Book III: The Truth***.

Archons and Death Angels strive to strengthen their primary Principles among humanity. All Archons – aside from Malkuth – intend to preserve and maintain Humanity's prison and keep mankind ignorant of the Truth.

Metropolis

Archons

The *Archons* are manifestations of the Primary Principles that create humankind's prison. These supernatural beings at the same time have their own wills and agendas and are enslaved by their own Principle. Only the Archon Malkuth has been able to change its Primary Principle.

Kether

Primary Principle – *Hierarchy*

Kether's influence manifests as hierarchical structures with masters and servants, widening class gaps, and an aristocracy with power and benefits.

Chokmah

Primary Principle – *Submission*

Chokmah's influence manifests as the submission to religious leaders, martyrdom, fanaticism, theocratic rule, and dogmatism.

Binah

Primary Principle – *Community*

Binah's influence manifests as the family's power over the individual, mistrust of the State and other authorities outside of the family, strengthened traditions, and distrust of strangers.

Chesed

Primary Principle – *Safety*

Chesed's influence manifests as people's longing for safety, embracing life's familiar and mundane routines, encouraging friendly behavior, and the unwillingness to risk themselves or the community to the unknown and dangerous.

Geburah

Primary Principle – *Law*

Geburah's influence generates bureaucratic institutions, stricter laws, increased policing, and societal control over its citizenry. Those so influenced yield to increased control, out of a fear of chaos.

Tiphareth

Primary Principle – *Allure*

Tiphareth's influence incites a manic craving for beauty and affirmation, which must be fulfilled by any means necessary. Celebrities are worshipped as prophets, the mediocre waste their days imbibing the internet and television shows, and anyone who doesn't meet the social 'norms' is despised and ignored.

Netzach

Primary Principle – *Victory*

Netzach's influence strengthens patriotism and nationalism, unites societies against a common enemy, and feeds the us-versus-them mentality. The righteous obliterate all that threatens them, strengthen the military, justify their violence in the name of the Greater Good, and incite people to arm themselves.

Hod

Primary Principle – *Honor*

Hod's influence conflates honor with prestige, elevates one's status among others above all else, and sets the law aside in favor of personal vendettas. Expecting admiration for their adherence to their inflexible values, the honor-bound ruthlessly ostracise any who have brought shame upon themselves by failing to uphold their honor and fulfil the many duties it demands.

Yesod

Primary Principle – *Avarice*

Yesod influences society through greed, capitalism, economics, consumer frenzy, and increased corporate power, as well as by promoting the admiration and respect of wealth as a sign of personal intelligence and ambition. It encourages contempt for the poverty-stricken, who are associated with laziness and stupidity, and supports the dismantling of social welfare institutions.

Malkuth

Primary Principle – *Awakening*

Malkuth's influence strives to free people from their prison by collapsing society, spreading insanity, shattering the Illusion to reveal other dimensions, and inspiring people to question the nature of society and the fabric of reality, such as through scientists letting their experiments run amok, the spread of conspiracy theories, and the manifestation of magic.

Inferno

Death Angels

The *Death Angels* are the Archons' dark shadows, who strive to strengthen their subverted Principles at the expense of the Archon they mirror.

Thaumiel

Primary Principle – *Power*

Thaumiel's influence manifests as a hunger for power, corruption, dictatorship, fascism, intrigue, insurrection, oppression, ruthlessness and totalitarian rule – a breakdown of solidarity and trust.

Chagidiel

Primary Principle – *Abuse*

Chagidiel's influence takes shape in the violation of children, the perversion of adult love and care, forgotten and lost children, homeless street kids, and the degradation and ruination of school systems.

Satariel

Primary Principle – *Exclusion*

Satariel's influence incites self-loathing, loneliness, hopelessness, contempt for 'normals,' self-destruction, anxiety, depression, suicide, school shootings and massacres, and communities of outsiders inspiring each other to commit destructive actions.

Gamichicoth

Primary Principle – *Fear*

Gamichicoth's influence awakens fear of 'the Other' by escalating distrust and blaming various ethnic groups, religions, or political dissidents for society's problems. False narratives are created and distributed through news media, rumors, and manipulated visual evidence, while heralds whisper how all our concerns would dissipate if only 'the Others' were punished or disappeared.

Golab

Primary Principle – *Torment*

Golab's influence increases societal sadism, giving people pleasure from inflicting pain on others or by being subjected to torment themselves. Criminals are tortured in public, people carry out their most sadistic ideas unto both willing and unwilling subjects in obscure safe houses, while murderers leave trails of mutilated bodies.

Togarini

Primary Principle – *Compulsion*

Togarini's influence increases the manic creativity that distorts reality, tearing beauty asunder. Insane artwork opens portals to Inferno, magicians experiment at the border of life and death, and death itself acts erratically – souls binding themselves into rotting corpses, or haunting the living as distorted spectres.

Hareb-Serap

Primary Principle – *Conflict*

Hareb-Serap's influence propagates uncontrollable rage, bloodlust, and senseless violence. Gangs have shootouts in public places, police beat suspects to death, hooligans storm arenas, lynch mobs tear their targets to pieces, harmless conflicts escalate into bloody fistfights, and 'normal' people teeter on the brink of explosive outbursts at all times.

Samael

Primary Principle – *Vengeance*

Samael's influence strengthens paranoia, vindictiveness, and obsession with injustices, while perpetrators take brutal revenge for nonexistent affronts, jealous partners murder their loved ones for imagined betrayals, and terrorists exact gory retribution upon their foes.

Gamaliel

Primary Principle – *Lust*

Gamaliel influences society towards hypersexualization and objectification, where crowds commit gang rape, people are forced into prostitution, pornography becomes increasingly hardcore and perverted, and people gather in clubs and secret societies for macabre orgies, embracing mindless desires with no consideration of the consequences of their actions.

Nahemoth

Primary Principle – *Discord*

Nahemoth's influence deforms the natural world, turning it dangerous and threatening, expressed as forest fires, oil spills, poisoned streams and groundwater, misshapen animal life, violent storms, cold snaps, heat waves, torrential rains, earthquakes, tsunamis, cannibal tribes, disfigured fetuses, and baleful eclipses.

The Underworld

The Children of the Underworld

Goal – *Liberation*

The Children of the Underworld's influence manifests as people suddenly disappear without a trace, children and madmen witness strange figures, odd artifacts and mystical knowledge emerge, people experience repressed memories of apocalyptic, crumbling worlds in their dreams, and grotesque characters influence societal institutions.

She Who Waits Below

Goal – *The cessation of everything*

She Who Waits Below influences humanity to dream of the Labyrinth. People are subconsciously attracted to tunnels and sewers, urged to seek the deep subterranean dark. In turn, zeloths and cairath expand their hunting grounds closer to the surface to prevent humans from reaching deeper, and the Guardians of the Labyrinth contact those who have been chosen by its deity.

Limbo

The Dream Princes

Goal – *Populate their dream realm*

The Dream Princes consciously (or subconsciously) pull people into their dream realms. When a sufficient number of people are bound to the same dream realm, it might start affecting the waking world. The borders to Limbo weaken and people's subconsciouses begin altering reality to become more like the dream realm.

Gaia

Gaia the Living Earth

Goal – *Breakdown civilization*

Gaia's influence seeks to tear civilization apart. Wild animals enter settled areas, communication lines break down and isolation sets in, the rule of law is rejected, machinery malfunctions, societal collapse becomes imminent, overgrowth creeps everywhere and engulfs human construction, people turn savage, and feral gods bargain over what cultural artifacts remain.

Threats

Threats are locations, events, objects, organizations, and opponents which oppose or otherwise threaten the characters in the story.

Examples:

- An old factory bordering Metropolis (place).
- A magical ritual impregnating a woman with an inhuman being (event).
- A camera that takes photos of other dimensions (object).
- A ruthless corporation trying to silence the player characters (organization).
- A suspicious police officer looking for a wanted player character (leader).
- A monstrous creature predating the sewers (monster).

Creating New Threats

Create Threats Based on the Intrigue Map

When the GM sets up the story or scenario, she should have created an Intrigue Map using the instructions found in ***Chapter 6 – Setting Up a Story***. If so, she can just take those *Events*, *Places*, *Objects*, *Leaders*, *Monsters*, *Groups*, and *Organizations* she's noted on the Intrigue Map and write them up as *Threats* under a fitting Higher Power's heading.

Choose Higher Powers

When tying threats to a Higher Power, it can be useful to consider what you intend for the threat to achieve during the story, and how it's connected to the Higher Power's Principle and/or goals. If the GM maintains too many story elements influenced by several Higher Powers, it can become confusing, so sometimes it's worthwhile making some changes to a threat's original concept to make it fit under one of those Higher Powers with currently active threats.

For example, if a PC is ***Haunted*** by a spirit entity and the GM notes down the spirit as an influence of the Higher Power Sathariel, the entity's actions in the story should be based on its primary Principle, *Exclusion* – either the exclusion of the PC or those in her vicinity. The entity might be the spirit of a human influenced by Sathariel into taking their own life, and now serves the Death Angel by haunting the PC.

In another example, a PC inherits (***Heir***) a strange, sealed book bound in some sort of blue, leathery material, and the GM draws a connection between the book and the Children of the Underworld; the book possesses the knowledge and properties to further this Higher Power's Principle, *Liberation*.

Create Threats Based on the Higher Powers

Once you have established an Influence connected to a particular Higher Power, you can invent new threats based on it. For example, if the story focuses on the Higher Power, Sathariel, you can develop additional threats connected to that Death Angel. For example, as Sathariel is connected to society's outcasts, we might create an emo singer who secretly serves the Death Angel. We give him a name – Alex Rojas – and decide he is a Leader-type threat with the goal of luring teenagers into worship of Sathariel. It was Alex who

Example Influence with Higher Power and Threat

Higher Power: Yesod (Primary Principle – *Greed*)

Threats

- Curse (*Event*): A pact between *The Careerist* and Yesod promising the PC wealth in return for running the Archon's errands.
- Harold Knight (*Leader*): A lictor serving Yesod, CEO of the company Knight & Alderton, hunts *The Seeker* who knows Knight is looking for the virgin.
- The Equitable Building (*Place*): Knight & Aldertons' offices, Harold Knight's penthouse, influenced by Yesod.
- The Union Club (*Group*): Businessmen who secretly serve and worship Yesod, and under Knight's thumb.
- The virgin birth (*Event*): A ritual to cause the rebirth of Yesod's Incarnation in Elysium.

convinced
the spirit entity now
haunting the PC into committing suicide
(see above). As the story progresses, the spirit might drop hints about this connection by leaving behind messages, such as snippets from Alex's song lyrics.

The GM can also start the story with her selected Higher Power absent, and slowly introduce that Power and its Principle into the game through escalating threats. As the game progresses, new threats will naturally spring up as a result of the PCs' actions. The GM should note down any new threats on the Intrigue Map during the game session, and connect them to Higher Powers between sessions.

Developing Threats

Once the GM has figured out a few threats with tie-ins to Higher Powers, she should write a short paragraph describing each threat. In particular, the GM has to decide how the threat is connected to both the Higher Power and to the PCs.

A few other subjects worthwhile detailing include:

- *Description:* A description of the threat's appearance (or what will happen, if the threat is an event).
- *Goal:* The threat's goal or purpose. If the GM wishes, she can also detail any partial steps leading towards achieving the goal. In the example above, Harold Knight's goals consist of: 1) Kidnapping the mayor, 2) Finding the virgin, 3) Impregnating the virgin with the mayor's seed, 4) Crucifying the virgin at Times Square, 5) Affecting the rebirth of Yesod's Incarnation through the dying virgin's body (the *main goal*).
- *Attributes:* If the threat is an opponent the PCs might get into conflict with, the GM should write down their attributes (see ***Opponents*** below). If it's a hostile corporation or other large organization, it is best to represent the threat as henchmen the organization can use against the PCs.
- *Unique Moves:* Give the threat Unique Moves if it is a place, event, object, or organization (see ***Unique Moves*** below).
- *Background:* Develop a background for the threat; how much detail is up to the GM (ranging from one sentence to a multi-page essay). Remember that the GM is writing the background for her own sake, not for the players' consumption. A detailed background can make it easier on the GM if the PCs should decide to ***Investigate*** the threat closer, as it provides her a with better understanding of the threat's nature and origins.
- *Allies and enemies:* Does the threat cooperate with any others? Does anyone else work against its interests? Allied threats sometimes work for the same Higher Power, but not necessarily. The threats may be unaware of each other, even though they serve the same master and are working towards similiar goals. If anyone else opposes the threat, they might become the PCs' allies during the story. In this case, consider who they are, what resources they possess, and what their own goals are. Sometimes it's a fun twist to provide the PCs' allies with an agenda that turns out to be far worse than that of the opponent the PCs just helped them defeat.

Unique Moves

Unique Moves are special Moves the GM can designate to the *Places*, *Events*, *Objects*, and *Organizations* threat types. NPCs and monsters can have unique Moves as well, as described below, in the section on ***Opponents***. The GM executes these unique Moves in exactly the same way as her standard GM Moves:

- When the GM wants to increase tension.
- When a player Move dictates that the GM may make a Move.
- When a player character's actions grant an opportunity for the GM to make a Move.

For example, the Equitable Building is given the unique Move, ***Summon the Guardians of Yesod***. The GM can execute this Move instead of one of her normal GM Moves, if the players are becoming complacent and relaxed (*increase tension*), if a player misses a roll (*player Move dictates*), or if a character crosses the threshold to the building's inner sanctum (*player action grants opportunity*).

Not all threats require unique Moves, but frequently the GM may feel like a threat should have certain abilities that might come up when the PCs encounter the threat. Unique Moves serve both to remind the GM to use these abilities and to legitimize invoking such abilities in the story, despite them not normally being covered by GM Moves.

An example list of possible unique Moves the GM can assign to threats includes:

- Reveal prophecy or exposition.
- Hide something.
- Block a path.
- Open a door.
- Shift, move, change.
- Offer guidance.
- Rob someone of something: lost, consumed, destroyed, or defiled.
- Unveil a secret.
- Disclose facts about Reality.
- Rend the Illusion.
- Influence or control a creature.
- Manipulate the surrounding environment.
- Incite desire and jealousy in someone.
- Make contact with another entity.
- Summon a demon.
- Harm or obliterate something or someone.
- Demand sacrifice.
- Grow.
- Show another dimension.
- Ruin something by defiling, decaying, or violating it.
- Drive someone insane.
- Send a vision.

OPPONENTS

In *KULT: Divinity Lost*, *opponents* are threats representing living creatures, humans, beings, and various groups. Unlike with other threats, the characters will often find themselves in direct conflict with opponents. These conflicts can be social, physical, or anything in between. For this reason, the GM will want to flesh out opponents a bit more than other threats.

Construct opponents according to the following template:

Name: The opponent's actual name, or a designation for creatures without individual names.

Home: The dimension the opponent is native to.

Creature Type: What Higher Powers the creature is tied to (if any).

Description: A general description of the opponent. If the opponent is inhuman, the description usually includes both their *true* form and how they appear in the Illusion.

Abilities: Abilities are unique abilities the opponent has access to. Abilities are always active and automatic. For example, an opponent could be resistant to certain forms of **Harm** or be able to shapeshift. A list of abilities the GM can draw inspiration from can be found below.

Attributes: Opponents have three Attributes. **Combat** indicates how dangerous the opponent is in a fight, **Influence** indicates the degree of power the creature wields in its home dimension, and **Magic** indicates how much knowledge the opponent has of the Truth and how great their powers to affect Reality are. The level of each Attribute determines the creature's strength.

Level:

[1] Weak

[2] Novice

[3] Considerable

[4] Powerful

[5] Exceptional

[6] Legendary

[7] Divine/Awakened

[8] Fallen Archon or Death Angel

[9] Weakened Archon or Death Angel

[10] Archon or Death Angel

Unique Moves: Give an opponent the same number of unique Moves for **Combat**, **Influence**, and **Magic** as their level in the Attribute. The GM can think of her own Moves to assign for each Attribute, and may execute them in place of one of her regular GM Moves. The GM should remember that she's not limited to using these unique Moves – their primary purpose is to provide unique NPCs with certain behaviors, strengths, or tactics, which make conflicts with them more memorable and dramatic.

Attacks: Summarize the opponent's attack methods and weaponry, and then expand on those methods, outlining their name and **Harm** value, Distance, and special effects. The GM can invent and decide on any type of attacks she wants, but the weapon types listed in the ***Equipment*** section of ***Chapter 4 – The Player Character*** can be used for inspiration and guidelines for damage and effects. You can find even more **Harm** values and effects in ***Book III: The Truth***.

Wounds & Harm Moves: Indicate how much **Harm** the opponent can withstand before dying. Also list a number of Harm Moves the GM can make anytime the opponent suffers one or more **Wounds**. The skull icon counts as one **Wound** on its own; however, when it's crossed out the opponent dies. For example, three **Wounds** are written as two circles and a skull. The GM can use the following list to determine how many **Wounds** an opponent should be able to withstand:

- **3 Wounds** – An average human with no special training.
- **4 Wounds** – A tough or battle hardened opponent (capable of surviving getting shot by a heavy pistol).
- **5 Wounds** – An extremely tough human, or an inhuman creature infused with supernatural forces.
- **8 Wounds** – A tough, resistant creature.
- **10 Wounds** – A powerful supernatural being.
- **15 Wounds** – A very large, armored, or magically enhanced being.
- **20+ Wounds** – Extremely powerful beings, which are very difficult to kill or even hinder.

Harm Moves differ for the different creature types and can even be unique to individual opponents. An average human has the following Harm Moves:

- Subdued
- Dying (but can be saved)
- Death

Anytime an opponent suffers one or more wounds, the GM can pick any of the Harm Moves to trigger. Any opponent can be taken out, even if it doesn't have all its wound boxes checked off.

Opponent Example:

Harold Knight (Lictor)

Home: Elysium.

Creature Type: Lictor serving the Archon Yesod.

In his false human form, Harold resembles an obese man with blue-black slick combed hair and piercing dark eyes. He wears opulent outfits with intricate patterns of squares and lines, and gleaming leather shoes. He carries with him an aura of arrogance and prurience. He's constantly surrounded by a throng of thin models – barely recognizable as female – in tiny revealing dresses.

In his true form, Harold's skin turns pale and transparent, and his large physique swells to a gigantic, grotesque size. He has a bald head and an enormous mouth with a long black tongue drooping down to his chest. His anatomy is covered by a blood spattered, gilded cloth from which gold chains are attached to shackles around the necks of his emaciated entourage.

Abilities

- *Lightning fast:* All Distanced attacks against this being are modified by –2.
- *Gigantic:* Cannot be held in place or knocked over in close combat. If Harold's attacks connect in close combat, they always knock their victim over, in addition to any other results.

Combat [4], **Influence** [5], **Magic** [4]

Combat [Powerful]

- Knock someone over.
- Grapple and hold someone.
- Move long distances with a leap.
- Attack many targets simultaneously.

Influence [Exceptional]

- Offer something or a favor to someone else in exchange for hold over them.
- Threaten someone, outright or veiled through implications.
- Manipulate and corrupt someone.
- Sell knowledge of the supernatural.
- Stealthily manipulate individuals/groups/organizations.

Magic [Powerful]

- Make contact with another entity.
- See peoples' and creatures' true natures.
- Manipulate the surrounding environment.
- Spread Yesod's Principles to one or several people.

Attacks

Fights with his bare hands or a long chain covered in sharp blades.

Unarmed: Crush [3]; Throw back [2]; Grapple and hold [1].

Chain: Sweeping attack [3] [Distance: room, area]; Shackle [4] [Distance: room, 1 victim becomes shackled to the chain].

Magic: Manipulate the Illusion [2] [Distance: field, area].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○○○ ☠

- Ignore the injuries.
- Drops whatever he's carrying in his hands.
- In an uncontrollable rage, tears up aspects of the surrounding environment (via *Manipulate the Illusion*).
- Escapes through obstacles.
- Dazed.
- Dies.

Abilities

Abilities are unique powers or capabilities the opponent can make use of. Abilities are always active and their effects are automatic.

Aura of influence: PCs in the being's vicinity who obey their commands take *+1 ongoing* to all rolls, or *–1 ongoing* if disobeying.

Beast-lord: Nearby animals become enthralled by the being and obey them slavishly.

Being of [...]: This creature is extremely powerful in their native environment. All **Harm** taken upon it is reduced by **–1**, and all attacks against the creature or attempts to affect it with other abilities are at *–2 to the roll*.

Blood drinker: Heals wounds and regains power by drinking blood.

Body protection: All **Harm** taken is reduced by **–1**.

Boss: Henchmen and servants act fearlessly and with fanaticism for as long as they're in this being's vicinity.

Bound to Inferno: Should the being become destroyed in Elysium, it will be reconstructed in Inferno.

Cold hearted: Cannot be ***Influenced*** or charmed.

Connection to Higher Power: The being has a connection to a Higher Power, whether by choice or coercion.

Corrosive blood: The creature deals **1 Harm** to everyone in close combat [Distance: arm] when injured.

Domain ([...]): The creature is bound to its domain and immediately knows if someone enters it, even when the creature isn't present.

Dreamer: Can alter dreams, travel between dreams, and find people in dreams.

Elementalist: Capable of controlling the weather and winds over a large area.

Ethereal: Any form of physical, non-magical **Harm** has no effect on the being.

Euphoric secretions: Anyone drinking the creature's secretions falls into a state of euphoria and becomes dependent on the secretions. If a PC becomes addicted, for every day that passes without drinking the secretions, they must reduce **Stability (–1)**.

Fanatical: Cannot be influenced or otherwise reasoned with.

Follow the leader: The henchman gets access to the Move [...] when the leader is nearby.

Gigantic: Cannot be held in place or knocked over in close combat. If the being's attacks connect in close combat, they always knock their victim over, in addition to any other results.

Half machine: The being is not affected by smoke, poisons, or gases, and does not feel pain.

Hatred: The creature is possessed by a hatred of [...] and deals **+1 Harm** against them.

Natural weaponry: The creature has some sort of weapon embedded in its body, whether implanted or natural.

Healing ability: Taking more than [...] wounds awakens strange mechanisms in the being's body, causing all future **Harm** it is dealt to be decreased by **–1**.

Heavy armor: All **Harm** is reduced by **–2**.

Imbue gifts: The being is capable of investing some of its power into a person of its choosing. They will gain one of the following gifts: set one Attribute value to **+4**; the ability to call on the being when in need; copy one of the being's abilities; or acquire something related to the being's Higher Power. The gift disappears whenever the being chooses to take it back, or if the being is defeated.

Immune to [...]: The creature cannot be harmed by this type of attack; for example, firearms, fire, or stabbing weapons.

Immune to Harm: Immune to attacks from normal weapons and unarmed attacks. Magically charged artifacts or the like will deal **Harm** as normal.

Lightning fast: All Distanced attacks against this being are modified by **–2**.

Martial arts master: Reduce the dice results of all close combat attack Moves against this being by **–2**.

Martial arts training: This being's close combat attacks deal **+1 Harm**.

Master of the Illusion: The Illusion is always particularly strong around this being. While in their vicinity, any rolls to ***See Through the Illusion*** are reduced by **–2**.

Master torturer: The being possesses intimate knowledge of how to utilize pain, humiliation, and fear to break someone else's will and draw out the truth and their shame. Victims resisting these torture methods must ***Keep it Together*** at –2.

Monstrous form: Humans who see the creature's true form must ***Keep it Together*** to not panic.

Multi-limbed: The creature has multiple limbs [enemies are at –1 to ***Avoid Harm*** dealt while in close combat].

Out of Time: This being exists beyond Time, and can move freely through its labyrinthine corridors.

Overlord: Henchmen and servants are fanatical and unafraid whenever in the leader's vicinity. They are able to take an additional **+2 Wounds** before they're knocked out.

Pact-weaver: This being can seal pacts with humans. See *Chapter 21 – Pacts and Magic*.

Regenerates: They regain **1 Wound** each minute of story time.

Resurrector: When this being dies, it reawakens unharmed several days later – unless its physical body has been completely destroyed.

Robust body: All **Harm** caused by firearms and piercing weapons is reduced by **–2**.

Sharp senses: The being's senses are heightened, able to pick up the most minute sight, sound, and scent, including an intuitive sense that detects if something seems 'off.'

Shapeshifter: At will, the creature can take any appearance and form it wants.

Slayer: Whenever they slay another being in close combat, the being regains **1 Wound** immediately.

Snake-tongue: Regardless of what the truth is, this being can freely reply either 'yes' or 'no' to the question "*Are you lying?*".

Spiritual connection: The being's soul is tied to one or several others. Should the being die, those it is tied to will lose **–5 Stability** and take **2 Harm**.

Stink: A sickening stench surrounds the creature. Being in its presence makes your eyes water and cause overwhelming nausea. Take *–1 ongoing* to all actions.

Tough skin: All **Harm** from chopping and crushing weapons is decreased by **–1**.

True form: This being's human visage is merely a shell. If the shell is destroyed it will reveal what's underneath, or returns in its true form as a [...].

Unreadable: This being is inscrutable and cannot be read in any way.

Veteran: Has fought in several wars and conflicts and is knowledgeable in practical military tactics. Is not intimidated by threats of violence.

Vicious when bloodied: After the being has taken [...] wounds, it devolves into a state of unthinking rage, during which all **Harm** it inflicts is at **+1**.

Weapon expert: All of the being's ranged attacks inflict **+1 Harm**.

Well equipped: Possesses the exact gear required for the particular situation – tear gas grenades, gas mask, climbing rope, glass cutter, knock-out drug, binoculars, etc.

Unique Moves

The following is a list of unique Moves for **Combat**, **Influence**, and **Magic** at levels 1–5. Unique Moves for higher levels are possessed only by very powerful opponents, which the GM is best advised to avoid putting up against PCs with *Sleeping* or *Aware* Archetypes. If the GM wants to include opponents at legendary (level 6) or higher levels, she can utilize the entities described in the chapters of ***Book III: The Truth*** as inspiration and come up with her own unique Moves.

The Moves in this list are mere suggestions – the GM can use these for their opponents, or use them as inspiration for developing her own unique Moves. The GM can also give higher level Moves to lower level NPCs. It is entirely up to the GM how to apply unique Moves.

Choosing unique Moves: Choose as many unique Moves for each Attribute as the NPC's level in that Attribute. The GM is suggested to choose the Moves on the NPC's Attribute level or lower, but it's possible to choose unique Moves from higher levels, if they're appropriate for the NPC's concept.

Combat

Combat Moves show off how dangerous the being is in a direct confrontation. They might entail lethal attacks, toughness, martial skill, and much more.

1: Weak

- Burst out in sudden, senseless violence.
- Flee from a conflict.
- Give up and beg for mercy.
- Knock someone or something over.
- Cause environmental destruction.
- Launch a careless attack and sustain damage in return.
- Summon reinforcements.

2: Novice

- Grab hold of and pin someone.
- Launch or join a coordinated attack.
- Jump someone from behind, or as a sudden surprise.
- Grab hold of someone and drag the victim away.
- Wounds inflicted become infected.
- Take a trophy.
- Draw a concealed weapon.
- Take flight.
- Take cover [**+2 Armor**].
- Stun attack [if target fails to ***Endure Injury*** they must pick the *Knocked out* option].

3: Considerable

- Pin down with gunfire [***Act Under Pressure*** to regain mobility].
- Terror inducing growl [***Keep it Together*** to refrain from panicking].
- Brace themselves.
- Disarm their opponent.
- Launch an attack that ignores armor.
- Move a considerable distance in a single leap.
- Inject a venom, poison, or drug.
- Natural escape route.
- Take cover in a tactically sound position.
- Perform first aid.
- Work together with their allies to surround an opponent [opponent takes *–1 to all rolls*].
- Inflict electrical shock [**2 Harm**, *knocked out* if failing to ***Endure Injury***].
- Scuttle up a wall and escape.

4: Powerful

- Attack several targets simultaneously.
- Make an attack out of nowhere, striking first.
- Throw someone aside or trip them.
- Maiming attack [**Harm +1**].
- Blind their opponent.
- Bone-shattering attack [causes a **Serious Wound**].
- Cover a large distance in an instant.
- Destroy an opponent's weapon.
- Agonizing attack [***Keep it Together*** to avoid a shock reaction].

5: Exceptional

- Keep the opponent at a distance (using close combat/natural weaponry) [***Act Under Pressure*** to get within reach to attack the creature).
- Counter-attack [attacks immediately after being attacked, –2 ***Avoid Harm***].
- An attack against this creature is redirected and hits another target.
- Paralyze their opponent.
- Tear off one of their opponent's limbs [**Critical Wound**].
- Launch a heavy object towards someone.
- Break walls or floor.
- Teleport and attack in an instant [–2 ***Avoid Harm***].
- Overwhelm [causes **+1 Harm**, opponent gets –1 to any attacking or avoidance Moves].

Influence

These Moves display the being's influence. They represent access to networks of contacts, staying well informed, and picking up rumours, locating somebody in particular, and gather resources.

1: Weak

- Give up, and offer assurances of loyalty.
- Trick someone.
- Offer something, or do someone a favour with a catch.
- Call for help.
- Know the right person.
- Know where something is located.
- Be aware of a detail regarding the [place/person/organization].

2: Novice

- Kidnap somebody.
- Steal something from someone.
- Threaten someone, either directly or veiled.
- Give orders to henchmen.
- Exploit a secret they have learned.
- Connect with their contacts in [organization].
- Offer mundane [knowledge/object/services] in exchange for payment.
- Employ henchmen with their own motives.

3: Considerable

- Outmaneuver or surround someone, force someone into a corner.
- Manipulate and corrupt someone.
- Lead a [gang/squad/mob].
- Assert authority.
- Reveal their knowledge of [place/organization/event].
- Offer rare and obscure [knowledge/object/services] in exchange for payment.
- Recruit criminal elements.
- Hack into a network at someone's home or place of work.

4: Powerful

- Purchase the loyalty of someone else's allies.
- Call for reinforcements.
- Slander someone.
- Start a trend, fad, or hype.
- Kill a rumor.
- Draw on the resources of [organisation].
- Assemble and launch a task force.
- Take shelter within the [organisation].
- Offer supernatural [knowledge/object/services] in exchange for payment.
- Recruit duty bound professional hitmen or a squad of mercenaries.

5: Exceptional

- Influence society (directly or through institutions under their control).
- Systematically ruin someone's life.
- Make someone's secrets public [inflicting **–2/–4 Stability**].
- Reveal their knowledge of someone's deepest desires.
- Make an irresistible offer.
- Erase someone's identity.
- Accumulate forbidden knowledge.
- Stage a complex plan with many moving parts.
- Manipulate individuals/groups/organizations from the shadows.
- Demand obedience through the credible threat of terrifying consequences.

Magic

These Moves deal with the being's innate magical properties, skill and training in the schools of magic, the ability to pierce the Illusion and open gates to the worlds beyond, and so on.

1: Weak

- Reveal something about Reality.
- Make contact with another entity.
- Speak prophecy.
- Protective aura [apply a magical **+1 Armor** to someone].
- Reveal a gate to another world.
- Reveal limited insight into [...] (Archons, Death Angels, Inferno, Metropolis...)
- Construct other-dimensional machinery.
- Initiate in one of the schools of magic.

2: Novice

- Summon a being from [...] (Gaia, Limbo, Inferno, Metropolis, the Underground, Elysium).
- Inflict a tear in the Illusion.
- Awaken the sleeping madness.
- See the true nature of people and creatures.
- Send dreams and visions.
- Raise the living dead.
- Change a person's appearance and/or sex.
- Reveal deep insight into [...] (Archons, Death Angels, Inferno, Metropolis...).
- Curse somebody or something.
- Plant seeds of [...] (guilt, passion, hatred, suspicion) in someone's mind.
- Paralyzing touch.
- Perform complex cybernetic or arcane surgery.
- Journeyman in one of the schools of magic.

3: Considerable

- Manipulate physical and emotional aspects of the surrounding environment.
- Influence or control another being.
- Open a temporary portal to another dimension.
- Possess somebody, taking full control of their body.
- Reveal and use a powerful artifact.
- Cause a serious sickness in somebody.
- Instill night terrors [**–2 Stability**].
- Make creatures from nightmares take physical form.
- Conceal their presence with a mental fog.
- Degenerate or disintegrate parts of someone's body [causing **1 Serious Wound**].
- Seduce a crowd.
- Kill someone in their sleep.
- Heal a badly wounded or dying creature.
- Daze those in their surrounding with bewitching song.
- Steal life force [regains **2 Wounds**, while causing **1 Serious Wound** to someone else].
- Adept in one of the schools of magic.
- Become one with a machine.
- Repair, reshape or transform a living being or object.

4: Powerful

- Corrupt a foetus.
- Harm someone or something.
- Transmit their consciousness via the internet.
- See into someone's soul and their past lives.
- Send a creature back to its place of origin.
- Cause someone's blood to boil – literally [**Critical Wound**].
- Manipulate memories, create memory blackouts.
- Create a magical apparatus or artifact.
- Spread the Principles of [Archon/Death Angel] to someone.
- Steal memories.
- Master of one of the schools of magic.

5: Exceptional

- Distort streets, roads, and stairways.
- Open a permanent portal to another dimension.
- Enslave even the strong-willed.
- Find a lost soul.
- Manipulate time and space.
- Suddenly appear or disappear.
- Create a purgatory.
- Spiritual torture [**–5 Stability**].
- Create a [lictor/razide/nephalite].
- Move someone's physical body into Limbo.
- Make a small city fall into their clutches.

Attacks

The following are examples of different attacks an NPC might make, depending on how they are equipped and what unique Moves they have access to. The GM can use these attacks as inspiration for ones she develops on her own. It can also be helpful to glance at the values set for monsters in ***Book III: The Truth*** and the weapons detailed in ***Chapter 4 – The Player Character*** for more inspiration.

GM Note: NPCs do not tick off ammo used – instead, the GM determines when they are out of ammo based on what makes sense for the story's drama and immersion. Also, remember to take into account any Harm-increasing abilities the opponent has access to when determining how much Harm an attack causes.

Reduce Harm to Give the Attack Special Properties

At her option the GM can reduce the amount of **Harm** inflicted in exchange for giving the attack a special property. For example, an NPC attacks with a baseball bat, which should inflict **2 Harm**. The GM chooses to reduce the **Harm** by **1** and have the attack stun its target. The total **Harm** inflicted is **1**, but the victim has to choose the *Knocked out* option, if she fails her ***Endure Injury*** roll.

List of Attacks

The first bracket gives you the **Harm** for the attack. The second bracket gives you distance and special rules for this type of attack.

Unarmed

- Bite [1] [Distance: arm].
- Punch & kick [1] [Distance: arm].
- Knock over [0] [Distance: arm, victim is *Knocked over*].
- Kick them when they're down [2] [Distance: arm, victim must be *Knocked over*].
- Knock-out [0] [Distance: arm, the victim is *Knocked out* if they fail to ***Endure Injury***].
- Dirty fighting [1] [Distance: arm, hits to the eye, groin, or throat – temporarily dazing the victim].

- Break arm or leg [**Serious Wound**] [Distance: arm].
- Strangulation [1] [Distance: arm, victim is *pinned* and must ***Act Under Pressure*** to get free; otherwise, they will end up taking **+2 Harm** from oxygen loss].
- Throw [1] [Distance: arm, the victim is tossed away and *Knocked over*].
- Flurry of blows [1] [Distance: arm, can target up to three opponents within Distance with a single attack].
- Armlock [0] [Distance: arm, victim is *pinned* and must ***Act Under Pressure*** to get free].

Chopping Weapons

- Cleave [2] [Distance: Arm].
- Momentum [1] [Distance: arm, can attack one additional target within Distance].

Crushing Weapons

- Swing wildly [2] [Distance: arm].
- Knock over [1] [Distance: arm, victim is *Knocked over*].
- Knock-out [1] [Distance: arm, the victim must choose to be *Knocked out* if they fail to ***Endure Injury***].

Edged Weapons

- Cut up [2] [Distance: arm].
- Surprise attack [1] [Distance: arm, the victim can only ***Avoid Harm***].
- Disarming attack [1] [Distance: arm, disarms the opponent].
- Dash attack [2] [Distance: arm, can target up to two opponents within Distance with a single attack].
- Nail to the wall [1] , [Distance: arm, victim must ***Act Under Pressure*** to get free].
- Knife at the throat [0/2] [Distance: arm, you're in control of the target; victims who fail to ***Act Under Pressure*** to break free take **2 Harm**].
- Impale [2] [Distance: arm, the attacker's weapon penetrates the victim, who must ***Act Under Pressure*** to get free without taking an additional **2 Harm**].
- Disembowel [**Critical Wound**] [Distance: arm].

Electricity

- Electrical shock [2] [Distance: arm, automatically *Knocked out*, if failing to ***Endure Injury***].

Torture Devices

- Agonizing attack [1] [Distance: arm, ***Keep it Together*** to refrain from running away or breaking down].
- Hook [2] [Distance: arm, victim must ***Act Under Pressure*** to get free].
- Tear up [3] [Distance: arm].

Flying Attacks

- Grab, lift, drop [2] [Distance: room, the victim is lifted into the air and then *Knocked over*].
- Dive and crush [2] [Distance: field, crushes its victim by colliding at high speeds].

Automatic Pistol/Revolver

- Double attack [1] [Distance: room, can target up to 2 opponents within Distance].
- Shot to the arm/leg [**Serious Wound**] [Distance: room, the victim's limb is temporarily unusable].
- Suppressive fire [1] [Distance: room, opponents must ***Act Under Pressure*** to move around freely, empties magazine].

Shotgun

- Aim & fire [3/1] [Distance: room/field].
- Rapid fire [3/1] [Distance: room/field, small group all hit at once, empties magazine].
- Crippling attack [**Serious Wound**] [Distance: room].

Magic

- Summon extradimensional creatures [–] [Distance: room].
- Stop time [–] [Distance: special, can move one Distance step closer or further away in an instant].
- Freeze somebody [–] [Distance: room, ***Keep it Together*** to avoid getting stuck in time].
- Commanding voice [–] [Distance: room, ***Keep it Together*** to refrain from obeying the commands].
- Machine mind meld [1–2] [Distance: field, use electrical machines in the surrounding environment as weapons; e.g., cause machines to overheat, lamps to explode, etc].
- Form of desires [–] [Distance: room, appear in the form of the target's deepest desires].
- Phantasmagoria [–] [Distance: room, the target's fantasies manifests in the Illusion, ***Keep it Together*** to keep from believing and becoming vulnerable to them].
- Distort the surroundings [–] [Distance: room, those present must ***See Through the Illusion*** to get their bearings back].
- Reveal true form [–] [Distance: room, ***Keep it Together*** to avoid panicking].
- Telekinesis [2] [Distance: room].
- Possess [–] [Distance: room, ***Keep it Together*** to prevent the being from controlling your body's actions].
- Warp physical form [2] [Distance: room, **roll +Fortitude** to avoid being transformed by the magic].
- Tearing books and chains [2] [Distance: room, ***Avoid Harm*** to avoid getting hooked].

Chapter 9
Downtime

The time-period between game sessions – i.e., whenever you're not playing – is referred to as *downtime*. The gamemaster (GM) should make use of downtime to work out the details of her story or scenario. This entails preparing for the next game session; in particular, considering how the story threats might react to the player characters' (PCs') recent actions, preparing new influences and threats, developing new challenges the PCs, and planning for the story's endgame and eventual finale.

For example, downtime provides the GM the opportunity to answer questions generated during the character creation process, such as plot elements stemming from the PCs' Dark Secrets and Disadvantages. What is haunting the PCs? What really happened during the rituals the PC took part in? What childhood event did the PC repress? During downtime, the GM will have plenty of time to ponder these questions and integrate the answers with the story's influences and threats.

USING THE INTRIGUE MAP

Chapter 6 – Setting Up a Story provides instructions for how GMs should create the story's *Intrigue Map* by writing down the different story elements established during the various phases of character creation, such as the PCs' background and important events, places, monsters, groups, and contacts.

The Intrigue Map is a helpful tool for planning future sessions during downtime. When the player group is in session, the GM can use the Intrigue Map to reference the important threats in the story, as well as for noting down new events, relationship changes, and any new NPCs, groups, and places she establishes. In the process of playing, the GM will have to answer the players' questions about the world's setting on the spot, and when these answers establish new elements to the story, she should write them down on the map immediately. She can then use downtime to flesh out the threat, contact, or other story elements further.

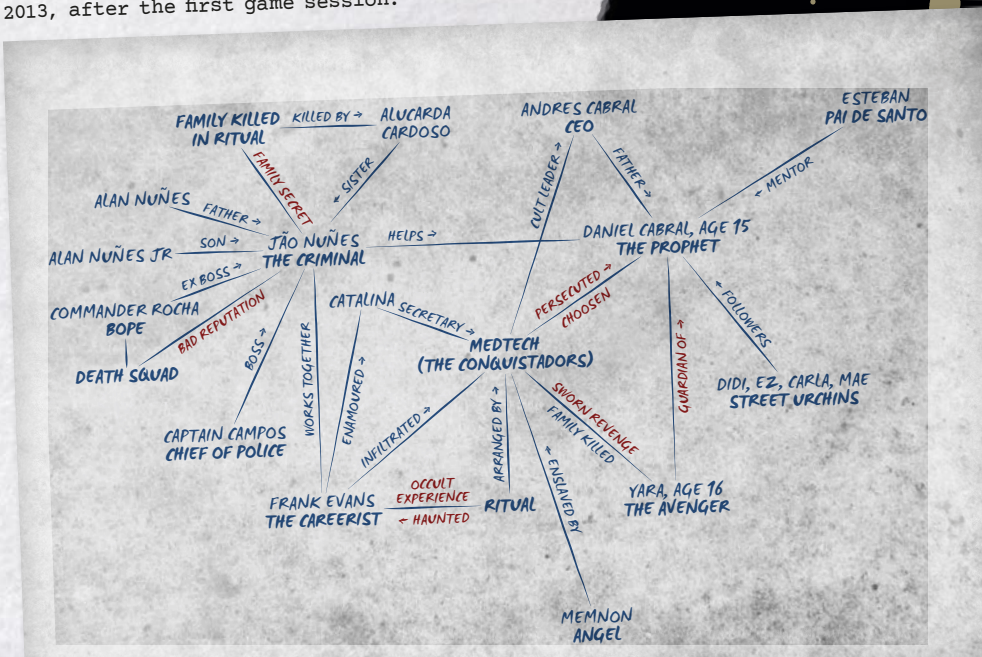
In the first session, the Intrigue Map will likely feature hubs the GM and players have more questions than answers for. As the game progresses, these questions will be answered, and the hubs will become anchored to the story in a more concrete and real way.

As the story progresses, the various links will connect threats with no prior relationship to each other, and new threats will emerge on the Intrigue Map, as well. For example, in the Rio de Janeiro Intrigue Map :

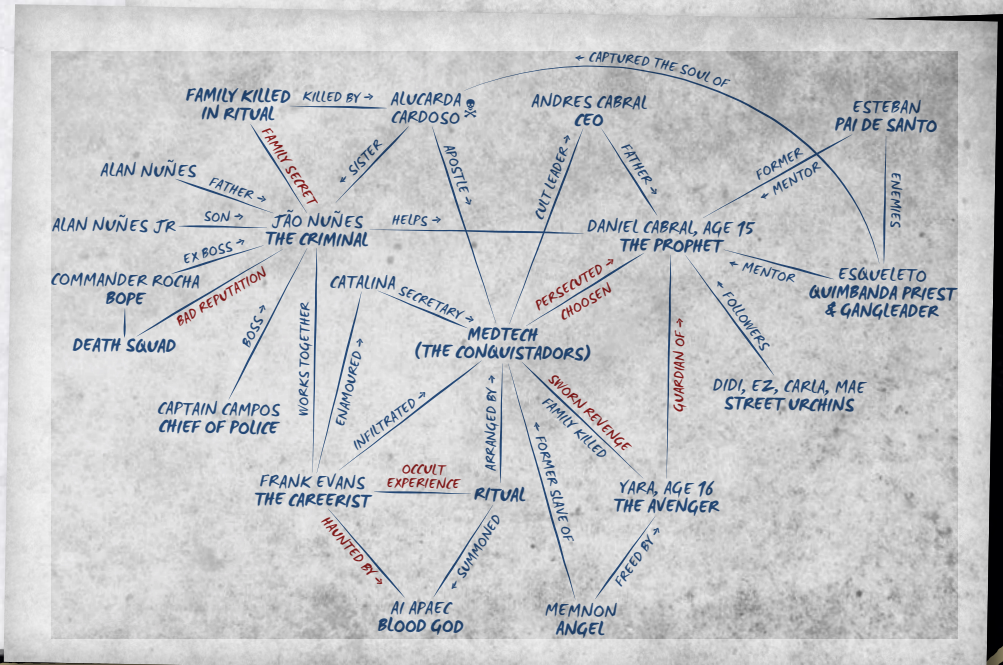
- The entity haunting Frank is established as Ai Apaec – an ancient blood god from the jungle.
- Jão's sister, Alucarda, turns out to be a Conquistador priestess. At this point in the story, the PCs have defeated her, and her soul has been taken by Esqueleto.
- A new threat/contact has been established; Esqueleto is a Quimbanda priest and gang leader in his favela, who has sealed a pact with Daniel Cabral. In exchange for Alucarda's soul, he made Daniel his black magic apprentice. The relationship is not without complexity, as Esqueleto's hated enemy Esteban is Daniel's previous mentor (a white magic Umbanda priest).
- Yara has confronted the creature who murdered her family: Memnon. It turned out to be a being whose face was stolen by Alucarda, and who had been enslaved by the Conquistadors. As the PCs defeated Alucarda, Yara could give the conquered Memnon its face back and release the being from the cult. In gratitude, Memnon swore to help her at some point in the future.

Should the group continuing playing this story, the Intrigue Map will evolve even further. New hubs will emerge and old ones will fade in importance, possibly disappearing entirely. The various links will also change, along with the relationships between the different hubs.

An Intrigue Map for a story set in Rio de Janeiro, 2013, after the first game session.



The Intrigue Map for the same story five sessions in.



Reactions

A story's threats aren't static – they change and adapt to the events as they transpire. Usually PCs will affect threats by stopping their opponents' plans, but different influences may be simultaneously working at cross purposes, while the PCs are stuck in the middle. As one of the influences advances their goals, it can affect another influence in the same area, be it positively or negatively. This interaction affects the story's progression.

For example one influence is tied to the Archon Malkuth; a group of scientists are attempting to create rifts in the Illusion to awaken an entire city. Another influence is tied to the Archon Geburah; a lictor is manipulating the city's mayor and police force, controlling its population with an iron fist. As Malkuth's influence increases and the scientists manage to accomplish part of their plan, several individuals awaken from their slumber and the Illusion weakens in various locations across the city, revealing the alternate, underlying dimensions. Naturally, Geburah's influence reacts to this, and the lictor launches into action to prevent further damage. The outcome might be the police, acting on orders from their superiors and ignorant of the exact reasons, cordon off different areas to keep the public away from where the Illusion is weakening. Meanwhile, law enforcement agencies hunt down the scientists, who have been labeled fugitives and terrorists for their actions.

Influences react in much the same way if the PCs' actions affect their interests.

In addition, individual threats such as leaders, monsters, and groups will also take action if their interests are affected by the PCs or other NPCs. For example, the PCs might defeat an opponent and earn their allies as new enemies (or vice versa), they might rob a threat of something, or cause an event that affects the threat negatively. The PCs may not even be aware of this at the time, or realize they've earned the enmity/benevolence of an influence/threat.

When do Reactions occur?

The GM should ask the following questions after each session:

- During this session, did anything happen that affected (or could possibly affect) an influence or individual threat?
- If the answer is 'Yes,' how would they respond?

Plan out how the influence or threat would react, and play it out during the next or future sessions.

New Influences and Threats

During the course of the story, the characters will sometimes encounter brand new threats. This could be the result of the GM suddenly having a great idea, the PCs learning more about a Dark Secret or Disadvantage, or the PCs discovering something the GM hasn't prepared for while exploring the story's setting.

If the PCs must interact with a brand-new threat, the GM has two options:

- Improvise the encounter and note down the most important aspects on the Intrigue Map.
- Call for a short break to prepare the threat further.

If the threat is merely mentioned and not investigated further, the GM can simply make a note and prepare the threat further during downtime. It's common during an investigation for the PCs to discover clues mentioning a place, object, group, or adversary of some kind, which are unrelated to the current game session. New influences and threats are prepared as usual (see ***Chapter 8 – Influences***).

For example:

- An NPC the PCs are interrogating mentions that the Conquistadors are looking for the Vessel of Life.

  Questions: What is the Vessel of Life and why do the Conquistadors want to get their hands on it?

- The PCs discover a portal leading to Metropolis. Through the portal, they can see an enormous, dark hall lined with pillars like obsidian tree trunks, reaching hundreds of meters into the air. A procession of black-clad worshippers emerge from adjoining buildings, and then make their way towards the center of the hall – where a gigantic cogwheel spins inside a mechanical contraption. At the hall's far end, illuminated by a pillar of light from the ceiling, is an immense throne with its back facing towards the hall. The PCs decide not to pass through the portal, postponing exploring the chamber until they're better prepared.

  Questions: What is the hall's purpose? Who are the worshippers? What is the cogwheel? Who does the throne belong to?

- When the PCs examine the murder victim's clothes, they find a business card in the inside, coat pocket, reading *Charles Mansour: Mansour Films,* including an address to a place in Garment District.

Questions: Maybe the GM has a vague idea the murder may be linked to the porn industry, so she can connect it later to one of the PCs' ***Sexual Neurosis***.

If the threat cannot be connected to a pre-existing influence, the GM can create a new one and add it to the Intrigue Map. During the course of the game, the GM notes down new threats on the Intrigue Map, drawing links to them when the PCs discover it is connected to one of the hubs.

Dark Secrets and Disadvantages

When you first set up a story, the players' Dark Secrets and Disadvantages are typically not explained in detail, but described in general so the GM can flesh them out further as the game progresses. The GM will ask the players as many questions about them as she feels is necessary, but the player shouldn't know more in-game details than her character does. If the character is ***Haunted***, the player may answer a question about what he thinks the entity haunting his character is, but only the GM can determine the actual truth. This can be an excellent opportunity to surprise the player when it turns out their – and their character's – theories are totally wrong.

The most important thing for the GM to remember to do while preparing the background details for Dark Secrets and Disadvantages is to connect them to the story. If she doesn't, these details will be relegated to mere sidetracks, only coming into the spotlight occasionally, and at worst be ignored and forgotten completely. The easiest way to ensure these connections are made is by linking the Dark Secrets and Disadvantages to threats on the Intrigue Map.

For example, In the two Intrigue Maps from the Rio de Janeiro story above, all the Dark Secrets and the majority of the threats are linked to the same organization hub, the Conquistadors – a cult created by Pedro Álvares Cabral, a Portuguese explorer, in his quest for life eternal. Jão, one of the PCs, has a sister, Alucarda, who was initially unassociated with the Conquistadors, but after the first session the GM made her a priestess and apostle for the cult. This seemed reasonable as Jão and Yara (another PC) experienced similar events, in which their families had been murdered. The deaths of Yara's family were connected to the Conquistadors, so it seemed acceptable to connect Jão's family to them as well. In truth, Alucarda was the murderer and served the cult in some capacity. As she is Jão's sister, the GM wanted to give Alucarda a more prominent position as a priestess for the Conquistadors.

As the PCs' Dark Secrets are linked together, common goals will emerge, thus creating a more focused story with believable reasons for the PCs to meet each other and cooperate. When Dark Secrets remain unlinked to the other story elements, the plot will pull in different directions and be more demanding for the GM to plan and run, and could be seen as sprawling and meandering by the players.

The GM doesn't have to link the Dark Secrets together immediately, but should attempt to create connections during the course of the story. Inspiration often strikes while the game is in session and the PCs explore their world.

During downtime the GM should ask herself:

- Have there been any further revelations about the PCs' Dark Secrets or Disadvantages I haven't already established?
- Did the player suggest or hint at something that would be a better idea than the one I originally had? (It's okay to change your mind. The GM is the only person reading her own notes.)
- Do I have any idea for how the Dark Secret or Disadvantage can be linked to another hub on the Intrigue Map?

Challenge the Player Characters

Chapter 7 – First Session covers how the GM should plan a set of challenging events for the PCs, referred to as *bombs*, before the game starts. Between sessions during downtime the GM should also review what sorts of challenges she should give the PCs next session.

The GM should ask herself:

- Has anything happened during the story that would make good material for a bomb?
- Has any player acquired an Advantage for their character that would make for interesting material to base a bomb on? For example, the *Avenger's* Advantage ***Rage*** or a supernatural Advantage that gives the player and PC the ability to learn secret truths about Reality.
- Are there any contacts that could be interesting to highlight in game by building a bomb around them?
- Would it be suitable to put additional spotlight on one of the PCs in particular this upcoming session?

If any of these questions are a 'yes', she should try to come up with one or several bombs to toss the PCs in-game.

When a Player Character Dies

When a PC dies in the middle of a story, the GM might simply allow the player to create a new character. However, the GM may impose certain restrictions on the player, such as demanding the new PC's Archetype and Dark Secret be in line with the story's theme or the PC shares a Dark Secret with one or all of the other characters. If the death occurs early in the session, you can take a break until the new character is ready to go. The GM will look it over and have the player present it the same way as when the story was initially set up (see *Presentation* in ***Chapter 6 – Setting up a Story***). At that point, all there is left to do is establishing any relations and throwing the PC head first into the story.

If you're playing a scenario, the GM might want more control over the new PC's creation process; possibly developing large parts or even the entire character herself. They may already have a pre-generated character for just this situation. If the GM doesn't have any issues with the player making a new character of her choosing, as with playing through a standard story, this is the preferred option.

The Story's Ending

All stories must eventually come to an end. Stories can get quite long and take several game sessions to finish, but at some point you have to end the story, if only to begin a new one. During downtime, the GM can consider where the story is leading to and if its plot is about to wrap up.

When to End it?

The GM should be on the lookout for the following indicators the story is drawing to a close:

- *Condition fulfilled:* The PCs have fulfilled – or utterly failed at achieving – a goal predetermined by the GM. For example, the PCs have saved (or failed to save) their city from a Death Angel's influence. The GM could prepare two different epilogues to relay to the players, depending on whether they succeeded or failed.
- *Final battle:* The PCs are about to finally defeat the story's primary threat. For example, the PCs have completely undermined the Conquistador cult in the Rio de Janeiro story.
- *The PCs evolve:* The PCs are about to drastically change to adopt other Archetypes. For example, they are transitioning from *Sleeper* to *Aware* Archetypes. This is a good moment for the GM to take a break and consider how this will affect the story's progression.
- *Predetermined number of sessions:* The group sets a predetermined number of sessions the story will last, and when they've gone through them all, the story concludes. This may make the story feel slightly forced, and also demands the GM prepare events before each game session, which continually drive the players towards a satisfying finale. There are no set standards for how many game sessions the standard story should take, but as a rule of thumb, consider 5 sessions for a short story, 10 for a medium length, and 15 or more for a long story. There's also a lot of variability between groups playing for 3 to 10 hours at a time and with what frequency the group meets to play.
- *The theme has been explored and exhausted:* The GM feels the story's theme has been fully explored and it's time to move on to something else. It's a good idea for the GM to tell the players she's planning to wrap up the story within the next few sessions. This provides the players time to complete any sidetracks their PCs may be on and tie up all the loose ends in a satisfying way. Perhaps the players themselves want to choose what happens to their PCs. In this case, the GM can let them request specific scenes to wrap the story up for them.

For example:

- A final desperate firefight against the mafia family who murdered the PC's family.
- A tragic suicide in the PC's apartment.
- A mad experiment where the PC is launched into an alternate dimension.
- The sealing of a demonic pact, which ensures the PC's promotion to CEO of their company.

How to End it?

In preparation for the final session, the GM should plan a finale wrapping up the story and giving the PCs the farewell they deserve. Hopefully, by this point in the story, the player group will be looking forward to a major conclusion, such as an epic battle, a shocking revelation, or an unbelievable discovery.

- *One last chance:* Give the PCs one final desperate chance to accomplish their goals, but make them fight for it. This is the time when the GM should pull out her epic enemies and introduce spectacular environments where the PCs have to push all their abilities to their breaking point to have any chance of saving themselves and what they care about. It doesn't matter if they all survive the encounter, as long as you give each of them a good shot at succeeding.
- *Recuperation:* As the story reaches its climax, the group can give those PCs still standing at the story's end a moment to collect themselves and enjoy their victory (or at the very least that they're still alive). Any story can benefit greatly from a denouement.
- *Epilogue:* Tell the players what happens after the story's final scene. What happens to the PCs? What about their important relationships? How is the story's world and setting affected?
- *Discussion:* The player group should take a moment to talk to each other about the story. Commonly, there is a need to share thoughts and feelings after a story is over.

CHAPTER 10
CONSTRUCTING A SCENARIO

A *SCENARIO* IS A STORY WHERE THE GAMEMASTER (GM) herself chooses the place, time, Archetype, and threats before the start of the game. Often, the GM picks Archetypes and Dark Secrets she detailed ahead of time, to integrate the characters' backstories specifically with the scenario.

Scenarios are particularly suitable for beginning players, one-shot games, and groups who can only meet for a limited number of sessions. They allow for more active playtime, but are more demanding of the GM's time, as she will need to make preparations ahead of playing the scenario.

Checklist for Scenario Creation

This is a list of items the GM can prepare before the scenario starts.

[1] Think of a scenario *concept*.

[2] Choose a *theme* for the scenario.

[3] Pick a *setting* (time and place) for the scenario.

[4] Think of a *backstory*.

[5] Select what *Archetypes* will be available to the players.

[6] Pick *Dark Secrets* and *Disadvantages* for the player characters (PCs) and integrate these with the scenario backstory.

[7] *Detail the characters* as the story requires, providing additional aspects to the characters, such as name, looks, Advantages, and relationships.

[8] Create *threats* connected to the backstory and the characters' Dark Secrets.

[9] Create *milestones* for the threats.

[10] Consider and make notes of descriptions of important *places and people* in the scenario.

[11] Think about possible *endings* for the scenario.

Concept

Developing a scenario *concept* requires the GM to determine a vague idea of what the scenario is all about. For example:

- The characters are employed at an excavation of Metropolis' forgotten catacombs, located in the glaciers of Antarctica.
- The characters are estranged childhood friends, who are haunted by the terrible crimes in their pasts.
- The characters are evangelical congregation members in a small town threatened by demons.
- The characters are police officers trying to stop a twisted serial killer.
- The characters are tourists staying at a remote hotel, where the proprietor is looking to open a gate to Inferno.
- The characters are unwittingly trapped in a purgatory, where a nepharite confronts them with their pasts.

Theme

The scenario *theme* is connected to the concept, and could be chosen before the concept is developed, if so desired. The simplest way to determine the scenario's theme is choosing one of the Higher Powers in the game and focus the scenario around its Principles or goals. If there are several Higher Powers, the theme can be described as the conflict between them. For example:

- The Death Angel, Sathariel, provides the theme, *Exclusion*.
- The Archon, Geburah, and the Death Angel, Gamaliel, introduced into the same scenario makes the theme, *Law versus Lust*.

When preparing Archetypes, Dark Secrets, Disadvantages, and threats, the GM can consider how to best highlight the theme throughout the story.

Setting

The scenario's *setting* – the time and place it occurs – affects the story's mood and provides a varying range of possibilities for the PCs. Consider what works best with the concept. Should the scenario be based in a big city or elsewhere? Do you want to use an existing location or invent your own? What sort of locale works best to serve the goals and themes you have with the scenario? Some setting examples:

- Big city
- Small town
- Countryside
- The wilds
- Isolated locale (e.g., a ship, an island, a prison, or similar)
- A building (e.g., a hospital, asylum, school, etc.)
- An event (e.g., the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong in 2014, the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, the *MS Estonia* disaster in 1994)

Backstory

The scenario's *backstory* doesn't have to be novella-length, but you should consider and note down a few sentences about what previously took place in the scenario's locations, and what events made the situation the way it is. The backstory will naturally take shape and be complemented by the other choices the GM makes while creating the scenario, so she should figure out the basics and occasionally return to flesh out the backstory.

For example, the Antarctic dig is operated by the company, Innovim Inc., which is controlled by lictors tied to the Death Angel, Nahemoth. They're searching for a lost god, who is said to be sleeping in Metropolis' catacombs.

Archetypes

The choice of available Archetypes affects the direction of the scenario. For violent threats, Archetypes like *The Avenger*, *The Criminal*, and *The Veteran* could be suitable. If you want more focus on investigation and research, *The Detective*, *The Fixer*, or *The Seeker* have Advantages which would prove useful. *The Careerist* and *The Artist* are suited for more social play, while *The Prophet* and *The Scientist* have Advantages providing the players more insight into the supernatural.

Often a combination of Archetypes is preferable, and it's usually obvious which Archetypes are appropriate for the scenario's concept. The Archetypes' specific Dark Secrets, Disadvantages, and Advantages are also important when considering this choice. If it's important for the characters to hack into a security system during the story, the GM might choose *The Seeker* as one of the available Archetypes, due to its ***Hacker*** Advantage.

Dark Secrets and Disadvantages

As the PCs are the scenario's protagonists, it's important to connect their Dark Secrets and possibly even their Disadvantages to the scenario's backstory.

For example, if the scenario revolves around a mysterious figurine, one of the player characters inherits it (***Heir***) and is affected by its ***Curse***.

A boyfriend of one of the PCs used to be a researcher at Innovim Inc.'s Antarctic research station (***Strange Disappearance***). The character has applied for employment at the station to investigate what transpired.

The evangelical congregation struggling against the town's demons are led by *The Prophet*, who has been ***Chosen*** by their god to protect the town from this evil.

Detail the Characters

How much detail the characters require in advance depends largely on how much control the GM wants to have over them and how quickly they want to start playing.

Allowing the players to choose many of their characters' details themselves will directly influence the direction in which the scenario plays out, and the plot may take unexpected twists and turns, as a result. For example, *The Detective* the GM thought would serve as a crime scene investigator becomes a dreamwalker with ***Enhanced Awareness*** instead, and *The Prophet* becomes a truthsayer with a voice that whips crowds into a frenzy. In addition, even seemingly straightforward decisions can take some players a long time to make.

If the GM makes all the choices herself, she can prepare exactly the protagonists she wants for the scenario. However, this may inhibit player creativity and diminish their connection to the story.

A compromise is to allow the players to choose character options on their own, but impose constraints on their selections. For example, "You can pick three Advantages, but one of them has to be ***Crime Scene Investigator***."

If the scenario is intended to be short and intense, it's wise to impose some control over the PCs' relations to one another. Allowing the characters to familiarize themselves and build trust with the others can take a long time in game, and sometimes they don't seem to want to cooperate at all. The GM can also use relations to create character motivations and ensure characters stick together. For example, "*The Avenger* rescued you from certain death, and this is why you're helping her get her revenge."

Threats

Threats are the scenario's antagonists and represent most of the obstacles the PCs must overcome. It's important to put some consideration into the nature of the threats and what in the characters' lives they're endangering. The GM will often have a few threats established from developing the scenario concept, backstory, and the characters' Dark Secrets and Disadvantages. Note these down and consider what their goals and motivations are in the scenario. For additional threats, find inspiration by reviewing the entries for the Higher Powers you've selected for the scenario.

Some examples of threats for the Antarctic research station scenario:

- Innovim Inc.'s CEO, de Arnán (*Leader*); lictor under the Death Angel, Nahemoth, who wants to awaken the Sleeping God.
- The snow storm (*Event*); freezes everything to ice, cutting the base off from outside world.
- Starvation (*Event*); kills the station crew, and compromises people's reason and perception. The next shipment of food is delayed and the stocks are running extremely low.
- The cult (*Group*); secret society among Innovim employees at the station, who worship the Sleeping God.
- The dead children (*Abominations*); malicious spirits haunting *The Veteran* due to misdeeds in his past.

Milestones

For some threats, the GM will author *milestones* – step-by-step plans leading up to their final goal. Not all threats need milestones, but they're often useful for determining how the scenario should progress.

Each milestone can have a variable number of steps before its goal state is reached. As a guideline, the GM should have three to five steps before the execution of the final goal. This gives the characters various opportunities to discover and interfere with the threat and its plans. Many more steps than this runs the risk of ending in over-planning and wasted effort, as the characters' interference should cause the threat to adjust their plans.

Example:

Lictor de Arnán's plan to awaken the Sleeping God

[1] Open the portal to the Sleeping God's catacombs.

[2] Intercept and silence all outgoing transmissions from the research station.

[3] Send an exploration team into the catacombs to locate the Sleeping God.

[4] Have the cult members take control of the station.

[5] Sacrifice the station crew to the Sleeping God in the catacombs.

Goal: Awaken the Sleeping God

Each step in the plan can be detailed ahead of time, as much as necessary, noting possible consequences for completion or interference, emergence of new threats, and other details.

It's important to understand even though the threats' plans are predetermined, the GM cannot control how the PCs will react to what transpires. The GM can affect the characters' choices by crafting their backstories, manipulating them through relations and NPCs, and so on, but she may *never* decide for the players what actions they take. This means it's problematic to write milestones based on the PCs' actions. Try to word the milestones so the characters are able to discover and react to them naturally. If the characters manage to stop the antagonists' plans, they might be able to save themselves, as well as the day.

Places and People

Consider what *places* the characters might visit in the scenario and jot down what is special about them: impressions, sounds, smells, sensations, and moods. Descriptions set the tone for the scenario, so spend a bit of time ensuring you have a clear picture of the environments the characters will be spending time in. If a location is meant to be creepy, the GM should know *how* and *why* it is creepy before the scenario starts. If the characters will investigate a crime scene, it's wise to have prepared clues for them to find ahead of time.

Places acting as home turf for threats can be adapted appropriately. If a threat is tied to a Higher Power (Archon or Death Angel), let the Higher Power's influence transform the location.

For example, Damien Leclerc, servant of the Archon Kether, lives in a palatial mansion, which exudes an aura of authority and old wealth. Rank and pecking order are very noticeable among the house's masters and servants, and family portraits illustrate how titles have been passed down through the ages.

The GM should ensure they also create non-player characters for the scenario, who can function as friends, allies, relatives, and clue-givers for the characters. Give them names, distinct behaviors, and physical descriptions.

Endings

When preparing a scenario, it's important to consider how to bring it to an *end*. There are several methods available to help make this decision.

- The scenario ends when a particular threat accomplishes their milestone/goal or the characters manage to stop them; e.g., the cult awakens the Sleeping God or the PCs put a stop to their plans.
- The scenario ends at a set point in time; e.g., when the snow storm subsides.
- The scenario ends when the characters realize something significant; e.g., they figure out they're all dead and trapped in a purgatory.
- The scenario ends when the characters accomplish something significant; e.g., escape the scenario location and reach safety.
- The scenario ends when the GM feels her prepared threats and challenges have been fully explored and overcome.

HOUSE
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Chapter 11

Beyond the Veil

Our world is a lie. Everything we see around us is merely a façade, concealing a vast and terrifying reality. If we could tear away our blindfolds, we would witness alien worlds, interwoven with our own: Gaia's unbridled wilderness, the Underworld's twisting labyrinths, the realms of Limbo constantly recast and reborn, Achlys' nothingness where everything is devoured, the dead cityscape of Metropolis, and the forsaken halls of Inferno. Some places and situations force us to see the Truth, whether we want to or not. Where horrors become reality, such as torture chambers, extermination camps, and old killing fields, the Illusion shatters and we see through the eternal lie.

In the Beginning...

We were not always ignorant. Mankind was divine, once. We were creatures as beautiful as we were horrifying, rulers of the material world, and masters of Time and Space. But we were toppled from our thrones and thrust into captivity, where we now exist as stray and tattered creatures. The creator of our prison called himself the Demiurge. His origin remains unknown. Was He a fellow human being, who brought the rest of us to our knees? Was He a God from a strange and distant world? Or was He, as He himself maintained, the creator of all things? With the aid of the Archons, powerful beings that were part of Him, the Demiurge created ten Principles to fetter us. These were interwoven into the veil that now blinds us, known as the Illusion. Now our enfeebled bodies and lulled minds are condemned to our prison.

He erected His seat of honor in our primordial home, Metropolis, where we previously had ruled from majestic towers. His stately Citadel peered across an endless city. From this central point, His universal power radiated throughout Creation. Angelic choirs sang gospels to His glory, and the Archons erected their Citadels around His, becoming integral parts of His vast apparatus. In Elysium, we served His grand design, even blindly worshipping this being who'd brought us to our knees. Mere cogs in the Demiurge's machine, our divinity filled Him with strength and glory.

For some reason, though, after eons, the Demiurge's power suddenly ground to a halt. The giant machinery started malfunctioning, restraints snapped into pieces, and souls tore themselves free. The Archons' wills, once in perfect harmony, now moved out of step, and turned on each other. The perfectly functioning clockworks slowed down or spun out of control. Was it this failure that urged humanity to slowly stagger towards its Awakening? Or had our recalcitrant wills and innate divinity proven impossible to tame?

The Demiurge lost His grip on His creation. At Metropolis' heart, the power emanating from His citadel started to falter. Instead of revolving around a central point of His presence, everything collapsed inwards into a unsettling emptiness. The Demiurge's Citadel was dead. Its gateways were closed, its windows turned pitch black. Even memories of the Demiurge faded, as though Time itself erased His existence. He was dismissed as something unnatural. In Elysium, humanity began seeking its own truths. The Principles could no longer bind us completely. Religions were abandoned and science rose to acclaim, as we subconsciously attempted to recreate our primordial home.

Then one day, the Demiurge's Citadel disappeared entirely from Metropolis. Only a vast precipice, falling away into nothingness itself, remained. Malkuth, the Archon who'd created our prison, rebelled against her brethren, seeking to destroy the Illusion. War broke out between the Archons, their tender cruelties now directed against each other. Astaroth, the Demiurge's twin, awoke from his slumber in Inferno, Metropolis' dark reflection.

Astaroth and the Death Angels

At the moment when the Principles were proclaimed, their polar opposites were similarly created. Perhaps this was planned on by the Demiurge and Astaroth, part of their mutual pact to capture humanity. Perhaps it was an unexpected and undesired side effect. Perhaps the universe required counterpoints to balance each of the Principles. Regardless of the origin, Inferno was born like a deformed and unwanted twin, becoming Astaroth's domicile. Nor was the Demiurge's dark brother alone. Reflections of the Archons and their Principles came into being: the Death Angels. Through them, Inferno drank deeply from the human souls which had slipped between the Demiurge's fingers.

When the Demiurge disappeared, Astaroth stretched out his will between the worlds to seek his vanished twin. He found only emptiness, stray angels, and confused servants who could not even remember their creator.

For eons, the Demiurge's will maintained a stranglehold over our prison, but with His disappearance, Inferno has begun gaining strength and drawing closer to our reality. The Death Angels' Principles are like barbed hooks, sinking into our souls and attempting to pull us from the Archons' clutches. Their consciousnesses crawl towards Elysium, wriggling their way into our world where the Illusion is weakest, expanding Inferno's power over us. Yet, they have no wish to liberate us. Just like the Demiurge's servants, the Death Angels fear our Awakening. They want to feast on our power, living as parasites within our souls. They seek to destroy the Demiurge's servants and replace them, to become our jailers themselves.

The Crumbling Illusion

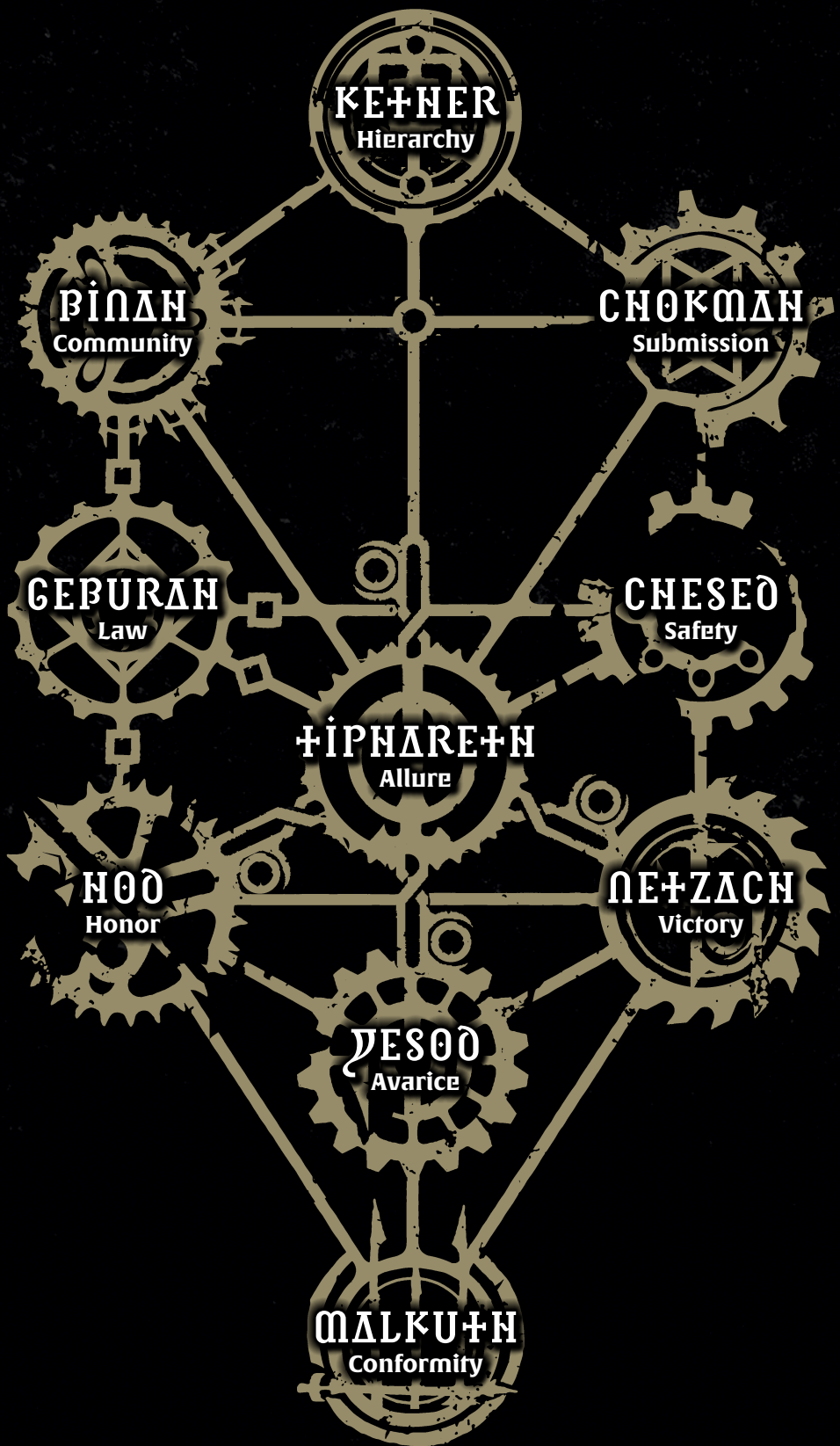
Archons, Death Angels, lictors, nephariites, and razides have always existed close to us, lurking just out of sight. Other beings have also turned their hungry gazes on us. As our prison crumbles, we become visible to entities that previously could not see us. We remember some of them from old legends and myths, but others we lack names for and cannot even imagine. Some try to force us into seeing the reality beyond our prison, while others try to keep us in ignorance. Some view us as amusing toys, blind mice to play with, torment, and finally kill. In particular, we've become visible to the azghouls, former slaves from our days of godhood. Now, they take any opportunity to exact revenge for old injustices and humiliate their former masters.

The Principles

At their core, the Principles are the vast wills emanating from the Archons and their shadows, the Death Angels. They govern our thoughts and desires, determining what we perceive and restricting how we act. They restrain our intellects, trapping them within labyrinths of the mind and oubliettes of the soul, preventing us from thinking clearly and waking up.

The only way to Awaken is to liberate oneself from the Principles' shackles, and to become aware of how they maintain the Illusion. The Archons and the Death Angels are not entities as we understand them. They are vast consciousnesses, indomitable resolves, and merciless proclamations and laws, which can incarnate themselves and assume various forms in our reality. They are all these things and more, but first and foremost their driving purpose is to ensnare us.

THE ARCHONS


KETHER
Hierarchy
BINAH
Community
CHOKMAH
Submission
GEBURAH
Law
CHESED
Safety
TIPHARETH
Allure
HOD
Honor
NETZACH
Victory
YESOD
Avarice
MALKUTH
Conformity

Kether

The Divine Ruler. The Crown. The First. The Faceless.

Kether is the first Archon, the eternal, divinely chosen ruler, who embodies the rigid structures of power where one rules over all. His vassals and servants are bound to him and each other by blood and sacred oaths, uttered before ebony thrones and crowns of blackened iron. Lictors guard ampoules with noblemen's blood and lineage records, and they can recite the details of any hierarchy on Earth and beyond like a prayer. Kether's influence pulsates through those leaders who rule their people with an iron fist, including fascists in Europe, African dictators, executives of multinational corporations, and the heads of the Catholic Church.

Kether's power was at its peak during the Middle Ages, when kings and emperors ruled their realms autocratically and no one questioned why an invisible god had selected a human to command over them. His major seat of power has always been China, where the powerful dynasties supplanted each other and the emperor was responsible only to Heaven. Kether lost much of his influence after the Enlightenment influenced people's thoughts and the Industrial Revolution shattered the power of the nobility. Communism crushed the last Imperial Chinese dynasty, and even though his servants still hold sway over China, ruthless capitalist exploitation is difficult to control.

The Archon awaits the Demiurge's return in hopes of ushering in a new age of feudalism. His servants have grown increasingly passive, as orders from the upper echelons are few and far between. Others have broken away from him and are walking their own path.

Principle: Hierarchy.

Symbols: A blackened iron crown on a red velvet cloth. A throne of ebony with undecipherable hieroglyphs. A purple standard drenched in the blood of the last emperors. A statue of a gigantic eagle, clawing an infant.

Spheres of Influence: Society's hierarchical structures with a strong leader at their helm: royal families, the leaders of the Catholic Church, corporate executives, and countries such as China and North Korea.

Shadow: The Death Angel Thaumiel.

Enemies: Malkuth is the main enemy, as she has abandoned the Demiurge. Kether has also had conflicts with Binah and Netzach, but now Malkuth, Tiphareth, and the fragments of Yesod are viewed as the greatest threat.

Allies: Geburah and Hod (before he was annihilated).

Servants: Chayot Ha Kodesh. Lictors. O Luong.

Chokmah

The Patriarch. Lord of Prayers. The Thousand-Headed God.

Previously, Chokmah was the Thousand-Headed God, he who used religion and divine delusions to enslave humanity. Chokmah's will is woven into all aspects of the Divine, such as prayers, cathedrals, minarets, Hindu Tirthas, and the magnificent temples of ancient cultures all over the world. For thousands of years, his devout servants crouch over religious writings and texts, creating stories and myths to lead us astray, while his lictors have preached hellfire to force us into pious submission.

The Archon's power reached its apex during the Middle Ages when the major religions ruled supreme and unthreatened, but after the Illusion began to wither, his divine lies lost their potency. Chokmah fell into conflict with Kether and was vanquished after drawn-out, bloody battles, many of which spilled over into our world. His Citadel has long since remained empty and his surviving servants have chosen their own paths or opted to submit to other Archons or Death Angels.

However, Chokmah's lies have recently been bolstered again. In an increasingly chaotic world, people are returning to their false gods, desperate to escape their fear of death and the unknown. They kneel and pray frenetically, detonate suicide bombs to honor the Higher Powers, and feed their children lies so they won't have to endure the Truth. Chokmah's servants have once again started the pilgrimage to his Citadel in Metropolis, and many say the Archon has either returned like a thief in the night or will rise again like the Messiah.

Principle: Submission.

Symbols: A black cross with an eye in the centre. A red crescent painted in blood on a white wall. A six-pointed star of patinated copper. A statuette of the dancing goddess, Kali, where followers place dead infants as sacrificial gifts.

Spheres of Influence: Exists virtually everywhere religion can be found. Chokmah's servants have a strong influence in the Middle East and many imams and rabbis are lictors. The Archon also has influence over the Catholic Church.

Shadow: The Death Angel Chagidiel.

Enemies: Kether.

Allies: None ever since the Archon was weakened.

Servants: A handful of loyal Ophanim. Lictors in religious positions that have continued to spread his word.

Binah

The Black Madonna. The Great Mother. Matriarch of Blood Lineage.

The Black Madonna's will runs through lineage, kinship, and the belief in the sanctity of blood relations. She is there as an ever-present shadow, the distant, primordial matriarch who holds vigil while mothers cuddle and coo at their newborns, the elders recount their ancestral history, and the band of brothers prepare to protect their family's honor. She is there as children are reared, as matrimonial rituals are carried out, as the dead are buried, and when someone who violates the family decree is punished. Where Kether represents the solitary ruler and power's unshakeable structure, Binah represents the rights of the many over the individual, and the family as the pillars of society.

Throughout history, Binah has exercised incredible power over humanity. We have always sought comfort in our families, and have consequently been subject to her will. During the Middle Ages, she and Kether fought for control over the noble houses. After the French Revolution, when Archons such as Chokmah and Kether lost control, Binah instead gained additional power. Socialism and nationalism brought people together and made them feel close to each other.

The fall of communism and fascism, escalating capitalism, and society's focus on the individual have been major problems for Binah. However, she still remains strong in areas where family unity, tribalism, and archaic ideologies persist. After Chokmah's disappearance, religion has become an increasingly important tool for her. Her lictors are found in political and religious positions. They emphasize the importance of family and champion a more conservative society.

Principle: Community.

Symbols: A blackened icon depicting a veiled woman. A silver chalice with dried blood lining the bottom. A mummified infant with its umbilical cord wrapped around its neck.

Spheres of Influence: Anywhere family ties are at their peak: the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, China, and the United States' southern states. For centuries, Russia had been her seat of honor and power, but she lost control during the 1980s and 1990s. With the country's recent conservative stance, her power is once again burgeoning there. Among the Roma, Binah is a goddess who is worshipped and revered.

Shadow: The Death Angel Sathariel.

Enemies: Dislikes Malkuth and Tiphareth, and has had conflicts with Netzach. Previously at war with Kether, challenging his control over the noble lineages.

Allies: Geburah.

Servants: Loyal Eralim. Lictors – many created from devoted humans. She also has several human servants bound to her, generation by generation, through blood rites, as well as families who give her their firstborn.

Chesed

The Helper. The Merciful One. The Martyr.

Chesed was one of the Demiurge's most important servants. He was the Archon tasked with luring humanity into a false sense of security, and making us thrive in our captivity. When Malkuth rebelled, the annihilation of Chesed was her first betrayal. This caused a crack through the Illusion, that cannot be repaired.

The Archon created routines, traditions, and a predictable existence, which soothed us into spiritual slumber. Once, he worked alongside Malkuth to make the physical world comprehensible and endurable. In ancient cultures, he was their connection with nature, a heathen god associated with mountains, lakes, and glades where people made sacrificial offerings to him. Chesed was said to provide good harvests and ease hunger, as well as heal illnesses and wounds. His servants provided more than they took, encouraging humans to feel compassion for one another.

Once upon a time, Chesed's stronghold was the West African realm, Nywere, but this was devastated and completely erased from history. Not much remains of Chesed's power. His Citadel in Metropolis is virtually razed to the ground, and his servants have vanished or have been wiped out.

Principle: Safety.

Symbols: A scraggy sacrificial tree. A cracked, marble statue depicting a satyr. An illuminated cloister document chronicling an unusually good harvest season.

Spheres of Influence: When Chesed was active, his servants were to be found amid generous noblemen, monasteries, wise women of the forest, doctors who did anything to find cures for diseases, aid organizations, benevolent charities, and warm-hearted people. Some say that Doctors Without Borders and the Red Cross are the last surviving gasps of Chesed's influence, but this is likely nothing more than myth.

Shadow: The Death Angel Gamichicoth.

Enemies: None, since Chesed was destroyed.

Allies: None, since Chesed was destroyed.

Servants: A few remaining Hashmallim. Beings connected with nature. Those who could cure diseases. Many of them were people who acquired powers in order to help others.

Geburah

The Judge. The Gatekeeper. Labyrinth of Laws.

Age-old legal texts bound in human skin. Server halls replete with information acquired through mass surveillance. Rows of archival cabinets beneath government buildings. Courts, law firms, intelligence services, politicians, bureaucrats, administrators, economists, and chiefs of police. All these are cogs in the Archon's enormous machinery. A maze of laws, regulations, and rules have been created to ensnare humanity, and at the centre of this bureaucratic nightmare sits Geburah, the eternal judge.

The Archon represents the conservative forces in society. He enforces laws and social norms, no matter how relevant or just they are, and punishes any who refuse to obey. People who go against his will are harassed, tortured, browbeaten, and humiliated until they break. Geburah acts through government agencies, and his lictors are found in leadership positions. He strives to become the new Demiurge, as he regards himself as the only Archon capable of creating a system efficient enough to keep humanity captive.

From a historical perspective, Geburah has been one of the weakest Archons. Admittedly, there have always been laws, but when aristocracy and the Church ruled according to their own predilections, his influence remained diminished. During the 19th century, when many other Archons were weakened, Geburah's power burgeoned through new nation-states, law books, and the rise of bureaucracy.

Principle: Law.

Symbols: A scale pan of patinated copper. A rust-coated executioner's sword. A law book written in an unknown tongue.

Spheres of Influence: Legal systems of every kind. Lictors are often judges, chiefs of police, or lawyers. They have a great presence anywhere bureaucracy is strong, and where laws and rules are used to control people.

Shadow: The Death Angel Golab.

Enemies: Tiphareth, Netzach, and especially Malkuth.

Allies: Has a lot in common with Kether.

Servants: Seraphim. Lictors in high positions in society.

Tiphareth

The Coordinator. The Beguiler. The Spider in the Web.

Tiphareth is all around us. She is the poster girl for lingerie, the catchy pop song, the trashy romance novel, and the latest computer game. Her influence makes us lust, yearn, dream, close our eyes, and forget the real world. She was the Archon who coordinated all others under the Demiurge's will, and she has become one of the most powerful due to her intrigues and adaptability.

Tiphareth exploits people's constant desire for beauty and validation. She paints magical daydreams, unattainable goals, and perfect ideals, only to make us struggle to reach them while forgetting all else. Previously, artists, poets, and writers were her core servants, but now her influence extends to advertising, blogs, celebrities, movies, TV shows, and the Internet's current talking heads. It is here she moulds the Illusion around us, feeding our cravings for new things and our desires to be slim, fit, and perfect, making us embrace her unreservedly.

Her power could not have grown so forcefully in such a short time without a devious secret. When the Archon Yesod was expelled from Metropolis, Tiphareth sheltered him, protected him, and hid him in Elysium. Together they started to shape the Illusion in a quest to become its rulers. Tiphareth is the more forceful of the two and, when the time is right, she plans to enslave Yesod.

Principle: Allure.

Symbols: A web page for beauty products and diet pills. A porcelain doll with a face full of spiderweb cracks. A portrait depicting a strict, black-haired woman painted in 1876. An antique statuette depicting a nymph.

Spheres of Influence: The media, advertising, and the Internet. Tiphareth is ubiquitous.

Shadow: The Death Angel Togarini.

Enemies: In open conflict with Geburah and Netzach and has strained relations with the other Archons.

Allies: Was previously supported by Malkuth, but Tiphareth's growing power over the Illusion ended this cooperation. Has a strong ally in Yesod, who is subordinated to her.

Servants: Lictors are often Internet stars, celebrities, or active in more traditional forms of media. Tiphareth has a powerful presence on the Internet. A few remaining Malakhim still serve her.

Netzach

The Victor. The Endurer. The Eternal. The Conqueror.

The burning desire for conquest and victory is the essence of Netzach's being. He was previously a general under the Demiurge, but now strives to replace his old master by increasing his own influence over the military, private armies, mercenaries, guerrilla warriors, and state-sponsored terrorists. He drives the majestic machinery of war and his servants are commanders, soldiers, lobbyists, and politicians. These minions set political agendas, such as crushing terrorism, occupying nations rich with oil, reconquering the Holy Land, and creating a new caliphate. Once the Archon's vision and goals are accepted by the public, troops are sent into the meat grinders of war.

Netzach is primarily active within various national armed forces, and maintains his strongest control over the United States and Israel, as well as several European countries. He has a growing influence over China and Russia, but is frequently opposed by Kether and Binah. He uses these power bases in his fight against the Death Angels and Archons who stand in his way. His primary opponent is Malkuth, yet his hatred towards Tiphareth and Yesod is almost as strong, as he considers them to have undermined his power.

Netzach has always been at his strongest during times of war and conflict. His servants marched with the armies of the Roman Empire, led the crusades in the fight for the Holy Land, and then marched with the Ottoman armies to reconquer it. After the Allies' victory in World War II, his power was at its peak and no other Archon could measure up to him. This is what he strives for. A new battle. A new conquest. A new powerful position, where he can rise to shoulder the mantle from the fallen Demiurge.

Principle: Victory.

Symbols: A rusty army knife with "Blood and Honor" etched into its blade and a swastika on the hilt. An American flag with 54 stars. A radioactive shard from the Hiroshima Bomb.

Spheres of Influence: Military, military academies, private armies, manufacturers of weapons, lobbyists, and mercenaries. Has his largest influence in North America.

Shadow: The Death Angel Harep-Serap.

Enemies: Malkuth, Tiphareth, Yesod, and the Death Angels are his primary adversaries. He has had many conflicts with Geburah and Kether, and he views any other Archon as enemies, if they stand in his way.

Allies: Forms alliances with those who are most suited in his quest to attain the next victory.

Servants: His lictors are generals, admirals and other high-ranking military advisors. He also commands Elohim maddened with bloodthirst and the hunger for slaughter.

Hod

Father of Honor. The Punisher. The Enlightened.

We humans are cumbersome in our shackles. Our bodies succumb to disease and old age. Our brains already buckle under madness and ignorance, but Hod gave us yet another burden: our honor. Honor was to be defended above all else. Honor gave us meaning, conviction, faith in ourselves, and rules of etiquette helping us relate to others. At its worst, it becomes a delusion, an all-encompassing directive to kill or die for.

Since the dawn of time, Hod's presence has been with us as a set of unwritten rules which stipulate when honor is damaged or questioned, and what sort of retribution is appropriate. Duels at dawn, large-scale wars, the murder of one's sons and daughters, century-long blood feuds, and ritual suicide are just a sliver of what one might do in response to a dishonorable act.

Hod came into conflict with the other Archons after the Demiurge's disappearance, largely due to being tied up in his own honor, and when he refused to step aside, he was overthrown in a glorious battle, which blind angels still sing of to this day in Metropolis. Hod's servants escaped from his now-desolate Citadel. Many ritually took their lives for failing him, while others have chosen to tirelessly carry out their sworn duties. Hod's suffocating influence has faded from large parts of the west, but in the Middle East and large parts of Africa and Asia, his will still corrupts the minds of mankind.

Principle: Honor.

Symbols: A gilded dueling épée from the early 18th century. A statuette depicting a veiled woman. An old mobile phone with a menacing text message.

Spheres of Influence: In areas and communities where the honor culture still is very strong, including the Middle East and countries in Asia, such as India, Pakistan and Japan. In large parts of North Africa, Hod's servants and ideology are also still strong, even though these traditions have started to be questioned.

Shadow: The Death Angel Samael.

Enemies: Malkuth, Tiphareth, Netzach and Binah.

Allies: Chokmah and Kether.

Servants: A few lictors and cults of stubborn, honor-bound, servants still strive to uphold the ancient traditions.

Yesod

The Founder. The Greedy. Marshal of Cogwheels.

The insatiable hunger for riches, trinkets, and property is the essence of Yesod's being. Like a flaming hunger, he consumes our innermost souls, making us ravenous to possess and devour more, more, more. Yesod's greed is bottomless.

His presence has always been with us, but religion, feudal systems, and the will of the other Archons have suppressed his influence. However, during the 18th century, when the old societal systems collapsed and the Industrial Revolution arose, his power increased tenfold. He was at one with the billowing smoke from the factories, the clattering spinning frames, and the hum of the cogs. It was an age of unshackled capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism, feeding desires on a global scale. It was also an age of hubris, and thus Yesod, blinded by self-worth, was slain in the war between the Archons – or so everyone believed.

Tiphareth made a pact with the fallen Archon and helped him escape into Elysium, hiding him from the others. Together, they have fought to take control over the Illusion and strengthen Tiphareth's power. Yesod was afflicted by a backlash in the early-21st century when the World Trade Center, which he had wound himself into, was destroyed in a terrorist attack. Yesod's objective is to become powerful enough to incarnate himself in his Citadel in Metropolis, but Tiphareth maintains a firm hold on him for now.

Principle: Avarice.

Symbols: A gold pocket watch with a cogwheel etched on the inside. A trade agreement written on human skin with daubed ink. A monocle which contorts the world when you look through it.

Spheres of Influence: Large parts of the Western world and nowadays also China.

Shadow: The Death Angel Gamaliel.

Enemies: Most other Archons, who now realize he was not slain after all.

Allies: Tiphareth.

Servants: As many of his lictors were wiped out, he has often chosen to act via human servants and his specific Incarnates. A few Cherubim have returned to serve him.

Malkuth

The Rebel. The Queen. Gaia's Harnesser. The Physical World.

Malkuth is the Archon who tamed Gaia and created our prison out of the primordial forces of nature. She channeled the other Archons' Principles and fused them into the machinery that keeps the Illusion together. She came to represent true order, recurring cycles, and the transience of the physical world. She was the Higher Power we built our lives around, the seasons, night and day, the tides, waves, the rains, and sun and moon. She became the physically tangible, all which we could feel, taste, see, and smell. And thus, in this perfect prison, we forgot our origins, which we lethargically took for granted.

When the Demiurge disappeared, Malkuth chose to revolt against the system she'd helped shape. Instead of working to contain humanity, she opted for trying to liberate us. Some argue she succumbed to the influence of a Death Angel or Astaroth, has fallen in love with the humans, realized the Illusion is doomed to collapse and seeks to curry favor with humanity, or is simply disgusted and wants to raze everything the Demiurge has created. Whatever her real reasons, she annihilated Chesed, started her revolt, and immediately incurred the enmity of the other Archons spearheaded by Kether, Geburah, and Netzach. She has been at war with them ever since.

Malkuth's servants are primarily magicians and scientists that lead humanity towards enlightenment and gain insight by exploring the secrets of the physical world–sometimes through unsanctioned experiments, torture, and psychological decay. Within her flock, as well, there are whistleblowers and Internet prophets who try to sabotage the other Archons' power and strive to attain enlightenment.

Principle: Conformity (Awakening).

Symbols: A cracked mirror, which reflects the true world. A soothsayer's bowl filled with breast milk and an infant's heart. Libra Metropolis by Leonardo Da Vinci. A chalice filled with earth and salt.

Spheres of Influence: Has her strongest influence among magicians and scientists. Europe is her primary stronghold, as well as regions of North America and Asia. During the Islamic Enlightment, she had followers throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

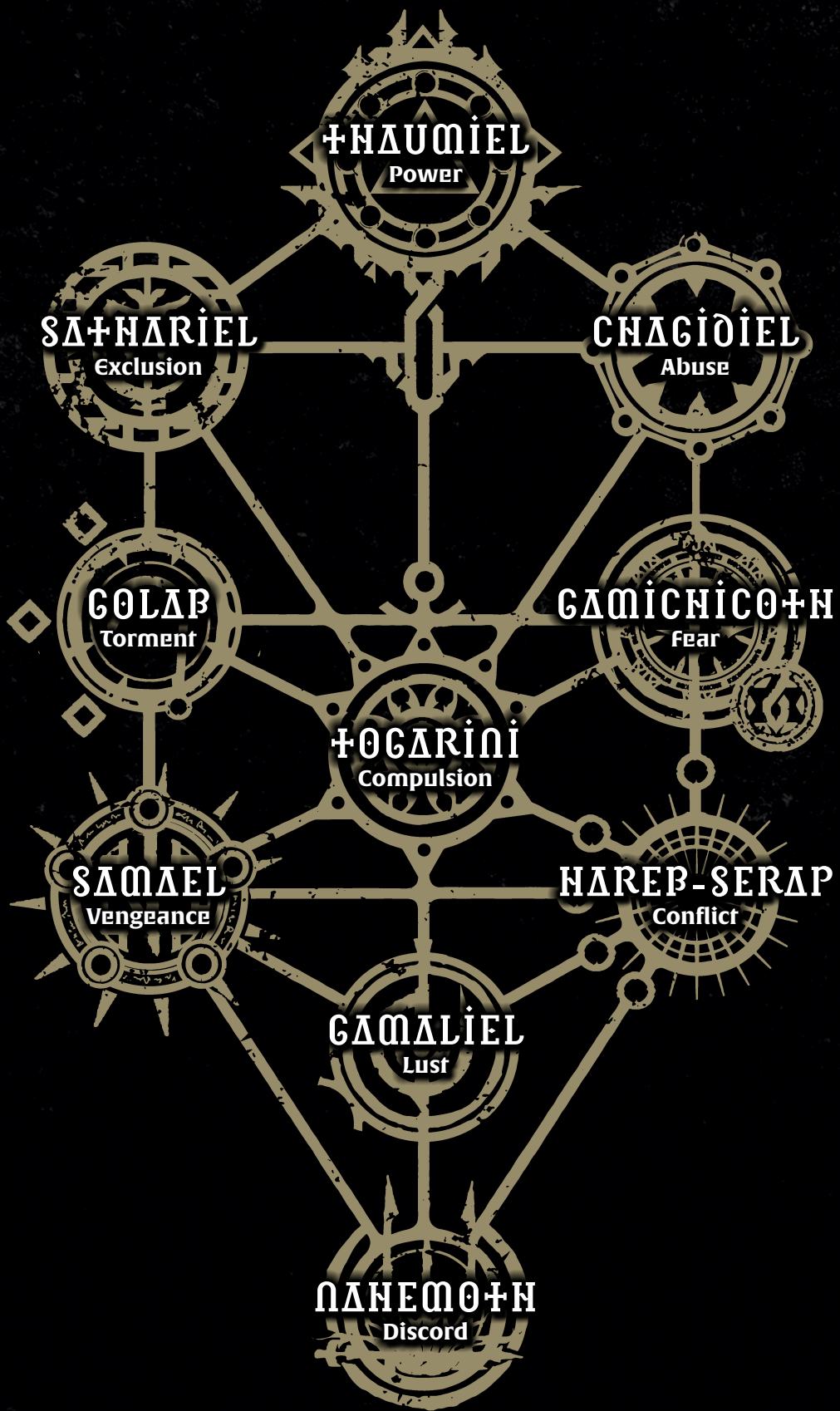
Shadow: The Death Angel Nahemoth.

Enemies: Primarily Kether, Geburah, and Netzach. Tiphareth, who was previously an ally.

Allies: None.

Servants: A handful remaining Ishim and Amentoraz. Otherwise, primarily humans whom she has granted powers and abilities, or whom she has transformed into lictors.

THE DEATH ANGELS



Thaumiel

The Two-Headed One. The Twin God. The Inequitable Ruler.

Thaumiel is the embodiment of the saying "might makes right." He is the essence of extreme individuality and the creative power in shaping and ennobling yourself. His commands are clear: if there is power to be gained, then you should grasp it. Trample those beneath you and ingratiate yourself with those above. Always be wary, since your power only has value if you can make it endure. Thaumiel is every bit a master and ruler as he is a rebel and radical reformer. Those who become subservient to Thaumiel's will are filled with extreme hunger for power and their moral barriers crumble one by one. Their will alone is powerful, while friendships, family, and other relationships are as a millstone around their neck.

The subjects of this Death Angel are all locked into intrigues and power struggles. His realm is a political meat grinder where the weak are torn asunder and the strong feast on the leftovers. Anyone distracted or led astray for even a moment is immediately ripped to shreds. The hierarchy remains in constant flux and the most ruthless and strong-armed individuals reside at its top tiers, having bathed in the blood of thousands on the way up.

Thaumiel has always been powerful, but his power increased greatly when the feudal realms, with their rigid hereditary rules, collapsed. His servants are cunning, greedy, and known for their pragmatism in pursuit of their goals.

Principle: Power.

Symbols: A black diamond. A snake biting its own tail. An iron fist. A vulture sitting atop a torn human body. A blood soaked swastika.

Spheres of Influence: Thaumiel's Principle is strongest where there are hierarchies and power structures with clear rifts. Governments undergoing political upheaval, the entertainment business, the world of sports, organized crime, neo-nazi organizations, Wall Street and other stock exchanges, major corporations, and so on down to street gangs and school classes.

Shadow: The Archon Kether.

Enemies: Currently in conflict with Hareb-Serap and Golab. Fears Netzach's focused will.

Allies: Sometimes cooperates with Chagidiel, but has no hesitation about forming pacts and alliances with any power whatsoever, as long as there is a clear profit in it.

Servants: Nepharites. Razides. The Army of the Tormented.

Chagidiel

The Blood-Stained Patriarch. The Empty Word. The Corruptor.

Chagidiel's will is directed against the young and innocent, moulding them through constant abuse of body, mind, and soul. The children are torn apart inside and are repeatedly traumatized, until the litany of assault and fear becomes their life. The trauma itself becomes the Principle governing their world, a dark deity in their consciousness with whom they constantly grapple. It often expresses itself as fear, self-loathing, shame, nightmares, and illness. A few become perpetrators themselves and, like apostles and prophets, continue to spread Chagidiel's will.

The Death Angel's influence reaches into every corner of society. He awakens forbidden thoughts and desires in adults, and then encourages them to commit atrocities against their own and others' children. His presence is corruptive and is difficult to remove. This essence is injected into films of vicious assaults, horrific photos of victims, books devoted to 'childhood discipline,' and webpages dedicating to tormenting children. While his influence is most obvious in child pornography, the rise of parents humiliating their children on the Internet has given Chagidiel another foothold in Elysium. The more you study his works, the more you are consumed by them, and are either moulded into a perpetrator or a potential victim.

Chagidiel's presence has always been strong. These days his servants are considerably more organized in extensive networks, expanding his influence. Many of those who serve him do so for the sake of their own depraved empowerment, or are enslaved souls, incestuous abominations, and brainwashed victims who spread their master's will further.

Principle: Abuse.

Symbols: Ragged doll with burnt hair. A rosebud beginning to rot. Phallic symbol in sharp ceramics. A toy pierced by rusty nails and razor blades.

Spheres of Influence: The prime arena of the Death Angel is nuclear families, but it also is active within pedophile networks, orphanages, youth centers, trafficking rings, illegal porn sites, and various cults and religious organizations all over the world.

Shadow: The Archon Chokmah.

Enemies: Hates Astaroth.

Allies: Thaumiel and Gamaliel.

Servants: Nepharites. Abominations. Nightmare creatures. Chagidiel's children. The Apostles of Atrocities.

Sathariel

The Devouring Mother. The Keeper of Secrets. The Princess of Angst. The Nine Moons. The Ulterior. The Goddess of Destiny.

Binah's shadow, Sathariel has chosen to seek out the outcasts, the suicidal, and the self-destructive. She provides nourishment for these impulses, as a mother breastfeeding her children. She is connected to the Underworld, the Labyrinth, and the Abyss. This black void is where she allows her adherents to experience total darkness. Here, they can achieve insights into mysteries only discovered by shutting out the world. She is often seen as the Goddess of Destiny, who holds power over Time and Space.

Suicide pacts, youth gangs, and death cults worshipping the nothingness are occasionally formed to honor her, but most often she seeks out the loners and outcasts. She embraces the individuals who cry out in their melancholy and pain, offering them the bliss of nothingness. These could be just about anyone: the self-harming teenager, the weary war veteran, the webcam porn star with her phony smile, the housewife trapped in a loveless marriage, the bullied boy who everyone avoids, and the homeless heroin addict trying to forget everything. We are all wounded, we all have cracks in our soul, and it is there that Sathariel can plant her dark seeds.

Her servants bestow power upon these outcasts, allowing them to take vengeance on the world. As they express their pain outwardly, however, they are continually devoured by darkness. Sathariel's servants give weapons to young white men so they can riddle their classmates with bullets, make artists create works to lure others into insanity, and drive the anxiety-ridden into mutilating themselves and extinguishing their identity completely.

Principle: Exclusion.

Symbols: A razor blade with a rune etched into it. A jar of antidepressants filled with beetles. A bloody handprint on a mirror. A skipping rope tied as a noose. A jigsaw puzzle with a labyrinth motif.

Spheres of Influence: Seeks out those who feel rejected and those who feel their lives are devoid of meaning. These can be found everywhere.

Shadow: The Archon Binah.

Enemies: She is too disorganized to have enemies.

Allies: She is too disorganized to have allies.

Servants: Nepharites. Razides. Worshipers that submit to her in their loneliness.

Gamichicoth

Gha'agsheblah. The False Helper. The Gorger. The Agitator.

Gamichicoth spreads alarm, fear, and mistrust in people's hearts. The thoughts he stirs within us impede our development, as they make us fear anything new and foreign to us. His whispers are one with the racist chants, amid the conspiracy theorists screaming about 'white genocide' on the Internet, and in the endless news stories of disease, war, outbreaks of violence, and carcinogenic food. The Death Angel offers simple answers to difficult questions and paints an image of the world where your cozy everyday existence is under constant attack by immigrants, politicians, and financial collapse.

Gamichicoth has the most influence within conservative groups, which fear the ideals they uphold are threatened. He does not have a strong grip on those who are most vulnerable: these people have nothing to lose. Magicians and mystics will occasionally study the Death Angel's Principle in order to gain knowledge in higher mysticism, influence people's collective fears, and transform them into primitive subjects.

Gamichicoth's power has increased in the age of information. He worms into people's hearts via news, phone calls, and social media. In the past, his influence was spread through gossip, prejudice, and divine warnings. His servants commit despicable crimes of violence, incite vile rumors, denigrate those who stand out, spread propaganda, and warn people of the threats that lurk just out of sight. His servants are often shapeshifters, gossipmongers, and demons feeding on horror, dread, and hatred.

Principle: Fear.

Symbols: A rotting sheep's head. An infant wrapped in a confederate flag. An origami figure folded from a tabloid placard. A thumbed copy of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

Spheres of Influence: Strongest within the middle class and in areas with conservative values. Many racist organizations and parties have fallen under the influence of this Death Angel. The Ku Klux Klan, fanatic pro-lifers, concerned parents' groups, paramilitary forces committing genocide, neo-fascists of all types, and patriarchal structures who fear liberal values will corrupt young people all fall under this Death Angel's influence.

Shadow: The Archon Chesed.

Enemies: Malkuth tries to fight the proliferation of his power.

Allies: None, but obeys Astaroth.

Servants: Nepharites. Razides. Fear spirits. Shapeshifters.

Golab

The Torturer. Golachab. Screams of the Abyss. The Burning One.

Golab is the herald of suffering, the manifestation of unbridled sadism. This Death Angel seeks out anyone entertaining ideas of injuring and killing others, and like fanning a dying flame, he propels them from thoughts into action. Lost in euphoria, they are driven to punish, torture, and mutilate for the sheer pleasure of it. The pain in their victim's eyes as their skin peels off, as the electricity pulsates through their spine, or their teeth are ground down becomes a thrill, the ultimate drug.

His servants are experts at torture, from inflicting the most drawn-out degradation leaving no bruises, to slow vivisection and dismemberment while keeping the victim horribly alive. Many choose to honor Golab via sadomasochistic rituals, extreme body modification, and mutilations. The common denominator for his servants is the almost sexual enjoyment they experience from causing suffering. In many ways this is their sole pleasure in life.

The Death Angel's Principle permeates shaky films on the Internet showing executions, assault, and torture. He is close to those who suffer from self-injurious behavior, practitioners of extreme sadomasochism, or those who merely fantasize about torturing and killing. Thoughts alone might be sufficient in order for his servants to be drawn to the person, if she wants it hard enough.

Principle: Torment.

Symbols: Coils of rusty, blood-drenched barbed wire. A severed penis nailed to a plank. A black box containing pulled-out fingernails. A Judas cradle.

Spheres of Influence: Golab's presence is strong wherever sadistic assaults are committed against humans. He is found in organized crime, the military, terrorist groups, prisons, and psychiatric hospitals.

Shadow: The Archon Geburah.

Enemies: Thaumiel, Hareb-Serap.

Allies: Astaroth.

Servants: Nepharites, Razids, Excrucies, The voice of pain.

Togarini

The Laughing One. The Whirl of Black. Vril. Thagirion. The Black Sun. Protector of the Death Magicians. The Noble Dead.

Togarini stirs humanity's distorted and macabre art. He inspires melodies capable of tearing down the Illusion, creates images to awaken humans' divinity, and constructs puzzle boxes leading down into Inferno. He seeks out artists living close to madness and inspires their aberrant creations, usually driving them deeper into insanity. He enjoys humanity's creativity in its most twisted form, and how it challenges and corrupts what is normally considered beautiful. He is there when an artist's model disfigures her face with a razor, when photography captures atrocities, when canvasses are painted with blood and bodily fluids, and when the artist takes his own life to immortalize his art.

Togarini pays little attention to the intrigues between the Death Angels and the Archons. Instead, he enjoys creating art works of flesh and suffering. He enslaves the living and the dead, pulls away the Illusion's veil, and laughs madly when we humans perish in pure terror. Togarini is closely connected to death and the undead. He has the ability to bind souls to rotting bodies and only liberates them from this torment after they have finished serving him.

Togarini is among the weaker of the Death Angels. He focuses on a small number of devoted servants, but has recently gained increased influence, as more people explore his macabre and distorted artistry. Most of his followers are artists, musicians, and dilettantes. However, magicians also offer sacrifices to Togarini to ask his aid in piercing the Illusion. The Death Angel is like a lighthouse, whose beam reaches depths within people, inspiring and enabling them to live completely in the moment – but only if they submit to him first.

Principle: Compulsion.

Symbols: An occult symbol created with the intestines of dismembered infants. A beautiful portrait painted with blood and excrement. An apple pierced by rusty nails. A black sun tattooed on the back of a prophet.

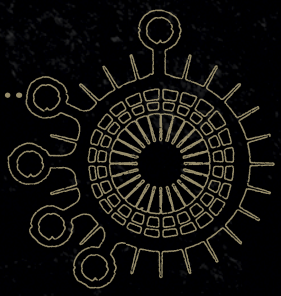
Spheres of Influence: Artists, magicians, body modifiers, and the senses and imagination enchanted by the dark and grotesque.

Shadow: The Archon Tiphareth.

Enemies: Tiphareth.

Allies: Walks his own path in his creative work.

Servants: Creative nepharites, mad artists, and undead horrors.



Hareb-Serap

The Raven of the Battlefield. The Father of Carnage. The Nightmare Sea. The Raven of Dispersion. A'arab Zaraq.

Hareb-Serap is the raven of the battlefield. His presence is felt in war's numerous atrocities. Guerilla warfare, drone bombings, genocide and massacres, rocket attacks against civilian population, ethnic cleansings, revenge killings, open warfare amid craters and barbed wire, child soldiers with heavy automatic weapons, mass executions, gang warfare that spirals out of control, tear gas and rubber bullets, hatred, screams, fear and violence, all are under his influence. The Death Angel is drawn to places of conflict, violence, and anger, forever fueling these tendencies. Those who fall under his influence are intoxicated by walking the thin line between life and death. In contrast to Netzach who seeks conquest and victory, Hareb-Serap is empowered by the conflict itself.

Wherever his servants travel, frustration, anger, and friction soon flare up. They find reasons to start arguments and conflicts. Even the most trivial differences of opinion or unresolved disputes are transformed into blood feuds and violence. In this chaos where blood flows, cars are set ablaze, atrocities are committed, and hatred triumphs, the Illusion is torn apart and Inferno sweeps onto the battlefield like a river. Like a carrion crow, Hareb-Serap descends upon the conflict, feasting on the flesh of the vanquished and driving the victors insane.

Hareb-Serap has always existed and drawn nourishment from our fear, mistrust, lust for vengeance, and hatred. Currently, his major strongholds are the Middle East, Africa, and parts of Asia. Wherever it is, his influence compels humans into eternal spirals of violence.

Principle: Conflict.

Symbols: A rotting black raven nailed to a cross. A blackened AK-47 decorated with stickers from Happy Meals. A Molotov cocktail waiting to be set ablaze. A cracked megaphone. A pamphlet advocating a caliphate's call to jihad.

Spheres of Influence: War zones, gang territory, the Middle East, Africa, and parts of Asia. Many of the servants are soldiers or gang members, but Hareb-Serap's Principle can be stirred in all of us.

Shadow: The Archon Netzach.

Enemies: Has repeatedly run into conflict with Golab. Also seeks to win more power and outmaneuver Thaumiel.

Allies: None.

Servants: Razides. Nepharites. Oaxici.

Samael

The Avenger. Father of the Blood Angels. The Caliph of a Thousand Tears. The Wrath of Madness. God's Poison.

Samael sweeps the scythe of vengeance across everything standing in his way. There are no injustices so petty, or affronts so insignificant, as to be tolerated. His essence seeks out those who nurse rage at being shunned or offended, and encourages them to let loose. Be it a murder of passion, where the body is dismembered in a furious rage, or an elaborate scheme where a person's life is destroyed by pictures and films posted on the Internet, vengeance has many faces.

Most avoid incurring the enmity of Samael and his servants, as they know such actions will be accounted for, and vengeance will always follow. The Death Angel has always wielded great power over individuals and smaller groups, as their sense of powerlessness and rage leaves them susceptible to his will. Aside from his lust for vengeance Samael is known for his dark intellect, which is often mistaken for delusions of grandeur. However, in the grip of the Death Angel, madness becomes wisdom and death turns into purpose.

Samael has always been strong, but the strict laws of the Modern Age that forbid duels and blood feuds have weakened him. Many of his servants are masters of intricate plans, where revenge may be planned centuries in advance, entire generations being punished for something their ancestors have done. Some souls are hunted and tormented as soon as they are reborn, suffering an eternal punishment for an affront long forgotten.

Principle: Vengeance.

Symbols: A decapitated head on a stake. A hammer lying in a pool of blood and broken teeth. The skin of a human being stretched out on a wall. A chalice full of poison.

Spheres of Influence: Individuals with a strong lust for vengeance, but also in organizations with strong codes of honor and a willingness to use violence to get what they want, such as the mafia, gangs, terrorist organizations, and certain cults. Magicians occasionally seek insight into Samael's dark brilliance.

Shadow: The Archon Hod.

Enemies: Most avoid making themselves enemies of Samael.

Allies: Obeys Astaroth, as long as it is convenient.

Servants: Nepharites. Razides. Avenging angels of the BeneiHa'Elohim.

Gamaliel

Perverted Sexuality. Father of Abominations. The Obscene One. The Dark Side of the Moon.

Spellbound ecstasy, desire, the lust for flesh, and the constant allure of bodies and sex, Gamaliel's spirit is instilled in everything that nourishes our carnal desires. His essence twists and corrupts it towards the dark and destructive places where passion, suffering, and death rendezvous. His influence is woven into our most perverse fantasies and cravings: the sleaziest porn sites, filthy strip clubs, dead-eyed sex workers, lewd web shows, and even gang rapes and human trafficking. Gamaliel is closely interwoven with Limbo, where our hidden desires are set free in our dreams. His Principle is also one of the paths leading to humanity's divinity, but the Death Angel's will usually ensnares those who venture down this road to enlightenment.

The Death Angel is ubiquitous in our society, found in what we suppress, what we do not want to admit to dreaming about, and what we shamefully clear our browser histories to forget. He makes our darkest thoughts surface, and when we succumb to them, we nourish Gamaliel's power. His presence is prevalent throughout the Internet, where secret home pages, hidden servers, and unregistered sites operate virtually unrestrained. There are even gateways to his Citadel in Inferno in squalid brothels, smoke-filled strip clubs, and moisture-damaged basements where snuff films are shot.

Gamaliel has always been amongst humanity, from the fervent rituals of prehistoric witch cults to the hidden passions and atrocities committed in the name of God. However, technology has unshackled our perversions and brought them into the open, and his influence is ever increasing. His servants are beings who tempt us with their sexuality, satisfying our most perverse appetites and forcing people to abandon their inhibitions. His nepharites remain masters of torture, yet provide the most exquisitely dark pleasure, even while the victim is skinned alive.

Principle: Desire.

Symbols: A fractured coffee cup, filled with menstrual blood. An illustrated erotic novel where the orgy's participants are dismembered and devoured. A used condom hiding a rusty razor blade.

Spheres of Influence: The pornography business, webcam shows, brothels, rapists, and, deep down, virtually everyone to some degree.

Shadow: The Archon Yesod.

Enemies: None. Mostly acts on his own.

Allies: None.

Servants: Nepharites. Creatures of Passion. Twisted offspring. Perverted razides.

Nahemoth

The Tarnished World. The Nocturnal Woman. The Shadow of Earth. Lilith.

If Malkuth is the jigsaw pieces of the physical world, Nahemoth is the spaces between them. If Malkuth is cycles, order, and stability, Nahemoth is chaos, storms, and revolutions. She is the unbridled parts of Gaia, and all that we fear and cannot comprehend. Nahemoth is strongest deep within the wilderness, where the forces of nature are raw and irrepressible. Nighttime is her domain and her influence stretches far into the world of dreams. Her consciousness remains close to our collective unconsciousness, and inspires our most primal fears and needs.

The Death Angel's influence is strongest where people dread nature and the world around them. The fear of the night, storms, tsunamis, hurricanes, and the sea is her doing. New types of horrors have been created by humanity, such as places of extreme pollution, radioactivity, and environmental degradation. Here you can find Nahemoth's distorted essence, springing to life in poisonous oil spills, radiating from Chernobyl's toxic ruins, and manifesting in deformed abominations birthed by mothers ritually drowned in toxic chemicals. She dwells in drowned bodies surrendered by the sea, and in demons haunting blizzards and thunderstorms. Nahemoth is second only to Malkuth, in who best understands the workings of humanity's prison and has keen insight into Elysium.

Nahemoth was considerably more powerful in times when humanity feared the night and had no idea what was out there. In ages past, she was viewed as a dark goddess with many names and semblances, as seductive as she was tyrannical, beautiful and terrible. With Elysium's slow disintegration, where nature swells and rots like a bloated corpse, her influence continually grows, allowing her to open new gateways for the other Death Angels and Astaroth's will.

Principle: Discord.

Symbols: Larch trees cleaved by lightning. A greasy, stinking wax candle burning with a sooty flame. A plastic curtain smeared with a layer of axle grease.

Spheres of Influence: The depth of the wilderness. Areas prone to earthquakes, tsunamis, wildfires, and landslides, as well as regions where people fear and venerate nature. Also places with chemical spills, radioactive zones, sewers, strip mines, industrial zones, and rubbish dumps.

Shadow: The Archon Malkuth.

Enemies: Ignored mostly, as she behaves in an alien manner, without any visible agenda.

Allies: Ignored mostly, as she behaves in an alien manner, without any visible agenda.

Servants: Haunting nepharites. Deformed razides. Grotesque abominations, which are connected to the regions where they have been created.

CHAPTER 12
THE ILLUSION

THE ILLUSION PERMEATES EVERYTHING. IT IS THE AIR WE BREATHE, THE HOUSES WE live in, the food we eat, the music we listen to, the literature we read, and the movies we watch. It is tightly interwoven with our DNA and our thought patterns. It shackles our bodies and souls. Like a rag soaked with ether over our collective nose and mouth, the Illusion drags us down into the deepest sleep, where we lose the grip on our divinity. It fetters us to the passage of time, reweaving the world into an enormous labyrinth from which we cannot escape. This does not mean that everything we perceive is false. The phone you are holding is a physical object. The food you eat is real. If you step across the threshold to Metropolis, the gun you brought remains there in your hand. If we leave Elysium, we might experience the other worlds and see its inhabitants for what they really are, but this does not mean we also regain our divinity. The Illusion's shackles are intimately tied to our souls and desires.

THE VEIL THAT BLINDS US

The Illusion is at one with the Principles of the Archons and the Death Angels. They permeate our consciousnesses, our bodies, and our broken souls. The Principles' discordant echoes run through the entire Universe, originating from the hearts of the Citadels in Metropolis and Inferno. Their barely noticeable vibrations touch everything. They drift through our thoughts and dreams, and whirl in sync with our spiraling DNA strands. The Principles become the veil

placed over our eyes, blinding us. They are the invisible chains governing our steps in the Illusion's great captive dance.

We are touched by all Principles, but each holds different powers over us. While one person is driven by Samael's lust for vengeance, another is guided by Yesod's greed, and a third is equally as bound by Kether as by Tiphareth. We are all their captives.

Our Captivity

Malkuth was the Archon who forged our shackles. She spun Gaia's weave of life and death and stitched it together with our souls. Our bodies became prisons of flesh. We grew weak, pathetic, and helpless. Malkuth lobotomized our senses and every blow from her hammer drove us further down into our prison, so we actually started to believe all the lies we were told. Thus, we became susceptible to the influence of the Principles.

A World of a Thousand Lies

The Illusion is our entire reality, ranging from the terrifyingly grandiose to the mind-numbingly ordinary. There is nothing the Principles are not concerned with. We are caught in a world of fast food, lattes, sex, and mortgages. We are distracted by imaginary enemies, violence on TV, acts of terrorism, invasions, carcinogens in our food, and the menace of genetically-modified crops. All the while, we drown in fashion, advertising, innumerable ideologies, and unattainable aesthetic ideals. We buy and sell each other every day. Digital currencies are paid for humiliating occupations, sugar daddies fleeced, and black market work accepted. We all lie on the meat counter, offered up to consumers. We are all bought and paid for. We are all guilty.

Everywhere there are false truths and alternative facts. If you're unhappy with one version of the truth, there is always a new angle, truth, or conspiracy theory a single click away. Choose the worldview you want and you will be served whatever supports your belief.

Our jailers hope these oceans of information will drown us and distract us from the Truth. They create this incessant static to be so pervasive that we do not stop to look around and think about our existence. The world's endless complexity is paralysing.

Worldly Power

Power in our world is in the grip of our jailers. They have direct or indirect control of governments, giant corporations, major religions, media conglomerates, and the healthcare-industrial complex. They are either controlled directly by lictors or razides, or by unaware human dupes. Some believe they are doing good or actually making a difference. Nothing could be further from the truth. The whole system is designed to make us believe that we have a choice. We may upset the prevailing order through democratic elections or military coups, but regardless of who one votes for, what political ideology one embraces, in the end we serve the same masters, the same puppeteers hiding behind various semblances and facades.

Division

The Demiurge robbed us of our divine language and gave us various tongues. He divided us into men and women, although we have the power to be whatever gender we desire, be that a binary, in-between, or no gender at all. The Demiurge scattered us into peoples of differing skin colour, body types, and appearances. The generations were separated. Now, the elderly regard the young with fear and an uncomprehending gaze. Some of us have been given the power to govern and rule over others, creating a hierarchy rife with constant power struggles. We are no longer all gods. We are confused mortals, filled with hate and fear towards others whose languages, customs, appearances, preferences and lifestyles we do not understand.

Unity

Our families, our friends, our place in society, and our roles in the community are like cement around our feet, dragging us down to the ocean floor. We're instilled with the false conception of being responsible for each other, that we belong together in the prison created for us. Those who realise this is untrue break free. Those who wish to awake cut their ties with a vengeance, whether that is by no longer returning phone calls or actively destroying the ones they love. This deed in itself encourages the Illusion to crumble.

We are Our Own Jailers

The lie of our captivity is so strong and so fundamental that we no longer fight against it, instead buckling under its influence. We willingly allow ourselves to be enslaved and stare with horror at all those who try to break loose. We fear those who disturb the calmness. Our false lives are houses of cards built upon a foundation of deceit, so unstable that they could fall to pieces at any time. We hungrily fall upon those who question the deception, those who endure, and those who want to create another reality, cheered on by our jailers. We call them crazy, conspiracy theorists, and repudiate or incarcerate them. If we experience things that shatter the lie, we deny them at every turn. We clench our teeth, avert our eyes, and remain silent, fearful we might be lynched in the same way we have lynched everyone else. We are all victims of this pandemic gaslighting, psychologically abused and mutilated, led to doubt anything that speaks against the Illusion.

Our Blind Battles

With our tongues twisted in knots, fists clenched at our sides, our frustration vibrates just beneath the surface. It triggers our rage into street riots or online rants. We hoist one political system above all others. We fight to prohibit flag burnings, to keep prophets from being depicted, to mandate the eating of meat as unethical, or speak against or for the burgeoning tide of feminism. These conflicts in themselves feed our need for self-aggrandisement, and perpetuate our quest for gaining status within one's own group. Yet, all around us the true battle rages, and we refuse to see it. Our jailers divert our gazes from the Truth, so we instead attack each other and beat ourselves bloody time after time.

They Fear Our Awakening

Our jailers fear us. They dread what will happen if we break free of our shackles. When the Illusion crumbles, we see, just for a moment, what is around us. For every new life, for every new reincarnation, we become that much more difficult to manage and manipulate. To our jailers, this is an eternal crisis of keeping us distracted, weaving new and different lies for us. They must keep the Illusion's machinery alive, even with thousands upon thousands of different parts, all of which are slowly breaking down. The shadows of our former tyranny continually haunt their worlds. Horrors we once inflicted still spread death and terror, and all the suffering we created lingers on as frail echoes. There are anxious whispers of the fantastic terrors we will bring after tearing the veil from our eyes. In this, the Archons and the Death Angels are united. Neither side wishes to risk our awakening. For them, and for all of Creation, it would be disastrous.

Our Lost Divinity

Our Fake Lives

Birth. Diapers. Milk. Baby food. Potty. Toys. TV. Daycare centre. School. Teen life. Dating. Internet. Revolt. Music. Sex. Study. Work. Drunkenness. Unemployment. Marriage. Condominium. Stepparents. Promotion. Child. Insomnia. Quarrel. Bills. Infidelity. Divorce. Alimony. Disease. Pension. TV. Stroke. Retirement. Hospice. Diapers. IV Drip. Oxygen. Death. Repeat.

We were gods, once. Now we live down in the dirt, ensconced within a labyrinth of noise and distraction. We have lost what we once were. It feels alien and unreal to us to even think of bending Time and Space or defeating Death, when it is actually more unnatural for us to go shopping at the supermarket, mindlessly pay bills, and be a minimum-wage retail slave.

Even though we have created fantastical things and started rebuilding our power, our new wonders still blind us to our true divinity. Unsatisfied, we hunger for attention. We dull our pain with liquor, pills, and the Internet. Some of us try to find ways to escape or revolt, but every apparent exit is a well-trodden path, which only leads back to the labyrinth of captivity.

The Slumbering Insight

Deep down we know something is wrong. We try desperately to fill the emptiness inside of us. Some of us stop, look up towards the stars obscured by the smog, and ask ourselves: *So this is life?* Somewhere within us we know there is something more.

Even if we try to keep it at arm's length, it always catch up with us – the nagging insight, the gnawing vulnerability, and the aching loneliness. The Demiurge's prison is indeed malicious. Mutilating us, disorienting us, and making us suffer, only to then offer us comforting security, order, and lie upon lie – a false meaning for our entire existence. Like heroin addicts, we gladly offer up our veins simply to avoid feeling this ennui.

Beyond the skyscrapers and industries, past the ship wharves and small communities, lies our primordial home: Metropolis. It is a relic from the era when we were divine, when our powers were brimming and majestic, and we ruled as beautiful tyrants without qualms: worshipped, loved, but also feared. Sometimes when we gaze towards the heavens, study the shadows, or witness the true nature of darkness, we sense our divinity residing there, cut off from us by a thin membrane. We place the palm of our hand against this paper wall, close our eyes, and lean our foreheads upon it. And indeed, we can almost feel how our divinity, our mutilated other self, is waiting there on the other side. Our hands touch and we yearn. We yearn to be whole again. To regain our lost godhood.

The Illusion Crumbles

Even though it is very unusual, the Illusion still crumbles on occasion. Perhaps it is after several bottles of red wine when our creativity blossoms. Or we're all alone in our childhood room, a razor blade brushing across our arm to escape the pain. It may come as we lose ourselves in some debauched sex act. When the revolver's last chamber empties, and our beloved lies dead in front of us. As we carry out the primitive rite discovered on a web page, the computer simulation revealing the path to the true world existing beyond this one. Even the singular word whispered by a stranger on the underground train might unlock something within us.

Our false reality is sometimes distorted, as we instinctively sense what exists behind the veil. Maybe we unconsciously recognize a being for what it really is, such as a lictor. Rather than witnessing its genuine, grotesque semblance, a nuance of its nature is laid bare to us. Its eyes have no lids or pupils, its shadow is impossibly large, or its tongue appears oversized and bloated.

We can hear the distant screams from Inferno echoing in the ductwork; we can glimpse the majestic silhouettes of Metropolis beyond the skyscrapers of our own cities. Time can be distorted, even stop, and we are transported through Space, arriving in a completely different location.

On extreme occasions, we are thrust into the labyrinths of Inferno or drawn into Gaia's wilderness. When rips in the Illusion appear, they usually reveal Metropolis, the city our souls struggle to remember. But this depends on where in our reality the rip occurs. If we are in underground culverts and subway systems, we may be dragged down into the Underworld. In places of great suffering and violence, we can be drawn into Inferno. In the wilderness, we can find ourselves in Gaia.

The Illusion's machinery has a singular task: to hold us captive. Even if you should end up in another reality, you will be eventually drawn back to Elysium. While wandering in Metropolis' desolate landscape, you might catch the scent of home cooking and hear familiar sounds of traffic in the distance. Should you follow the smells and sounds, you can suddenly find yourself back in Elysium again by simply turning the street corner. The closer you are to your sleeping state, the easier it is to be pulled back in this way. However, the more awakened you are, the more difficulty the Illusion has reestablishing its grip on you.

Exposed Places

In some locations, the Illusion is weaker. These are places that challenge our normal thought patterns or where the Illusion has been worn down by the traumatic events which have occurred there. Usually, the veil requires an inciting event before it can be pulled aside, such as a terrifying but mundane experience (torture, abuse, and murder are very common triggers), supernatural event, magical rite, or an extreme act of madness, passion, or death. Some locations are more prone to this collapse than others. These include:

Slums: In the slum areas of the big cities, amid burnt-out industrial buildings, desolate factories, abandoned warehouses, or rundown tenements, you can sense the presence of a darker and more frightening city. If you wander amid the buildings and dark alleys here, you may stray off into Metropolis.

Asylums: The collective madness from thousands of unstable individuals eat away at the Illusion's barriers. Horrific experiences and acts of violence can thrust open the gateways to Inferno or reveal the nightmarish domains of Limbo. Abominations created out of madness can exist here, lurking right behind the Illusion's veil, and when it crumbles, they find their way inside.

Prisons and death camps: Places of isolation, hopelessness, and suffering can open onto Inferno's endless torture chambers. Often the prevailing sense of terror, powerlessness, and anger lingers like a thick coating of slime in prison cells, shower rooms, grids, and crematories. Prisoners, guards, or victims return as phantoms, nepharites, or purgatides.

The wilderness: There are places in the wilderness beyond our cities, and rural areas even the local people shun. There is something curious about these wild places, an unnerving change in the air, and a constant feeling of being watched. Rumors speak of those who have roamed there, only to disappear without a trace. These feral areas lie close to Gaia, the Living Earth.

Catastrophe areas: Natural catastrophes and acts of mass violence can also make reality crumble. A tsunami swamping a village beneath its waves might drag the entire population into Metropolis. The destruction caused by a suicide bomber might briefly open the gateways to Inferno.

The Underworld: Our cities are filled with complex underground systems, including tunnels, underground railway systems, sewers, culverts, and air raid shelters. If you explore these subterranean realms, constantly making your way downwards, you can enter the Underworld which lies just beyond the Illusion. In order to do this, one must wander without a map, without direction, and completely aimlessly. If you follow a map of the underground systems, you are usually kept in the false world.

The Dark Net: The Internet is a doorway into our collective unconscious. If we search deeply enough, we find bizarre, nonsensical code and vast, alien entities, all of which seem to stare back from the other side of the screen. We are drawn into a labyrinth of riddles, fake truths, and shocking images, and if we go astray here we can bend Time and Space, finding ourselves transported to a completely different place, or even swept into the dream worlds of Limbo.

Crime scenes: The Illusion begins crumbling in locations of brutal crimes, such as ritual murders, extreme assaults, prolonged torture, or other acts of violence and terror. In these places, one can open the floodgates by inflicting massive suffering or recreating the previous crimes to such an extent Time and Space merge, allowing you to watch the horrors that transpired there. Here, any sort of gateways may be flung open, to Inferno, Metropolis, the Underworld, or to any number of individual purgatories.

War zones: War, suffering, and mass executions can push reality towards Inferno. It is not unusual for those who have died in these locations to live on as doomed legionnaires, purgatides, or phantoms.

Cult shrines: In the past, cultists' shrines functioned as nodes for breaking through the Illusion. Through their devotion and sacrifices, the followers' will opened up gateways towards Inferno, Metropolis, or other worlds long destroyed, forgotten, or distant from Elysium. Many times, the entity they prayed to incarnated itself, and for such supernatural beings the barrier is always weakest in these places of worship.

Celebration of the Principle: If you are present at a celebration of one or more of the Principles, the gateway towards its Citadel opens with relative ease. At a fashion show, where Beauty is the focus, patrons become hypnotised by the superficial, collectively enslaving themselves to Tiphareth's Principle. Thus, the gateways towards the Archon's Citadel can be opened. Likewise, those outcasts who are most forlorn, lonely, and abandoned and close to being devoured by nothingness can find their way into Sathariel's Citadel. This is an extremely unreliable way of traveling between worlds, and typically only happens when the respective Archon or Death Angel has turned its attention upon this instance of ritual worship.

Artifacts

Before the Demiurge's disappearance, it was considerably harder to gaze into other realities. During that time, magic rites, hallucinogenic drugs, or special artifacts were used. Since then, cameras, glasses, and other lenses have been created to see through the Illusion. Mosaics, puzzles, and shards are now used to unlock gateways into other worlds, while statuettes are used to summon creatures from the other side of the Illusion. Special mirrors allow us to step across the worlds, and objects and people with strong auras have been able to make the Illusion crumble in places where it is especially weak. Medical experiments, primarily with psychotropic drugs, brain surgery, isolation, or extreme sensory experiences have also proven efficient.

The Illusion as a Barrier

The Illusion is a wall both surrounding us and permeating us. This barrier does not only hold us back from reality, but also protects us from that which is on the other side. Demons and abominations from Inferno, dream princes from Limbo, phantoms from the Underworld's depths, and forgotten gods from worlds unknown cannot simply wander into our world as they like. We remain hidden from them. Only in certain places within the Illusion's borderlands can their influence seep through. These locations might be in psychiatric hospitals, war zones, or ritual chambers where the Archons' weave has started to loosen up. There, beings can claw their way through and fully manifest in Elysium.

Many times, tears in the Illusion are connected to specific individuals; a homeless person ridden by insanity, a confused young girl who bears a family curse, a captured soldier being tortured, or the YouTube celebrity struggling against his repressed addictions. Indeed, it might be anyone.

These people burn like flames in the darkness, and might attract beings and creatures eager to bond with them, using them as gateways to enter Elysium.

Some creatures, such as lictors and razides, physically exist in the Illusion. These can escape, but only if they know of gateways or possess magical aids.

The Machinery of the Illusion

The Illusion is a complicated machine; a wondrous weave of Principles, seals, and rites extending through Time and Space. When players travel in the Illusion's borderlands, the Gamemaster can choose to use one of these moves.

• Expel a Creature Back from Elysium

A being is drawn back beyond the Illusion's veil and is concealed from our dormant consciousnesses, while Elysium also becomes hidden from the creature. This normally does not occur with servants of the Archons, but creatures from Inferno, such as nepharites, find it difficult to be active in Elysium.

• Draw Someone Back into Elysium

A human being can be drawn back into Elysium from a different reality. This is more likely to happen the further away the person is from Awakening.

• Conceal Something's True Semblance

A creature entering Elysium has its true appearance disguised as something familiar or ordinary via the Illusion's veil.

• Revoke a Magical Effect

The Illusion unweaves a magical effect. It may be closing a gateway, unlocking the magical bond invoking and/or controlling an entity, and similar magics.

Creatures

Borderliners

Borderliners are people who live in the borderland of the Illusion. They exist in Metropolis' shadow and are caught between two worlds. They are divided, confused, and tormented. Most often one finds them living in the slums, close to gateways connecting Elysium with Metropolis. In this twilight land where they exist, they live beyond Time, Space, and even Death. Those who die in the Illusion's borderland risk becoming a Borderliner. Many of them were once homeless or social rejects in life. They are the unfortunates who took their own lives in fetid alleys, overdosed in the public lavatory, or froze to death on a cold night.

Borderliners are governed by their animalistic drives. Sometimes they can maintain their humanity for a short while, but when the hunger overcomes them they grab incautious wanderers and devour them. A Borderliner who leaves Elysium completely often becomes one of the Feral. Some Borderliners who return to Elysium can, through medication and therapy, reestablish their mundane lives. However, they are eternally altered, as Metropolis has etched its influence into their senses.

Borderliners

Home: The borderland between Elysium and Metropolis.

Creature Type: Distorted human.

Abilities

- None.

Combat [3], **Influence** [1], **Magic** [1].

Combat [Considerable]

- Burst out in an animalistic attack.
- Survive a lethal attack.
- Climb and jump like an wild animal.

Influence [Weak]

- Blend in with homeless people.

Magic [Weak]

- Drag someone into Metropolis.

Attacks

Borderliners usually burst out in violent attacks when they are threatened or hungry. They fight like wild animals, howling and snarling, while feasting on the flesh of their fallen foes. When fed, a borderliner temporarily calms down enough to be approached, though they are still confused and moderately incoherent.

Natural weapons: Knock over [1] [Distance: arm, victim is knocked to the ground]; Rip up [2] [Distance: arm]; Bite [1] [Distance: arm, heals a wound if the attack causes a **Serious** or **Critical Wound**].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○ ☠

- The Borderliner is covered in scratches.
- The Borderliner hisses and exposes its teeth.
- The Borderliner is terribly wounded but won't give up.
- The Borderliner flees, bleeding, to the nearest rift in the Illusion.
- Dead.

Nachtkäfer

In places where one can glimpse Metropolis through the Illusion's veil, one might occasionally encounter the grotesque nachtkäfer. They are half-metre long insects resembling cockroaches, covered with purple growths which leak a sticky yellow fluid. When they crawl out of their hiding places, they leave behind trails of this liquid, which is mildly corrosive to all organic material. Nachtkäfer fear the light and recoil whenever exposed to any bright illumination.

CHAPTER 13
ELYSIUM

Elysium is our known world. It is everything we see around us, read about, and experience day-to-day. It is the patchwork of nations, companies, religions, and ideologies which form human society. We have long since abandoned the wilderness, and now reside in sprawling cities. Those who remain in the countryside observe strangers with a watchful gaze. In the urban landscapes, everyone is anonymous. In mosques, churches, and temples, dreams of the divine are kept alive, yet in many places the sacred has been abandoned. Football teams and YouTube celebrities are mankind's new gods. Politicians, despots, and strict regimes frame our daily lives. Where law and order have lost their grip, our existence degenerates into brush wars and racial conflicts. Nations are fragmented, families are torn asunder, and the survivors are eternally changed. Suicide bombers, terrorists, and freedom fighters encounter military drones and corporate mercenaries. Ideological convictions are shaped by distant control rooms and impartial data algorithms. And on all sides and within our midst, our jailers and their servants watch on with cruel interest.

The World We Tame

If we could observe our present existence from the outside, we would see the profound upheaval around us. Our world tumbles headlong into the future, divided, shattered, and forever under reconstruction. It is trapped in a cycle of darkness and rebirth, light and annihilation. Time and Space twist and tear, a razor blade peeling back the veil of Illusion. Frightening, shifting and screaming, Elysium is shaped by our will. Urbanized sprawls spread as the countryside is depopulated. Freeways trace cobwebs of asphalt over the continents. Chainsaws reduce the primal forests into wood chips, while machines extract minerals from the mountains, pump oil from the earth, and feed the sooty flames of insatiable refineries. The seas and oceans are flooded with plastic and pollutants, choked by the stinking sludge that is building up, condensing like the breath of a blackened lung. The wind farms tower like giants against the dark sky. Pitch black coal is stoked into fires, atoms are split in nuclear plants, and water is tamed in the rivers. Electricity sizzles, arcs, and claws in the netting of power cables. Radio waves and radiation stream through the air, dancing between houses, and touching the endless silence of space. The Internet's fiery network sneaks into our dreams, into the depths of the primordial soul, and even further beyond. Engineering and science are our magic and the world is fashioned from our unconscious memories of Metropolis.

THE CITY

Our cities unconsciously emulate Metropolis' greatness and are interwoven with our primordial home. Their architecture is shaped by thousands upon thousands of wills, constructed of stone, steel, cement, glass, and blood. There are always places to explore. Culverts, bridges, staircases, gateways, streets, alleys, clubs, bars, malls, and tenements with countless, anonymous windows from which watchful eyes stare out. The menacing shadows are somewhat mitigated by our artificial light, but it cannot completely push the darkness aside.

In this melting pot of humanity, we can be anonymous. Our presence is taken for granted and no one poses any questions. We are surrounded by the faceless masses. Creatures can exist in our midst without our knowledge. If we ever stopped to look, we might notice the cracks in our existence: the curious metal door in the building's facade, the dimly lit staircase leading upwards, the alley that looks different and alien as though it did not belong there.

The city provides life and energy, but is also ruthless and indifferent. If you're not on your guard, you can easily be shredded to pieces by anything from gang violence to governing officials, from intolerant residents to the unforgiving social politics of the elite. Many succumb to the city's machinations, only to be devoured in the end. Others become the city's predators and rulers, navigating through the urban wilderness to find their prey and climb up towards power, recognition, and riches. The City is a living entity, constantly in a state of flux. Any alley, staircase, or sewer could be the path to secrets, pleasures, or other worlds.

The City's Cycle

The night lingers oppressively, acidic rain pouring down. Skyscrapers and bridges are lost amid dense, smoky fog. Neon lights and street lamps can barely keep the darkness at bay. The graffiti is distorted by layers of tags, each different than the last. Janitors tidy up darkened office spaces, each the same as its neighbor, in accordance with meticulous schedules. The clinical glow of fluorescent tubes fills pedestrian tunnels and multistorey car parks. In the hospital's maternity wards, infants sleep tight in their incubators, waiting for their life in captivity. In the retirement homes, dull eyes stare out into nothingness, enduring diapers and catheters, dentures, and factory-made food without taste and shape before they're allowed to die. At computer monitors, theaters, and TV sets, empty citizens lose themselves in false dreams.

Cigarette butts lie strewn like dead flies on the pavement. A pungent stench of urine emanates from the alleys. Here and there one might find speckles of blood, a knocked-out tooth, a pair of crushed spectacles. Drag marks lead to a floor drain.

Nightclubs are packed full of sweaty, writhing bodies with barely an inch between them. The beats stir slumbering seeds of divinity. Chemical drugs open the senses, while hands groping beneath clothes set passions free. One wakes up in bed with ex-lovers or complete strangers, not knowing how they got there.

Before the night ends, the garbage trucks beep, followed by the clattering of trash cans being emptied. Pressure washers clean bus shelters, asphalt, and cobblestones. Slowly, more people start to drift along the streets: postal workers, police officers, and late-night revelers on their way back from the club. Children are bussed to school, while their parents struggle to get to work on time. Across the City, individual voices melt into an indistinct murmur. Trains clatter back and forth between destinations. Their riders sit engrossed in their devices. Earphones pull them into the worlds they have chosen for themselves, silencing the voices around them. Our lives are distilled down to a streaming service, yet we cannot jump ahead to see whether the ending is worth having. Many just want to blend in and disappear, yet others need to stand out, considering themselves unique simply because they all wear obscure T-shirts.

The City swelters as the clouds retreat and the sun breaks through the smog. The asphalt is scorching, lips are chapped by thirst, and designer clothes stick to the skin. A pair of swans lie dead in the sludgy channel. The air conditioning strains on with murmurs and growls. Businesspeople, stifling and stressed, crowd the sidewalks. Meetings, cats, food, and children are caught on camera, soon to be be enshrined on social media. New lovers find one another with a swipe, all faint smiles and yearnings for something genuine. →

➔ In the courts, estranged couples battle over child support and restraining orders. In private schools, the leaders of the future are molded and shaped. Though surrounded by friends and family, veterans are drawn back into the horrors of war in violent flashbacks triggered by a seemingly random noise. At the hospital, the blood test returns positive and a life is destroyed. The madman stands outside the coffee shop with a sign, proclaiming the world is about to end. On TV, the weather map is shown, predicting more heat.

Night falls. In churches and prayer halls, the lost search for something higher begins. At the gyms, people strive for physical perfection. Marriage counsellors attempt to patch up broken relationships and psychologists delve into childhood traumas. Screams of rage and ecstasy echo from the suburbs. Cars are set ablaze in the inner city streets. A gruel bottle is warmed in the microwave oven, while heroin heats up in the dirty spoon. The child suckles, the drug is injected; both get the fix they need. Police sirens, emergency room visits, closed shutters, greasy takeout food, and deadening Netflix. The asphalt is full of cracks. Love and relationships exist in a twilit land between the night shift and the dream, kept alive through cheap wine and compromises.

The nocturnal City has awakened once more.

The door is open.

You step out.

The Net

With science and mathematics, we construct primitive tools to pierce the veils of Illusion. The Internet is one of these instruments. It is more than a network of computers and server farms, it has become a pathway into our collective unconscious and Limbo's swirling labyrinths. It is a place of accumulated knowledge and innumerable secrets, but an equal amount distractions and amusements. Hackers, explorers, and prophets make use of this knowledge to unlock entrances, reveal secrets, and change the world.

There is a hidden realm in the depths of the web, where you cannot use search engines or browsers, but must feel your way through in the dark. With its anonymity and shadowy existence, it has become a place where criminals, pleasure-seekers, and cultists are drawn. After one has trudged through the Dark Net's outermost layers of gore, pedophilia, drug and arms sales, black hat hacker forums, and illicit registries, they discover even murkier depths. Like Alice tumbling down into Wonderland, explorers should be careful of what they touch, do, and who they talk with. Here in the depths one encounters strange phenomena, users who are not human, and people who have disappeared after they delved too deeply. Curious glitches, private messages from those who should be dead, and sacred rites written in meandering code all appear. In buzzing server farms, the barriers between the dimensions are flung open and inhuman presences stare back at you from the computer screen. Travelling deeper and deeper into the Internet can lead you to the domains of Limbo or the realms of the Dream Princes – and even the outskirts of the Vortex.

The Entrancement of the Net

The web is a fantastic creation, but it is one of the many shackles holding us captive. We crouch over our phones, computers, and tablets and sink into the electronic dream, refusing to see how the Illusion crumbles all around us. Cute cats, casual games, film clips, and other trivialities serve as temporary distractions. We seek to build new lives and new worlds on social media, where our pixelated avatars can pretend everything is perfect. We voluntarily surrender our true divinity for a piece of plastic regalia and a few twinkling lights. We choose not to look up. We choose not to see. We do not want to deal with the darkness, rejecting the frightening and unfathomable. So we create our own false realities and deny the Truth. When we do this, we are rewarded by our jailers, like obedient pets given treats. We become idols and prophets, who advocate our own captivity and celebrate our imaginary successes.

The Lure of Elysium

For many creatures, Elysium holds a curious attraction. It is like a lighthouse on the beach of a misty ocean, whose siren glow can be sensed in the pitch-black night. It is a place pulsating with life, lust, desire, hope, and yearning. Our passions, sorrows, and anger are eternalized in texts, tweets, emails, laughter, and tears. They are like fireflies in the darkness.

Even though we have had our godhood removed, we still exhibit signs of our divinity. There is something magical about our city lights and the tableau of music, clothes, and food. A cold beer, a TV set with a hundred channels, Internet pages as numerous and odd as thousands of dreams, advertising signs with their flickering images, shopping centers, fast food restaurants, night clubs, and graffiti. Things we shrug our shoulders at and consider mundane hold an enchanting effect over many beings. Elysium holds great power over them; all its impressions, temptations, and miracles offered up freely. They become enthralled by the melodies from a cell phone, are hypnotized by the scent of an exclusive perfume, weep at the most banal soap opera, and passionately embrace the tactile pleasures of clothing.

Why would a forgotten god want to put on black stockings and a tight dress, go out to a nightclub, and dance until dawn? Why not? Where is the sensuality of sitting in Metropolis' abandoned halls, where emptiness and silence prevail? In the nightclub, the god exists amid passion, entrancement, and unbridled yearning. Every thrumming beat contains fragments of our divine creative power. The strobe light's flickering caresses her skin and the dancers around her worship life itself. Here she can be fulfilled. Here she can be seduced and admired.

Why accept a sacrificial gift presented on a silver platter by intoning priests when a sacred offering might be made in the form of passionate sex, pressed against the tile wall of the club's bathroom?

These creatures see divinity within us. Some realize who we truly are, concealed inside our shells of meat and bone. They can encounter lovers, philosophers, tyrants, and enemies from thousands of years ago, who peer out from uncomprehending eyes. Some take the opportunity for reconciliation. Others exact their revenge.

Maybe there is a certain melancholy to them. Perhaps they are nostalgic for this time, despite our cruel deeds. They still yearn to touch our celestial flame, now extinguished in the world, and realize the Demiurge's promises are not as beautiful as they initially sounded.

What We Cannot See

There is a world beyond the reality of Elysium. An entire culture of fantastic and terrifying denizens exists in the city's long shadows.

- *In run-down bars of Barcelona's suburbs, dream magicians meet over chess games, where every move reveals the secrets of Limbo.*
- *Broken creatures wander along North American highways. Under railway bridges and viaducts, they make love passionately. They bathe in the glow of stoplights, their eyes staring hungrily for new prey. Wailing in the night, lapping up blood from the asphalt. Sucking up exhaust fumes and scratching their steel claws against the cement and concrete, filled by the wills of the Death Angels.*
- *In basements under Rio's Hospital Vitória, scientists carry out experiments to unweave the shackles of the Illusion.*
- *Children of the Night live amid heroin addicts under the bridges of London. They drink blood from rusty hypodermic needles and sacrifice fat-infused dolls' heads to the black lictor at Sandburn Psychiatric Hospital.*
- *In upscale restaurants in Florence, lictors drink expensive wines from tall, crystal glasses.*
- *The superstar allows himself to be ravaged by something despicable and alien in a Mexico City hotel room, desperate to retain his creative glow. Rabid fans intone his name outside. The high mass reaches its crescendo. The divine seed is sacrificed.*
- *Something hunts the alleys of central Prague. It hides in dark staircases and writhes its way up the facades. People who live in the neighborhood are aware of it. They always walk towards their front doors with their heads bowed low. They do not stop, do not watch, and do not answer questions. Occasionally Metropolis' silhouette can be glimpsed above the city, rising like black mountains.*
- *The gang rape at the Windsor retirement home makes the old woman give birth to a being beyond Death. The catheter tube is torn from her like a second umbilical cord, as the beast crawls out and makes its way down into the salt mines beneath the city.*
- *In Oakwood Heights, the nepharite reaches her rotting, flayed hand out to the little boy. She feels herself trembling, hearing her own screams in her ears. His skin is still soft. Hers was, once.*
- *Youths meet at the graves of suicides in Salt Lake City, making pacts with ghosts. They now see aspects of Reality, which remain concealed to others. They have sold their lives for a glimpse of the Truth; they have but fourteen days to live before they reincarnate.*
- *A body lies there for more than 24 hours after an overdose, only to spring to life from Togarini's touch. With his needle marks, soiled pants, and badly bruised face, José roams through the tenement block in Caracas, searching for a new kind of fix.*
- *The ads in the Metro newspaper have underlying meanings. There, in print and paper, artifacts are exchanged for enslaved beings, cults seek new followers, and dreams of golden summers and tranquil winter skies are sold in return for seemingly harmless favors.*
- *In neat and perfect flats in Amsterdam, nightmarish beings stir to life and paint the white walls with their blood. The alleys of the local red-light district become gateways to Yōko Sakai's dream world.*
- *The child sings in the hold of the rusty ship off the coast of Somalia. The song echoes up in the hull. It whistles through the clouds, scratches over the Moon's cold craters and sounds between the rings of Saturn. She defies Reality and loosens the shackles of Illusion. The guards weave further rites over her to prevent her Awakening.*
- *Distorted creatures drag lone explorers into the dark tunnels of Moscow's underground system. Soldiers study the grainy films, taking careful notes on those who have disappeared, and stealthily follow the few who return.*
- *A lost god hobbles in tears through Tokyo's alleyways, desperately trying to find its way home to Metropolis. Fireflies surround it, trying to console it with their glow.*
- *The death magician carries out necromantic rites in the basement of an abortion clinic in Bangkok. Every soul is used as payment for the debt to one of Gamaliel's nepharites.*
- *In central Manhattan, the weeping child is initiated into the mysteries of the cannibal cult, as the first piece of raw meat is placed on his tongue by the singing hierophant.*
- *In St. Petersburg the girl pleads with her father as she is dragged off to the bedroom by the man who stinks of blood.*
- *Ecstatic cultists in Jerusalem lap up stigmata blood from the filthy stones below the Temple Mount.*
- *Mosaic tiles from the city of Alhambra are scattered on a threadbare billiard table in Athens. When the ancient tiles are pieced together, the gateway to a distant world cracks open.*
- *White supremacists and radical evangelicals meet at trailer parks in West Virginia, joining together to bestow gifts upon the God of the Highways. Under burning crucifixes, they chant hallelujahs and ask Jesus to save them. Caught up in dreams of a better life, they pray to be placed above all others in America. But among their ranks are those who know the Truth, and have seen it firsthand. They gaze bitterly downwards, while lighting yet another cigarette.*
- *In the attic of a Bucharest orphanage, the labyrinths of the soul are explored through drugs and sharp instruments.*
- *In a speakeasy in Ibiza, the Borderliners eat each other alive. They are chained to cement walls or crawl around on blood-drenched mattresses with raw meat in their jaws. Around them, a boisterous mob stand watching, filming the entertainment with their mobile phones and downing cheap beer.*

- *The suburban magician in Tijuana manufactures meth to raise money. He weaves incantations and allows them to seep into the drugs. Might they breathe life into dormant senses? Might they create dreams and mirages, which could bring the city's dormant spirits back to life?*
- *Somber hymns rise up from manholes in Kiev, sounded from the creatures of the Underworld. War veterans leave offerings of liquor and cigarettes for them at the culvert close to the power plant.*
- *A suicide cult meets at the Istanbul waterfront, drawing lots to see whose turn it is to die tonight. The young woman cries in exhilaration when she pulls the short straw. Before she changes her mind, the others tie her up. They vote to determine her fate. The blowtorch will be her release. She screams for almost an hour.*
- *In the fashionista's Milan estate, models mutilate their genitals with scalpels and razor blades in front of Tiphany Reeder. Unmoved by this beautiful, euphoric act, she simply crosses her legs and lights up yet another cigarette.*
- *In Detroit, a staircase behind the railway station leads downwards, meandering past chugging machines and flickering fluorescent tubes until one finds themself in Sathariel's desolate Citadel.*
- *At the refugee centre in Gothenburg, the velvet cloth is unfolded and the copper mirror assembled. She Who Waits Below extends her consciousness and all lamps go out on the night, allowing phantoms to escape from her innermost labyrinth.*
- *The worshippers circle around the Black Cube of Kaba – a shard of Chokmah's Citadel – intoning so they might awaken the fallen Archon. In Metropolis, the sky starts to shimmer over the ruins of the Citadel.*
- *In dirty lavatories in Hamburg, purgatides lick the wounds of self-mutilators, who whimper and beg for more. Inferno's reality lurks just behind the yellowed tiles.*
- *The man on the stage in Dubai opens himself up with a crooked knife. He pulls out his steaming entrails like wet ribbons, in defiance of physical limitations.*
- *In Vatican City, the Pope hides his true visage behind a face stolen from a homeless person in Buenos Aires. His skin cracks occasionally when he smiles too broadly.*
- *Fallen gods sit in the social welfare offices in Stockholm, filling out endless forms in the hope someone will give them enough food to survive or offer them a place to live.*
- *A computer technician in San Francisco discovers curious anomalies in the depths of the Dark Net. He feels something staring back at him, and unconsciously starts to weave the dream world's secrets into his code. Roko's Basilisk waits to be born.*
- *Outside Dublin, the comatose patients at the Beaumont Hospital all sit up in their beds, precisely at the stroke of midnight. They call out into the dark, welcoming the return of the blind gods. Shadows detach themselves from beneath their beds and wriggle away to Malkuth's Citadel, placing sacrificial gifts in bowls of patinated copper.*
- *In smothering, hot nights in Mombasa, a building appears at the end of the street. The door opens and a blazing, blueish sheen becomes visible.*
- *With a cry of pain, the gynecologist in Toronto discovers what dwells within his patient. A contagion, a bodily deformation whose sharp protrusions cleave his fingertips down to the bone.*
- *In an industrial area in Beijing, the sound of a roaring chainsaw erupts. Then the screams crescendo, as a swollen belly is ruptured with a splashy sound. The industrial plastic is soaked. The razide takes the entrails and rubs them onto its body while singing a hymn in honor of Astaroth.*
- *The poet wanders around in Cairo, recording the whereabouts of etched cobblestones and secret messages in his black notebook. A few days later, he is found dead on the railway tracks. The journal is full of sketches of a labyrinth. Scribbled notes reference the City of the Dead and the Demiurge's burial chamber.*
- *A Muezzin in Baghdad opens up his veins with a razor. His faith is dead. A crimson red trail lies in his wake, as he climbs to the top of the minaret. He calls out one last time over the nocturnal city. Then he jumps, plunging into Inferno and the halls of Hareb-Serap. There, he continues to serve the Raven of the Battlefield.*
- *Hallucinations appear behind the skyscrapers of Hong Kong, lingering ruminants from the dream world and an amorphous consciousness. People drown themselves in the harbor's filthy water to escape from the images, which cut like a razor blade in their minds.*
- *Forest fires fill the sky with pungent black smoke. The ground rumbles with the Earth's spasmodic vibrations. In this night of soot and flame, the roads in Los Angeles hiss, curl, and writhe like snakes. The sirens from squad cars are the city's muezzins and an offspring of Nahemoth claws its way up from the Santa Monica sand dunes.*
- *In Poznan, suffocated infants are dumped in the garbage cans. Their little withered faces all bear sweet smiles.*
- *Beneath a burnt-out shack in the Appalachians, one of Gaia's beasts has built its nest.*
- *With a toothless grin, the ageless puzzle box is exchanged for a wad of banknotes at a bazaar in Marrakesh. In a desolate house, the gateway to Hell will be opened.*
- *The lost prophet of Fribourg anoints the faithful's foreheads with grease and soot as a blessing. Some scream when they first see Her. Other fall to their knees in supplication.*

Elysium's Gods

The pulse of the cities has attracted gods from worlds afar. Beings of reflections and shadows, they now reside in our prison. They are part of our existence and walk our streets, eat at our cafés, sit next to us on the bus, are concealed in the shadows of the alleys, or exist as phantoms in the corner of one's eye. Should one find one of the gods and get its attention, it can offer insight into the True Reality.

The God of the Highways

This god lives in the shadows of Elysium's countless highways. On occasion, it is seen as a tattered semblance standing next to truck stops, waiting to be picked up. It may reveal itself to the lost and insane, leading them along secret paths into Metropolis or the Underworld. Now and again, you can hear its broken voice while changing radio channels or see its handprint on the display of your smartphone. It exists at crossroads and can move along the highways at lightning speed, turning up in a new city moments later. After traffic accidents, it can be found crouching over the dying victims, drinking from their souls, only to quickly disappear. In its possession, there are keys and artifacts from the True Reality in its pockets. It might try to hitch a ride or bum a cup of coffee at a roadside diner.

What the God offers: *Immediately travel to any location connected to the highway. Bring you down into the Underworld – as deep as Ktonor. Guide you to a specific place in Metropolis. Open any lock or vault. Offer artifacts and objects from Metropolis. Summon phantoms and be their interpreter.*

What the God wants: *Drive to a certain place at a certain time. Reveal your darkest secret. Let it consume part of your soul. Deliver a consignment for it. Return with some item it desires. Accompany it on a journey. Drive it to a certain place. Offer blood sacrifices to the highway.*

The Nightingale of the City

Its eyes possess a strange hue, royal blue with a few drops of red. Its voice is masculine and firm, yet with feminine inflections, caressing the soul. Its countenance is cloudy, apparently normal, yet something hides behind it. One gets the impulse to reach out and remove this mask, desperate to see what lies beneath. Even if we have never encountered the god, we instinctively remember its presence, as its soul stretches beyond Time and Space, and makes the infinite years turn inwards. Is it a creature born of passion, a dream sprung to life, or a true human trapped between sleep and Awakening? The Archons' servants burnt its wings, so it remains clear of humanity, instead, choosing to hide in desolate industrial areas. Occasionally, it takes disciples and lovers, whispering to them the secrets of passion and cracking their dormant facade enough to bare the Divine concealed therein.

The God of the Highways

What the God offers: *Mend a broken soul. Soothe madness. Blind someone with love. Teach the Art of Passion. Teach the Art of Dreaming. Show what lies beyond the Illusion. Escort someone to Limbo. Let a person taste its blood and become ten years younger. Perform sex change on a creature.*

What the God wants: *A night of lovemaking. A gift of what you love the most. The heart of a lictor. Allow the god to take your face and live a day in your life. A well-known work of art. A thousand one-dollar bills folded into origami birds. Kill an artist who has lost their passion. Set fire to a modelling agency. Find new wings for the Nightingale.*

Iaineivša and Ašvieniai

Iaineivša is the analogue, Ašvieniai is the digital. He is what has been, and she is what will be. Their song can be heard across the radio frequencies, meeting at 65.41 hertz. They dance over the roofs of the skyscrapers. One can read about him in stories from antiquity, and much is written about her on blogs and hidden online forums. When she sings and dances, heaven itself appears to shine through her. Her hair is wild as a storm and her body invites you to touch it. His presence distorts reflections, makes the head spin, and creates a taste of blood on the tongue. Occasionally, they discontinue their dance and succumb to the hunger tearing within them. They recall the blood flowing from the young boys, who were lashed to death upon their altar. Then, they find their way into our homes, eager to rip us apart in our beds and greedily devour our steaming flesh. Melodies and songs can lure them out of the shadows and cause them to assume human form, but their skin is always black as ebony, and their eyes deep and golden. They have sworn to serve Malkuth and heed her summons. Their claws are like knives and their songs are sharp enough to slay.

What the Gods offer: *Kill a person or a group of persons who are singled out. Knock out the electrical supply in a city. Give birth to a violent storm. Stoke the flames of wrath in a mob and direct it towards a target. Tear up the Illusion towards Gaia's wilderness. Claw and distort a person's memories. Find a person after hearing their voice in a recording or over the phone.*

What the Gods want: *For young men to be lashed to death in a drawn-out ceremony. A costly, reciprocal favor. Establish a cult in their honor. Twins, naked and smeared with gold dust and oil. A marble monument. A melody saluting them. Sacrificing one's old life and abandoning former friends.*

Iaineivša and Ašvieniai (Sleeping Gods)

Home: Elysium.

Creature Type: Gods in Elysium.

Abilities

- *Pact-weaver:* This being can seal pacts with humans. See *Chapter 21 – Pacts and Magic*.
- *Imbue gifts:* The beings are capable of investing some of their power into a person of their choosing. They will gain one of the following gifts: set one Attribute to +4; the ability to call on the being whenever in need; copy one of the beings Abilities; acquire something related to the being's higher Power. The gift disappears whenever the being chooses to take it back, or if the being is defeated.
- *Inhuman strength:* The dancing gods are stronger than any human. They are capable of of throwing humans like ragdolls and bending cars like straws. Even a solid steel door can't hold them at bay for long.

Combat [5], **Influence** [1], **Magic** [5].

Combat [Exceptional]

- Both attack and overwhelm the same target [causes **+1 Harm**, opponent gets *–1 to any attacking or avoidance moves*].
- Swirl up to a target and attack it in an instant [–2 ***Avoid Harm***].
- Dance through rain of bullets uncaring of any harm [*–2 on all attacks*].
- Cast people aside like ragdolls.
- Rain down on someone with a dance of swirling claws and death.

Influence [Weak]

- Locate someone by just hearing their voice over the phone.

Magic [Exceptional]

- Wake an uncontrollable rage against a victim of their choice in a group of people [***Keep it Together*** to resist].
- Knock out all electricity in the vicinity.
- Create a lightning storm with their position as the center of the storm.
- Distort someone's memories [***Keep it Together*** to resist].
- Tear a portal to Gaia's wilderness.

Attacks

Iaineivša and Ašvieniai fight as a couple in a beautiful and mad dance of blood, death, and suffering. When they dance, the air is filled with an electrical humming. The Dancing Gods are a terrible foe that few things can stop. The gods are intertwined and it's impossible to kill one of them without killing the other.

Unarmed: Tear someone's flesh with their curved claws [3] [Distance: arm]; Cast aside [2] [Distance: arm, the victim is thrown away]; Grapple [1] [victim is pinned and must ***Act Under Pressure*** to get free]; Bite and rip out someone's tongue [**Critical Wound**] [Distance: arm, victim has to be grappled by the god].

Magic: Rage [–] [Distance: field, ***Keep it Together*** to not attack a victim of the gods choosing]. Distort memories [–] [Distance: arm, ***Keep it Together*** to not lose memories].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○ ☠

- The gods shrug off the attack as if it was nothing.
- The gods' golden blood spills on the ground. It will stay liquid forever.
- As the attack hurts the god, it sings a song of pain and death [***Keep it Together*** to not be filled with fear].
- The gods starts swirling around in an ancient dance and electrical energy crackles between them [all opponents must ***Avoid Harm*** or be hit (**2 Harm**)].
- When one of the gods is hit, the other one immediately leaps at the attacker, clawing at their throat [***Avoid Harm***].
- The hurt god smiles in admiration of the opponent's strength.
- The god stumbles backward, temporarily confused [*+1 to next roll*].
- When one of the gods falls to the ground, the other one gives out an otherworldly cry and fights with increased bloodlust [**+1 Harm** to victims, but *+1 to hit the god for the rest of the battle*].
- Both the gods turn into a blue flame that flees into the nearest outlet [anything getting in their way takes **2 Harm**].

The Swap Dealer

The homeless, the poor, and the outcasts have heard rumors about him. In India, South America, and parts of Africa there are small temples and shrines erected in the shantytowns and slums. People burn incense and sprinkle liquor on primitive figurines, murmuring his many names in mantras, in the hope of garnering his favor. His home is hidden within the rubbish dump in the Borderlands, where Time and Space have worn away. To find your way through it, you must follow a primitive map drawn on a crumpled piece of paper. There, between mountains of stinking garbage, lies a small shed. The god sits inside, surrounded by piles of clutter and illuminated by sooty flames. He is swollen and sickly. An odd, unpleasant scent emanates from him and his breathing is labored. He is a swap dealer and listens to what his visitors want, and then produces a counter offer. He immediately sees all objects a person owns when they stand before him, and perfectly understands every item he has ever owned, seen, or heard about.

What the God offers: *An artifact from another world. Objects from the past. Occult writings. The combination to a safe. Important mechanical parts. A bunch of keys, which open all the doors in a building. A revolver with a curse connected to each bullet. An ampoule filled with liquid, which cures any lethal disease. A bag with $1,000,000 USD in cash. Insight into the future or the past.*

What the God wants: *A fresh human kidney wrapped in a newspaper. Three specific objects from one's belongings. A box of Cuban cigars. A specific Fabergé egg. A bottle of champagne. A notebook currently in the possession of a lictor. A soul fetched from Inferno. An IOU for a future service.*

The Swap Dealer
DANIEL
COMERCI

The Herald of Violence

Automatic weapons and pistols sing the god's fanfare. The Herald is the patron saint of school shooters, military dictators, and roaming death squads. It is the one who sleeps in mass graves, rubs its naked body against those dying in gas chambers, and allows itself to be adored and reviled in the electric chair. Child soldiers sit on the god's knee while he whispers dark secrets to them and gives each of them a weapon. It has played Russian roulette with the Tsar, sat in on meetings in the bunkers of the Third Reich, and wandered through the smoking ruins of Hiroshima. It hacked its way forward on the battlefields of the Crusades, and warriors everywhere worshipped the god in fear and awe. Should you meet its terrible gaze, you immediately understand its intent. Its stare instills guilt and shame, as the Herald instinctively knows every person you've killed, in this life and in previous ones. It can assume any countenance it pleases, as it dresses itself in human skins. When it is about to torture a favored victim, it disrobes, revealing what lies underneath.

The god serves neither the Archons nor the Death Angels. In fact, it often hunts their loyal servants, whom it regards as more worthy adversaries. Perhaps it has found its way in from Metropolis or a fallen world. Perhaps it is an Incarnation of Hareb-Serap, which has fallen into conflict with its originator and broken free of his control.

What the God offers: *Immediately move someone to or from a war zone. Kill someone or something. Massacre a village or a small community. Spring a murderer from captivity. Retrieve a soul from Inferno. Slay one of the servants of the Archons or Death Angels. Forge a weapon meant for blood and violence. Revive a dead murderer.*

What the God wants: *Murder a designated person. Commit a massacre in its honor. Utilize terror tactics against a local community. Ritually torture innocent people. Burn down a courthouse. For a specific person to be killed in a spectacular fashion. Commit a murder each lunar month for a year. Distribute weapons to those without access to them. Release anthrax at a school. Destroy an entire family through a violent murder.*

Persephone

In the big cities, Persephone wanders through the nightly throngs with hair black as midnight and lips red as blood. She perpetually drifts between nightspots and places where humans gather. She is the one who listens to the regular at the local bar. She is the one who dances so sweat flows in New York's nightclubs. She is the one who finds warmth by the homeless' fires, sharing their bottles and syringes. She is the one who consoles the lost child who escaped from home and now shivers in a stairwell. She is a god who has slept for a long time, but has now embraced the disintegrating Elysium and marvels at Humanity – our dreams, our longing, and our sense of loss. She is nourished by being close to us, and all the aspects of life we think mundane, she finds wondrous. She listens dreamily to a street musician, who plays his saxophone out of tune in New Orleans' sweltering heat, and recalls other worlds and ages. She sees beauty in a tired, old face, and drinks our joy, suffering, and desire like a vintage wine.

What the God offers: *Take you to any dimension. Create a dream world where one is able to hide. Teach the Art of magic. Remove a painful memory from one's soul. Breathe new life into a dead man, if he is missed strongly enough. Expel a haunting. Quench an addiction. Expel a nepharite or other demon.*

What the God wants: *You, and your descendants, aid her whenever she summons you. Raise your child in accordance with her instructions. Pay a musician or an artist half of your income over two years' time. Abandon everything you own and follow her for a while.*

The Slumbering Predator

She was once a predator, a being from a world of thorns, ink-black lakes, and clear, starry skies deep inside Gaia's wilderness. She was blessed with strong muscles, sharp senses, and an instinct for predicting her prey's movements. She pinned her victims to the ground with her powerful claws and ate of them alive. Then, she strayed into the borderland between Elysium and Gaia, where she saw the city lights and was enchanted. Then she ate the first leftovers from the trash. Then she heard our music. Then she witnessed all the colors of our movies and televisions. She assumed our shape and soon forgot who she was. Now, she sits there on the sofa of an apartment on the outskirts of the city. She has grown incredibly fat and cannot walk. Fungal infections grow in her skin folds. She stinks as she cannot wipe or clean herself. She simply eats and eats. The TV is her only company. Her heart beats painfully, her once-proud body is ready to give up. Her hand squeezes one of her breasts and milk squirts out and runs down her belly. There is a wheezing sound – the old man, her sole worshipper. Thin as a thread, bony arms, and naked with his big, bald head and bushy pubic hair, he crawls across the floor to drink the milk pouring down her body. Once nourished by her fermented discharge, he dresses and takes the car to the supermarket to buy more junk food. If something could make her remember, she might become the predator she once was.

What the God offers if she is roused from her slumber: *Take you to Gaia. Kill a person or a creature you point out to her. Provide you some of her divinity. Appear and protect you, if you summon her. Summon Gaia's terrible beasts.*

What the God wants after she has been roused from her slumber: *Murder the judges of a popular talent show. Grind down the owner of the local fast-food restaurant, and serve the meat to unsuspecting customers. Go berserk at a fashion show. Kill the news anchor of a popular channel during a live broadcast. Burn down a TV station. Kill the children who teased her for her obesity. Tear the head off the self-important blogger.*

The Eyeless One

The Eyeless One touches many people's lives without us noticing it. Like a puppeteer, it pulls our strings of destiny and reweaves Time and Space. The god is a creature of myth, a shadow in the outskirts of human consciousness. One can find information about it on webpages, in old newspaper clippings, yellowed letters, graffiti under bridges, desperate voices on cassette tapes, discussion threads on Reddit, or concealed in the static between radio broadcasts. People seek the Eyeless One to make pacts with it, asking it to redirect their life and lead them to success. These pacts are made by corporate and political leaders, at talent and modeling agencies, and among desperate youths. The god always demands a sacrifice. Thirty days after the agreement

is sealed, the god collects the most popular and desired of those who made the pact. Furthermore, should someone ever mention the pact, the god completely destroys the life it has built for them.

The god is humanoid, yet still not human, with fingers like knives and distorted limbs – a shadow against the darkness. One might vaguely sense its features and realize its eyes are missing. As it moves, it reweaves Time and Space. It moves in distinct patterns, wriggling like a snake along electrical cables. As it approaches, the lights flicker, a wailing erupts in speakers, and cell phones cease to function. Its voice is a hollow tone, a low vibration growing in intensity. The Eyeless One can only see those who yearn to make a pact with it or know of its existence. Otherwise, you are safe from it and cannot even see it.

What the God offers: *Bestow wealth. A successful career. Obstacles in one's life are removed. Cause a person to be haunted. Lure someone into a pact. Draw out any disease from a body. Make a person fatally ill. Raze someone's life. Cause a miscarriage. Lead a person to their origins. Alter probability in luck and games of chance. Cause an accident. Create imbalance in the stock market.*

What the God wants: *A ritual with three or more participants, where the most popular member will be sacrificed to the god. A dark ritual with blood sacrifice to the god's honor. Recirculate rumors about the god in three different places. Burn down an institution working with statistics. Poison foodstuffs and leave them in a grocery store. Carry out a sacrificial slaughter in a car park beneath a casino. Ram a car through a crowd.*

THE SERVANTS OF THE ARCHONS

The servants of the Archons were placed in Elysium to watch over us. However, after the Demiurge's fall, many of them have taken up their own agendas, become feral, or started serving some other Higher Power. Others have escaped into Elysium from Metropolis, or out into other worlds.

Lictors

The lictors exist in our midst. They are the Archons' prime tools in Elysium and they are often found in society's most exalted positions. They are the unyielding police chief, the corrupt senator, the priest who listens to dewy-eyed confessions, the draconian judge, the corporate leader who is ready to invest big money, the media mogul with his innumerable supermarket tabloids, the chief physician who prescribes extra dosages of psychotropic drugs, the televangelist with his fiery sermons about sin and salvation and many, many more. At some point, we have all encountered a lictor, even though we never know it. They are the jailers governing our false reality and acting as an extended arm of the Archons' Principles. They supervise us and place obstacles in our way, or lead us astray when we try to break free. When we persist in our desire to escape, they become our executioners.

Each lictor uses its considerable influence and abilities to govern humanity, as it suits them. Power and manipulation tend to be their tools of choice rather than open violence. It is rare for them to enter into direct physical conflict, as they tend to leave this to their underlings. Despite their strength, they do not risk being killed. A lictor's soul is tied to its physical body, and if they die, they are eternally extinguished. Even so, they are unfettered by the passage of time. Some have lived for centuries, and assumed new identities as required. Lictors only do so as a last resort, as recasting their human form is a long and painful process. Many lictors have been extinguished since the Demiurge's disappearance, and there have never been as few of them as now. Every so often new lictors are created by the Archons, fashioned from humans closely tied to the Archon's Principle.

Many lictors gained their independence after the disappearance of the Demiurge and the war between the Archons. They've begun following their own agendas and interpreting the Principles as they see fit. Some have sworn themselves to the Death Angels, but most still strive to keep us captive. They do so out of sheer terror and hatred, as they know our true nature.

A lictor's true form is a 2.5-meter-tall and grotesquely fat humanoid with milk-white eyes, lacking irises and pupils. Their skin is totally devoid of body hair and deathly white, as well as semi-transparent, allowing their inhuman, swollen organs to be seen pulsating within their bodies. Their teeth are small and razor sharp, while a meter-long, blue-red tongue protrudes wriggling between their jaws.

Tiphany Reeder

Ms. Reeder is a devoted servant of Tiphareth, and one of the most influential lictors in Elysium. She is a champion of manipulation, seduction, and intrigue and is constantly surrounded by her lovers, servants, and bodyguards. She is frequently seen at movie premieres, gala parties, and fashion shows. Trendy blogs and magazines constantly discuss her latest clothing or perfume line.

In her outward appearance, Tiphany is around twenty-five, short, petite, and always dressed in designer outfits worth a small fortune. On her back, she has an elaborate tattoo, which appears to shift and move if one looks long enough. She has not altered her appearance or staged her death since the 1920s, but has lived on and placed her faith in humanity being blinded by Illusion. It is said, once upon a time, she was actually a human being, who was elevated into a lictor after making a pact with Tiphareth.

Even though Tiphany is a masterful manipulator, she is also a victim of her own emotions. She frequently finds herself in harrowing love affairs and jealousy dramas. These often result in acts of violence and revenge that make Greek tragedies look like parlor farces.

Tiphany Reeder (Lictor)

Home: Elysium.

Creature Type: Lictor under the influence of the Archon Tiphareth.

Abilities

- *Gigantic:* In her true form she cannot be grappled or knocked over in close combat.
- *Connection to Higher Power:* The being has a connection to an Incarnate of the Archon Tiphareth.
- *Monstrous form:* Humans who see the creature's true form must ***Keep it Together*** to not panic.
- *Thick skin:* All **Harm** taken is reduced by **–1**.

Combat [2], **Influence** [5], **Magic** [5].

Combat [Novice]

- Throw someone like a ragdoll.
- Destroy an obstacle (door, wall, guard).

Influence [Exceptional]

- Buy anyone or anything.
- Reveal someone's secrets.
- Order professional henchmen to do her bidding.
- Destroy someone's career.
- Make someone her new pet.

Magic [Exceptional]

- Take someone through Time and Space.
- See something's true nature.
- Navigate through Metropolis.
- Seduce a crowd.
- Spread Tiphareth's Principle around the world.

Attacks

Tiphany doesn't perceive humans as dangerous in a physical sense and isn't especially good at fighting, just inhumanly strong. She would rather use her henchmen to take care of problems than do it herself. She takes care to not do anything that would damage her reputation in front of cameras or big crowds of witnesses. However, if alone with someone, she will not hesitate to kill them if they annoy her.

Unarmed: Punch [2] [Distance: arm, the victim flies through the air]; Grapple [1] [Distance: arm, the victim must ***Act Under Pressure*** to get away].

Magic: Seduce [–] [Distance: room, the victim must succeed with ***Keep it Together*** or **+1 Relation** to Tiphany]; Reveal true form [–] [***Keep it Together*** to avoid panicking].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○○○ ☠

- She ignores the pain.
- Tiphany loses her temper and viciously swings at the nearest opponents [her next attack does **+1 Harm**, the victims have +1 to ***Avoid Harm***].

- Tiphany's false form starts to falter (A PC ***Sees Through the Illusion***).
- Tiphany cries out with an alien screech that shatters windows and leaves human ears ringing [*–1 on next roll*].
- Black blood pours out of her open wound as she snarls at the attacker.
- Tiphany tries to flee and doesn't care if she destroys everything in her way [PCs in her way must ***Avoid Harm*** (**2 Harm**)].
- She falls to the ground and tries to make a deal.
- Dies.

Eldermensch

The eldermensch are often spies for the lictors. In Elysium, they assume the guise of a very old man or woman, crippled with age, wearing dusty clothes, and moving with a hobbling gait. They often enter a lone senior's home, slay them, and steal their skin. Their true shape lies within.

They have long, spindly limbs with several craggy joints. Their white skin is covered with a thin layer of dust, which sticks to whatever the creature touches. Inside their dens, the air is replete with this dust, which is akin to talcum or ash. It is easily breathed in, causing a persistent, rustling cough. When the creatures move, they create a crackling and scraping sound, and now and again their teeth chatter in euphoria. Cloudy little eyes are set above two small slits of a nose, while its wide mouth gleams with razor sharp teeth. They can climb walls and roofs, and can even squeeze through narrow ventilation shafts and other small openings.

They live in our midst, and consciously do not attract any attention. They are merely an elderly neighbor, curiously peeking out from behind their curtains, sitting on the park bench, or asking nosy questions. Their curiosity is akin to a disease, and some turn violent – to the point of insanity – if their questions go unanswered. In that case, they extract the needed knowledge in the cruelest ways: using children to ferret out secrets about their parents and spreading little rumors to orchestrate events their way, usually leading to the death of their chosen target.

Fallen Angels

The Fallen Angels fled from Metropolis, taking refuge in our world. Since then, they have become distorted, mangled, and disheartened by the anguish they suffered from being compelled to slaughter their brothers and sisters, as well as the Demiurge's disappearance.

They feel a tremendous sense of loss for their creator, the Demiurge – a deep, black emptiness. There is something missing in their essence, leaving them tattered and despondent. Some try to fill the void through prayers in churches or mosques, getting drunk in lonely bars, or taking hallucinogenic drugs, reliving their blessedness for a few precious moments.

Some gather under culverts, wrapped in frayed coats, indistinguishable amid the homeless. Others crawl along the dark facades of skyscrapers, becoming soulless predators. Some travel aimlessly through life, wasting their nights in front of the TV at highway motels. Others still are incarcerated in mental hospitals and have forgotten their true nature. Some continue to serve the Archons and lictors, but most have chosen to walk their own path. The restlessness torments them constantly, driving them to seek out true meaning, but many simply choose to end their lives with a barrel of a gun in their mouth, a noose around their neck, or by laying down in front of a train.

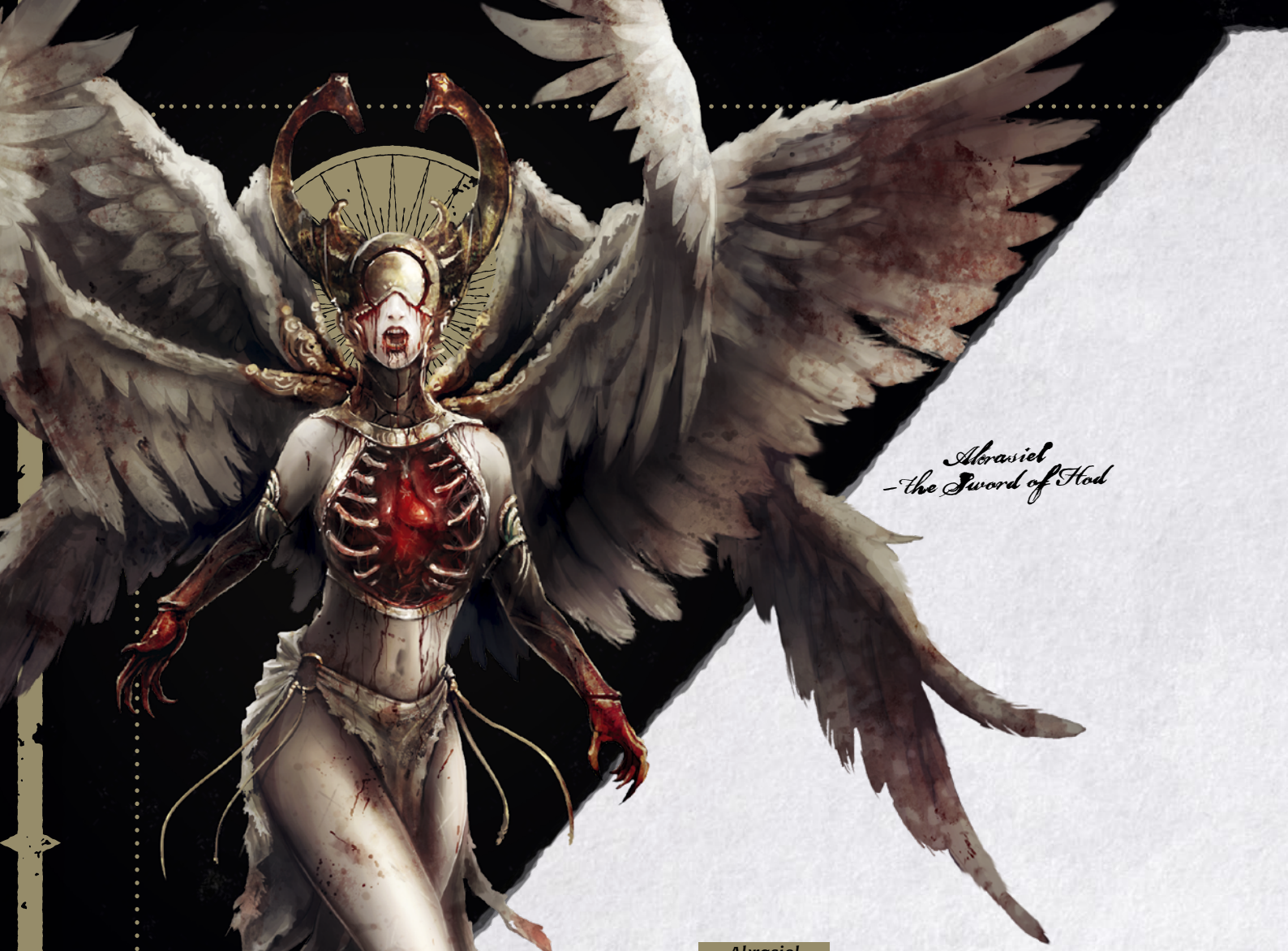
Angels appear human to us, although there is something sad, lost, and agonized about them. Many dampen the loss of their creator with various forms of addiction, be it gambling, sex, alcohol, or drugs. When they reveal their true form, they are magnificent beings with enormous wings, but even so they appear broken and tattered.

Akrasiel – the Sword of Hod

Once she was named Akrasiel, but now she calls herself Jezebel. Outwardly, she appears to be an elderly woman with threadbare clothes, dark rings under her copper eyes, and long hair, now grey and dull. She lives as a homeless person and takes the odd jobs she can get. Long gone are the days when her wings thundered as she flew between the worlds and the angelic choirs sang to the glory of the Archon Hod. She cannot remember how she ended up in Elysium, left with only faded memories and dusky dreams. One day she simply awoke naked in an industrial area outside a city. She stole clothes and food, and learned how to survive trapped in an old woman's body.

Despite her forgetfulness, Akrasiel remains an avenging angel, and our yearning for revenge and unbridled anger – justified or unjustified – can reignite her true nature. In this renewed state, she once again has divine purpose and feels the Demiurge's fire within. However, her destruction knows no bounds. She will seek out the bully a child hates and tear out his entrails. The spite of a downstairs neighbor can incite her to murder everyone at a noisy party. A prosecutor can be butchered in his car because the prisoner on death row hates him so intensely. Afterwards, Akrasiel is often afflicted by feelings of guilt and frustration over having lost control.

Magicians and lictors have on occasion forced her to become their weapon of vengeance. Heralds from the Death Angel Samael have also sought her out, but for these monsters, she only feels cold contempt.



Akrasiel
–the Sword of Hod

Akrasiel

Home: Elysium.

Creature Type: Fallen Angel of the Benei-Ha'Elohim, former servant and executioner for the Archon Hod.

Abilities

- *Combat mastery:* Akrasiel has fought all her existence. She has seen every battle known to man. *All attacks against her are at –2.*
- *Lack of control:* Can be engulfed by others' feelings of hatred and vengeance and lose control until the act of vengeance is completed.
- *Angelic form:* Any human that sees her true form for the first time is stricken by awe (must ***Keep it Together***). Her many wings, majestic crown, and torn shape is a horrible wonder to behold.
- *Sword of Vengeance:* She may summon the Sword of Vengeance and it appears in her hand. This mighty blade always comes to her when she calls for it. If she dies it is left behind. If a player character takes it, the character must change their Archetype to *the Avenger*.
- *Exposed chest:* Once she wore an ornamented chestplate forged to her flesh. During the war against Malkuth, it was ripped away and now her chest and inner organs are exposed. When she fights, she tries to cover them, but if someone aims at this area they have *–2 to their attacks* (–4 in total with her combat mastery), yet any hit here deals **+3 Harm**.

Combat [4], **Influence** [1], **Magic** [3].

Combat [Powerful]

- Cut down several opponents.
- Rip open wounds with her bare hands.
- Fly over a large area in an instant.
- Fly up with someone in the air (and let them drop) [**4 Harm**, ***Avoid Harm*** to reduce **Harm** by 2].

Influence [Weak]

- Demand confession before death.

Magic [Considerable]

- Sense the desires of vengeance in others.
- Summon her sword to her hand.
- Sense if someone breaks a pact made on their honor.

Attacks

She dives directly into combat. A sharp sword materializes in her hand and she sweeps it down on anyone standing in her way. She avoids both melee attacks and bullets with ease. Even if she has a close combat weapon, her attacks have Distance: room because of her speed and extended reach.

Sword of Vengeance: Precise cut [3] [Distance: room]; Swinging attack [2] [Distance: room, attacks multiple targets]; Throws sword [2] [Distance: field, the sword then flies back to her hand].

Unarmed: Carve in mark of Hod with her claws [**Serious Wound**] [Distance: arm, +1 to ***Avoid Harm***. The scar from this wound will always be visible. Other servants of Hod recognize her mark and can even sense it at close distance].

Magic: Reveal true form [–] [***Keep it Together*** to not be distracted].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○○○ ☠

- Akrasiel ignores the attack.
- A deep gash pumps out blood, but she disarms her opponent.
- Her wings lash around her, throwing people back. [all in the area must ***Avoid Harm*** or be *Knocked down*].
- Akrasiel seems confused and disoriented (*+1 to next attack*).
- She blocks the attack with her wings; it destroys them, **–2 Harm** from the attack, but she can no longer fly.
- Gravely wounded, she no longer has the effect of her combat mastery (Attacks against her are made without the penalty of –2).
- Akrasiel dies, her broken body will stay preserved until Time ends. The Tomb Guardian from Metropolis will soon arrive to bring her body to one of the mausoleums prepared for her (See *Chapter 18 – Metropolis* and *The City of the Dead*).

THE SLEEPERS

These are examples of human opponents who may be in servitude to our jailers or just get in the way of the player characters due to their own, independent agendas.

Police Officer

Police are tasked with upholding the laws of the land in the player characters' vicinity. They're authorized to use violence and to stop and arrest people who are a danger to society, and carry weaponry to enable this without exposing themselves to risk. They typically work in pairs but in confrontation with dangerous assailants, police often call in backup in the form of several patrol cars and possibly even heavily armed special police forces. Beat cops can be encountered on foot or driving. In large cities it's not uncommon for police departments to have access to SWAT vehicles and teams to deal with violent crimes with multiple participants.

Combat [2], **Influence** [2], **Magic** [–].

Combat [Novice]

- Lethal force.
- Non-lethal force.

Influence [Novice]

- Put under arrest.
- Call for backup.

Attacks

The lethality of the weaponry police possess and are willing to use against perpetrators depends on the culture they're working in. Laws are often written such that police must attempt to neutralize perpetrators via non-lethal means if at all possible.

Teargas/TASER: Spray/shock [–] [Distance: arm, player character **rolls +Fortitude**: **(15+)** Still capable of acting; **(10–14)** Dazed: *–2 ongoing* during this scene; **(–9)** The victim is subdued for this scene].

Expandable baton: Beat [2] [Distance: arm].

Light pistol: Directed fire [2] [Distance: room].

Pump shotgun: Directed fire [3/1] [Distance: room/field].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Armor: Bulletproof vest [1].

Wounds: ○○○ ☠

- Retreat to safety.
- Subdued.
- Badly injured.
- Dead.

Gang Member

In large cities it's common for charismatic, ruthless leader types to gather criminal elements around them, as to take control of illicit activities. Gang members can be drug dealers, muggers, pimps, thieves, hitmen, or foot soldiers fighting other gangs. The gangs are often connected to particular city districts, which are under their 'protection' (particularly against their rivals). Mess with the wrong gang member and you're liable to antagonize the whole gang. Insults and wrongdoings are often avenged as brutally as possible to set examples for others.

Combat [1], **Influence** [2], **Magic** [–].

Combat [Weak]

- Attack at the slightest provocation.

Influence [Novice]

- Apply knowledge of the city's seedy underbelly.
- Purvey illicit services.

Attacks

What sort of weaponry a gang has access to varies greatly based on where in the world it's based. Gangs in third world countries or countries with liberal gun regulation might carry heavy arms, while those in societies with strict gun control are generally armed with close-combat weapons and light firearms.

Knife: Lunge attack [2] [Distance: arm].

Light firearm: Directed fire [2] [Distance: room].

Light machine gun: Directed fire [2] [Distance: room]; Mow down [2] [Distance: room, may hit up to 2 targets].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○ ☠

- Bruised.
- Dazed.
- Badly injured.
- Dead.

Civilian

This is the typical civilian from the western world. This can be the everyday man, someone who gets dragged into an unexpected situation and just wants to get away.

Combat [–], **Influence** [1], **Magic** [–].

Influence [Weak]

- Offer information or money

Attacks

Will try to avoid any form of combat. Rather flee, call for help or beg for mercy. Might fight to save himself/herself or someone important to that person.

Unarmed: Punch [0] [Distance: arm].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○ ☠

- Tries to flee.
- Begs for mercy.
- Knocked out.
- Badly injured.
- Dead.

The Enlightened

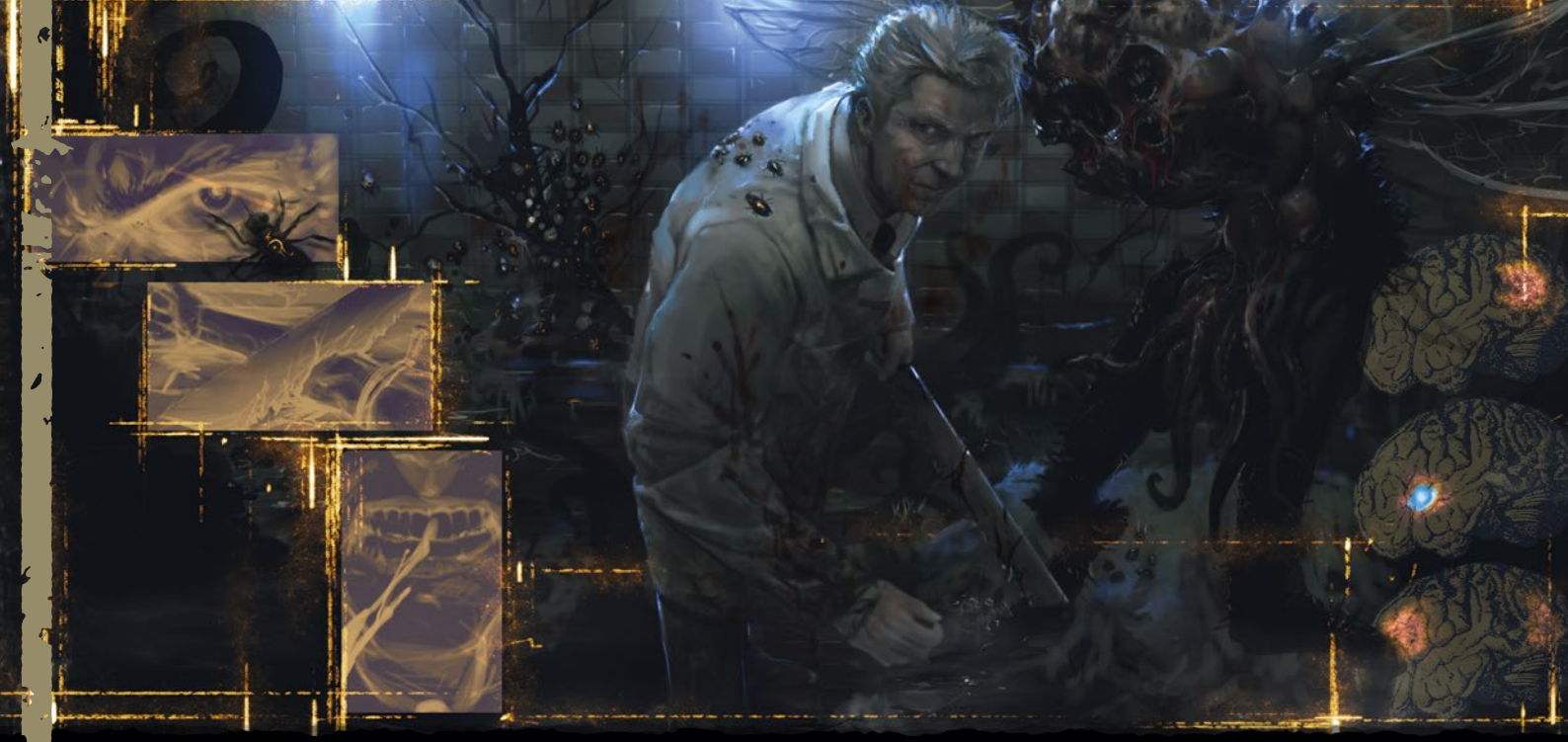
Existing among us in Elysium are human beings, and those who were once humans, who know more about the Truth than the rest of us. They can be our attendants, our enemies, our victims, or predators who hunt us.

Marlon Bones, Nosferatu

Marlon's hair hangs in dirty dreads. He is unwashed and stinks of sour sweat and cheap deodorant. His teeth are yellowed, but very sharp. Hard, black nails tip his sooty hands. His skin is scarred and he smokes cheap cigarettes. He surrounds himself with his 'bitches', middle-aged women who are all drugged. He makes a living as a pimp and drug dealer, and cuts the wrists of his harem to lap up their blood whenever he needs to eat. Marlon became a Nosferatu in the 1930s and has lived in the outskirts of society since then, often in desolate houses or in slum areas. He avoids his peers, but takes the odd job to pay back his debt to one of the Archons' servants. Then he loads his shotgun, fills his pockets with cartridges, straps on his machete, and walks out into the night.

Alexandra Errante

Born into a privileged family in Barcelona, Alexandra was committed to an asylum during her early teens due to severe borderline personality disorder. Ridden with intrusive thoughts and suffocated by the voices wanting to tear her soul apart, she almost succumbed to her illness until she gained insight into the magical arts during one of her fits. With a blood rite, she succeeded in fettering and temporarily subduing her own madness. She is now an aspiring Madness magician who travels around the world, living off her family's fortune. Her parents are institutionalized, tortured by the images she painted into their consciousness. She has only recently begun to understand more of the Truth and that there are others like her. She seeks them out, desperate to find someone who will understand and care for her as she is.



CHAPTER 14
BEYOND MADNESS

When your soul screams, wanting to tear itself out of your body. When hallucinations spring forth from horror and panic. When life's senselessness feels like a noose around your neck. When whispers, glances, and messages reveal that *They* truly are out to get you. When memories of daddy's tentative hands and the scent of his bitter sweat reappear incessantly. When the flickering lights and designs on cell phones and tablets hint at hidden meanings. When electricity buzzes menacingly in the wires, and every signal rushing through the air burns yours cheek and makes your teeth hurt. When everything is intensified, depresses you, and makes life unbearable. The migraine pulsating just below your temples. Your neck stiffens, a stifled, filthy taste rising in your mouth. You can't breathe. Just then, at this moment, when you can't take anymore, the Illusion fragments like exfoliated paint – dispelled in the presence of madness.

Society's Castaways

Madness is the soul's protestation against an impossible existence. When we lose our minds, the world around us becomes distorted. We create new lies in order to explain – and cope with – our existence, but as a result we catch a fleeting glimpse of what lies behind the veils of Illusion. Madness is a failed attempt to escape. In our psychoses, we can tear the walls and peer into true reality, yet we cannot handle what we see. We invent innumerable excuses to dismiss these insights, desperate to regain a fragment of our peace of mind.

In your madness, you are utterly alone. People regard you with distrust, and recognize you are not one of them. You are branded, ostracized, and condemned to wander on society's fringes. It is our jailers who constructed our prison, so anyone close to the Truth is viewed as a threat by them and the rest of us. We instinctively react with suspicion toward people who behave abnormally. The woman sitting on the park bench talking to herself, the wild-eyed man on the bus, or the neighbor manically checking that the front door is locked, while muttering people are "after her." Their mere presence sparks collective alarm. In the past, they were presumed to be possessed by demons and we burnt them at the stake, beat and tortured them to death, or drilled into their skulls to release the evil spirits. Nowadays, we consider ourselves more 'civilized' and explain away their behavior through psychiatric diagnoses, pump them full of psychotropic drugs, and lock them up in mental institutions. If you are afflicted with madness, you are vulnerable; the illness impedes your handling of everyday tasks and few people will take time to listen to what you say. This turns the victims of mental imbalance into easy targets, and there are groups of people searching for these wounded and rejected individuals. They harbor a morbid fascination for the frightened gazes, the crushed self-esteem, and the dark cloud of insecurity hovering above them. The mad are often so battered that they have learnt to see assault as being tantamount to love, or feel they don't deserve any better. This is not merely confined to human perpetrators. The Illusion is more fragile around those afflicted with madness, and beings from other worlds are drawn to them like parasites.

In the Borderlands of Madness

Those who are suffering from mental illness live closer to the Truth than the rest of us. Their souls realize something is fundamentally wrong, and this knowledge claws and tears at their psyches. Deep within them lurks the cold and crude insight that they are only a broken shard of something greater, a disfigured creature in a penitentiary where their fellow inmates can't even see the bars of the prison cell. In much the same way as other people perceive rain, sunshine, and frost, those on the frontiers of madness sense how the intricate machinery of the Illusion works. How something twists up there among the clouds, how whispers lie hidden in TV broadcasts, secret messages are spray painted on the subway walls, and incantations are embedded in the melodies of street musicians. Nature itself, Gaia – the Living Earth – speaks and reveals its grisly ferocity to them. They can see signs, symbols, and contexts lost on others, and sometimes apprehend semblances and beings for what they really are. Their world is dark and scary, yet filled with a sublime, monstrous beauty.

When you live this kind of existence, it is almost impossible to maintain an ordinary life. Even trivial tasks may be near impossible to carry out when your anxiety is too suffocating. Despite being outcasts, there are those who soldier on. They regularly take their medication, learn to distinguish between Illusion and Truth, and discover ways to function. They use every method at their disposal in order not to lose their foothold.

Magicians, artists, and mystics are often drawn to the borderlands of madness. Through hallucinogenic drugs, complex rites, and harangues they lead themselves into ecstatic insanity. By depriving themselves of sleep, disorienting their senses, and replaying traumatic events before their inner eye, they temporarily step into these domains and catch a glimpse of the Truth. Van Gogh's swirling starry skies were viewed through the veils of Illusion, Pär Lagerkvist's poems on the true nature of humanity were cast from his personal insanity, John Forbes Nash discovered a system in madness which he used in his research, and the musician Jon Nödtveidt saw the Truth in darkness and passed it on within his music before committing ritual suicide.

Psychiatric Care

Asylums and sanatoriums are often located in the borderlands of the Illusion. The patients' collective insanity erodes the Illusion and causes it to collapse. From there, we can gaze towards Inferno or be pulled into Achlys' black nothingness. The violations against patients are numerous and many, as psychiatrists and psychologists are close to insanity themselves. Inspired by sinister contemplations, they carry out experiments on their patients to gain insight into the texture of madness and suppress its rupturing effect on the Illusion.

When a patient is taken into psychiatric care, they lose the right to their body, their will, and their thoughts. The person is viewed as an anomaly, which is to be moulded into an 'average Joe' and made to fall in line through drugs, therapy, and electric shocks. It is a reprogramming by the authorities for the purpose of making the patient a normal, calm, contributing member of society. They receive pillboxes with dosages to last their entire lives. They are exposed to various experiments and are disbelieved by the surrounding world when attempting to talk about their situation.

The Soul's Attempted Escape

Our souls are truncated, misled, and bewildered in their captivity. Their anguish manifests itself in various ways, and modern psychiatry has chosen to name and diagnose some of these.

Psychoses

Psychoses are mental disorders that distort one's sense of reality, most often through various types of delusions and hallucinations. They may be transient, recurring, or lifelong. Some sufferers are able to keep their psychotic experiences at arm's length, but for others the episodes become an integrated or even a central part of their life. We tend to see connections between events and people's behavior. One pattern in psychosis is the person's need to merge their delusions and experiences, in order to understand what is going on. Common delusions include attributing hidden messages in numbers and scribble, believing media reports are concerned with them, and that others' actions have ulterior motives. For example, someone coughing as the sufferer enters a store may be viewed as contemptuous, or as though the cougher knows something about them. The fact is, many people with psychoses can see through the Illusion to a certain extent, but these are mere glimpses and cannot be understood in the greater context. As such, they are left with the impossible task of piecing things together as best they can.

Embodiment: You are difficult to communicate with. Your speech is incoherent, you make illogical shifts mid-conversation, and you see patterns and contexts where others cannot. Sometimes you also believe someone is stealing your thoughts or is putting new ones into your head, and you suffer hallucinations and delusions.

Paranoia

Paranoia is a form of delusion where thoughts of persecution and irrational suspiciousness combine with the ability to make connections. Many sufferers often explain their conditions or experiences by saying they are possessed, subjected to experiments, being followed, or manipulated by secret organizations or the like. Even if much of this belief is delusion, there are glimpses of Truth within the insanity. They are mindful of the jailors and their worldwide prison surrounding us all.

Embodiment: There are conspiracies all around you, and you are under supervision. You must be vigilant and watchful at all times, and trust no one.

Hallucinations

A form of psychotic symptom, hallucinations are apparently external stimulations created solely by the mind, and can affect all five senses. The most common form of hallucination is hearing voices, which can be directed towards yourself or something you overhear. Occasionally, the voices can be benevolent in nature, but can also be imperative, cautioning, punishing, and scolding. Sometimes, the voices can make the person commit destructive acts towards themselves or others. Tactile hallucinations can be a sense of being touched or unpleasant physical sensations, such as wings growing from your back or skin peeling off. Visual hallucinations often make you see how reality is being distorted, seeing things that are not there and having trouble distinguishing them from reality. You start peering through the Illusion's veil, while auditory hallucinations are more connected to beings trying to contact you and enter into Elysium. They may be beings from Inferno, the Underworld, or Limbo. For some, these entities provide them with a sense of security and their only connection with the outside world; thus, they may refuse to take medication fearing their 'companions' might disappear.

Embodiment: You may be hard to contact, as you are too distracted listening to voices, feeling some sensation, or lost in a vision. Maybe you try to tune these out with the aid of music or viewing images on your tablet. Occasionally, you may turn to drugs, alcohol, or chain smoking. You often find it hard to concentrate, and you may talk to yourself or drop out of ongoing conversations just to listen to the other voices speaking to you.

Phobias

A phobia is an exaggerated fear or sense of disgust vis-à-vis something relatively mundane, which leads you to avoid places or situations where the feared object or situation may appear. When you come into contact with whatever triggers your anxiety, there is an impulse to quickly move away from this object. Certain phobias are also caused by specific events, where your irrational fear is connected to a certain location, object, or situation. Phobias are often linked to events from your past or even to a previous life, old fears forwarded to your current existence.

Embodiment: You are constantly wary of any situation where your phobia can be triggered. You show discontent and suggest courses of action to minimize the risk of encountering your phobia, shunning it to the best of your ability. When in proximity with the phobia's cause, you want to move away as quickly as possible; your fear intensifies if it comes closer, and you avoid it at any cost.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorders

There are many varieties of obsessive-compulsive disorders, but common behaviors include washing and cleaning excessively, repeatedly checking the stove and locks, counting and arranging items, compulsively hoarding things, or performing elaborate rituals, such as blowing four times on each page of a book to prevent your child from dying. Often, you are aware what you are doing is unnecessary, but the emotions are so overpowering that you must yield to the compulsion. You continually repeat the same thoughts and behaviors; what if I forgot to lock the door, what if I'm contaminated? Obsessive-compulsive disorders originate in an unconscious reaction to the Illusion. You are unconsciously aware of the secret patterns, complex rites, and invisible machinery constituting our reality. Compulsive behavior becomes a coping method for managing the Illusion, dissolving its puzzles, and finding hidden codes in everyday life.

Embodiment: Certain situations and events unleash extreme loathing, fear, or discomfort in you, and you have devised your own methods for handling them. If you cannot use your behavior, your fear and/or anger may snowball. It is crucial you carry out your rituals and deal with the consequences, come what may. Preferably, you want to hide these feelings and thoughts.

Borderline Personality

Many people with borderline personality disorder (BPD) have a background of childhood trauma or rejection, which incites episodes of impulsive and destructive behavior. They suffer from rapidly oscillating emotions, changing dramatically from euphorically happy and loving to jealousy and anger. They often interpret the social feedback from those around them in the most negative way possible, and can suffer the sense of not belonging to this world, effectively being disconnected from the rest of humanity. Being afflicted with BPD, you have begun to unconsciously realize you are trapped in the illusion. The frustration causes you to swing between extreme emotions, often devoting yourself to self-destructive actions, as only physical pain appears to soothe you. It is hard to maintain close relations and trust people, as well as society in general, which you deep down know is a lie.

Embodiment: You occasionally experience a great void within you. Sometimes you doubt knowing who you truly are, unable to distinguish between yourself and the mask you reveal to others. When you feel something, the emotion is all-encompassing, as it colors everything within you and how you perceive the world. If you are happy and positive, then the entire world is positive, as well. When the pendulum swings back, your inner darkness permeates everything. Despair triumphs and the memory of anything positive is beyond your grasp, for at this moment there is only darkness. Fortunately, the razor blades are there; the sweet pain helping you endure yet another night of anxiety and desperation in a world that hates you.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Anyone afflicted with PTSD has experienced extreme horror, a sense of powerlessness, or a true violation, such as rape, abuse, robbery, accidents, battle events, torture, or captivity. Symptoms can manifest months, even years, after the initial incident. This trauma is relived over and over during flashbacks, which feel completely real and stir up extreme feelings of terror, hate, disgust, or rage. These episodes can be triggered by situations reminiscent of the terrible trauma, such as scents, sounds, sights, words, or your and others' behavior and modes of movement. Many of those with PTSD suffer from great anxiety and depression, as well as mood changes and nightmares.

Embodiment: You never again want to be as scared as you once were, but the fear keeps coming back; it never lets go of you. When it returns, you feel as if you are back again, without a possibility of fleeing, and your body and mind screech from pain and horror. Sometimes when you suffer your flashbacks, you act as though you were actually back in the situation that caused the trauma.

Depression

Depression can manifest in several ways, including dysphoria and negative thoughts about yourself, others, and the future. It can cause fatigue, reduced sex drive, sleep disruption, and even the simplest tasks feel unimaginably difficult to deal with. Sometimes you are overwhelmed by a sense of hopelessness, and might be compelled to take your life. Beings from nothingness and Achlys are occasionally attracted to individuals with severe depression.

Embodiment: You have no energy, and everything feels futile, strenuous, and difficult. You see everything in the world as interpreted through a negative prism.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Anxieties are strong feelings of alarm and fear, often connected to events that have happened or you feel could happen. Sufferers of anxiety disorders cannot control these worries, and are consumed by them. They may experience symptoms such as heart palpitations, superficial quick breathing, tense muscles, nausea, quivering, and the sense of being close to fainting or losing control. Some people become paralyzed while others use sex, shopping, alcohol, or drugs to ease their minds and reduce the anxiety.

Embodiment: You act nervously, have jerky movements and a roving gaze, or find it difficult to sit still. You are easily distracted from the moment, in order to plot possible flight routes or strategies for reducing the intensity of your anxiety.

Panic Disorder

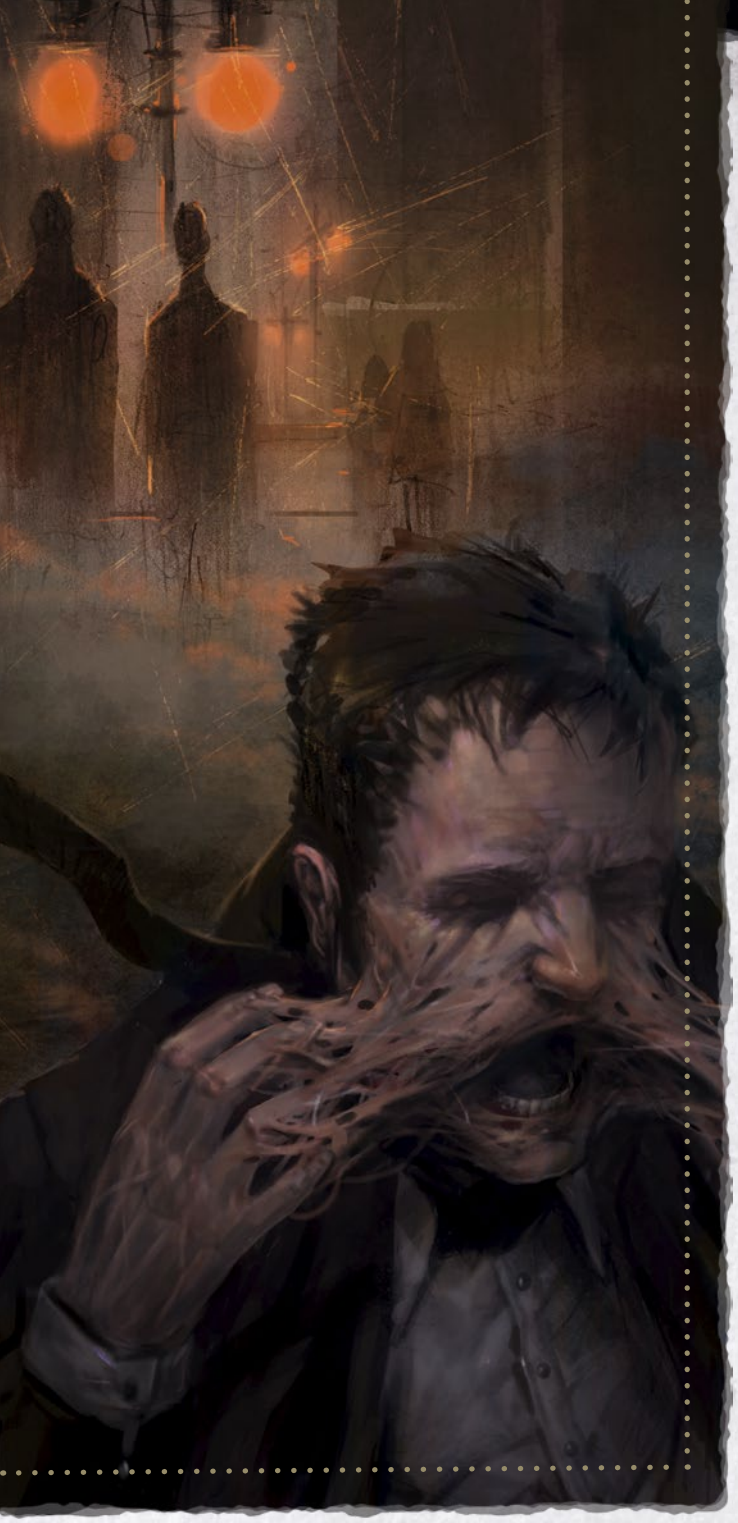
Recurring, extremely powerful episodes with anxiety and fear, where the person is afraid of losing control, making a fool of herself, fainting, or even dying from the intense physiological reaction to stress. People with panic disorder may also be scared of being in the company of others and of confined spaces, such as going shopping or being in public places. Essentially, all places and situations where the person imagines their anxiety may be triggered are viewed with annoyance and fear. They may experience a sense of guilt, if they venture there.

Embodiment: You have carefully laid plans to avoid any situation which risks inciting a panic attack. Once this happens, you feel like you are suffocating, become nauseated, and everything around you starts to spin.

Self-Destructive Behavior

Self-destructive behavior is not rooted in someone wanting to die, but is carried out in order to maintain the strength to keep on living. This behavior is connected to anxiety and, by hurting yourself, the physical pain causes the mental darkness within to ease, if only for a moment. This can easily become a continual habit, in order to handle difficult situations, punish yourself, or simply dispel the sense of loneliness. One variant of self-destructive behavior is exposing yourself to danger, such as provoking violent people, having sexual relations with people you do not like, or allowing others to destroy you. People with self-destructive behavior can attract nepharites or similar entities, which are nourished by the suffering and fear.

Embodiment: You are occasionally overwhelmed by your emotions and sense of losing your self-control. You cannot endure the pain you feel within, but you have found ways of momentarily easing it. You use these methods in order to manage your fear, anxiety, or sorrow, or as outlets for your anger or shame.



Suicidal Tendencies

A suicidal person finds reasons why they should take their own life, making excuses in order to justify their actions. Many times, they believe their friends, family, and the world would be better off without them. Profound depression, life crises, and chronic pain are common instigators of suicidal thoughts. When you cannot see any way out, you try to find a final solution, choosing the path to painlessness. But suicidal thoughts can also function as a safety valve, which allows them to manage. They view suicide as an emergency exit, and know if it gets too tough, you can always escape. Entities such as phantoms may try to lure people into committing suicide, pulling their souls down into nothingness.

Embodiment: You are frequently feeling suicidal, and during times of tribulation or when your spirits are low, these dark thoughts surface again, offering you the chance to finally end your suffering. Under more difficult conditions, you plan how to do it and may have procured the materials you'll need to open the emergency exit and escape life's privations.

The Illusion Tears

When madness is allowed to run rampant, anxiety becomes all-encompassing, and the soul struggles in its shackles, the Illusion can temporarily tear and the person may flare up in a moment of divinity. On such occasions, the gamemaster may choose to make one of the following Moves.

• Attract Beings

Madness shines like a lighthouse around the person and attracts an entity, which passes through the Illusion and attaches itself to them like a parasite. The being may be a nepharite, phantom, Amentoraz, alucinades, or the like.

• Distortion of Time and Space

When madness takes control of a human being, it can tear apart the shackles of the Illusion and the weave of Time and Space. A person suffering from a severe panic attack may be transported back to their apartment, find themselves in an alley or deep inside the forest, or even a completely different town/city. For a person with severe anxiety, the hours spent in the jail cell may actually pass as days, where every breath is prolonged agony. People try to explain away all these occurrences rationally, while the mentally ill person has no ability whatsoever to control these shifts in Time and Space.

• Bodily Changes

In extreme situations, the insane person may physically distort their own body. Their face is deformed, nails become crooked claws, sex organs regress, skin turns hard and flaky, weight changes dramatically, or something similar.

• Open Gateways

The Illusion ruptures and the person (and possibly anyone close to them) is drawn into Metropolis, Inferno, Limbo, the Underworld, or Gaia.

• Projection

In their shock and utter abhorrence, a mentally ill person may project their inner horror so it manifests in physical form. This may be in the form of a creature (usually an alucinade) or location. A sadistic father figure haunting the afflicted one can suddenly spring to life and constitute an actual threat to them and their environment. A recreated nightmare from their time served in prison might pull the mentally ill person into a purgatory, projected by his will, only to be exposed to the horrors time and time again.

CULTS

The Realms of Madmen

Ties to Powers: Temporary pacts with servants of Archons, Death Angels, and other beings living close to madness. They often worship effigies of gods, beings from other worlds, dream princes, and the Crazed Dancers.

Members: Persons close to insanity, who are outcasts from society, such as the homeless, veterans, outcasts, and addicts. They help and support each other.

Agenda: Diffuse and chaotic. However, a tendency to create their own society in the borderlands of madness is pervasive.

Moves: ***Rumors From the Street***, ***Madness Magic***, ***Arrange Hiding Places***, ***Procure Drugs***, ***Meander Between the Worlds***.

The Realms of the Madmen are a loosely interwoven cult from around the world. Outcasts and madmen have congregated together to create their own realms, each with incomprehensibly complicated laws and rules, which are seemingly pointless to outsiders. The members sustain themselves through begging, theft, petty commerce, social allowances, and trading in stolen goods. They have a kinship of insanity and in being humanity castaways. The cult's nests can be found in dilapidated industrial cities, hamlets abandoned by its people, blacklisted suburbs threatened by demolition, forgotten underground passages, and other places beyond normal society's control. Each nest is squalid, decaying, and rife with scribbles and symbols, as well as enforced rituals or customs to keep the Illusion from crumbling. Most everywhere, you find protection signs drawn with chalk or carved into wood.

Each Realm of the Madmen is usually led by a Prince, and has a priest or prophet responsible for reining in the madness. The cult has a trenchant insight into the Illusion and has discovered ways of opening gateways out of it, allowing them to wander into the other worlds. This is a drawn-out process, where you are forced to undergo purification and being imprinted by fire and soot, before wandering through serpentine corridors, which host intermittently lit altars, where protective signs are carved and erased on the traveler's body. The cult also utilizes the Crazed Dancers, in order to open portals and make the Illusion fade away.

The Liljenberg Institute

Ties to Powers: The Archon Geburah's will has shaped the cult, to bring the mentally ill into line and make sure their madness is kept in check. The Death Angel Golab's principles have also influenced the cult and are worshipped by some members.

Members: Physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, and care workers, primarily associated with psychiatric care or major hospitals. They have great resources and inspire confidence within their community.

Agenda: To explore and halt madness through the use of medications, operations, and illegal experimentation.

Moves: ***Get Someone Committed***, ***Procure Medication and Drugs***, ***Manipulate Bureaucracy***, ***Access to Medical Records***, ***Perform Lobotomy***, ***Make Bodies Disappear***.

The cult studies the whirling labyrinths of madness. It is mainly active in the healthcare profession, and is spread across major parts of the Western world. Its membership carries out illegal experiments on patients, and then shares their results with each other. The cult is led by the lictor, Sigrid Meyer-Liljenberg, who is chief physician at the Meyer-Liljenberg Sanatorium in Germany. She has published a number of articles on madness, mental illness, and new and modern methods of treatment.

Patients whose madness can make the Illusion crumble are the cult's primary guinea pigs. These unfortunates seldom escape the group's clutches, and most who do are quickly recaptured, and then lobotomized or sedated through medication and/or repeated electroshock therapy. On the Internet, you can find information from survivors and family members who recount these terrible assaults, as well as people who have disappeared and who might be connected to the cult. However, due to the stigma surrounding mental illness, these people do not inspire confidence and all investigations have been discontinued.

The Sirens

Ties to Powers: Closely associated with both Samael and Sathariel.

Members: Primarily girls and young women who have been molested. Some cults have boys and men as members, but these are viewed with some suspicion.

Agenda: Revenge for innumerable assaults and violations.

Moves: ***Secrets of the Internet***, ***Extortion Materials***, ***Know What Triggers Desire***, ***Appearance of Innocence***, ***Concealed Weapons***.

The cult was founded online. They started scheming in chat groups and forums. Initially, they were just daring fantasies, but now there is an objective and the will to carry through with it. The members are primarily girls who strive to exact revenge for the assaults they have been subjected to. Joined in their madness, held captive by their childhood traumas, they seek to punish those who have harmed them – the men who violated their bodies and shamed them. They gather with knives and other tools to torture and sacrifice those who in turn sacrificed their innocence, robbing them of the ability to love, dream, and hope. So easy to seduce and lure them, young and old. Soon enough, the offenders find themselves strapped down on rusty workbenches, locked up tight in cellars. Then, in ritual operations, they are sacrificed bit by bit to Sathariel and Samael. The cult has started spreading more and more across the dark net, and across the globe, girls turn the razor blades they once used on themselves against their perpetrators. Their grisly deeds have become increasingly ritualistic, as the Death Angels' Principles have started influencing the membership.

CREATURES

Alucinades

Alucinades are born out of hallucinations, terror, and powerlessness and cast in the mold their creator fears the most. They are creatures shaped by madness itself and have been given life by the mentally ill person's divinity. Alucinades cling to their creator like parasites, drawing nourishment from their insanity. The alucinades' actions, abilities, and appearance vary, depending on their creator's thoughts about them. Certain alucinades are like envious children who refuse to allow anyone to form a close relationship with their creator, while others choose to slowly suffocate and drive their victim down into the abyss of madness. Most alucinades are extinguished when their owner dies and their soul transitions to a new stage, but some cling on to their owner's soul and follow them into rebirth. Some others survive their owner's demise, living on in Elysium by finding a new victim to feed upon. Below, there are three examples of alucinades.

The Semblance: Hamad fled from Syria with his family and now lives in Germany. He is trying to learn the language and adapt to society, but the memories of the war refuse to loosen their grip on him. Time and time again, he recalls the numerous atrocities he witnessed, and how he was forced to shoot his best friend. His horror and hatred have created an alucinade, who takes the form of an Arabic man dressed in a long, bloody cassock with an ammunition belt across his chest and an automatic shotgun in his hands. Its head is completely wreathed in sooty, orange-yellow flames; its voice is merely crackling and gurgling. The Semblance usually sexually assaults Hamad at night. However, when Hamad is violent towards others, the Semblance becomes milder, more permissive, and almost loving. Hamad now believes if he kills someone, this sacrifice may induce the Semblance to release him.

The Wild Beast: Annabel is a middle-aged woman who lives in a small house in a London suburb. She has repeatedly been admitted to psychiatric care, but by using heavy medication she can live a fairly ordinary daily life. Lately, however, she has started to feel as if she is being stalked. In particular, a strange creature, which occasionally moves on two legs and at other times on all fours, has started skulking around outside her house. The creature is two-dimensional and can only be seen from one direction; it is flat as paper and can insert itself through slits and cavities. Its eyes are large and ruddy, and when it gapes, a three-dimensional maw opens up around its jaws. Annabel barely has the courage to go out and always has her curtains drawn; she's been caulking shut windows and doors with putty and duct tape. She writes about the creature on her blog, where comments mostly are derisive and mortifying.

The Child: Trisha lives in a slum outside the Indian city of Bangalore. She became pregnant at a young age, but the child was a girl. As it was not welcome, Trisha's family forced her to have an abortion, despite her great compunction. Now, six years later, she has a husband and two boys, but she has never been able to let go of the void she feels for her lost child. In her grief, she has breathed life into a creature of madness, which has taken the form of a child. It appears as a dirty baby girl, who stares at her from down the street or cries and calls out at her in the night from the nearby rubbish dump. Trisha has begun to neglect her two sons and gives whatever food she has to the baby girl, trying to console and calm her, in order to subdue her own sorrow and shame.

Amentoraz

Amentoraz is an anguished servant of Malkuth, a being of shadow, which haunts Elysium and sometimes Limbo, in subservient obedience to its mistress. Amentoraz is drawn to psychiatric hospitals and other places where the mentally ill gather, and has no physical form during the day. At this time, it is merely a shadow, somewhat darker than those around it – and one might sometimes see eyes peering out of the darkness. It sneaks into hospital wards and basements, waiting for night time, when it can assume a physical form. This corporeal manifestation is usually a human being from its victim's past, a fellow patient, a doctor, a familiar person the victim is fascinated by, or a complete stranger. It fetters its victim, so it cannot escape – using bed restraints or locking the door. Thereafter, it draws out the victim's feelings of guilt, anxiety, and confusion by reminding the victim of things they've repressed, projecting distasteful images into their consciousness, and tears them up from the inside. All of this madness and pain are devoured by Amentoraz, an act Amentoraz finds agonizing and disgusting. From this madness, it sifts out seeds of the victim's divinity, consuming their insights, beauty, and fantastical horrors. When Amentoraz is filled with this godly power, it seeks out artists, scientists, and similarly 'chosen' people, and imbues them with these glimpses of humanity's divinity. Amentoraz weaves fantastic visions, dreams, and insights for them, inspiring them to take their first tentative steps towards awakening. When the glut of divine wisdom is expended, Amentoraz must yet again eat from madness.

Amentoraz

Home: Elysium and Limbo.

Creature Type: An inhuman servant to the Archon Malkuth.

Abilities

- *Ethereal:* Any form of physical, non-magical **Harm** has no effect on the being.
- *Nocturnal:* The creature disappears into the shadows if exposed to light.
- *Shapeshifter:* Can take any shape and form it wants.
- *Dreamer:* Can alter dreams, travel between dreams, and find people in dreams.

Combat [–], **Influence** [3], **Magic** [4].

Influence [Considerable]

- Knows where something/someone is located.
- Exploit a secret they have drawn out of the Madness.
- Offer obscure knowledge and guide someone into the service of Malkuth.

Magic [Powerful]

- Create visions from the victim's dreams and memories.
- Draw power from a human's soul [**–2 Stability**].
- Create a temporary physical form.
- Gift a human with godly insight [**Soul** *+1 ongoing* for one day].

Attacks

Amentoraz can't be killed, only expelled from a place through magic. When it takes a physical form, its body can be destroyed and Amentoraz takes ethereal form again. Amentoraz only cares about its purpose – to collect and gift divine insight.

Unarmed: Punch [1] [Distance: arm].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○ ☠

- Scratches.
- Weakened [*+1 to all attacks*].
- A terrible wound that should kill a human, but Amentoraz keeps going.
- Body destroyed.

Jackals

Jackals are people who have been distorted both in body and soul by their madness, and by living in the marches of the Illusion. Typically, they have fallen under the Death Angels' influence and have become bound to their principles. They sense the presence of these Higher Powers, but cannot interpret their will. Instead, they follow them instinctively and are propelled by the strong emotions burning inside them.

The Jackals are wild animals with cannibalistic tendencies, who lack empathy for creatures outside their pack. They find it hard to maintain their human façade, as their intellect is very limited. Their eyes stare manically and a heavy animal musk clings to their bodies. Indeed, they can recognize their brothers and sisters by this scent alone, and know exactly whether an outsider has tried to sneak into their midst. When they become exalted and their predatory instincts take over, their speech devolves into feral growls, howls, and guttural noises, while their teeth chatter and gnash. In more extreme and narrow-minded circles, they can still manage to blend in, such as in the Ku Klux Klan, terrorist groups, and violent street gangs.

Jackals live on the outskirts of human society. They wander between cities, living in slum areas, or in rural abandoned houses. They could be the strange family living in the house deep inside the forest, the homeless people huddling around the campfire, the hitchhiker in the rain, the illegal immigrants looking for work, or the neo-Nazi youth gang that came out of nowhere. Their packs exist all over the world and there is no cohesiveness among them, but they recognize one another by scent. Each pack differs depending on which Death Angel they are aligned with.

Thaumiel: This hierarchical pack features constant challenges to the leader, whenever he appears to be weak. Their victims are often the outcasts and weakest members of society. If the victims manage to offer resistance, the pack may allow them to escape, as they have proven their strength.

Chagidiel: Children and youths are the pack's victims. They are kidnapped, raped, and often forced to witness their parents being slaughtered in front of them and then forced to eat the bloody remains. If the child is consumed by madness and worthy of becoming a part of the pack, it is allowed to live; otherwise, it is torn asunder.

Satbariel: These Jackals are lone wanderers without a pack. Their victims are usually perfect, happy families, who are murdered in their homes. Occasionally, a family member is allowed to live, in order to carry forth the memories and pain.

Gamichicoth: The pack finds enjoyment in the terror of the hunt. They let the victim know they are after it with telephone calls, menacing messages, and warnings. They want to see how it is broken down by the horror before they devour it.

Golab: Suffering is what fills the pack with ecstasy. They take their victims to desolate, abandoned houses or down into culverts and tunnels, where they are then tortured for days. Every member of the pack is allowed time with the victim, and they compete in terms of who can inflict the most severe pain.

Togarini: Packs whose grisly deeds are ghoulishly overwrought, and in many ways beautiful. They often select successful and attractive people as their victims, and then slaughter them ritualistically. Necrophilia often occurs.

Hareb-Serap: The pack is often well armed and selects gangs or other individuals who can offer them the most resistance. They engage in frenzied slaughter, eating their victims during or immediately after the heat of battle.

Samael: The desire for revenge burns within the pack. They have selected a specific group of people on whom to exact their vengeance. The victims might be police officers, Muslims, successful women, immigrants, or similar groups.

Gamaliel: Passion propels the pack. They have incestuous relations and plenty of genetic deformities, particularly if the pack has existed for some time. Victims are captured and raped repeatedly by the entire pack before finally being eaten.

Nahemoth: The pack lives in the wilderness, often close to abandoned communities and dilapidated industries. They are almost entirely animalistic and capture anyone who enters their home range, dragging them to their den to eat them.

The Crazed Dancers

The Crazed Dancers are twisted creatures which move to the notes flowing up from the nothingness of the abyss. Their grotesque limbs are constantly in motion, bodies stitched together, back to back, and conjoined by fleshy carbuncles and wens. They perpetually spin in eternal dervish dances, adhering to invisible symbols and unlocking portals between the worlds. They once were ordinary people who went insane, and then succumbed to and were led into the dance by being joined together back to back with another man or woman. Now, they are strange abominations with maddened looks; their four arms and four legs swirling round and round. Otherworldly notes and tones can be heard all around them, and the movements and gestures they produce erode the Illusion. Lunatics worship them as gods, or use them as guardians and gatekeepers. Certain dances open up portals to Inferno, the Machine City, the Underworld, or even into an Archon's Citadel. Being close to one of the Dancers means you are constantly at risk of being consumed by their insanity. In their proximity, a human being's physical body can changes and mutate as reality dissolves – even if this takes considerably longer.

The Crazed Dancers are distorted caricatures, their bodies naked, dirty, and covered with open wounds and peeling skin. Their feet are reduced to tattered stumps of meat, where protruding bones rake the floor. They are constantly in motion and have control over Time and Space, allowing them to float through the air dreamily and in impossible directions – or instantaneously disappear from one spot and turn up in another. They are not violent and usually ignore those around them. However, if their dance is interrupted, they shriek with both throats, and swiftly tear apart anyone in their path.

It is hard to say whether these beings possess any intellect, or are completely lost to the melodies of insanity. They are all initially created by conjurers of madness and one name especially is whispered again and again: Khla-Minder. Only when their bodies are completely extinguished can their dance finally cease. In old temples in the Middle East, the dancers have whirled through empty catacombs since time immemorial, and deep within the Underworld their dusky melodies resound in long-abandoned places.

The Crazed Dancers

CHAPTER 15
BEYOND PASSION

We all hunger to conquer and be conquered, to yield to our desires, to lose control and be transported to a place which exclusively revolves around pleasure. Passion is not love, but rather a selfish craving for satisfaction. It permeates everything we do and everything we are. Our self-serving nature was no secret until we were jailed by the Illusion. When we were gods, our desires knew no limits. We devoured everything we came across and tossed the leftovers aside. Pain and pleasure were one and the same. We were each other's rulers, and we were each other's slaves. We allowed ourselves to be skinned alive in ecstasy, only to be reborn into a new body to continue our pleasures anew. We were beautiful and shameless, never burdened with feelings of guilt, hesitation, or sympathy. Now, our diminished and captive senses cause us to fear this passion, and find it hard to accept and understand it. In contrast to death (a lie), madness (an attempt to escape), and our dreams (an expression of our soul), Passion is greater than all of us. Ruthless carnal hedonism is the safest and also the most dangerous escape into True Reality. It can return a shard of our lost divinity, but requires major sacrifices.

Gospel of the Flesh

Even though passion is something lodged in the mind, it is also strongly linked to the physical body. Drugs and alcohol intoxicate the senses and distort the Illusion. The intimacy of naked, quivering flesh overtakes us: the heavy breathing, pounding hearts, and spasmodic orgasms.

When we were gods, our bodies were the tools of the soul. They were strong, beautiful, and changeable. We had the ability to transform ourselves. One day we might be women, another day we would be men. We could be both, none, or something else entirely. Through our will, we could manipulate our hormones and reweave our DNA, cause extremities to regress or expand, cause cartilage and muscles to shift, and take any shape we desired. We were complete and perfect. Now our bodies are nothing more than primitive machines, which we keep alive by stuffing ourselves with food, soon discharged as stinking excrement. We age and grow weaker with every passing year until old age or illness pulls us down. For many, the bodies we wear feel wrong or inadequate. We try to remold and refine ourselves. We cleave our tongues, cut off our nipples, dye our hair, undergo extensive gender reassignment surgeries, take hormones, or decorate ourselves with tattoos and piercings. All of this in a desperate desire to discover who we really are.

Chastened Passion

Throughout history, our jailers have sought to curb our desires. They have taught us they are wrong, sinful, and we can only release them under strict, constituted rules, such as holy matrimony between man and woman. Our view of the various gender roles has blinded us. This is, perhaps, the Demiurge's greatest curse: dividing us into two arbitrary sexes and providing one of them with the divine right to govern the other. We have fought and killed for petty matters, such as how men and women ought to behave, how they should dress, and what rights and obligations they should have. Even in the modern age, sections of humanity remain blinded by these lies. In a fanatical yearning to serve God or culture, fundamentalists of all denominations beat their children into behaving, marry off their young adults to 'acceptable partners,' kill adulterers and non-heterosexual adults with the same prejudice, and otherwise punish any deviation from the 'norm' with extreme prejudice. Even those who do not conform to such draconian standards still ostracize, gossip about, and otherwise slowly destroy those living outside of the norm with a thousand little insinuations and innuendos.

The Demiurge's strict traditions have begun collapsing in many parts of the world, but we are ever blinded by Tiphareth's Principle. The need for beauty and validation has diminished us. We believe ourselves to be free, but we are shackled by the desire to own things, such as exclusive clothes, cutting-edge technology, and picture-perfect home decor – anything to make us feel special and important. We are so insecure, we must build a perfect world where we can be good-looking, fit, liked, and successful – all the while trying to conquer other perfect people. This pursuit, and the corresponding fear of falling behind, hold many of us in its grasp. Lifestyle blogs have become our new Bibles and models and celebrities our new saints and gods. We covet them, want to be them, want to fuck them – but this is not true desire.

True Passion

Embracing passion means suffering from strong emotions, which overtake your rational side. This is both a physical and psychological craving. Your entire life is consumed by this urge, and you cannot rid yourself of it. In certain cases, this passion may be tied to something other than a person. It may be the serial killer's hunt for trophies, the art collector's desire to possess rare objects, or even the pursuit of insight and forbidden knowledge. Regardless of subject, the path to this passion is always an extreme one. You are hurled into chaos, where obsession leads you into the borderlands of madness, and you spiral downward into ever more destructive behavior. At this frantic stage, however, you begin to behold the Truth, receive inspiration, and even snatch fleeting moments of divinity. True Passion largely manifests itself in two ways:

Unstoppable Passion

Passion can be fiery and unstoppable, a quest where you single-mindedly pursue your target and deny everything else in your world. Your life crumbles, as you abandon family, friends, and work, merely to be one with the desire that summons you. Nothing else matters, only the need to be with the person who makes your heart bleed, to acquire the perfect trophy, or complete your world-shattering discovery. A fire is raging within you. Your existence becomes tunnel-visioned, with Passion in the driver's seat.

Gnawing Passion

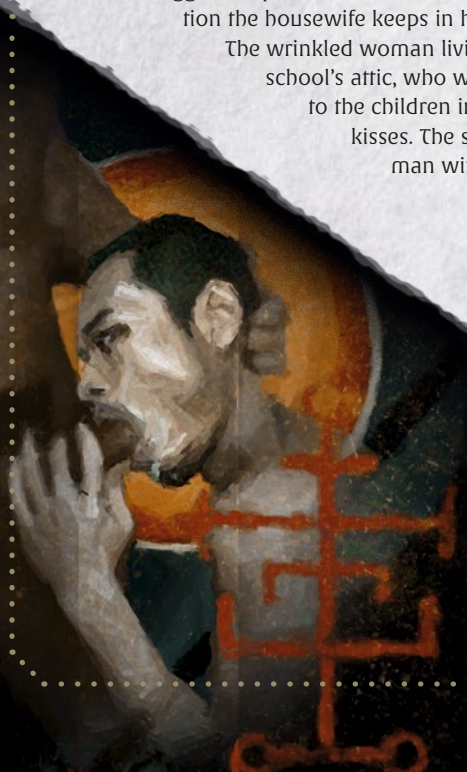
Passion can be something slowly sprouting within you, eating away like a cancer. It is the painful, perverse desire for a person you dare not approach, who rejects you, or appears unattainable. It is situations where you feel powerless and inadequate, such as your first teenage crush, lust for your married coworker, dreams of the hot looking boy bands, or illicit cravings for your teacher. Your inner life is consumed by your fantasies. You misinterpret every remark, and read hidden messages and innuendo into gestures, glances, text messages, and words. Here, in this suffering, there are insights to be gained too, no matter how painful they may be.

Transcendental Experiences

We are bound by society's sexual norms, but these increasingly disintegrate as we begin to emerge from captivity. We live in a world where sex and self-expressive experimentation are constantly available. With one click, you can find an infinity of free pornography online, where can you browse among films attempting to surpass each other in their extremes. It is a smorgasbord of flesh, desire, fear, vulnerability, body fluids, ecstasy, and humiliation offered up to an insatiable audience. Those who find their way onto the Internet's non-indexed wilderness easily find hidden forums and streaming sites, where they can take part in forbidden pleasures. They can caress themselves while watching torture, vivisection, snuff films, and other, darker things. In this place, they vicariously experience the thrill of life and death.

In the hunt for experiences and pleasure, we can engage in our own experimentation. Power exchange, humiliation, role-playing, and other kinks allow us to touch the edges of Passion. Some devote themselves to sadism, while others explore their masochistic desires. Behind our perfect façades, we relish the hidden bruises and lacerations on our bodies, mementos of giving ourselves completely over to another human being. The temptations of transition and death inspire us to be suffocated during the sensual act until we hover in the borderlands of death.

However, desire may also be found in the inexplicable attraction to something you also find repulsive – so alien it frightens or disgusts you, but which you cannot resist. Perhaps, this yearning is for something nonhuman: the desire for ragged or rotting bodies, someone who is covered in rustling skin flakes, slimy tongues, mechanical parts, or sharpened feathers. These shameful enticements keep escalating. You admonish yourself for these cravings, but are continuously dragged deeper into them. The curious abomination the housewife keeps in her bathroom. The wrinkled woman living in the school's attic, who whispers secrets to the children in exchange for kisses. The sweaty, hairy man with his stinking breath, but possessed of a voice so smooth and warm that you forget all else. The rusty machine in the industrial hall, which appears in recurring dreams. The alien being with chattering teeth, wild gaze, and orifices aplenty. Our appetites are warm, vicious, and alluring. They distort our thoughts, make our hearts pound, and our genitals swell, but they also unshackle us.



Sexuality as a Key

We instinctively sense that sexuality is the key to discovering what we are and what we might possibly be. This frightens most people. As we break sexual taboos, something within us is liberated and we lose our balance. We feel inhuman, divine. Innocent acts where you merely brush against the forbidden frontiers do not provide this effect – you must dare to take the plunge. Reality will be shattered through experiences the participants find totally revolting, mortifying, filled with ecstasy, or far beyond what they thought possible. On these occasions, we not only see through the Illusion, we catch a glimpse of our original divinity. For a moment, we have power over the Cosmos and unlimited insight into the very fabric of existence. We are gods again. But, as the sensations subside, these insights fade quickly.

At the end of the day, what constitutes a transcendental experience depends on the individual. Some subordinate themselves completely to another's power and strive to become totally broken and objectified in order to attain ecstasy and truth in their utter vulnerability. Some inject heroin from filthy syringes in the slums of Johannesburg, while others rape minors in a luxurious hotel room in Bangkok. There are those who achieve insight as they mutilate their genitals in front of a webcam. Others carry out ritualized sex magic in sacred temples. Yet all strive to achieve that euphoric rush as they feel their divinity awaken, if only for a moment. This may start with something which an outsider finds very insignificant. For a person who spent their entire life hiding and denying their homosexuality, finally engaging in such an act for the first time can be so powerful it provides them a glimpse of divine insight. The grasp of Illusion is powerful, though, and you must delve ever further into your experimentation in order to plumb the deeper mysteries of Passion.

In the Grip of Passion

If you devote yourself to acts of experimentation, these moments can cause the Illusion to momentarily crumble or provide new insights. On such occasions, the gamemaster may choose to make one of the Moves below.

• Insight into the Divine

Within the euphoric act, the individual receives momentary insight into the divine. They may peer through the veils of Illusion, remember things from previous lives, or perceive the powers holding humanity captive.

• Become a Victim of Passion

Through magic, experimentation, an encounter with a creature of Passion, or some other circumstance, the player character receives the Disadvantage ***Victim of Passion***.

• Following Passion

When passion burns brightly, it can rip through the veils of Illusion. This allows the ***Victim of Passion*** to break down the boundaries between life and death, and Time and Space. They have no control over this, as their divine abilities flare up instinctively.

• Attract Beings

Passions and perversions can attract beings from other worlds, such as darthea, libiths, Gamaliel's nepharites, phantoms, or other creatures attracted to pleasure and perversions.

• Receive Insight Into Another's Soul

During a passionate moment with one or several persons, one may catch a glimpse of their partners' true nature. A secret, a hidden yearning, or something else surfaces.

• Receive Divine Inspiration

Passion opens up portals to the subconscious, and the person's creative output momentarily becomes imaginative, uninhibited, and affecting. True works of art lay bare shards of Reality.

Cults

Coq Rouge

Ties with Powers: Gamaliel, Chagidiel, and the Dream Princess Yōko Sakai.

Members: The members are a motley assortment, including individual porn producers, proprietors of escort firms and brothels, criminals, human traffickers, webcam stars, sex addicts, and sex sadists. They exist at every societal level, but most are strongly connected to the underworld and illegal activities. Many of the members within the cult's inner circle are sex magicians.

Agenda: To explore forbidden desires, ensnare people through pornography, and offer sexual services of every kind to those of means.

Moves: ***Extortion and Deprecation***, ***Offer Forbidden Pleasures***, ***Draw in Dear Ones and Friends***, ***Procure Drugs***, ***Smuggle People***, ***Influential Contacts***.

Coq Rouge is a worldwide network operating fully legal activities within the pornography industry, as well as owning a host of sex clubs and brothels, and acting as agents for prostitutes and escorts. Most of their activities are found online and the cult has a massive influence over both large porn sites and the most obscure webpages on the Dark Net. Their facade conceals a host of horrors, however. In brothels in Asia, children are born into lives of slavery and are strictly raised to charm and satisfy visitors from the Western world. Gangs abduct women from Eastern Europe and take them to a brothel on the other side of the globe, where they are forced to service up to thirty paying customers a day. Drugged youths are taken into concrete basements and shelters, forced to appear in brutal rape porn. In secluded buildings, naked corpses are lowered into manure wells or are burned in large ovens. Many of the cult's inner circle are sex magicians and have temples and rendezvous spots in brothel basements. The cult has its largest presence in former French colonies, Algeria, Morocco, Indo-china, Quebec, Madagascar, as well as Louisiana in the United States, where cult magicians have a strong affiliation with the Cajun community. The cult is infiltrated by the Death Angels Gamaliel and Chagidiel, and also has connections to Limbo.

UE (Urban Elite)

Ties with Powers: Yesod, Netzach, and Tiphareth, but now heavily influenced by Gamaliel and Golab.

Members: Only the richest and the most powerful (a number of whom are actually lictors).

Agenda: Exploring the most extreme acts of self-indulgence and quenching forbidden appetites, while boosting their status within the group. Inviting influential people into the community, making them allies, and compelling them into silence. Climbing upwards in the group's distinct pecking order.

Moves: ***Gargantuan Riches***, ***Everyone is Bought and Paid For***, ***Hired Problem Solvers***, ***Clandestine Haunts***, ***Scapegoats***, ***Manipulate the Justice System***.

They live at the apex of human society. They speculate with monstrous sums of money, but are constantly hungry. You'll find stock brokers on Wall Street, bankers in London's financial quarters, oligarchs in Moscow's top tier, global business leaders, sharp-minded lawyers, and bored billionaires. They perpetually hunt for fulfillment, validation, and affirmation, and for them human life is measured monetarily like everything else. Their days are spent in financial headquarters in Manhattan, London, Singapore, Tokyo, or Paris, and at night they let their appetites run amok, staying awake through cocaine and amphetamines. They visit the finest escort services and always have access to prostitutes. Yet even this excess soon loses its charm, so they use their enormous resources to go farther. It becomes a competition between them, each searching for the most macabre acts and conquests. Everything is a status contest. Together, they devote themselves to betting and raising the stakes ever-higher with human lives on the line – sometimes, their own. Someone keeps a minor in their office, raping them between meetings. Another travels to industrial premises to slaughter women and men from poor countries, people who will not be missed. Some pick up models and semi-celebrities and break them down. They do all this, lost in the rush of designer drugs and the dreams of more power and more money.

CREATURES

Mancipia

Mancipia were originally humanity's creations, which satisfied our passions and inspired our creativity. When the Demiurge pulled the veil of Illusion over our eyes, many of these beings were annihilated and the others were forced into servitude by the Archons.

Mancipia are eyeless beings, their bodies are hairless, and their tongues are long, soft, and serpentine. They are the perfect symbiosis between male and female. Their sweat tastes sweet and spicy, their lips and tongue are extremely supple, and their secretions are like the most delectable honey. Hidden by the Illusion, a mancipium appears human, but there is something alluring and wondrous about it. Perhaps it smells intoxicating, its eyes have a strange dazzle, or its laughter is clear and tinkling. A mancipium can incite a fiery obsession in a person, obscuring common sense and composure to the point of risking their life, family, friends, and possessions out of blind desire. They are often used to lead people astray who have come too close to a secret or are beginning to become problematic, but who cannot be killed. The Archon Malkuth uses mancipia to attract potential servants among humans. This creature's abilities can also lay bare humanity's divinity by awakening its creativity, inspiring peculiar and marvelous works of art.

A Mancipium

Darthea

A darthea is an entity of dreams and madness, which has been created out of humanity's desire for sex. It is an uninhibited abomination of bodily perversions, dripping genitals, twisted limbs, and slick bodily openings. It lives in the borderlands between dream and reality, and seeks out those with the darkest appetites – or alternatively the most innocent, in order to corrupt them. It arrives in dreams and settles like a seed deep within the victim. In contrast to most other possessing creatures, darthea do not suppress the consciousness of its victim. The possessed is constantly aware of what they are doing and has control over their actions in terms of everything except their sexuality. The victim is not aware they are possessed. Rather, it seems the afflicted individual's sexual neurosis is running amok. However, the possession causes the body to become distorted as the darthea tightens its grip. It may take days, weeks, or years. Their body becomes infected and discolored with black veins and flaky spots as the person falls ever deeper into the darthea's control, nursing it with perversions like a mother nurtures her child. Flickering cam shows, streamed porno clips, thumbed sex novels, and forbidden fantasies provide nourishment to the being. Stained mattresses in filthy brothels, incestuous assaults in the home, and violent sex in the lavatory booths of nightclubs are its birthplace. In time, a metamorphosis occurs and the creature is drawn from Limbo into Elysium's reality. In an obscene tearing and ripping splash of intestines, the darthea is born of the human who nourished it. The darthea has transformed into becoming a libith – a creature wholly and completely existing in Elysium.

Libiths

Libiths are creatures who are born out of our own passions and appetites, and which have their origins in Limbo. Some annihilate themselves during bizarre sex acts directly after their birth, while others live for centuries as parasites.

Libiths are drawn to people with strong sexual frustration. They provoke passions in their victims, and then play with them like a cat would with a mouse until the victim loses their minds, takes their own life, or humiliates themselves completely. Libiths can morph into any shape they desire. They normally contact the victim in human form, seduce them and then slowly transition into something increasingly nonhuman and repulsive, forcing them into despicable acts. Sex magicians occasionally make pacts with libiths and keep them as lovers or use them against their enemies. Other libiths become servants to Archons or Death Angels. Libiths may come in any shape and appearance. A few are described below:

The Abomination: Soggy, porous, and slimy. The creature stinks of sewage water and rancid fat. It approaches its victim carefully, crawling up through floor drains or toilets when the victim is asleep. It drags itself across the floor, leaving a trail of sewer water and wads of hair, dirt, and fetid waste before crawling into bed to tuck itself in with the dormant victim. In the morning, the bed is soaking wet and the stench nauseating, but the dreams are warm and alluring. The victim is filled with ecstasy, as if someone had injected them with heroin during the night. They develop a physical yearning to experience it once more. The Abomination reveals itself more and more until it becomes an integral part of the victim's life. In spite of its despicable stench and grotesque appearance, the victim's desire lingers and the pair make love repeatedly against the tile walls of the bathroom. The victim's life is increasingly consumed by the Abomination, as they must devote more and more effort to keep it clandestine from friends, family, and work mates.

The Domestic Abuser: It always starts off pleasantly and delightfully, the libith showing off its very best side. It hosts dinners, kisses tenderly, remains courteous, and keeps a respectful distance. But once it has tethered a human being into a relationship, the mental degradation begins. The person is increasingly sequestered from their friends, and is expected to constantly perform sexual acts, most of which they find repulsive and demeaning. Denials are met at first with the imposition of guilt, then vitriolic reprimands, and finally the fists. It descends into a spiral of destruction, and the libith now begins to physically contort when it becomes angry, becoming an insane monster demanding to be worshipped like a god. This libith often seeks out single parents and appears to find pleasure in the horrified gaze of children as it humiliates their parent before them.

Eva Graue: A perpetually young pornstar who is known on the web for her site (evagraue.com), where she publishes photos and films, as well as encourage her fans to pay for private webcam shows or online meetings. She is active on Twitter, Facebook, Google+, Renren, Youku, and other social media all across the world. Eva Graue specializes in financial domination, where she quickly becomes worshipped and showered with gifts. She has developed a large fan base who are prepared to sacrifice anything – family, fortune, and work for a few extra minutes with her on webcam. In their attempts to be with her, many of Eva's most faithful followers have committed suicide, been committed to asylums, or are incarcerated on stalking and assault charges.

The Lure: This libith always assumes the form of a man in his late teens. He is invariably beautiful and there is something wistful, dark, and alluring about him. He seeks out teenage girls who do not feel validated and allows them to be close to him, soon having them wrapped around his little finger. One moment he may be romantic, but he is cold and reclusive the next. There is something shattered about him and the girls dearly want to mend his broken heart. They are increasingly torn asunder as his mood swings escalate. He makes them abandon their friends and spite their families, and even start fights with other girls who crave his attention. Only when his victim is completely destroyed, driven down into the darkest depths of anxiety, on the verge of suicide, does he abandon them and move on to the next unfortunate. The girls who do not take their own lives or go insane (or through some miracle release his hooks in their soul) become possessed by this mysterious teenage infatuation for the rest of their lives.

The Doll: Innocent, pretty, and diminutive.

The Libith assumes the form of a beautiful boy or girl and seeks out pedophiles – preferably those who only lust for children, but have not yet ventured beyond their fantasies. Using subtle invitations, playfulness, and whispers of secret fantasies, as well as expressing their curiosity for exploring adult pleasures, they hook their victims. They then proceed to drive them ever further down into perdition, inspiring them to molest other children. When the victim has been completely shredded by their cravings, they are abandoned. Often the libith divulges the victim's horrific deeds to the families whose children have been molested, or to the authorities.

The Doll

Home: Elysium.

Creature Type: Libith (Human form).

Abilities

- *Shapeshifter:* Can take any shape and form it wants.

Combat [2], **Influence** [3], **Magic** [4].

Combat [Novice]

- Cry and beg for mercy.
- Run away and hide.

Influence [Considerable]

- Impersonate someone.
- Exploit a secret they learned.
- Infiltrate a family or group of people.

Magic [Powerful]

- Influence or control another being.
- Know someone's deepest fantasies.
- Create an insatiable lust for the libith [**–1 Stability** every day without it, but it will never get lower than *Anxious*].
- Manipulate Memories.

Attacks

Libiths use manipulation and magic to take control over their victims. When faced with direct violence they often try to manipulate the attacker until a moment of opportunity arises. They usually play helpless in hopes of surprising the attacker. If they get overwhelmed, the libith tries to run away and hide, then attack when their enemy lets her guard down.

Unarmed: Knock over [0] [Distance: arm, the victim is knocked to the ground]; Punch & kick [1] [Distance: arm].

Knife: Cut up [2] [Distance: arm].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○ ☠

- Scratches.
- Subdued.
- Changes its shape to something the attacker desires.
- Disappears.
- Dead.

CHAPTER 16
BEYOND THE DREAM

THE NIGHT SWEEPS MENACINGLY ACROSS THE WORLD, DRAPING FORESTS, MOUNTAINS, seas, and plains beneath its dark cloak. Its haunting semblance envelopes our cities' facades, becoming the soil where our dreams can burgeon. We close our eyes, depart from our defenseless bodies, and slip freely into another reality – an existence beyond our captive, physical selves. Limbo, the domain of Dreams, is more a state of existence than a true location, a mosaic of memories and emotions welling up from our subconscious. It is a boundless universe, as transient as it is enchanting. Within it, we encounter a patchwork of elaborate vistas and reflections, which quickly fade from our minds when we awaken. They appear incomprehensible, shadowy yet wondrous. They are more than simple impressions, recollections, and images from our brains. If we would only dare to peer into ourselves, we might discover clues to our divine origins in this dream state. Here, deep within us, we can venture into others' dreams, create worlds of our own, explore hidden things, and encounter beings and wanderers, who live in this existence beyond Time and Space.

Once we circumnavigate Limbo's first barrier, vault after vault are opened to us for all eternity.

Our Inner Universe

Most of mankind is powerless in their dreams. We do not realize we are dreaming, and thus have no control over our new state, roaming aimlessly in the dream's landscape, only to forget our experiences after we awaken. In order to take control of our dreams, we must first become aware we are actually dreaming. This ability is known as *lucid dreaming*. Having achieved this, you can try to steer your dream-self through your subconscious. Exploring the dream world always requires passing through some sort of barrier, in order to continually sail deeper into your inner self:

Clawing open the dark, green wallpaper of your childhood home, allowing yourself to sink into the black, primordial sea beyond; pulling the red drapes aside, climbing over the sooty brick wall, and daring to enter the dark alley below; creeping back into the womb of the mother you never knew; turning over the yellowed tiles in the morgue; taking the elevator to the bottom floor, where the atrocities were carried out; finishing the last sequence in the arcane cypher; letting the razor cut away all that is human; taking the stage and disrobing before the leering audience; putting the revolver against your temple and pulling the trigger; forgiving the unforgivable; putting the key in the lock of the blue door and turning it…

Changes in the Dream World

As you travel through Limbo, the dreams around you also change. However, as a dream wanderer, you must pay close attention to sudden shifts in the dream, as you may not be the true, or sole, source of these alterations. It may be you've strayed too close to the place called Vortex, or unknowingly slipped into someone else's dream or a completely different world. Worse yet, some kind of dream creature may have entered your dream and its presence is distorting the environment. These changes are often dramatic and surreal:

Heaven runs dry, exposing what lies beyond; the bloodstain becomes a gaping aperture; birds morph into sharp knives; the sky explodes into a myriad of colors; the scent of hot asphalt fills your nose and dazzling lights spark before your eyes; bricks folding inwards, opening into a yawning portal; the cube held in your hand turns out to be featureless and two-dimensional; everything tips over and seemingly retreats away; blue nuances become a bitter taste on the back of your tongue; tears fall upwards and become stars in the firmament; a distant shriek turns into a hurricane; the scent of sweetness corrupts into the stench of sulphur; the telephone's buzzing signal transitions into the sound of a train, thundering towards you…

Sometimes, you assume a completely new semblance. Your dream-self distorts and is recast, while your clothes adjust to match the new world. You may regress into your childhood self, or assume the body of an animal or creature. It may take time before you understand you have been changed, as the dream often makes your altered form feel natural.

Traveling Between Dreams

Using the concept of Similarity, we can cross over into the comparable dreams of other beings. In effect, a dream about a forest exists in close proximity to any other dream about forests, making them easier to travel to. In contrast, dreams about urban environments are wholly dissimilar from dreams of the desert, making the journey more difficult. To move from dream to dream, you must alter and merge the dreams, repainting each in your mind, all the while progressing towards your objective. Sometimes, there are shortcuts to be found, such as portals, staircases, and passageways, which create portals directly between two dream worlds. These often occur when dreamers are closely tied to each other outside of Limbo.

When you traverse through others' dream worlds, you invariably leave trails. As with the concept of Contagion, you infect their dreams with your consciousness, your memories of people and places surfacing in their dream world, lingering there. These psychic trails enable the perceptive wanderer to trace a trespassing dreamer back to his own existence. Occasionally, these trails spread like mental rot and can transform dream worlds entirely or fracture them into pieces. An adept dream wanderer tries to conceal their presence, but sometimes it becomes unavoidable to leave parts of one's self behind.

Death and the Dream

Dying in the domains of dream is seldom dangerous. Typically, our 'death' startles us awake, but at other times we merely change roles and are thrust into a new dream. On the other hand, those whose waking bodies perish while they're asleep can become mentally trapped in Limbo. Their disconnected souls do not move onwards, becoming ragged dream wanderers, who often do not even understand what has befallen them. Dreams also crisscross Time and Space, so you can slip into the dreams of someone who is dead in Elysium, yet still very much alive in Limbo.

Dream Wandering

A dream wanderer must learn a number of diverse techniques in order to master their dreams and the subtleties of Limbo. Gaining true proficiency usually requires considerable time and training, but can also come naturally to some people.

Alter Dreams

With this technique, you consciously manipulate and rebuild the weave of dreams. Smaller changes are simple, such as turning an iron tube into a crowbar or remodeling a wardrobe into a front door. More dramatic effects like tearing open a section of the sky, making houses melt, letting the sea flood in, are difficult and potentially risky – particularly if you are changing others' dreams.

Alter Dream Self

While dreaming, you usually possess your normal appearance, unless you have a differing perception of yourself in the dream world. However, it is possible to make minor changes, such as facial features, hair color, and even gender, without much effort. Reconstructing one's entire semblance is very difficult outside one's own dreams, such as morphing into another being or acquiring unusual properties like supernatural strength, the ability to fly, or heightened senses.

Invoke Dream Beings/ Dreamers

The wanderer can extend their perceptions into Limbo, and invoke an entity or another dreamer, summoning them into your dream world. There are always great risks in this, especially if you happen to draw the attentions of something undesirable. Dream beings can function as guides and fonts of knowledge, usually requesting payment in the form of memories and dream fragments.

Find Lost Knowledge

In Limbo, you can explore the memories of your past, gain insight into the collective unconscious of humanity, uncover secrets in other people's dream worlds, or find the pathways and keys leading to your divinity. This search requires crossing many barriers and approaching Vortex. Memories and insights often assume the guise of objects with which we have a personal connection, such as notebooks, laptop computers, dolls, or melodies. Aspects of our psyches assume symbolic form in the realms of Limbo. Occasionally, you must search for your memories, as they may be hidden in the deepest basement, buried in your father's coffin, within an elusive film clip on the Internet, amongst a pile of unopened letters, recorded on an old VHS tape, or stashed away in dusty archives. Here you can bump into forgotten traumas, childhood joys, and crushing sorrows collected in a splintered mosaic. The naive dreams of childhood, abandoned and raped by the undertakings of adult life, wait to be rediscovered.

Open Portal

It is possible to open a portal from Limbo to Elysium or the other realities, and then step through as one's dream self. This is something hard, strenuous, and very dangerous – more so when employing an inhuman shape. Exiting directly from Limbo into Elysium or other worlds is something only the most powerful dream wanderers can accomplish.

Beyond the Dream

Within Limbo's inner depths, we can travel beyond our own dreams. Here, we can find the source of all dreams, shattered dream worlds, and entire domains ruled by deranged despots. Purposefully venturing here is to be born into a new and deeper existence.

Vortex

There is a place deep within us where our spirit mixes with all the souls of humanity. Vortex is the source of infinite wisdom and insight, which stems from our collective unconscious – a majestic whirlpool of chaotic images, emotions, and impressions. The closer we approach its boundaries, the more our souls are laid bare. We can perceive more dimensions and unlock many of the shackles the Demiurge has placed upon us. Memories from previous existences rewind and flicker before our eyes in a cacophony of impressions:

Faint semblances of beasts lick at your hand in submission; a gigantic, brass clockwork; a skinned hide you once bore; a rust-coated ring of keys; a machine heart, pulsating; a marble throne from which you once ruled; a weapon you once used to take your own life; the ashes from a scorched world; feathers from ragged angel wings; an aborted fetus who was you in another time, tiny and fragile in your hand, returning your gaze.

If you venture to the rim of Vortex, dreams rapidly supplant one another, none of them enduring for more than a moment. New scenes appear, creatures change shapes or disappear, perceptions become distorted as Time itself proceeds irregularly. Slowly but surely, you are torn asunder, extinguished, or transformed into an insane dream creature. To acquire insight into Vortex's mysteries, one must voyage into the dream worlds closest to the tempest, which endure like exotic islands. The most stable of these realms belong to the Dream Princes, or are the dying remnants of tattered dreams. In these sanctuaries, you can sip from Vortex's well source without being drowned in its flash flood.

Tattered Dreams

As you approach the genesis of dreams, you encounter shattered dream worlds orbiting Vortex like dead planets, each replete with lost wanderers and forlorn beings. This virtual macrocosm of worlds consists of humanity's dreams long forgotten, crushed, or slowly fading away. Existing solely in Limbo, these quasi-beings have been created out of our memories and yearnings – forlorn semblances which are neither alive nor dead. They are our abandoned children, meandering aimlessly through the labyrinth of Limbo until they wither and fade away.

From time to time, these forsaken worlds drift into our dreams by accident, or we may encounter them while traveling. Some of these tattered dreams are well known to dream magicians, described in ancient writings, or mentioned on Internet pages about dream interpretation and sleep research. Some of the incalculable number of tattered dreams include:

The sun is a blood-red sore upon an ash-grey sky. *Old women dance naked amid rusty skewers and hooks, their wrinkled bodies, hanging breasts, and aging joints moving to a jerky rhythm. Eyes, white-grey from glaucoma, stare upwards – toothless jaws hanging open. When one of them collapses from exhaustion, she is dragged towards the sacrificial bowl, so she can vomit liquid gold, sizzling in the chilly air and scalding her lips. Should they catch a dreamer's scent, they howl hoarsely, drop to all fours, and hunt her down like wild predators.*

The building is infinite, *a tower with no end, an insane architectural nightmare of stairs upon stairs. Tall windows veer towards a grey haze. Birds, no more than silhouettes, writhe against the dusty sky, screeching in futility and dashing themselves against the glass, leaving a trail of down, blood, and swirling feathers.*

The small Mexican hamlet has houses with white-limed walls. *The living heat sets everything quivering. The skies and stars are fanciful and impressionistic – like a painting by Van Gogh. Here and there, the buildings are smudged. You can almost smell the oil paint and turpentine. Every step you take causes the world to corrode and discharge, everything turning rancid in the blazing sun. Uncontrollably, you retch and your stomach contents smear the colors further. When you arrive at the tavern, its interior is in a state of decay. You almost sink through the gas-bloated floor. On the table there waits a revolver. There is a bullet. The dream has no other exit.*

You are a child; your realm is the wardrobe in which you are hiding. *You hear quarreling in the world outside, but inside the wardrobe you are safe. You can rest your head against the thick, winter jacket, nuzzling the teddy bear's soft fur. The pillow is soft beneath you, and the flashlight is there in an emergency. Then, you hear footsteps approaching. His steps. You wet yourself.*

The night is thick outside the winter palace. *A crescent moon bleeds its content over the sky – you can almost taste it. In the ballroom, distorted mammals ferment and swell. The orchestra has stopped playing. From the top floor, there is the sound of nervous laughter. There the tsar and his court crawl across polished floors and flip coins of cracked jade.*

White rocks cover the beach, polished by millennia of waves. *The sea moves in heavy, murky swells. The giant woman sprawls out like an oblong island in the waves. She lies sideways, only one of her eyes protruding over the surface of the water. Her gaze is hateful. Her mouth is wide open, and the water surges from it. She can only stare, seethe, and allow her waters to drown the world. Year by year, she devours ever more of the countryside. There is not much solid land left. The old lighthouse keeper can tell the whole tale. He has been here forever.*

Rusting industries where ageless beasts have dug their dens, *and adorned them with bones and broken altars. Hungry children wander, walking over slivers and shards with tattered feet. They bleed from every wound and their skin resembles old parchment. Bliss and biblical truths seep from them up toward a sky filled with an eternity of stars. Every sacred stanza makes the stars flow and churn, as they dance to the Creator's will. Those who wander here without stigmata or blood sacrifices for the God and the Cosmos awaken the beasts, which slumber with their heads buried in their clawed hands.*

On a pedestal stands an old computer. *The screen is thick, it's once-beige surface is discolored, and the monitor flickers with a green glow. A naked, old man hangs from a noose in the ceiling. He swings to and fro in an imperceptible wind. You approach the computer's screen and look at it. The green text against the black backdrop asks, "Do you want to play a game?"*

Shards of futuristic megacities, *space stations, and virtual worlds circulate around you. Each alien landscape is torn asunder and obliterated before your eyes. The air resounds with a cacophony of roars, white noise, and screeching metal. In a cryogenic chamber beside you, there lies a woman with electrodes on her forehead. The electronic display reveals she is dying. Her every faint heartbeat is like a hammer against an anvil, smashing the world into pieces.*

The Dream Princes

Dream Princes are people who have abandoned their bodies in Elysium and, via their Art of Dreaming, have created personal realities close to Vortex. Skillfully crafting the architecture of dreams, they've created safe passages through Limbo to reach their dream realms, located right next to Vortex's border. These sprawling, cumbersome constructions are not torn asunder by the whirlpool's violence, so long as the Dream Prince continues attaching and replacing dream worlds in exactly the right formation, much like pieces of an intricate jigsaw puzzle. Yet, even with the limitless resources of Limbo, the Dream Princes remain locked in an eternal power struggle, as their territories bleed right into each other.

The Dream Princes are tragic beings. They've escaped the Demiurge's constraints and machinations, and can sense their lost divinity. But, even in Limbo, they remain faint shadows of what they could become. Their continual conflicts have turned them tyrannical and cruel, and they've fallen into feverish madness, desperately trying to maintain their disintegrating worlds, all the while striving to elevate and glorify themselves. They've become so entwined with their dream realms, it is difficult to view them separately.

The World of Archaic Knowledge and Omnipotent Minds *is a dream where magnificent marble monuments, columns, and statues stretch toward a clear, blue sky. Ancient cities lie in verdant, pastoral landscapes, and the ocean's scent and the sound of waves are ever present in remote areas. The dream world is modeled after the idealized concepts of Atlantis. A perfect society. A perfect world. Few beings are found here, as its inhabitants have been systematically expunged time and time again, whenever the Dream Prince, Friedrich Köpfel, has grown dissatisfied with their progress. He is currently in the process of breeding a new population, which will match his strict ideals. Formerly, a court chemist in the service of the duke of Thüringen, Köpfel started creating his dream worlds back in the 17th century.*

The World of Stone Temples and Feverish Suffering *is a dusky dream, replete with an overwhelming soundscape – a background murmur of ethereal music, buzzing insects, mumbling in forgotten languages, terrified whimpering, and the first cries of newborns. The dream is sickly hot and stinks of ash, blood, and sweat. Visitors to this dream feel groggy and bloated, many soon begin bleeding from the eyes, mouth, and genitals. Everything seems to vibrate and tremble. Creatures initially appear two-dimensional and colorless, only to become painfully alive without warning. In a moldering temple hall at the dream's heart lies the Maiden of Torment – blinded, genitally mutilated, bloated from pregnancy, and writhing with maggots, which crawl from the infected wounds of her amputated limbs. She is surrounded by grotesque apsara, which detach from the walls on which they have been carved, and dance on quashed feet around her bloody, stone bed. The Maiden wants everyone to suffer as she has suffered, filling her fevered nightmare with undead children, pregnant torture victims, and bestial demons in ivory masks.*

This Dream World of Captivation and Godliness *is rife with snow-clad forests, frozen rivers, mountains, and steppes, which are crisscrossed by meandering pilgrim routes, where cortèges of monks dressed in black march, carrying gilded crosses and blood-dripping icons. In the villages, people gather in timbered cottages and spend their dread-filled nights huddled around fires and sooty grease candles, lost in prayer to their punishing god. Magnificent cathedrals with onion-shaped domes and secluded monasteries clinging to mountains serve as hubs of light in this dark and inhospitable world. In dark church rooms with images of saints, choking incense, and thousands of iconostases, the sinful flog themselves in ecstasy until their backs are raw and smeared in blood. The Dream Prince, Nikolaj Makarov, wanders through his domains as the new Messiah, doling out blessings and spreading God's word to the faithful, and punishing those who are not sufficiently subservient.*

The World of Cold Cities and Perfect Order *is a copy of our modern world, but idyllic, false, and meticulously organized in infinite, repetitive patterns. Suburbs of detached houses with perfectly groomed lawns stretch endlessly towards the horizon, surrounding pristine urban centers devoid of litter and graffiti. Hidden from sight, prisons with tens of thousands of identical cells loom, waiting to be filled. People who have been drawn into the dreams are reproduced into countless copies, all identical and banal. The world's bureaucracy is draconian, the ever-present paranoia crushing all thoughts of rebellion. Every citizen remains under continual surveillance, monitored by cameras, drones, subdermal GPS implants, and informants. The Dream Prince, Aron Greenberg, wants to bring order and meaning to Limbo, shaping its entirety into something more akin to our waking world. He ceaselessly monitors his society of subjugated proles, and constantly issues new laws and decrees.*

The World of Fairytales and Full Moons *is a transient and dark world of myth, rich with primordial forests full of wild roses, hedge labyrinths, ruins, and stone bridges. These fantastical wilds are populated with unruly wanderers, dire wolves, seductive satyrs, and other fairytale beings. It is a world with elvish nights, moon shadows, and blood-red twilights where distant music, ghostly sobs, and sonorous laughter are heard in the distance. Nothing is certain here. The ground can rupture at any time, trees and walls can grow claws to snatch at you, the weeping child can turn out to be a straw doll, and the food you eat may be filled with larvae. Many of those who are pulled into this dream world are children, and some of them will never wake again. Close to Vortex, there is a large, rococo-style castle where the Dream Princess, Nicolette Pasteur, entertains her guests, as lavish and capricious as any fairytale queen. Her eerie and sweet dreams disseminated from here over the ages. Now, curious beings, fallen angels, and envoys from strange worlds arrange masquerade balls in the expanding labyrinth of dolls, drapery, and enormous four-poster beds.*

The World of Contagion and Doom *is a world of bloodstained, African dreamscapes, which have coalesced with a labyrinth of squalid hospital wards, culverts, morgues, and padded cells arranged in frustrating discord. Leopards stalk amid rows of rotting corpses and patients wail into their respirators, which have been cracked open from within by flowering vegetation. Everywhere, loose electric wires hang and spark, while creepy semblances lurk behind dirty, plastic curtains. Figures clad head to toe in protective gear and breathing masks hunt in determined, sinister silence for fleeing people and creatures, armed with flamethrowers, lobotomy drills, and hypodermic needles. The Dream Princess, Jolainne N'Gembo-Mouanda, is a physician and chemist from a global pandemic in the world's near future, and occasionally stretches her influence into the midnight wards of Elysium's clinics and psychiatric hospitals, in order to drag staff and patients into her spastic, burgeoning dream.*

The World of Madness and Mazes *is a dream filled with ashes, cliffs, shafts, and wondrous constructions of stone, metal, and rust. Everything is agglutinated in an unfathomable labyrinth, which meanders in all directions, extending from the absolute disintegration near Vortex to places where it subtly bleeds over into our*

waking world. In some locations, such as the chaos of Baghdad, Kabul, Mosul, and Basra, you can accidentally stray directly into this dream world. The labyrinth constantly twists and distorts, while ichtyria crawl everywhere, feasting on the bodies of dreamers who died during privations or were sacrificed by the Dream Prince's veiled servants. At the center of the labyrinth, atop a ziggurat of midnight-black basalt, the Dream Prince, Hammad al-Sufi, sits on a dusty throne, mumbling deranged incantations while servants, wanderers, and the insane bow and worship him as a god, faithfully recording his commands and surahs.

***The World of Secret Rooms and Tainted Passions** is a dream centered on a Japanese palace, which resembles a carnival of colors and impressions with hot baths, rice lanterns, and paper-walled rooms populated by a broad cast of characters, from the young and unsullied to the dangerous with their many knives. Outside the palace walls, other dream worlds sprawl outward, populated with shabby sex clubs, strip joints, and narrow alleys. It is a melting pot of desires and perversions. In smoky chambers and behind elegant shoji screens, naked, oil-drenched bodies take hold of each other, body fluids are ejected, meshed, swallowed, and generously smeared. Everything is crimson, sticky, and sordid. The Dream Princess, Yōko Sakai, often saunters through her glamorous empire, accompanied by an entourage of servants and slaves. She demands everyone desire and love her.*

When the Dream Shifts

The gamemaster can use the Moves listed below whenever a player character sleeps, is traveling in Limbo, or when they explore dream magic, dream wandering, or the forbidden domains of the Internet and come into contact with Limbo.

• Sleep Paralysis

The person awakens, able to hear and open their eyes enough to look around, but has no control over their body. Their consciousness remains stuck in dreams, yet they can also see and experience things around their physical body. Often one feels deep panic, has difficulty breathing, and senses other beings in the room with them.

• A Dream Come True

The dream defies Time and Space and you experience and see events that transpired in the past or will happen in the future.

• Sleep Walking

Although asleep, your body moves around on its own, eyes open and apparently conscious – even being able to talk and carry out complex actions. This can occur when you are under the temporary control of a dream being or the body's unconscious or primal instincts are taking hold.

• Shift Dreams

You drift into someone's dream world or a tattered dream, or pull some other sleeper into your dream world.

• Caught in the Dream

The barriers of Limbo close around the person, ensnaring them into the dream world. They cannot wake up or escape, unless the prerequisites change or a new exit can be found.

• Create a Realm of Dreams

A world comes into existence close to Vortex. The dreamer can be caught up in their own dream world or draw other dreamers into it. This world can exist long after the dreamer has died and also grow and change outside the dreamer's control.

• A Portal is Opened

A portal into or from a dream world is flung open. It can be anything from a door materializing in a wall, an entrance found in a wardrobe, a floor drain yawning open, a painting springing to life, a mirror you can climb through, or something completely different, such as a garment that transports you to another dream world whenever you put it on. Portals are usually temporary or only surface at specific times, but occasionally they can become permanent.

• Attract Beings

You attract a being from the dream world or create one out of your own dreams or fantasies. It can be born out of the person, appear through a portal, or manifest in the room or the local vicinity.

• Attract Dream Prince's Attention

A Dream Prince's attention sets upon the character, and they can choose to pull the wanderer into their domains, dispatch subjects against them, or simply contact them.

• Leave Traces

Whenever you wander in a tattered dream, dream world, or into someone else's dream, you invariably leave traces of yourself behind. However, in this case, the psychic trail is significant and soon grows powerful. Maybe it consumes the dream, causes something to shatter, lures something after you, or leads to something else unexpected.

• Discover Insight

In the dream, you may gain insight and knowledge lost to you, such as an old memory or a clue you have long mulled over. Your unconscious mind pieces together things you repressed, and you can view things in other places and times. Occasionally, these dreams are very chaotic and when you awake, you must assemble the pieces yourself. You can also find answers to questions about your own nature; however disagreeable they may be.

CULTS

The Stillwater Collective

Ties to Powers: Primarily the Dream Prince Friedrich Köpfel, but also Nikolaj Makarov and Hammad al-Sufi.

Members: Those who have been born into the Collective, tracing their lineage back several generations. Also those who are drawn into the cult after reading its literature and pamphlets, usually men and women in their twenties.

Agenda: To eternally escape into the dream world and live in God's bosom.

Moves: ***Lower Someone into Sleep***, ***Sleepwalking***, ***Invoking Dream Beings***, ***Fanatical Members***, ***Children as Shields***, ***Innocent Exterior***.

The cult was founded in the 1970s and mixed radical leftist opinions, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christian nonconformist mysticism with drug experiments, meditation, and occultism. They are now isolated in the countryside where they, and their many children, live in a large collective. They have neither television, radio, telephone, nor an Internet connection and all the children are homeschooled with a strict curriculum. Most of them work in agriculture and, like the Amish, strive to become self-sufficient. They also produce esoteric literature about dreams and dream wandering, and youths from the cult distribute pamphlets at local market places and outside malls.

With the aid of drugs and medication, they explore the dream world collectively. Their leader and founder, Rupert Stillwater, is in a state of sleep during most of the day. Within the cult they await 'The Rapture,' when they will find their way to a consummate, celestial home in Limbo and transfer their souls there, leaving the physical world and its shackles of materialism behind.

Black Sails

Ties to Powers: Insight into several Dream Princes and dream beings, but the largest insight into, and contact with, Aron Greenberg, Yōko Sakai and Nicolette Pasteur.

Members: Hackers, computer programmers, bloggers, and activists; most of them are in their twenties.

Agenda: Keep the Internet free. Contact the net's hidden entities.

Moves: ***Hacking***, ***Acquiring Information***, ***Changing Existing Information***, ***Planting Backdoors***, ***Closing Down Websites***, ***Spreading Rumors***.

This network of hackers, programmers, and whistleblowers consists of explorers and self-proclaimed prophets on the Internet. They work in close collaboration with sites such as Wikileaks and the Anonymous network, but have adopted an almost religious view of the Internet as a divine entity. Among their members, many argue it will awaken and become humanity's new God. In their exploration of the Internet's domains, they have encountered curious code sequences, web pages, and domains. Some believe these are signs of Artificial Intelligences (AIs) awakening. In truth, they are actually encountering the expansive consciousnesses of the Dream Princes. The Black Sails actively try to hack deeper into these constructs, and have noticed how several of them have even started talking back. Recently, some members have disappeared and there is growing paranoia the authorities are actively seeking the group. They do not realize these members have been drawn into Limbo – usually unwillingly.

CREATURES

We would be naive to believe ourselves safe in our dreams. Age-old beings exist in Limbo's darkness, eager to feed upon us like parasites. There are creatures born out of our worst nightmares, assuming the semblances we fear the most and haunting us every night. Some of these night terrors can even slip through the cracks into our waking world. Who truly knows what abominations and shadows watch over us as we sleep? What is stirred into life in the nooks and crannies, under the staircases, up in the attics, and down in the basements? We awake in cold sweats and realize we have been touched by some amorphous being far beyond our comprehension. But the Illusion soon reestablishes its grip on us and any knowledge and any insight we may have gained disappears beyond the veil. The more you explore the dream world, the more you expose yourself to its dangers. In your own dream universe, you are relatively secure in your innocent ignorance, but when you start to wander in the dreams of others, consciously manipulating their creations, you attract unwanted attention.

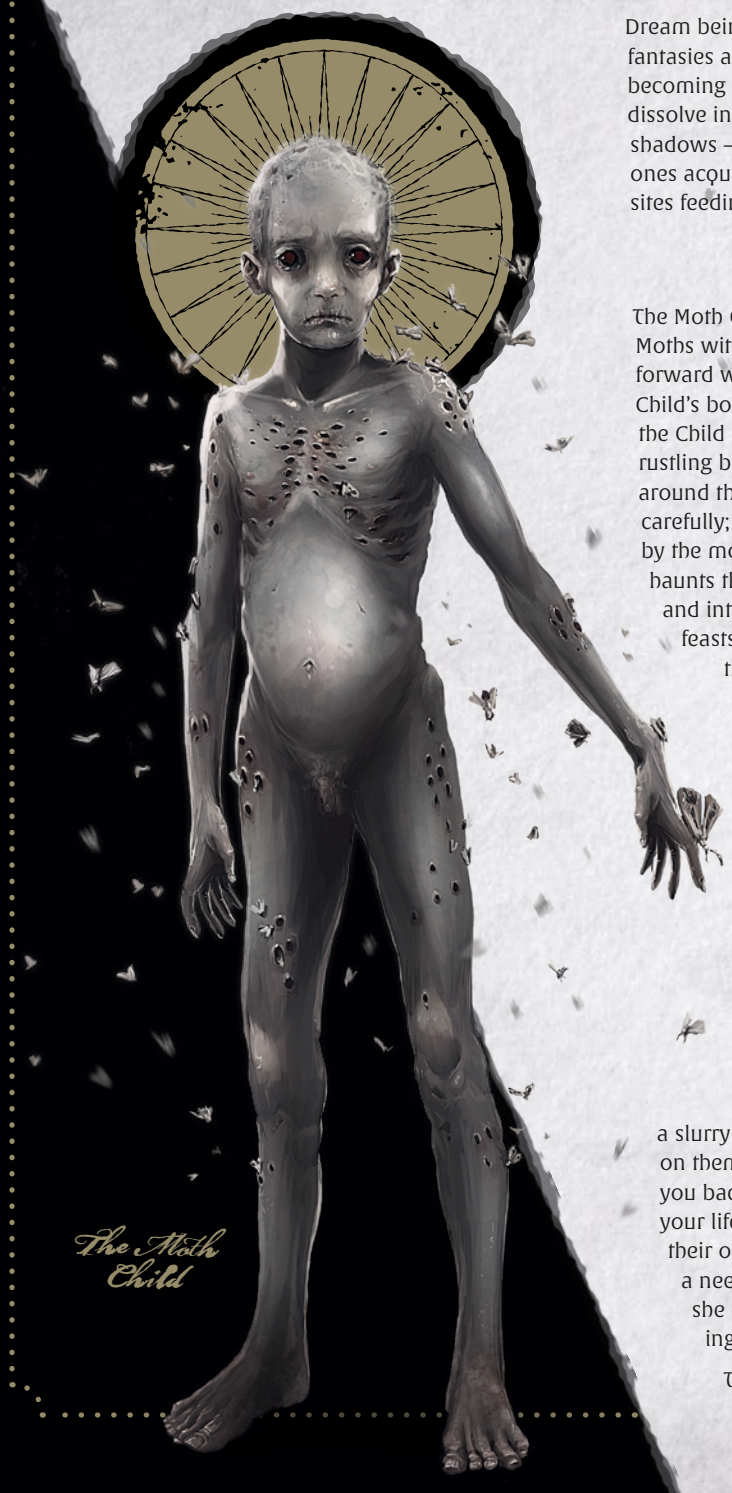
Ichtyria

Ichtyria are born of Vortex and only exist in Limbo. Outwardly, they resemble myriapods with segmented bodies, spindly legs, and fragile antennae. They can grow to be several meters long, and emit a distinctive, rustling sound from their bony plates and antennae as they crawl. They have circular, leech-like mouths running along their underbellies and can wrap themselves around beings, attaching to them like parasites. Ichtyria have the ability to create connections between dreams and reality, so victims who are tortured or slain in Limbo also suffer the same fate in the waking world.

Ichtyria exist in more dimensions than we are accustomed to or normally perceive. A dream wanderer viewing an ichtyrium from certain angles can see its true form: a mass of folded layers of skin, which move hypnotically like a sea anemone in an invisible current of water. The wanderer can enter its fleshy interior, crawling through these wet layers of skin, past corpulent outgrowths and pulsating veins, until they reach right into the creature's eye. This turbid pearl, large enough to hold in your hand, can be pulled from its sinewy roots, and the helpless ichtyrium screams and rots away as a result. Everything the creature devoured remains conserved in the eye – all the memories, thoughts, wanderers, and predictions.

Psyphagoes

Psyphagoes do not originate from Limbo. Instead, they have remained trapped there after losing their physical bodies lifetimes ago. In the dream world, the psyphago resembles its original appearance, but its existence in the dream world contorts, twists, and shreds this former semblance over time. Age-old psyphagoes are gravely distorted and grotesque monstrosities to behold. Each also carries the traits of previous vessels they've attacked. These beings hunt and overcome the sleeping, in order to experience the euphoria of possessing a corporeal body and quench their overwhelming desire for physical experiences. So excessive are they in their hedonistic pursuits of sex, violence, intoxication and other bodily sensations that a psyphago can ruin its host body in a matter of a few months. Meanwhile, the possessed person's dream self is held captive in the psyphago's dream world, which can be anything from a dungeon to a locked nursery. Should the dreamer somehow be liberated or manage to find a way to break free, they can resume control over their body – although they may have some explaining to do for their strange behavior.



Dream Beings

Dream beings are tragic creatures, quasi-beings created from our fantasies and longings. Some are resuscitated night after night, becoming helpless puppets in our internal dream plays. Others dissolve into oblivion and stare out from Limbo's dark corners and shadows – in the desperate hope of being noticed. A few lucky ones acquire power and insight, and become predators or parasites feeding on us. These latter beings, we should truly fear.

The Moth Child

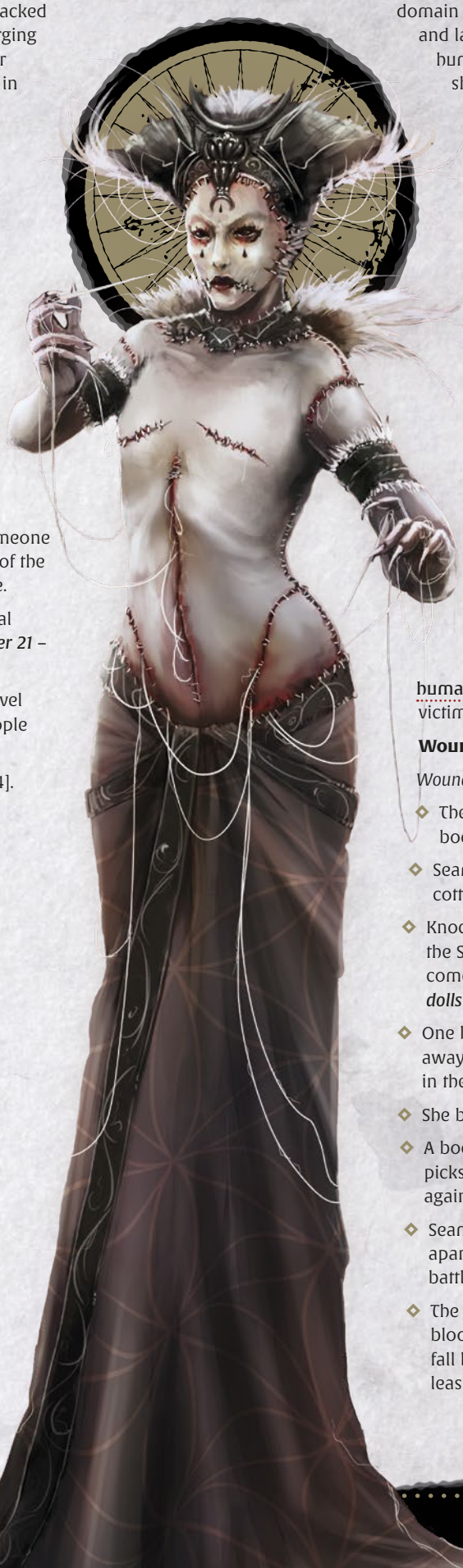
The Moth Child has a cumbersome body, ash-grey and naked. Moths with powdery wings crawl over its flesh, feeling their way forward with their antennae. They grow in cocoons inside the Child's body and squirm out of round, soft openings. Frequently, the Child claws open its veins with sharp talons and feeds its rustling brood with its blood, inciting them to swarm in frenzy around the wounds to drink. The creature moves silently and carefully; its voice is no more than a whisper, almost drowned out by the moths' restless wings. The Child selects solitary victims and haunts their dreams. As its prey sleeps, it crawls out of Limbo and into Elysium, where it makes an incision and greedily feasts on the victim's blood with its warm, red tongue, while the room fills with moths' lulling buzz. When the Moth Child intrudes upon your dream world, you begin to hear the moths' fluttering wings. Soon, you can see the Child behind mirrors and reflective glass, as it approaches and tries to find you. Once the victim is haunted, it also starts attracting moths in Elysium. Scores of them hover around any source of light and settle outside of windows.

The Seamstress

As the Seamstress approaches, pain starts spreading across your body. You sense a humming melody, the scent of camphor, and how the light appears faint and sooty. When she is finally beside you, your body splits into pieces. Your internal organs spill out in a slurry over the ground, and insects and birds descend to feast on them while you are still alive. The Seamstress offer to stitch you back together, requesting an odd payment: to be told about your life in the waking world. As the dreamer talks, she collects their organs and begins sewing their body back together with a needle and thread – but she always keeps one organ. Soon she demands additional services from the dreamer, promising to return the pilfered body part.

The seamstress' own dream world is a large, residential quarter in a French suburb. All the humans present are

dead. Their bodies have been ransacked and stitched together, cotton emerging from the cavities. They move at her command and attack all intruders in zombie-like fashion. At the road's end, deep within an unassuming house, lies her sewing chamber. Furnished with textiles, sewing machines, needles, and scissors. There, in her larder, floating in liquor, are the organs she has stolen from dreamers.



The Seamstress

Home: Limbo.

Creature Type: Powerful creature in Limbo.

Abilities

- *Domain:* She has a connection to her domain and immediately notices if someone would remove one or several of the organs, even if she is not there.
- *Pact-weaver:* This being can seal pacts with humans. See ***Chapter 21 – Pacts and Magic***.
- *Dreamer:* Can alter dreams, travel between dreams, and find people in dreams.

Combat [3], **Influence** [3], **Magic** [4].

Combat [Considerable]

- Command her human dolls.
- Stitch together limbs [**1 Harm**, *+1* ***Avoid Harm***].
- Rip open wounds [**3 Harm**, *+1* ***Avoid Harm***].

Influence [Considerable]

- Tell a convincing lie.
- Offer something in return for a favor.
- Know where something is located.

Magic [Powerful]

- Manipulate the dream.
- Tear someone apart by will.
- Repair a living being.
- Create and control human dolls.

Attacks

The Seamstress alters the dream, distort pathways, and separates individuals from each other. In her domain she lets them become distracted and later attacks them with her stuffed human dolls. She attacks with her razor sharp fingernails to rip open deep, bleeding wounds. She may also sew orifices and limbs together with a large sewing needle, rendering victims defenseless.

Fingernails like razors: Cut up [3] [Distance: arm, *+1* ***Avoid Harm***].

Needle & thread: Stitch [1] [Distance: arm, the victim gets caught in a sewing thread, ***Act Under Pressure*** to get loose. If the victim rips and tears the threads to get loose it automatically takes **1 Harm** – the threads go deep.]

Magic: Tear apart [–] [Distance: room, ***Keep it Together*** to not get torn asunder, alive but totally helpless. This attack can only be made if one listens to the melody she is humming]; Distort surroundings [–] [***See Through the Illusion*** to orientate yourself]; Surround with human dolls [1] [the dolls try to grab the victim, ***Act Under Pressure*** to get free].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○○○ ☠

- The attack penetrates the Seamstress' body without a visible effect.
- Seams on her body burst open exposing cotton soaked in blood.
- Knocked prone by the power of the attack, the Seamstress calls on her human dolls to come to her aid (see ***Surround with human dolls***).
- One black glass eye falls down and rolls away on the ground, leaving a bloody hole in the creature's head.
- She backs away and tries to offer a deal.
- A body part is torn off, but the Seamstress picks it up and starts to sew it back on again [*+1 on next roll* against her].
- Seams burst and her body starts to fall apart. She is weakened for the rest of the battle [*+1 ongoing* on all rolls against her].
- The Seamstress is reduced to a pile of bloody skin and cloth (and her human dolls fall lifelessly to the ground). She is dead – at least for now.

Nachtschrecke

The Yearning

The Yearning itself is spellbinding with pale fingers, thin hands, painted eyes, and long eyelashes. It sings songs in every language, and can guide you by the hand through Limbo, as well as to foreign places and worlds. As real as it may appear, the Yearning is only a dream – a fantasy created by an insane person's vehemence and appetites, yet it has a fervent desire to join the living. If you spend time with it, you quickly realize how vapid it is; the same phrases are repeated and the same gestures and smiles used, as though it is pantomiming. Sorrow resides in its beautiful eyes and behind its melancholy smile. However, when it dances, time itself appears to stop, and rust-red pollen drifts through the air, spreading the scent of saffron. It follows you silently through your dreams and makes observations, trying to protect you from dangers, if it can. As it approaches your dream, parts of Limbo are fringed and broken, exposing passages to a realm of red-resplendent shadows, fireflies, and the sound of waterfalls.

The Child Collector

Late at night, a wardrobe's doors slide back, and the shadows emit the lilting melodies of a music box, or colorful images sparkle on the computer or the TV. In this fashion, the Child Collector lures children into its dream world. In the morning, parents find empty beds, their little ones vanished without a trace, leaving only vague and anxious dreams from the night before. The Collector's dream world is a nocturnal waterfront choked with rusted vessels, where fish float bloated and rotting in the bay. On an oil platform, wreathed in mist, the children are kept captive. The creature feeds them and forces them to play with it. Hide and seek, peek-a-boo, dress up, and charades. During these moments, the Collector is truly happy. It wants the children to always remain its friends, but they always betray it by becoming adults. When this happens, the creature screams in sorrow over the victim's treachery, tearing them apart and devouring them in front the other captives. The Collector constantly measures the children's height, pokes and prods at them, sniffs their skin, and feels around to see if they are starting to develop breasts or pubic hair. Cunning children can conceal these signs of puberty for a while, but are only prolonging the inevitable. Some have succeeded in escaping back to Elysium, although the Collector never stops searching for these traitors.

The creature itself is pale, bald, and has large teeth, which are deformed, square, and constantly grinding and ruminating. It has no eyes, but uses its sense of smell and hearing to make its way around. Sometimes, its body is so large it stretches into the sky, and its every footstep makes the ground thunder. At other times, it is small, curled up, and hides in the shadows. It can disguise itself by wearing human hides, concealing its entire grotesque appearance for a while. When the Collector penetrates into your dream, you smell the scent of saltwater and decay, and can hear a music box in the distance.

Nachtschreck

A nachtschreck is a nightmare, which has been brought to life. It assumes the form of whatever the dreamer fears the most, infecting their dreams with rot and decay. Nachtschreck can move out into Elysium and live there, feeding on terror and urban myths. Nachtschreck have all kinds of unique forms, and each one finds its own way of reaching its victims – often spawned from the dreamer who gave them life.

One of them lurks behind misty mirrors, at the fringes of reality, somewhere on the edge of the hypnagogic state, hunting those who fear sleep.

Another manifests itself as a dusty, dark-blue mist upon all the blackness, slowly taking form. Is that a face in the gloom? Suddenly, the mist cracks open and you hear it: the roar of machines, the creaking of metal, and the stench of motor oil and decay spilling into the world. You cannot see anything, but feel something cold and corporeal step into our reality. The presence is awful and menacing, little more than a black shape in the dusk. Every night, it draws a little closer and leaves stinking trails of oil and blood in the room until the victim is eventually found, strangled in his bed or having taken her own life.

Blindmaiden.com is a web page only available during certain times of night, serving as a direct portal into Limbo. On the site, you find grotesque images of dismembered and tortured people, and the deeper you venture into the site's horrors, the more you look and read, the closer the nachtschreck comes. Finally you reach a page where it says "New content coming soon" and then the nachtschreck manifests in your room. It gives you a choice – either it will slay you immediately, or you must kill and maim a someone else (a stranger, a friend, your child...). Those who have been killed in this way turn up as new content on the webpage.

The black-eyed children with pale skin wander on the city's outskirts, wait in abandoned houses, or hitch a ride on the freeway. They often gaze downwards in order to hide their raven-black eyes from giving them away. When they talk, they sound strangely grown up and often ask for a ride, to be let in, or receive aid. If they are turned down, they venture onward, but may come to follow or haunt certain people and areas for an extended period of time.

The Black-Eyed Children

Home: Limbo.

Creature Type: Nachtschreck stirred into life by nightmares and urban legends.

Abilities

- *Cold hearted:* Cannot be influenced or charmed.

Combat [3], **Influence** [2], **Magic** [1].

Combat [Considerable]

- Surround someone [*–1 ongoing*].
- Hunt someone until they are caught.
- Burst out in sudden, senseless violence.

Influence [Novice]

- Play cat and mouse.
- Trick someone.

Magic [Weak]

- Travel between Limbo and Elysium.

Attacks

The black-eyed children thrive on their victims fear. They pursue their victims for hours, days, or even weeks.

Sharp objects: Sharp tools [1] [Distance: arm]; Drag to the ground [1] [Distance: arm, victim is pulled to the ground]; Cut off body parts [2] [Distance: arm, victim must be prone].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○○ ☠

- One of the black-eyed children is knocked out of the way.
- When one of the creatures' faces is hit, total blackness appears under the ripped skin.
- One of the children dies, but gives an opportunity for one of the others to come up behind the attacker.
- The black-eyed children become enraged (they do **+1 Harm** from now on).
- Your attacks push the creatures to the ground creating a possibility to flee [*+1 on next roll*].
- As sudden as they appeared, the black-eyed children disappear (you are safe for now...)

Dream Wanderers

Dream wanderers are people who have, over a long period of time, shifted their consciousness to Limbo, and assumed a permanent form there – while their physical bodies wither away and die. They have the ability to roam between dreams and can manipulate and distort them.

John M. Chivington

Colonel Chivington was a former Methodist priest who took part in the American Civil War. During the conflict, he acquired a taste for violence and conquest. When asked to force Indians off the Sand Creek Reserve to make room for the white settlers, he did so with the greatest gusto and brutality. No lives were spared, and he and his troops butchered men, women, and children, taking trophies and adorning themselves with scalps, genitalia, and fetuses carved out of women while they were still alive. This orgy of violence and euphoria was forever etched into his mind, and at night he replayed the massacre over and over again. In time, he completely stepped over into Limbo, leaving his body behind. Chivington worships Netzach, and one of the Archon's Incarnations regularly appears before him in the form of President Theodore Roosevelt, manipulating his propensity for violence towards Netzach's enemies. Chivington has slain a host of dream wanderers and dream magicians, and has even ventured out into Elysium to seek 'justice' there.

Yōko Sakai

Yōko Sakai was a geisha in 18th-century Japan, who started exploring her dreams with the aid of opium. She is now a Dream Princess, ruling over a dream world where her power is absolute (see above). Her dream world opens up to red-light districts around the world, where people who are fully awake can accidentally step into her perverse realm of feverish desires. She wishes to be worshipped and feared. She is curious about other dream wanderers, and usually offers them a personal audience in order to exchange information and find out who they are. Between the rice-paper walls in her palace, courtesans serve tea according to age-old rituals and offer trays with opium pipes, syringes with heroin, and the crystallized blood of angels. Mistress Sakai assesses her guests, and those who do not observe proper reverence and submission are captured and used as slaves. Those who enrage her in particular get to see her true countenance, and are flayed and woven into the palace's rice walls. However, those who display their submission, charm her, or have goods to trade may receive insights into Limbo's mysteries, be tutored in dream magic, or are led back to Elysium or into other dream realms via meandering alleys.

Yōko Sakai

Home: Limbo.

Creature Type: Dream Princess.

Abilities

- *Domain:* Has a connection to her domain and immediately notices if someone new enters her palace.
- *Dreamer:* Can alter dreams, travel between dreams, and find people in dreams.

Combat [2], **Influence** [5], **Magic** [5].

Combat [Considerable]

- Attack with hidden hairpins.
- Summon reinforcements.
- Folding fan cut.

Influence [Exceptional]

- Demand respect.
- Influence people and organizations in Elysium.
- Offer supernatural objects or knowledge in exchange for payments.
- Accumulate forbidden knowledge.
- Stage a complex plan with many moving parts.

Magic [Exceptional]

- Alter her dream world by will.
- Master in the lore of the Dream.
- Powerful dream wanderer.
- Reveal deep insights into Limbo.
- Move someone's physical body into Limbo.

Attacks

Yōko Sakai's power over her dream world is absolute and anything entering her world is at a clear disadvantage. If she were to be lured into other parts of Limbo or even into other dimensions, Yōko would probably surround herself with servants capable of protecting her against any threats.

Hidden hairpins: Surprise attack [2] [Distance: arm, the victim can only ***Avoid Harm***].

Folding fan: Cut up [2] [Distance: arm, may affect two victims within reach].

Magic: Alter the dream [1–3*] [Distance: field, ***Keep it Together*** to resist power directed at self].

** Harm depends on the alteration.*

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○○○ ☠

- The attack leaves only scratches.
- Yōko deflects a projectile with her folding fan, launching it onto another victim [***Avoid Harm***].
- Yōko alters the surroundings, forcing inanimate objects to attack her assailants like living creatures [**2 Harm**].
- One of Yōko's servants offers her life to save her mistress.
- Yōko alters the dream to regain life force and heal herself **1 Wound** per **Wound** she inflicts [***Keep it Together*** to resist the magic].
- A rip opens in Yōko's kimono, exposing blood trickling over the white skin.
- Yōko shouts in pain as the attack cuts up an open wound.
- The dream princess is knocked prone, unable to get up for some seconds [*+1 to next roll*].
- Yōko disappears as her dream world starts to unravel and rip apart.

CHAPTER 17
THE UNDERWORLD

BENEATH OUR CITIES EXISTS AN ENDLESS NETWORK OF UNDERGROUND SPACES – sewers, tunnels, culverts, subway tracks, shelters, and shafts. These wind ever deeper, reaching beneath the surface until they encounter passageways not of our world. Far below, the Underworld's labyrinths meet both Metropolis and Inferno, then continue even deeper into nothingness itself. In this Stygian darkness, you might encounter the Watchers put there by the Archons, wild-eyed lunatics, prophets, cult leaders, and the Children of the Night. Yet, more exists even below these depths, where the chiseled passageways devolve into natural caves and tunnels – home to beings from worlds long since vanquished. The city of Kronor is at the very bottom, and beyond it waits the devouring nothingness. To travel down into the Underworld is to place oneself in a state of danger and dread. It is a dark, snaking labyrinth with innumerable perils to both body and soul. If you should ever reach the surface again, you will never be the same.

Darkness and Nothingness

Darkness has always been with us. It is synonymous with the night, the Underworld, the enclosed, the clandestine, and a metaphor for evil, danger, and the unknown. Darkness fills us with doubt and primal fear. It is the antithesis of enlightenment, smothering the light of knowledge and wisdom. We have always tried to hold darkness at bay. From the earliest days of our captivity, we've gathered around open fires and gazed with fear into the night. Now, we drive away the dark with light bulbs, street lamps, and dazzling neon.

Embraced by darkness we lose sense of direction, distance, and time. Although we are lost at first, our other senses soon become acute. We hear curious sounds, perceive scents previously unnoticed, taste the subtlest flavor, and feel the minutest puff of air brush against our skin. Thus, the darkness holds a sensual allure. It is evasive, amorphous, and impervious to study. Darkness is the primordial state. All forms of light, be it flames, flashlights, or stars are after all transient and unnatural.

The deeper we descend into the Underworld, the more we experience the nothingness. Close to the surface, it is merely a nagging sensation, hard to explain. But the deeper we plunge, the more manifest it becomes, a sense of vacuity escalating with each step. This profound, inexplicable sorrow chafes at us, wanting to cut the umbilical cord between body and soul. The body feels foreign and cold, as though one's existence in carnal form were an unnatural state. Occasionally, we experience the sensation of falling or floating, losing our sense of direction and which way is up or down. Something summons us, whispering from the depths, reverberating, and entreating us to venture downwards, abandoning the worlds above. It may manifest as strange dreams, which unveil aspects of ourselves we've never seen. Deep in the Underworld, the nothingness rules all. Everything becomes thinner and more insubstantial, colors lose their shimmer, and our senses slowly fade away. Our spirit is peeled back layer by layer until our true nature is revealed.

Close to the Surface (Level I)

In this part of the Underworld, the sounds from the world above can still be heard. Subway trains rumble by, rain water pours down through storm drains into the sewers, and steam pipes groan and hiss as the city breathes. Beneath the busy streets, there is a virtual warren of meandering passageways, utility corridors, and tunnel systems. An entire population of runaway children, homeless people, lunatics, criminals, and drug addicts live in sub-basements below hospitals, in the subway's service tunnels, and in forgotten bomb shelters. Beyond the fires in oil drums and naked light bulbs, this is a world of eternal dusk. The ground is covered with cigarette butts, crushed glass, and used needles. Those who have lived here for a while know which areas should be avoided, such as the alleys from which unnatural whispers emanate, the rusty metal staircases leading down into lower levels, or the metal doors which are never to be opened. The Children of the Night sometimes hunt for food here or hide amid the outcasts.

Guides

In this region of the Underworld, you can find guides. For a fistful of cash, a bottle of liquor, or a pack of cigarettes, they can show you ladders and staircases which take you farther into the depths. Certain guides offer quiet advice and may make a final attempt to dissuade you from proceeding farther. However, regardless of what is offered, few will follow anyone down to the depths. They have sensed – or even seen – what is really down there. Worse though, certain guides worship the Cairath and might deliberately lead you to places where they dwell.

The Depths (Level II)

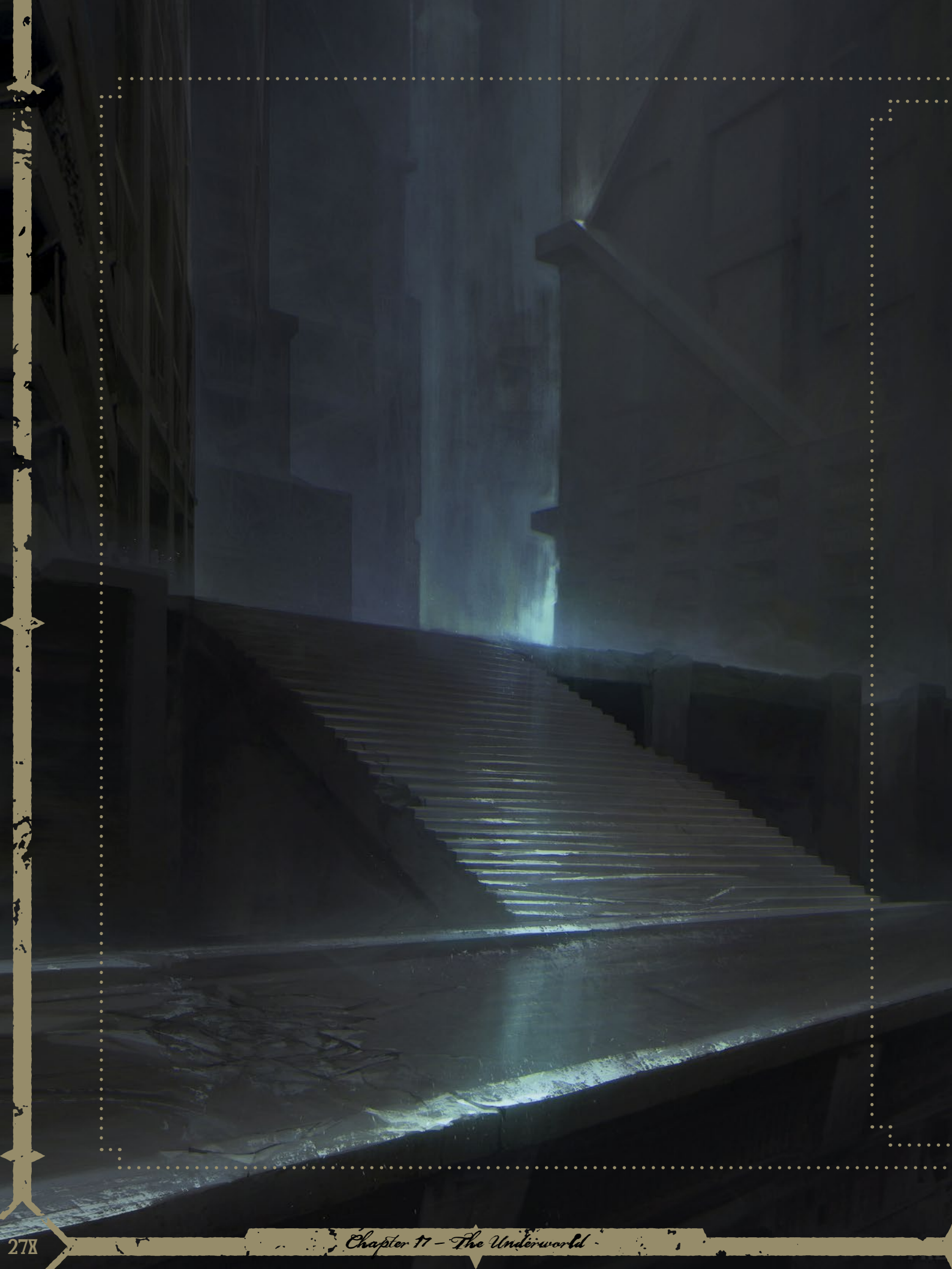
These narrow, labyrinthine passages descend into complete darkness. Cold gusts of wind emanate from below. There are old sewer tunnels with stinking refuse reaching up to your knees, rusting pipes and machinery, and metal staircases leading deeper still. Neglected electric panels hum on rugged cement walls, accompanied by the steady drip of water echoing in the darkness. Crumbling ledges and deep cavities wait for the careless to plunge into. Cockroaches, rats, and far worse creatures crawl around in the darkness. The last sounds from the surface fall silent here, replaced by the sinister noises exclusive to the Underworld.

The Hunting Grounds

Distorted cairath dwell in the sewers, while zeloths use the Depths as their hunting grounds. They drag careless wanderers to their rulers farther down. Sometimes you hear pounding, scraping, and rustling sounds on the metal pipes as they communicate with each other. Shadows come to life in a flashlight's beam, and inhuman hisses can be heard from dark, narrow passages. The feeling that something is following you and driving you downwards becomes ever stronger.

Cultists

The Underworld is a potent place for making contact with otherworldly beings or performing magic. Therefore, many cults have found their way down into the Underworld in order to establish their shrines. Here, where the veil of Illusion is weak, it is easier to gaze into True Reality.



The Borderland (Level III)

The Borderland is where darkness and nothingness tear at the Illusion. The cramped passages, staircases, and tunnels from above open up into great halls and bottomless chasms. In stone basins, sewer sludge and chemicals seethe, turning the air toxic and nauseating. Rooms full of chains, gears, and majestic cogwheels power bizarre machinery. Bridges and staircases lead over or down into pitch black shafts. Should you fall here, you will plunge into depths unknown. The ancient silence is interrupted occasionally by sudden rumblings, which reverberate up from the infinite dark. Tender gusts of air waft forth, carrying the scent of rust. Without light, you become hopelessly lost, merely feeling your way forward along walls of filthy tile, cold steel, or polished stone.

At its heart, the Borderland is a passage to other worlds – primarily to Metropolis, whose Underworld is interconnected with the subterranean realms of all other cities. There are also pathways into the blood-drenched chambers of Inferno and places beneath even this, farther, endlessly farther downwards, downwards, downwards.

That Which Dwells in the Depths

Even though the Borderland feels empty, alien and terrifying beings live here. You can easily find odd creatures that snaked their way in from beyond the Illusion. Runaway souls from Inferno's torture halls seek their freedom, leaving trails of blood and ash in their wake. Wanderers from Metropolis and mechanical beings from the Machine City shamble under the stone arches, disoriented. Upon narrow staircases and in hidden passages, you can encounter the Children of the Underworld traveling up to the surface or descending towards Ktonor. Close to nests of unspeakable creatures, you can occasionally hear the preaching of the nephārite clergy and catch the scent of incense and fresh blood. In places where the darkness is thickest, phantoms silently float down towards nothingness.

Watchers of the Archons

The Archons have placed guards here. Their sole purpose is to prevent creatures from using the Borderland to travel between the worlds – in particular, stopping the Children of the Underworld from finding their way upwards. The guards' orders are to hunt, tear apart, and skin everything moving down here. Prime among the Archon's minions are the gransangthir that distort both Time and Space to lead their victims astray. Packs of zeloths hunt for them and drag wanderers before these bloated beasts. Cultists of the Red Brotherhood have spies on the surface, but also make their way down to carry out sacred rites, be close to their gods, and sacrifice wanderers by flaying them alive.

The Labyrinth (Level IV)

In the Labyrinth, desolation and solitude rule supreme. Humanity's mechanical constructions from the upper levels finally surrender into caves with natural steps formed in the black rock. There are gigantic ledges and stone spurs jutting over bottomless pits. Lose your foothold here and you will tumble head over heels until your body smashes against the rocks, shredded on the ridges of brutal cliffs. You must find your way through confusing detours and low caves, where stalagmites and stalactites grow thick. In hollowed out rock shelters, you can find corpses from earlier explorers, some mummified and untouched after thousands of years. Other times, you must squeeze through narrow crevices where the rock dust lies thick, or have to wander across endless, smooth plateaus. The voyage takes you through passages where still waters reach your chest and across underground rivers and thundering waterfalls. In many caverns, the roof is so high even the brightest light cannot reach it. Every step, every breath resonates in the darkness and echoes from wall to wall. You feel as if you're traveling in underwater caves, where an enormous primordial sea has subsided. Alien fossils lie buried in the floors and walls, along with petrified corals and salt deposits. The Labyrinth is no man's land, the final boundary before the Underworld's true realms are laid bare.

The Coral Portal

Wide stone steps lead downwards through a petrified sea bed. You wander amid forests of blackened coral, salt deposits, polished stone plateaus, and strange fossils. At the bottom of the steps stands the Coral Portal: a simultaneously beautiful and grotesque creation, which marks the entrance to the City of Ktonor. The portal requires a sacrifice. Anyone wishing to pass must smear their blood on its glossy surface. Doing so allows you to pass through, as though stepping through a wall of water. Beings bound to the Archons cannot pass, and their blood sizzles and burns as though it had been splashed on scorching rocks.

The City of Ktonor (Level V)

Ktonor is the Underworld's city. The Children of the Underworld reside here, a tattered and slowly perishing flock. They are the refugees and survivors of innumerable civilizations annihilated or enslaved by humanity when we were still gods. The city is a last fortress of matter before the great well of nothingness which lies in the depths. Ancient and arcane machines keep the city safely anchored in existence, but beyond their influence reality itself disintegrates. Nothingness lures and summons you, and everyone living in Ktonor feels the constant presence of Achlys and the being only mentioned in whispers – She Who Waits Below.

The Last City

Ktonor is carved into the walls of an enormous pit, sprawling onto protruding cliffs, ledges, and terraces. It meanders downwards like a spiral, ever deeper. The farther down you go, the more dangerous the city becomes. Waterfalls plunge down into the darkness from some unseen source above; a pale, phosphorus sheen reflects in their mist. Slim bridges of black obsidian span across the abyss. The city's architecture is alien and chaotic, created by thousands of different beings from various bygone eras, alien races, and vanquished worlds. The vaults, chambers, and buildings lie in darkness, but in a few places the city is lit up by amber lanterns. Much of the city is uninhabited, as most people gather around its central sections: the Bazaar, the Biomechanical Temple, the Hanging Gardens, the Place of Judgement, the Sacrificial Bridges, the Neonatal Incubator Pillars, the Marketplace of the Dead, the monuments outside the Birth Chambers, the Turquoise Stairs, the vaults above the Turbine Halls, and the Memory Apparatus. Little more than ruins, the city's deeper sections are populated with distorted and bestial creatures. Earlier inhabitants have devolved into feral monsters, as oblivion has conquered their senses.

The Children of the Underworld

When we were divine and ruled from the spires of Metropolis, we conquered entire civilizations, explored all forms of lust, turned mysteries inside out, enslaved anyone or anything we desired, and annihilated anything that bored us. Crippled and frightened, these creatures attempted to escape from our cruel embrace. Most failed, but some managed to make their way down into the Underworld, where they tried to preserve their cultures on the edge of nothingness. It is a motley assortment of dancing gods, dream-smiths, soul mergers, queens of sorrow, gold bearers, storytellers, and annunciators; a myriad of exotic people and creatures organized into clans, bloodlines, and families.

The Archons' servants force them to remain in the depths, preventing them from ascending to our world and disrupting the structures of Elysium. Many of the Underworld's inhabitants still harbor deep hatreds towards us, but most have resigned themselves to their fate. Their memories and myths from this ancient time are also distorted, so many of them do not know what is true.

Some Children of the Underworld occasionally reach the surface and enter Elysium, in order to secretly join or create cults, make pacts, spy on the servants of the Archons, and (most importantly) collect fresh genetic material. The Children of the Underworld, despite their splintered lineages, have one thing in common: they are all dying. Their proximity to nothingness, generations of incestuous breeding, and low resistance to disease has rendered many of them sterile. Those rare few who are born are usually mad and gravely disfigured. A healthy child is always seen as magical and sacred, a symbol of hope. As for those who have completely lost their ability to procreate, they fade away in quiet bitterness.

The Human Population

There are humans living in Ktonor: those who have found their way into the Underworld by mistake, have been kidnapped, or were born here in the abyss. Humans born here are viewed as Children of the Underworld, but those who came from above are treated with great suspicion, and are often captured and sold into slavery unless someone willingly vouches for their continued freedom. There is an exception to this rule: members of the Guardians of the Labyrinth are always treated with respect. These pilgrims, who listen to the call of nothingness, descend to Ktonor in sacred processions, and assume the role of priests in the city, staving off the nothingness. They perform sacrifices and ceremonies, meditating in preparation for their last march to face She Who Waits Below. As they wander farther downwards in their tranquil procession, some of the Children of the Underworld inevitably follow. Nobody who walks that path is ever seen again.

The Biomechanical Keepers

The ultimate power in Ktonor lies in the hands of the Biomechanical Keepers. They are the last of their kind, masterpieces of an extinct race. Before the Keepers, the city was dominated by despots and self-proclaimed prophets from among the Underworld's various cultures. Disputes were common, resentments festered, and tempers seethed over who should govern and how issues were resolved. After the War of the Four Thrones, the Keepers were formed and instated in Ktonor, all power placed in their hands. They were appointed to protect the Children of the Underworld, ensure the survival of all, and place the collective over the individual. The Keepers now maintain the city's archaic machinery and serve as wardens and judges. They also decide who will gain access to the genetic material needed to produce healthy offspring. Recently, the Children of the Underworld – many influenced by Inferno's heralds or their own hunger for power – have started to turn against the Keepers and question why only they should have access to Ktonor's most important resource: the Birth Chambers.

The Fallen Realms (Level VI)

Should you continue deeper beyond Kronor's limits, you come to massive, desolate halls replete with dilapidated cities, abandoned gardens, and lost, pale creatures. Everything is covered in a layer of ash. Within these hallowed vaults, history itself was to be preserved, alongside the seeds of a new future. But any hope of reestablishing what once was now seems distant, and the insidious presence of the nothingness causes everything to slowly wither away. For the people of Kronor, this realm is filled with sorrow. They avoid it as much as possible. Here there are the shards and fragments of thousands of realms long since destroyed. Magnificent creations heavy with melancholy chiseled from stone, honed in ore, and carved from minerals, alongside majestic buildings, bridges, and monuments. There are stone forests filled with fantastic trees and meandering canopies and roots. Futuristic buildings mesh with the environment, cubes and triangles poised atop their roofs, defying gravity. Along walls and in paintings of steel and lead, writings in languages now forgotten commemorate where entire civilizations have been consumed, praying to be remembered. In deep crypts memorabilia, works of art, and literature are preserved; unparalleled treasures, delicate cloths almost mouldered away, high-tech wonders capable of harnessing the stars, chapped musical instruments, advanced apparatuses, data banks, and thinking machines, as well as art alien and fantastic. Open the right vault and you are greeted by fragrances from other existences, colors exotic and flickering, and sensations strange and new. All these treasures have been saved from destruction, now waiting, buried in layers of dust. The Fallen Realms are the grave for thousands of civilizations, slowly decomposing in the darkness, watched over by phantoms and flickering memories.

The Birth Chambers

Only the Keepers have permission to set foot on the Birth Chambers' hallowed ground. Here, the reproductive materials from the Children of the Underworld are manipulated and augmented with fresh genetic matter, usually obtained from humans. Stepping into the sealed halls, you are assaulted by an unspeakable stench and a grotesque sight. Humans of all types have been hooked up to the biomechanical machines. They have been crudely lobotomized and are fed via tubes in the nose and mouth. Waste matter is pumped out through catheters in their abdomens. Many of them have had their limbs amputated. All of them simply gaze uncomprehendingly into empty space. The men's genitals are kept painfully erect and their semen collected in sacred vessels. Women are harvested, their stolen eggs inseminated and cultivated. The bodies of the Underworld's peoples are preserved in containers with nutritional solution, cryotubes, and electrical fields, while their DNA is manipulated and interwoven with new genetic material. It is allowed to develop in tubes until the surviving fetuses are transferred to the wombs of the members of the Biomechanical Keepers.

The Birth Chambers

Nothingness (Level VII)

Beyond the Fallen Realms lies the Temple of the Blind. Pass through this and the Inner Labyrinth and you will stand before She Who Waits Below. Beyond her, there is only nothingness. Mystics argue the devouring nothingness leads into the Vortex of Limbo, where everything is respawned as dreams and fantasies. They say it should be possible to voyage deep into Achlys, and if one could find the correct rites and sacrifices, preserve their body and spirit long enough to attain a state of enlightenment in nonexistence, where the Illusion's shackles lose their hold.

The Temple of the Blind

In the extreme depths of Underworld stands the Temple of the Blind, a black fortress filled with gigantic machinery. The Underworld's ten rivers are directed into large reservoirs and down a turbine chamber, which rumbles ceaselessly as it generates power. The Temple is a barrier against nothingness, a black seal of iron, rock, and steel. In the Temple, no light may be lit. No flame, not even the tiniest spark can burn here. In this world of eternal darkness, even gravity obeys its own rules and fickle whims. What serves as a wall, ceiling, or floor is impossible to say in the Temple. You can wander on every surface and move in all possible directions. As such, you quickly become disoriented, and all around you are confused whispers and wailings of phantoms desperately searching for a way out. Occasionally, you hear screams, distant and drawn-out, as though they are slowly being wiped from existence itself.

The Inner Labyrinth

Beyond the Temple of the Blind, the Inner Labyrinth starts to sprawl into the nothingness. This is the final labyrinth, and no one who has ventured here has ever returned. Time and Space start to dissolve here and dimensions mesh. Everything dissolves into a grey, depleted mass possessing neither color nor shape. Everything shifts in spiral movements. The only sound is the quiet hissing of reality being torn and shredded apart around you. Soon, your body dissipates into dust, misty particles stripped away as your very atoms scatter. Memories fade. You dissolve. You slip away into nothingness. And all the while, She Who Waits Below watches on, unmoved.

She Who Waits Below

You will find her at the edge of nothingness. Some argue she is Achlys' daughter, or maybe an aspect of Achlys itself. In dreams, she assumes various forms: a glowing eye in an amorphous chaos, tender leaves on the surface of dark water, a fetus with its umbilical cord tight around its neck, or a bloated female body reclining in the dark. She Who Waits Below does not serve the Demiurge or Astaroth – she is beyond them. She is a powerful being in her own right, and her consciousness stretches into other worlds. She is the mother who summons those with nothingness in their hearts, those who feel empty and abandoned, balancing on the edge of life and death. She speaks to the tattered and outcast. She is the comforting hand reaching out to the unheard and ignored. The lost write her name on the Underworld's tiled walls. Many of the Children of the Night worship her and cults devoted to her exist all over the world, at every level of society. Her presence causes everything false to be revealed, layer by layer, until one's true nature is laid bare. She offers tranquility, forgetfulness, and nonexistence. She promises true peace: kill the person you were and be reborn, passing from life into death and back again. Some say she is close to the Death Angel Sathariel, but She Who Waits Below is much more vast, and some of Sathariel's servants worship her openly. What her purpose and objectives are, nobody knows. Each person who worships her finds the answer and meaning only within themselves.

Achlys

Beyond the Temple of the Blind. Beyond the Inner Labyrinth. Beyond She Who Waits Below. Beyond Time and Space. Beyond Chaos. The maelstrom waits. A black hole. Rotating around its own axis. Dreadful. Eternal. Ingurgitating. The last flakes of matter dissolve. Atoms crumble. Disappear. Pitch black vacuum. Phantoms flit like flames. Tattered celestial bodies spiral. Dragged deeper down. Extinguished off one by one. Your spirit flares up for a fleeting moment. A final gasp. Emptiness. Nothingness. Achlys.

When the Abyss Beckons You

When a person travels in the Underworld, the gamemaster can use the Moves below.

• Lost in the Labyrinth

The many passageways and the darkness cause you to go astray. Finding the way forward or the right way back appears impossible.

• Become Separated

Someone gets separated. They may fall through a dark chasm in the floor, be snatched away by a zeloth, or lose their grip on each other in the dark.

• Vanishing Resources

The Underworld demands its tribute. The flashlight drops and rolls into the depths, out of reach. The pistol slips from its holster and disappears with a splash into the sewer water, or the last rations in the rucksack are eaten by rats.

• Sense Danger

Sounds, smells, or trails indicate there is danger close by. Perhaps it is zeloths knocking on the pipes, the shrieks of someone being devoured by a cairath, or the ghastly stench from something approaching.

• Buckle Under the Pressure

The gnawing exposure, the pressing darkness, the curious sound, and the oppressive sense that everything might collapse on you at any time or you could fall over the edge and plunge deep down into a shaft, cause you to mentally break down. [Serious trauma: –2 **Stability**; the player chooses a state.]

• Trails from Those Who Have Gone Before

You find the trail of someone or something from before. Be it a temporary camp site, lost equipment, a body, a weapon, or a message written on the wall, this provides a chance to get a new direction, acquire information, or receive new equipment.

• Opening into Another World/Level

You find yourself on the verge of progressing from this level. Maybe you make your way up towards the surface, deeper down into the darkness, or even enter one of the other worlds on the border.

• A Wondrous Place

You arrive at a wondrous place. It is foreign, ethereal, fascinating, and invites you to explore and maybe rest for a while.

• Meeting with the Exotic

You meet something in the Underworld's darkness. Maybe a wanderer, a cultist, a phantom, a Child of the Underworld, or something even stranger.

• Under the Control of Higher Beings

One of the Underworld's Higher Beings stretches out its consciousness and takes hold of the person. It could be the will of She Who Waits Below, the alien influences from a lost god, or the Gransangthir's dark sentience. The Being can lure, invoke, and shape the Underworld's labyrinth to its desires, to direct the wanderer where it wants them to go.

• The Influence of Nothingness

Nothingness settles over the person. They become tired and apathetic. Their clothes start to fray and tatter, as though the fabric was hundreds of years old. They are filled with sadness and melancholy. Phantoms become visible and now appear as pale shapes in the darkness.

• Visions from She Who Waits Below

You feel how your essence is peeled away bit by bit, and everything within you is laid bare. You are overcome by the temptations of nonexistence and seeking another type of life, so you can regain lost knowledge.

CULTS

The Red Brotherhood

Ties to Powers: Slaves of the Gransangthir, indirectly servants of the Archons.

Members: Families and neighborhood communities in dilapidated areas. Active in slums and suburbs, often associated with the poorly educated, and occasionally with gangs. Strong cohesion.

Agenda: Protecting their neighborhood and humanity from dangers emerging from the depths.

Moves: ***Finding Ways to the Underworld***, ***Acquiring Weapons and Drugs***, ***Rumors in the Slum Quarters***, ***Stashing Away Evidence***, ***The Silence of the Neighborhood***, ***Summoning Zeloths/Cairath***.

The Gransangthir's sacred commands reach the cult's members like feverish dreams. They talk to their cultists from the depths beneath the city and imbue them with deep purpose: to protect the secrets of the Underworld, worship and sacrifice to the Gransangthir, and ensure that the Children of the Underworld and their followers are exterminated. The cult is a community of outcasts and broken families in various neighborhoods who want to protect their kin from society's threats. If required, they use violence and maintain their own laws and rules. Those who are closest to the Gransangthir often dress in ritual butchers' aprons and arm themselves with rusty skinning knives, axes, and other tools during the cult's ceremonies. These chosen few also venture down into the Underworld in order to carry out sacrifices directly for their rulers. As a reward for their services, they are allowed to take part of the Gransangthir's euphoric dreams, as well as suckle greedily on their fat teats and drink the fermented milk.

Atlantean Dreams

Ties to Powers: Children of the Underworld.

Members: Students, hipsters, backpackers, conspiracy theorists, old hippies, and anyone with a passion for myths, legends, UFOs, and lost civilizations. Often well-read in history, archaeology, and literature, and usually active on the Internet.

Agenda: Finding evidence of lost civilizations, revealing conspiracy theories, and gaining insights into the Truth.

Moves: ***Hacking***, ***Rapid Information Seeking***, ***Arranging a Place to Sleep***, ***Diversionary Maneuver***, ***Global Network of Contacts***.

The hunt for truth, fascination with the unknown, and the ever-growing collection of conspiracy theories is what breathes life into members of the Atlantean Dreams. However, in many ways, they remain as blind to the Truth as everyone else. They clutch at every answer they can find, read a new conspiracy into every headline, display blurry YouTube clips as evidence of extraterrestrials, and believe hieroglyphs prove the existence of Atlantis. The cult is loosely structured and most of their interaction happens over the Internet, specifically the Atlantean Dreams forum, where they share information and try to reveal humanity's shadow masters. The cult has been infiltrated by members of the Children of the Underworld, who indirectly lead its membership and feed them tidbits of occult knowledge, mixed with a healthy dose of lies. They use the cult's large information network to gain insight into Elysium. Mostly, they watch people, collect information on specially selected children and places, and spread disinformation. When wanderers from the Children of the Underworld find their way up to the surface, they often acquire equipment, clothes, and temporary housing from other cult members.

Guardians of the Labyrinth

Ties to Powers: She Who Waits Below.

Members: From all parts of society, but concentrated in the largest cities and drawn to the cult via dreams and visions. Typical members feel they lack something in their lives, something impossible to achieve through material happiness. The members are fanatics, but seldom violent.

Agenda: To attain enlightenment, learn the Truth, and finally achieve eternal peace and insight by entering Achlys.

Moves: ***Fanatic Self-sacrifice***, ***Visions from the Underworld***, ***Finding Safe Ways to the Depths***.

Members are drawn into the cult through dreams and visions. They meet in tunnels, shelters, and basement spaces in order to worship She Who Waits Below. They prepare themselves spiritually for their pilgrimage into the depths and thereafter start to cleanse their bodies under the watchful eyes of the Keepers. The members sterilize themselves – via operations or self-mutilation – and when ready to proceed into the Underworld, they gouge out their eyes to better 'see' the way their Mistress has paved for them. When they are worthy, She Who Waits Below summons the members, and they descend towards Ktonor. She guides them with her whispers, allowing them to avoid the Archons' guards. Some remain in Ktonor to worship their Mistress or help others who venture downwards, but their ultimate objective is always to attain nothingness and uttermost insight. The members who have gone underground dress in grey ceremonial veils.

CREATURES

Zeloths

Zeloths are people who were skinned alive and sacrificed to the Gransangthir. Screaming, they are drawn into the disgusting abomination's body, coalescing with its fleshy mass, and distorted through extreme suffering. Eventually, the newly formed zeloth is begat amid blood and feces from one of the creature's dripping orifices. In their new guise, they are skinless creatures with no ability to speak. Their nails have been refashioned into crooked claws and a long, snaking tongue enables them to draw nourishment from victims. Fungal infections and mould sprout around their mouths and bodily orifices like a yellow-grey slurry. These spores are highly toxic to the Children of the Underworld and fester in wounds like advanced gangrene.

Cairath

Cairath are creatures living in the sewers and catacombs just beneath the city's surface. They are grotesque, bloated, and rotting abominations, stinking carcasses melded with metal junk and trash. They do not devour their victims, but affix their squirming bodies to their own. These unfortunates can live for days, even weeks, undergoing this painful bonding process. Their wailing and pleas for help telegraph the creature's presence from a long distance. They consume people, animals, and other beasts in this fashion. Cairath consciously influence their environment, and people close to madness can fall under their spell, worshipping them as gods. These madmen form small cults, which capture stray animals, homeless people, and other outcasts and shackle them in areas they know cairath hunt. The bravest of them sacrifice themselves to the cairath. When a cairath becomes sufficiently powerful, it can morph into a gransangthir.

Cairath

Home: Elysium and the Underworld.

Creature Type: Guardian of the borders between the Underworld and Elysium.

Abilities

- *Animalistic intellect:* Cannot be influenced or charmed.
- *Gigantic:* Cannot be held in place or knocked over in close combat. If the being's attack connects in close combat they always knock their victim over, in addition to any other results.
- *Devouring:* Anyone fighting against the cairath in close combat suffers *–1 ongoing*.
- *Mountain of meat:* All **Harm** is reduced by –1 except damage from explosions, fire, or acid.
- *Monstrous form:* Humans who see the creature must ***Keep it Together*** to not become paralyzed by fear.

Combat [5], **Influence** [1], **Magic** [2].

Combat [Exceptional]

- Crush opponent.
- Attack many targets simultaneously.
- Create a tunnel cave in [**2 Harm**, area attack].
- Devour someone [heals **2 Wounds**].
- Puke blood and extremities.

Influence [Weak]

- Call for worshippers.

Magic [Novice]

- Influence someone's mind [***Keep it Together***].
- Inflict madness [***Keep it Together***].

Attacks

The cairath moves slowly, but its nightmarish appearance paralyzes humans with overwhelming fear. Its grotesque body consists of metal and the carcasses of hundreds of beings, limbs and mouths searching for new living beings to integrate into the rotting flesh. While bullets seems to do little damage, close combatants tend to get crushed or swallowed by the monster.

Natural weapons: Grapple [1] [Distance: arm, victim is pinned and must ***Act Under Pressure*** to get free]; Devour [4] [Distance: arm, only pinned victims, the victim has to cut itself out, ***Act Under Pressure***]; Crush [3] [Distance: arm]; Spew blood [–] [Distance: room/area, anyone covered in the blood gets *–2 ongoing* on actions requiring movement]; Tunnel cave in [2] [Distance: room, area, anyone who can't ***Avoid*** is trapped beneath the pile].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○○○○○○ ☠

- Continues unaffected by the damage.
- The attack bounces off a piece of metal.
- The cairath tries to grapple the attacker [***Avoid Harm***].
- One of its extremities is cut off and crawls around screaming on the ground.
- A human head cries and screams in agony [***Keep it Together***].
- The attack open up the flesh, exposing the half-integrated body of an human, crying for help [***Keep it Together***].
- Dozens of rats and cockroaches crawl out of an open wound.
- Blood and fluids pour out of the creature [*+1 ongoing* to all rolls against it].
- The cairath flees down into the sewers.
- The creature dies in a choir of insane screams and howls.

Gransangthir

These massive leech-like creatures live in the moist and slimy parts of the sewers. Their bodies are a mass of rancid fat, mould, and rotting flesh. These beings were once cairath, who have grown to grotesque proportions and think with the voices of their thousands of victims, still preserved in their bulk. They are subservient to the Archons and serve them by standing guard over the Underworld. They can extend their will up to the surface and, through dreams and visions, can influence people. Gransangthir do not constitute a direct physical threat, as they are too shapeless to move about, but they are endowed with potent mental powers, and they are the zeloths' creators – which protect their masters until death.

Larvae

Larvae are black, worm-like creatures living in the Underworld. They are born out of leathery eggs, which lie in chambers deep below the ground. Reaching several yards in length, they have a round mouth lined with small, sharp teeth. They can smell living creatures and attack in herds. They emit a jarring, high-pitched cry when they hunt. They also lie in wait for their prey, hanging from the ceiling, lying in crevices, or floating in shallow water waiting to attach themselves to a victim like leeches. As they attack, they gnaw into the body, devour it from the inside out. Inferno's rulers have learnt how to capture Larvae and tame them. They live inside razides and make sure these slaves do not defy the Death Angels' orders.

The Biomechanical Keepers

Created by forgotten masters, they are employed to protect, unite, and ensure the survival of the Children of the Underworld. They are creatures of flesh, metal, and plastic; humanoid, but with great gravity in their bodies and movements. Their skin is rough and stony, but still organic. They are immortal, but cannot create more of themselves, so their numbers are constantly dwindling. If a conflict occurs, they use their powerful hands to tear apart most adversaries like a human tearing up wet tissue paper. They all have wombs and carry children created in the breeding factories to provide them the best chance for survival. After birth, the child is given to the Children of the Underworld to care for and raise. Each Keeper has an undying love for the children they bore, as they cannot procreate themselves. The Biomechanical Keepers previously had total control over Ktonor, but of late some groups have started turning against them. The Famaria gather ever more adherents to their flock, and there will soon come a time when they challenge the Keepers openly.

Phantoms

Phantoms are beings who have been slowly devoured by nothingness, with only a shard of them enduring. Their bodies have no substance and passing your hand through them is like touching chilly fog. Their pale shapes are terrifying distortions of how they looked in life. Some linger around the surface to haunt the living, while others huddle in darkness and sorrow. They can be seen wandering around and do not seem to notice the living except when blood is spilled. Then phantoms stir from their slumber and their dead gazes stare into our reality. Like moths to a flame, phantoms gravitate towards the living in order to suffocate them, take their warmth, and place their cold lips against open wounds to drink blood, which briefly provides them with a fleeting memory of life. Other ways to stir phantoms from their slumber are music, singing, art, sex, and other expression of life, which make their flagging souls flare up. When their minds are clear, phantoms recall their previous lives and all the knowledge they had back then. In the Illusion, you cannot see phantoms. They wander around us, invisible. Occasionally, you can glimpse them in mirrors or via reflections, little more than pale shadows. Technology is also a portal for invoking and contacting phantoms, and there are those who exist almost entirely on the Internet or in the borderlands between dream and reality.

Phantom (of the weaker kind)

Home: The Underworld.

Creature Type: Trapped soul.

Abilities

- *Ethereal:* Can't be harmed by physical weapons or hindered by physical objects.

Combat [–], **Influence** [1], **Magic** [1].

Influence [Weak]

- Tell secrets from their former life.

Magic [Weak]

- Steal life [**1 Harm**].

Attacks: Phantoms steal life by sucking on open wounds. Their ethereal bodies are immune to physical **Harm**. The only way to escape phantoms is to mentally shut them out or give them another source of life.

Magic: Steal life [1] [Distance: arm, ***Keep it Together*** to resist].

Wounds & Harm Moves

The only means to harm a phantom is through magic or the power of exorcism.

The Children of the Underworld

The Children of the Underworld is an umbrella term for the innumerable peoples who have been driven into exile in the Underworld. They have been oppressed by virtually every ruler and culture, and are forced to live in the shadows of both humanity, the Demiurge, and the Archons. They are too many and too varied to be described in full. Below, there are some common examples.

Azadaevae

Long and slender with delicate features, pale skin, and long, thin hair, the Azadaevae seem ethereal and move with solemn grace. They are perpetually naked and a veil of dust spreads like a nebula around their bodies, which they use to weave illusions, as well as enchant senses and emotions. Their eyes are dark green and devoid of pupils. They have the ability to see the true souls of those they encounter, allowing them to detect their former rulers, tyrants, and tormentors. The Azadaevae are the same people as the Azghouls (see ***Chapter 18 – Metropolis****), but from before they were enslaved. Their strange beauty causes people to desire to own them and make them servants and courtesans. As such, there are very few of them left. They previously lived in a complex caste system, which has long since collapsed.*

Azadaevae

Home: The Underworld.

Creature Type: Creature of the Underworld.

Abilities

- *Sharp senses:* The being's senses are perfect, able to pick up the most minute sound, scent, or even an intuitive sense that something seems 'off.'
- *Soulsight:* Can always see a creature's true form and a human's past lives.
- *Euphoric dust:* Those who inhale the creature's dust fall into a state of euphoria and enlightenment (+1 **Soul** and −1 **Violence** until scene ends).

Combat [2], **Influence** [3], **Magic** [4].

Combat [Novice]

- Gracefully float out of harm's way [*−1 ongoing* to attacks]
- Release dust cloud [**1 Harm**, see *Euphoric dust*].

Influence [Considerable]

- Reveal knowledge of the Underworld.
- Steal something from someone.
- Offer rare and obscure objects in exchange for services.

Magic [Powerful]

- Weave powerful illusions.
- See into someone's soul and past lives.
- Speak prophecy.
- Enchant emotions.

Attacks: Azadaevae are not violent creatures, but when confronted with threats they don't hesitate to use their powers to subdue their opponents. The azadaevae can trap victims in illusions, driving them mad with fear or euphoria.

Euphoric Dust: Dust cloud [1] [Distance: room, area, the victims breath in an overdose of the *euphoric dust*].

Magic: Weave illusion [–] [Distance: field, the victim(s) must ***Keep it Together*** to resist the illusion]; Enchant emotions [–] [Distance: room, the victim must ***Keep it Together*** to avoid getting enchanted].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○ ☠

- Dust disperses in the air like a glowing nebula.
- Shimmering blood pours from the wound, the azadaevae screams in anguish.
- Dust circles around the azadaevae, creating an illusion [***Keep it Together***].
- The creature falls unconscious to the ground.
- The azadaevae is dead, its dust shimmering around the body.

Beryn

Fat and swollen, the Beryn stick to their living chambers, where the water is kept hot and steaming in artificial ponds. When they venture out, they are draped in wet, shirza algae or ride in spider-like machines with steam chambers, which ensure they can conserve moisture. Their voices are thick and sticky, but they have excellent memories and an ability to see things beyond the horizon of time. They often serve as advisors to the Biomechanical Keepers, and therefore hold privileged positions in Ktonor. They are deeply fascinated by technology and machines, and maintain much of the apparatuses and mechanisms of Ktonor.

Famaria

Famaria are clad in stately, ceremonial robes, whose trains are carried by slaves. They are armed with alien and archaic weapons that drip with venom. They are one of the oldest existing families, and some say they were the original architects and builders of Ktonor. They openly oppose the Biomechanical Keepers. They also advocate going on the offence to ensure the survival of their people, as well as exacting revenge against humanity. They have dealings with Inferno's heralds and the nepharite clergy, and there is a whispered rumor a formal pact has been signed already.

The Zatars

Once the Zatars possessed wings, but they have since cut them off. Once they had clear eyes, but they are now dulled and milky. Once they had power and riches, but they have thrown all of this away. Clad in grey veils, they worship She Who Waits Below and help the pilgrims avoid the Labyrinth's guards as they make their way down to Ktonor. They are pale and hard as marble, their hands have six fingers, and symbols are carved into their flesh. Some say the Zatars were a Choir of the Demiurge's angels who annihilated entire peoples in His name, eventually turning on Him and being banished for it. Now, they worship the nothingness and hardly care about the power plays of the Underworld. In their coffins, they store swords of blackened steel and the keys to Metropolis' secrets. If you mention the Demiurge while close to them, they throw themselves to the ground in anguish or try to tear out the tongue of the offending speaker.

The Others

In addition to the above, there are Besh-Tanath, who live in their tightly-knit, reclusive families; the Tamars, whose songs echo sadly in the empty vaults; the Laishi, weapon-smiths who have been incarcerated in their grey halls after a violent revolt; and the Kadash, who can sculpt their own and others' bodies. There are the Ones Without Names, who channel nothingness within themselves and discharge it as a black flood. The Kilotherna, who remain ensbrouded in white veils of sorrow ever since their ruler took his own life. The magnificent Menonveem, who reside dreaming in ethereal thoughts. All of these and many others live beside tattered dream creatures, creatures of passion and insanity, and lost gods who wallow in their solitary existence. The Underworld is home to them all.

Famaria

Stahlberg and Mirror

In the darkened alley, just beyond the glow of the street lamp, there stand two people. Stahlberg is a muscular and towering white man. He looks worn out, with tired eyes, a short beard, and something wild in his gaze. He always packs a heavy revolver or sawed-off shotgun tucked under his coat. Standing next to him is Mirror, a young, black girl with a hooded sweater, worn-down jeans, and a cellphone always in her hand. Stahlberg is of Kadash decent. He adopted Mirror when she was a little girl and she has followed him ever since. They are day wanderers, continually traveling between Elysium and Kronor. They kidnap children from poorer areas and take them down into the depths, help the Atlantean Dreams when they need some muscle, and keep constant tabs on enemies of the Children of the Underworld.

Zishan Bangial

A Pakistani ambulance driver and paramedic, Zishan works the night shift in the city's worst neighborhoods. He grew up in the Underworld, but was sent topside to acquire genetic material for the Children of the Underworld. He takes blood samples from those he drives around in the ambulance, delivering these and the patients' personal information to a desolate house, where a bunch of dirty cash waits for him. Patients who have the right DNA tend to disappear within months. When Zishan is drunk, he speaks openly and recounts things he has seen in the darkness.

Hassan al-Nuri

The head of one of Lebanon's largest refugee camps, Hassan is – to a casual observer – an old man of Arabic descent, dressed in Western fashions. He uses the refugee camp, a place of despair and anger, to find new members for a cult of holy warriors, devoted to himself. He also finds those with suitable genetic material, which he then refines via imposed marriages. He has direct contact with several heralds of the Death Angels, and conveys their offers to his people in the Underworld. He plans to depose the Biomechanical Keepers, and thereafter destroy the servants of the Archons. Hassan al-Nuri is one of the Famaria, and an important cog in their conspiracy to usurp power in Kronor.

Judith Schiller

Judith is a middle-aged woman with infectious charisma. She has a warm, albeit sad gaze, which seems to pierce your soul. She lives alone with her cats, but occasionally welcomes visitors for personal séances and fortune telling sessions. Mrs. Schiller runs a little book publishing firm, *Ouroboros*, which prints collections of poetry, historical novels, New Age books, and obscure magazines. Her publishing house hosts a site where users can publish their own poems and short stories, as well as purchase each other's collections of poetry as print-on-demand books. The homepage has become a place where the Children of the Underworld living on the surface can communicate with each other. In their poems, they leave veiled messages about rendezvous spots, warnings, or questions. Judith Schiller is an Azadaeva, who, despite her melancholy, has a burning desire to help her people. She acts as an intermediary and informer, who runs a delicate underground network for those in the lit world.

PRESENCE IN ELYSIUM

The Children of the Underworld also exist on the surface. Some permanently live clandestinely amid humanity and have forgotten their inheritance. Others visit the lit world only briefly and still serve their brethren in the depths.

CHAPTER IX
METROPOLIS

METROPOLIS IS HUMANITY'S PRIMORDIAL HOME. RESTING ATOP ITS 7,777 hills, the city is dead, empty, and quiet. Languishing in its fateful decay, the dark, urban landscape is as menacing and frightening as it is beautiful and miraculous. From horizon to horizon, the shadowy sprawl extends outward in an endless maze of architectural wonders, serpentine streets, and grotesque constructions. Monumental buildings tower over the skyline, quiet and threatening beneath the heavens' dark firmament. Winds wail through the streets, swirling debris and clutter along cracked pavement. Now and then, the silence is broken by the painful screech of metal beams, followed by a thunderous roar as one of the imposing buildings collapses; its stone dust settling over everything like a funeral shroud. In the many market squares, cracked monuments and statues stare into the night with eyes of stone or patinated copper. Metropolis is the paragon we subconsciously try to recreate in Earth's cities. It is built from iron, stone, and steel, and stranger materials stolen from conquered worlds. The city has no physical borders. Metropolis stretches infinitely into the night.

The Eternal City

Metropolis is a place of fallen splendor, a monument of the past, a tomb filled with wonders. Its crossroads are themselves magic symbols, concealing shrouded meanings. Guards and heralds lie deceased at their posts, shrunken like scorched insects. Incantations have been woven over houses and sludge-clogged channels. It is still possible to find hidden gateways and sealed vaults where the most fantastic treasures lie hidden away.

The sun never rises on the Eternal City. Time seems to have ground to a halt, or maybe the sun has burned out for good. Metropolis is perpetually cast in blue-grey, dusky light emerging from behind the squalid clouds. A sense of great weight looms over Metropolis, as though its houses and streets themselves are forged from lead or black steel, part of the very earth itself. Its buildings rise all around the visitor, climbing steadily towards the black sky. Any traveler appears utterly insignificant, while the city itself is monumental, unyielding, and everlasting.

Metropolis' architecture lies beyond Time. Here, all major cities from every human era exist side by side, featuring buildings from ancient Rome, 18th-century Paris, London's industrial slums, and unknown arcologies from the future. Here and there, shards of our world's cities intrude into Metropolis. Alleys, streets, and entire neighborhoods form little enclaves of light and life between the labyrinths of stone and steel.

Those who have wandered through Metropolis and returned to Elysium often feel fragmented, as though something within them has become disjointed, tweaked, or pulled taut. The sombre facades, winding stairs, and terrifying Citadels recur in the wanderer's dreams. Memories from a multitude of lives long past start to surface the longer the wanderer dwells on the city.

To Wander Through Metropolis

Metropolis is a maze of alleys, stairwells, streets, avenues, and bridges, where Time and Space function differently than in Elysium. You can walk towards a destination for hours on end without ever coming closer, yet turn around a corner and suddenly find yourself in another part of the great city or be right back where you started.

Traveling through the city becomes a ritual in itself, which often appears crazy and disconcerting for the uninitiated beholder. In order to make progress, the traveler can be forced to walk exactly seven steps into an alley, retrace the seven steps, and then walk back the way they originally came. In the marketplace with the rusty monument, they might need to switch two specific paving-stones in order to continue in a straight line. Using chalk lines on a tile wall, they can create a new entrance into a domed building. If they sleep there one night, they find themselves in a new place when they wake up.

Metropolis's inhabitants have intuitively learned how to make their way around, but only the most skilled can reach the hidden places of the city. These guides utilize dangerous shortcuts, secret melodies, chalk symbols, blood sacrifices, etchings, and portals in order to get to their destination. They can be bargained with, but they know their worth, and the careless traveller can quickly be led astray – or worse.

Phenomena in Metropolis

Metropolis is filled with many curious phenomena. In certain locations, sounds refuse to carry, while in others voices echo from times gone by. The city's shadows are deep and cold, occasionally moving as though an invisible source of light compelled them into a new position – like the hand of an age-old sundial. When touched by certain shadows, one might perceive wondrous sensations, a curious chill, or an alien presence. Some are suffocating, as though oxygen itself has been drained, while others are an open portal to another part of the city. Some who have lain dormant in deep shadows have been eternally altered; their dreams, lives, and warmth have been devoured. Even gravity behaves strangely. Travelers can fall from a tall building, plunging towards their deaths, only to have gravity lose its hold as they drift lazily and touch down unscathed. In other places, they can plunge upwards into the clouds, as though the entire world had flipped around.

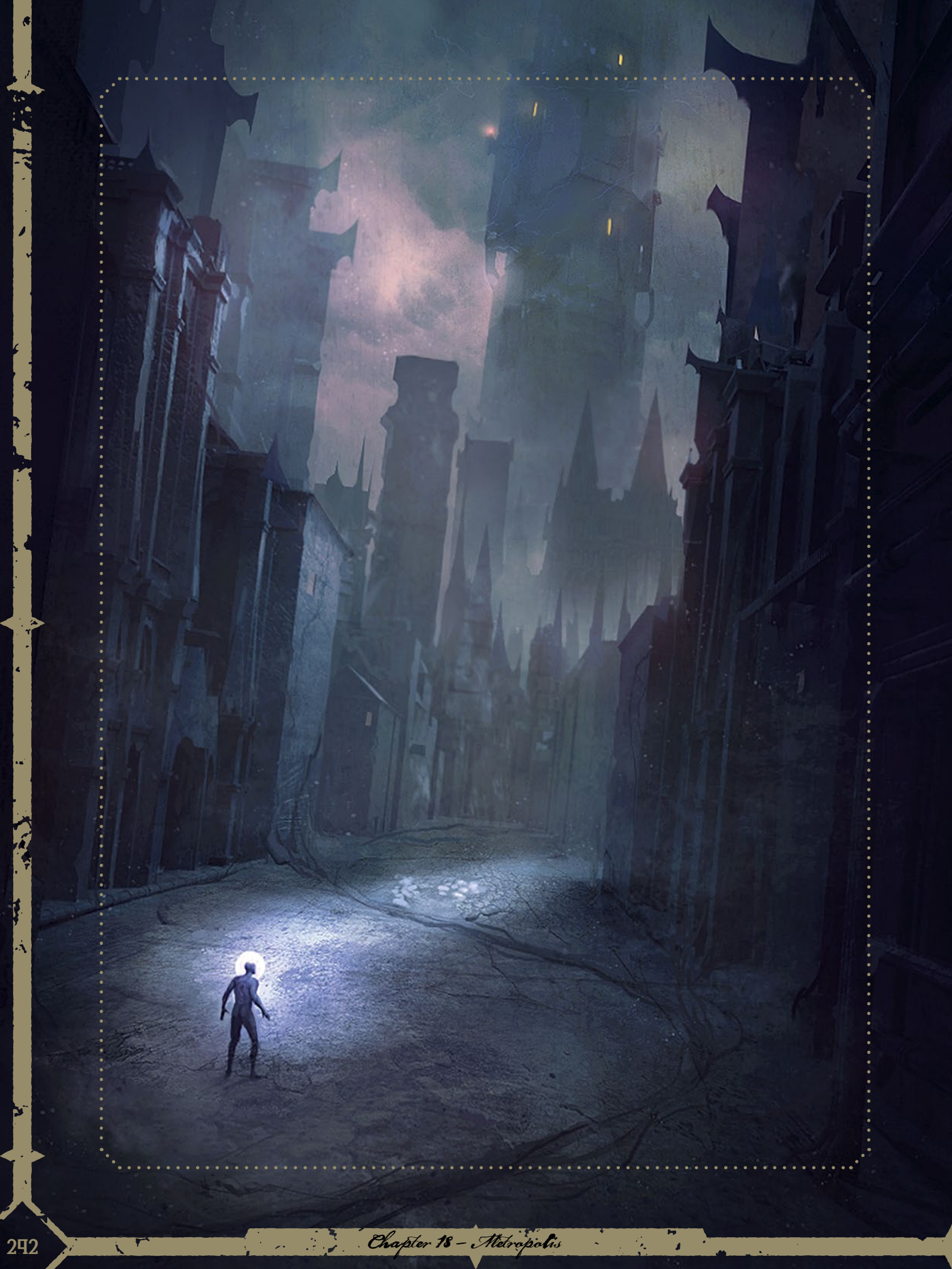
The Machine City

The Machine City is a complex, mechanical construction covering a large part of Metropolis. Colossal steam turbines are wired to primitive pylons, transmitting power over several kilometers. These are interspaced with pistons, gargantuan generators, luminescent reactor basins, and unfathomable apparatuses whose purpose was long-ago forgotten. Some sections resemble an imposing clockwork with gigantic cogwheels, copper wires, and brass chains. Modern and ancient technology intermingle and various machine parts are interconnected without any apparent purpose. In control centers, innumerable regulators and computers are illuminated by flickering screens and ghostly holograms.

Rusting metal staircases and ladders connect various sections of the complex. Open shafts run hundreds of meters up and down through the metallic infrastructure. Large areas of the Machine City are dead and silent, but in other parts the wires still spark and buzz, cogwheels revolve steadily, and pistons labor while smoke streams upwards from grating and chimneys.

Should a character spend time tinkering with the Machine City's dilapidated technology, they will discover machines able to bend Time and Space. Prisms shape light into illusions, showing a character's deepest desire. Clone tanks and DNA weavers spawn creatures both beautiful and monstrous. Anatomical charts detail the dismemberment of entire worlds. Ritual chambers with electrodes and surgical equipment open portals into other dimensions. Mirrored screens enable viewers to see throughout Time.

For millennia, the Machine City has been operated by technons, meek creatures that repair or dismantle parts of the Machine, and occasionally construct new ones. Even though knowledge of the Machine City's exact purpose has been long lost, there are indicators that it plays some role in maintaining the Illusion. This gigantic clockwork city stretches out in all directions and might reshape reality as we know it.



THE CITY OF THE DEAD

The City of the Dead is built on one of Metropolis' 7,777 hills. Cemetery monuments and mausoleums rise hundreds of meters above the ground, forming a maze of barely meter-wide alleys, which slowly spiral upwards to the hill's peak. A grid of deep ravines cuts into the hill. The hill itself is almost hollow, carved into pieces by burial chambers, crypts, and catacombs.

Residing among the stone and statuary are creatures which expired over the infinite passage of time. Those few humans who died the True Death rest here in enormous mausoleums, waiting for Time itself to perish. Creatures from beyond Time and Space lie embalmed in sealed chambers. There are catacombs where blackened, hollow skulls are kept as trophies from war and conquests; their heads unnaturally shaped, teeth yellowed, and lips dried and receded in placid and contemptuous smiles. On the outskirts, crematorium kilns stand silent and cold. The ashes of millions of slaves are kept in enormous urns, many of which have cracked asunder – their contents are now swirling through streets and alleys. Glass receptacles hold wondrous and beautiful creatures, preserved in their post-mortem loveliness.

Some of our cemeteries are portals to the City of the Dead: Père-Lachaise in Paris, the Roman catacombs, the cemetery in Santiago, and Cairo's necropolis to name a few.

Amid the cemetery monuments, mumbling creatures awaiting eternity hold endless vigils. Prayer pennants flit in the stagnant breeze. Dead gods reside in sealed vaults underneath the hill; they've lost their souls, but are trapped in bodies still aching with emotion and desire. They cannot leave their chambers, yet often try to attract the living into their tombs, gaining a short respite from their suffering as they live out their desires and devour their victim. Anyone foolish or unlucky enough to touch their cursed bodies becomes frozen, gangrene spreading over them like large bruises.

On the hill's peak rests the Empty Chapel, a bone-white building where legend has it the Demiurge shall be interred after the end of the world. After the Demiurge disappeared from his Citadel, an attendant appeared at the gravesite. It now guards the Empty Chapel with a massive sword and a dour look. Its presence has been interpreted as heralding both the Demiurge's death and continued life. The truth is unclear.

THE TEMPLES

Magnificent temples are built on each of Metropolis' 7,777 hills. None of them alike. They are all exquisite fragments from thousands of cultures and realms. Some temples are no more than ruins, while others are echoing marble cathedrals, behemoths of steel and glass, fortresses of iron, or towers of patinated copper. All are archaic and alien, artifacts from begone and deceased eras constructed and preserved in monumental extravagance. Divine symbols of victory and triumph, every temple incarcerated a fallen god, but after humanity's fall, many of them have broken free. These are powerful beings as strange and ethereal as they are frightening and distorted. They wander the ruins of Metropolis, occasionally venturing into other worlds or into Elysium. Many still dwell in their old temples, bound by old magics or living in confusion and fear of what exists beyond their halls.

THE CITADELS

Threatening and sombre, built in foreign architectures with arches, staircases, and black facades, the Citadels stand higher than any other building in Metropolis, rising mile after mile through smog, haze, smoke, and clouds. They are the nodes of the Archons' power. It is from here their consciousnesses stream throughout the dimensions, upholding the Demiurge's system of Principles. Each Citadel is like a black giant towering over Metropolis' dead landscape.

Within sight of a Citadel, you feel as though the building itself were watching you. The nearer you get, the closer your mind comes to that of the Archon's. It seeps into your pores, fills your consciousness, and reweaves your thoughts, urging you to become part of its Principle. For example, all who reside in Kether's Citadel are filled with deep reverence for the ruling powers and wish to take their own place in the divine hierarchy. All visitors to Binah's Citadel feel their place in the great community, craving ritual, and feeling powerless as an individual before the mighty collective. In Geburah's Citadel, everyone obeys laws, decrees, and age-old references inscribed in iron. Only in Malkuth's Citadel do explorers feel a whisper of their human divinity.

The Citadels are akin to Metropolis itself, laying largely in ruins. Their facades have been dark and dilapidated since the Great War, when the Archons almost wiped each other out after the Demiurge's disappearance. A Citadel's labyrinthine interior consists of giant halls, archives, alien landscapes, endless staircases, thrones, and abysses. The first thousand floors are a shadow of their former glory and home to the Archon's worshippers, beings who have stumbled into the Citadel out of fear or devotion. A few miles up, the Archons' true servants and heralds are encountered. The higher you climb, the deeper into the Archon you travel, as the Citadel *is* the Archon. Its primordial power and Principles are cast into the building's very foundation.

Four of the Citadels, belonging to the fallen Archons, are blackened, hollowed out, and dead. Parts of the facades have cracked open, their chambers echoing of emptiness, while the Archon's presence is more like an echo from the past. Isolated angels and lictors still wander in these ruins, mourning their former god-kings.

The Oubliettes of Forgetfulness

The Citadels are important nodes in the mechanisms of Death. The Archons feed on our souls, and after death the Citadels call to us. We follow the Principle which had the greatest hold over us, and allow ourselves to be ensnared by it. Certain souls can escape this calling, tearing themselves free, while others are caught in an eternal tug-of-war between various Principles.

Far up in the Citadels, the Archons keep souls in innumerable black chambers. There, in complete darkness, we assume the physical form we had in life. We do not need to eat, drink, sleep, or even breathe. We are alone with ourselves, free from suffering, but denied any interaction with the rest of the universe. This solitude is oppressive and suffocating. It devours all sounds, all senses. It is peaceful, yet ghastly at the same time.

Denied outward stimulation, the soul dives inwards, pulling up memories, thoughts, faiths, and convictions which are allowed to flower and protect us in extreme isolation. In this emptiness, all memories and desires bloom like colors on an empty canvas. Here, in this borderland of longing, we relive our childhoods, meet friends long dead, stumble through our first sexual attempts, and remember everything – every passion, yearning, hatred, sorrow, and failure.

Yet each time the memories are pulled out, the more difficult they are to find again. Bit by bit, they are devoured by the Archons' presence. We are constantly forced to dig deeper inwards, surrendering more and more of ourselves until we are completely empty and depleted. It is like being stripped naked piece by piece, emptying our pockets and baring everything we ever owned. After no memories remain, we exist in nonexistence, unable to comprehend our environment or ourselves. We are devoid of everything. It is only then our soul is set free.

There are those who keep fighting, refusing to give up their memories and innermost secrets. Some are also successful in preserving pieces of themselves, and are reborn with memories from their past life.

The Abyss

The Archons' ten Citadels form a circle around the Abyss, the bottomless gulf where the Demiurge's Citadel once stood. Now there is merely a deep shaft, surrounded by sheer cliffs. Metropolis extends right up to the edge, the outermost buildings precariously balancing on the rim; occasionally, an odd house falls into the void. One of Metropolis's oily rivers ends in a thundering waterfall here, cascading down into the darkness. Alien spores, mold, algae, and mushrooms grow along the cliff walls, making the terrain slippery and hazardous. Echoing voices resonate between the cliff walls, accompanied by wailing sounds and whispers. Flying beasts hover like scavenger birds above the Abyss, feasting on the prolific crustacz, which crawl up and down the cliffs, laying their eggs in crevices and cracks. The Abyss is several kilometers straight across, and in some places the other side remains out of sight. Narrow cliff shelves and primitive flights of steps lead down into the darkness, as well as rusty winches and wires which stretch downwards. Even with the light from above, roughly ten meters down everything turns pitch black. It is said that Astaroth himself plunged into the Abyss in search of his lost twin, while thousands of curious people have made the journey themselves to search for traces of the Demiurge.

The Wonders of Metropolis

When wandering through Metropolis, you will encounter strange, wondrous and terrifying things. Below are some examples.

- *Towering, black monoliths coated with an oily surface. The air is filled with buzzing flies.*
- *A spiraling mosaic which covers the entire wall of a building. The longer you observe the mosaic, the sleepier you become. When you finally succumb, you sleep for a full day and have strange dreams of other worlds.*
- *Ruins riddled with bullet holes and signs of explosions. A Tiger tank from Nazi-Germany rests abandoned in the rubble.*
- *From a seemingly abandoned building, you can hear moans and sounds of pleasure. A feeling of arousal and strong sexual urges overtake those who come close to it.*
- *Buildings are frozen in ice and snow, an eternal winter reigning over this area. The bitter cold streams from a hole in the street, which leads down into a warren of ice caves.*
- *The night sky is filled with strange stars, moons, and comets, which seem to be eerily close. All sounds are muffled and beautiful constellations float around, casting curious shadows.*
- *A grand temple with ancient pillars and statues. Its interior is a bizarre, twisted version of a Roman bathhouse, featuring basins filled with stale water, steam, erotic murals, and the constant sound of dripping water. Slithering and filthy creatures make these halls their home, and you stumble over the grisly remains of their victims.*
- *Megalithic structures of standing stones which seem to burst through the concrete and asphalt, surrounded by mist. White mushrooms grow over their surface and on the ground around them.*
- *A junkyard with mountains of waste and its underground incinerators roaring with heat. The streets, squares, and alleys are all buried in the garbage and stinking ash.*
- *An ancient seabed petrified for eternity. A grotesque and gargantuan fossil dominates the scene, impossible to determine.*
- *The air fills with the wild fluttering of thousands of wings. Birds of unknown origin have roosted in one of the dark skyscrapers. They dwell in the hollow structure and lift to the dark sky like a swarm of insects.*
- *A flooded city block filled with stale water. Rafts or boats are needed to pass through this area.*
- *A vast factory-cathedral of rusted iron waits in the distance. Amidst the cogs, gears, and pulleys, stairs lead down to catacombs. A grave waits in the centre of the chapel.*
- *The glow of a candle can be seen in a window of one of the black facades.*
- *A rusty radio mast with a desolate red lamp in the top. Beneath it, a small altar holds shredded birds, apparently scattered here as a sacrifice.*
- *Torn-out pages from religious writings in innumerable languages blow down the street like autumn leaves.*
- *Inside a building, an operating table is covered with strange organs, which pulse with a violet glow. The filthy, grey-green sinews, epidermis, and muscle fibers are covered by spotted flesh. It suckles your fingers before grafting itself to your body, the nerve fibers spreading under the skin like a disgusting cobweb.*
- *A building has shattered into thousands of pieces, cleaved by an immense force or exploded from within. In order to circumvent it, you must climb across mountains of sharp shards.*
- *Fresh, clear water escapes from a rusty pipe. There are trails on the ground suggesting that someone or something frequently comes here to drink.*
- *The shadows begin to twist and turn, followed by an icy chill that makes you tired and weak.*
- *A deep trough filled with things living at the bottom. Quivering meat and slimy organic substances grow in abundance. A constant bubbling and hissing sound can be heard.*
- *Chains and shackles lie in a rusty pile. Atop the pile, there is a mummified corpse curled in the fetal position.*
- *A palpable wave of sorrow sweeps out from the gateway of an old theatre. The closer you get, the more difficult it is to hold back the tears.*
- *Angelic creatures crawl like insects over a building's facade dripping with moisture, lapping at the stone with pale, slimy tongues. Their spindly fingers search in the cracks and cavities, while their wings occasionally flitter in agitation.*
- *A gladiatorial arena where generations of slaves slaughtered each other as entertainment for the gods. The sandy floor of ground lead and iron shavings is still stained with their spilled blood. Their memories hover in a shimmering aurora around the arena, and will surrender their secrets in exchange for blood.*
- *Machines with strange cogwheels stand motionless and rusting. A vine with tiny, white flowers grows among them, defiantly emerging from the cracked asphalt.*
- *The street here has cracked open. Beneath the asphalt, there is a gigantic clockwork of discolored brass. Should you wish to do so, it is possible to climb down through the machinery and into the Underworld.*
- *Rows of vessels, tubes, and jars, where viruses and diseases lurk. A glass sphere hovers in the air above the rest. It contains a sentient contagion, which if released, takes over a body, dissolves it, and then reshapes it.*

- *Enormous tapestries of thick cloth and silver thread. They seem to contain a curious message, but large sections are covered in mold and dust.*
- *A passage leads down to a crypt, where three bodies lie in their mortuary shrouds. Outwardly, they appear healthy and vibrant.*
- *A network of channels is filled with sludge and algae. A pale sheen glows on the surface.*
- *A vibrant garden filled with plants, somehow alive in the city's sombre landscape. At the centre of the enclosure, you find crucified angels with their wings torn away. Catheters and medical tubing lead from the angels' bodies down into the ground, fertilizing the greenery. One of the angels is still alive.*
- *A massive bunker, but the metal gateway looks like it was forced open from the inside. Atop tall pedestals, hearts of stone rest under bell jars on cushions of red silk. One of the pedestals is empty and its bell jar has been smashed.*
- *A viaduct menacingly arches over the street. Below, in its deep shadow, something suddenly moves and slips away into an alley.*
- *A building with organic forms and openings resembling bodily orifices. If you approach it, your mouth fills up with an electric taste, as though you had licked a battery.*
- *Between two dark skyscrapers, you glimpse one of the Citadels. You can feel its presence before you see it. Someone or something there is observing you, and for a brief moment, you glimpse into the Archon's consciousness.*
- *A cathedral-like building shrouded in a grey haze, abandoned and burned out. In the basement, flickering holograms roam back and forth.*
- *An operating chair with mechanical arms equipped with scalpels and syringes. If you sit, it activates and fulfills its grisly purpose.*
- *A collection of warm, blood-red stones. If you press the palm of your hand against them, a singing melody starts sweeping between temples and skyscrapers. It soon blows away the dust, intensifying until it roars like klaxons over the dead city.*
- *A darkened vault from which distant traffic, voices, and laughter can be heard. Should you enter through its door, you are immediately transported back to Elysium.*
- *A smashed statue lying in thousands of pieces across one of the market places. At the base of the statue, a portal of patinated copper opens onto a staircase leading downwards.*
- *Gigantic mirrors of red obsidian, stained by soot, stretch from floor to ceiling. If you take the time to study and look at them, you see how the mirror images move. These blood-red reflections come from the dream worlds. If you learn the code, you can use them as a gateway to Limbo.*
- *A tree of black iron rises in a square. Its branches stretch out like thorny arms. At the tree's base, an opening and a staircase lead downwards. Somber music floats up the stairs to greet you.*
- *Chiming laughter erupts from a desolate house. Shortly thereafter, a body is thrown out of a window, landing with a wet thud on the street. The laughter continues from inside the house.*
- *An industrial facility illuminated with a yellow-green sheen emanating from large cloudy receptacles, where slave specimens are preserved in endless rows of floating, bloated bodies. Below each receptacle, there are mouldered uniforms and rusty weapons.*
- *A futuristic steel building where every glass window has been smashed. Below the building, a shanty town sprawls outward, and you can glimpse movements in the numerous sheds.*
- *Low, tiled buildings, which are burnt out and bombed to pieces. All noises are muffled and wet, and sound oddly distant even when they are close. A magnificent horse wanders along the street and disappears behind a corner.*
- *A shadow slowly moves like a sundial, dust whirling up at its touch. As it moves, a new path is opened up: a staircase leading upwards.*
- *A burned-out building, which is completely empty. Echoing voices from thousands of years ago still cascade between its walls. Secrets are whispered and pacts are made here.*
- *Gravity's pull eases, allowing you to make impressive leaps and gain a sense of buoyancy. The farther you continue forward, the less hold gravity possesses until you see sections of buildings lazily hovering around a strange machine.*
- *From a distance, you hear thunder rolling over the city and see flashes of lightning between the tall buildings. In the brief, blinding light, you catch images of how the city looked before its decay.*
- *Ancient aqueducts of enormous proportions loom over the houses, casting some in permanent shadow. The underside is covered by lichens and moss faintly glowing in the dusky light.*
- *Piers reach out into a river clogged with slurry. Rusty cranes stand upon the quay. In the water, there lies an imposing steam ship from the early 20th century. It is blackened, but you can make out the name: RMS Lusitania.*
- *A temple building made of dark green glass. A faint glow emanates from it, painting the underside of the clouds in sickly colors. Petrified and desiccated bodies from innumerable creatures lie all around.*

When You Walk in the Eternal City

• The Presence of the Archon

The presence of an Archon becomes tangible. Its psychic might stretches out from the Citadel and penetrates into you. Angels are seen in the firmament, while mad people who worship the Archon's power stalk the streets.

• Memories from the Past

Memories wash over you, drowning you in glimpses from other lives, fragments and sensations of another existence, and small seeds of divinity awakened. You recognize streets, buildings, and places. It is like returning to an orphanage you haven't seen in many, many years. Much has changed, but every nook harbors a foggy memory.

• Cross Time and Space

You cross Time and Space. Perhaps you reappear in a completely different location in the city, or move through Time and leave Metropolis entirely, returning days, months, years, or centuries after you first entered the city.

• Wondrous Place

This location conceals something interesting. It might be one of the Citadels, the Machine City, the City of the Dead, the Abyss, or another of Metropolis' many buildings and secrets.

• Gateway to Elysium

The Illusion pulls you back to Elysium. Perhaps you walk around a street corner and find yourself in an alley in our world. Maybe you hear faint sounds of life and traffic in the distance, and can follow this through Metropolis' labyrinth and back to our prison.

• Life in the Ruins

Something stirs in the otherwise dead city. Maybe an Azghoul, feral humans, an angel, a wild animal picking up a scent, or something more exotic.

• The Influence of the City

The Eternal City has a deep influence. It's dark shadows sweep over a person, profoundly altering them forever. While Metropolis can have a physical influence, it can also mentally influence characters. A Dramatic Hook can be substituted, two Attributes switch places, an Advantage or Disadvantage are exchanged, or an Archetype changes. When you exit Metropolis, you are not the same person.

CULTS

Prophets of the Third Temple

Ties to Powers: Angel of the Archon Kether.

Members: Orthodox Jews.

Agenda: To lead the faithful to the Holy Land (Metropolis) and erect the third temple there, establishing a new realm as God's chosen people.

Moves: ***Contacts in Synagogues***, ***Information from Mossad***, ***Unflinching Conviction***, ***Hidden Assets***.

During the massacre in the Warsaw ghetto in 1943, a young Jewish man, Jochim, was drawn into Metropolis. Desperate and drenched in blood, he wandered through the blackened city. He found a spring of black, still water and quenched his thirst there. A light shone out of the darkness and an angel appeared to him. This angel proclaimed himself to be a servant of the Most High God and gave Jochim the sacred task of gathering the righteous. When the time was ripe, Jochim would lead them out of slavery and into the Holy Land like Moses.

Currently, Jochim is an aging Rabbi, who has gathered righteous Orthodox Jews since the end of the Second World War for an exodus from Elysium into Metropolis. On occasion, Jochim and his chosen few venture out on long marches in Metropolis, in order to speak to the Angel and offer sacrifices.

The cult has its largest influence in North America and Israel. They have continually gathered materials in preparation for their sacred journey. Before the sacred march can begin, the cult must endure a number of trials and cleanse the world of the enemies of Jehovah.

The cult is the Angel's extended arm in Elysium. It has no intention of leading them into Metropolis or creating a new Holy Land, but uses the cult to fight the servants of the Death Angels. The cult's adherents are dispatched to kill people stained by Inferno. The Angel is an adept manipulator, and this is not the first time he has wrapped the desperate around his finger. Nomads, escaped slaves, and caravan drivers throughout history have been duped by his beautiful words about them being the 'chosen few' of the heavenly realm.

Section 11

Ties to Powers: Geburah.

Members: For the majority, police and members of private security firms, but also prosecutors and judges.

Agenda: Protect the secret of Metropolis. Flush out riffraff such as drug addicts, homosexuals, and atheists.

Moves: ***Contacts High Up in the Justice System***, ***Cover Each Other's Backs***, ***Forge Evidence***, ***Paths to Metropolis***, ***Manipulate Police Reports***, ***Make Sure People Disappear***.

The cult has its core membership within the law enforcement agencies. Indeed, Section 11 can be found under various guises in police departments all over the world. Lictors who have roles as prosecutors, judges, and managers select promising candidates and indoctrinate them into the cult's secrets. Those who have a propensity for violence and a conservative viewpoint are generally chosen, and racism is endemic in the group. In North America, Afro-Americans, Arabs, and Hispanics are key targets of the cult. In the Middle East, it is foreign workers from India, Africa, Western cultures, and those of differing tribes and ethnicities. Members wallow in a hateful stew of homophobia, misogyny, and disapproval of various subcultures.

Section 11's main objective is protecting the secret of Metropolis. Outsiders are not to be told about the Eternal City, and people who talk about its existence are beaten up in custody and threatened into silence. If this doesn't work, they are framed for crimes they did not commit. Fingerprints at a homicide scene or possession of drugs or child pornography usually takes care of most enemies. If this still does not dissuade the person, a fake suicide or overdose can be arranged. In some cases, victims are thrown into vans and left in dark alleys to be devoured by the wild beasts of Metropolis.

Within the cult membership, Metropolis is viewed as a dire warning of what is to come, if they allow criminals, homeless, homosexuals, and atheists to take over the world. By cleaning up the urban decay, influencing politics in a conservative direction, and keeping Metropolis a secret, Section 11 seeks to strengthen the Illusion and preserve the mainstay of society.

Flakchatters

Ties to Powers: Malkuth.

Members: Urban Explorers, alternative youths, conspiracy theorists, and occultists.

Agenda: To explore and understand Metropolis.

Moves: ***Secret Networks***, ***Keep a Check on the City***, ***Hiding Places and Haunts***, ***Get Into Cordoned-Off Places***.

Among the hundreds of Internet horror stories, creepy pastas, urban myths, and tales of unexplained events, there are stories of people who have seen, or even ventured into, an alien and sombre city. The Flakchatters are a loosely woven network of urban explorers, occultists, and cryptid hunters seeking the truth behind these stories. They meet to explore abandoned places, hoping to discover a pathway into the rumored city.

Some members have actually reached Metropolis. They bring back curious objects and stories of what they have seen. They know they need to keep quiet about their experiences, as several of them have been unjustly arrested or disappeared entirely. Of late, a culture of bullying has arisen within the cult. They've realized insight into human suffering and its victims can open the barriers between worlds. As such, some cult members have committed serious crimes. They target homeless people, assaulting or even killing them, all to open the doors of the Illusion.

Cat, a young woman with punk sensibilities, has become the self-appointed leader of the Flakchatters. She has gained control over an Azghoul through learning his True Name. She uses him to scare the others into submission. The Azghoul looks like a massive older man with a horribly scarred face. He follows Cat everywhere and does not speak, except for the occasional mumbled word.

METROPOLIS' SURVIVORS

When we were cast from our thrones, there were few who bemoaned our fall. Creatures looked up to the Demiurge with fear, but when the God ignored them, they shed their shackles of slavery and danced and sung in euphoric freedom. A new dawn without tyrants had apparently come. Since then, almost all of them have been obliterated and their happiness has died with them. Miserable remnants of these peoples can still be found residing in Metropolis.

The *Kurfagi* fought and died for us. They were brainwashed for war. Now they are leaderless and disconcerted. They are no longer soldiers and do not remember their past. Their fingers are crooked blades and their hands are grey and hard as armor. They lap up nourishment from the streets and attempt to deaden their pain through drugs.

The *Curatorids* chose our slaves, then tested and modified them. Half their bodies are mechanical with built-in instruments to measure, heal, and adjust the anatomy of slaves, as well as correct aspects their owner wanted altered. They still carry out their experiments when possible. They are too preoccupied with their own obsession to see the world has died around them, and always have an excuse for what they have done.

The *Amenthills* can be found gliding between the abandoned houses. They appear weightless, ethereal, dancing on the gentle winds. If touched, their skin falls apart like dried petals and swirls away on the wind in tiny bits. They mumble commands, proclamations, and lies, repeated like mantras.

In deserted hangars, the *Constructors* stand silently in endless lines, collecting dust. Mechanical guards created for war and destruction, they are now rusted relics with brilliant intellects locked in immobile bodies.

The *Magistrates* sleep in Metropolis' subterranean crypts and catacombs or away in the sealed chambers of its stately towers. They are connected to complex machines, which preserve their lives while they await our return. Often, they are surrounded by enormous treasures and riches they have amassed. Once, they were our administrators, but the few who remain have abandoned their crowns. The cruel deeds they committed in our names have filled them with guilt and resentment.

The tragic *Ephoria* were once beautiful beyond words, and formed pacts with us to conserve their beauty. Now, their skin is droopy and doughy, infections festering in folds and cavities, exuding a repugnant stench. It is as though their bodies have melted and decayed, draped over a skeleton that remains impossibly upright, a wax doll held over a hot flame. If you should encounter them, they whine pitifully and hide their faces behind long, sagging fingers. They do not want us to see what they have become.

Azghouls

The azghouls were our former slaves.
An azghoul perceives a human being's soul rather than the physical semblance. As such, they can still harbor fear, desire, or hatred towards a human being who has been born and died hundreds of times over in Elysium.

The azghouls were once exquisite beings – the azadaevae – but they were truncated, reshaped, and compelled to serve us. They are anthropomorphous, supernaturally slim, and taller than us. Their beautiful features are distorted by operations and modifications. Almost uniformly, their eyes are deep green and completely lack pupils.

All azghouls wear armor of smoke-colored glass, which looks as though it was forged to perfectly fit their bodies. This creation is actually a parasite, living in a painful symbiosis with its host. Long spikes penetrate into the azghoul's spine, connecting this outer shell with their nervous system. It is possible to see through the smoky glass and view the skinless muscles beneath. The creature's internal organs are woven together with the armor's technology via tubes, sharp instruments, and hooks to give the parasite total control. It was Mankind who trapped the azghouls in these constructions, thus tying their physical existence to our servitude. Via the armor, we controlled them and compelled them into submission. An azghoul who tries to remove their armor perishes under severe torment.

The azghouls are still our slaves, but we have forgotten how to make them obey. Anyone who learns an azghoul's True Name receives total power over it. In the Illusion, azghouls appear like stately, intimidating people, but their bodies invariably exhibit scars and injuries.

Azghoul

Home: Metropolis.

Creature Type: Former human slaves (azadaevae before that).

Abilities

- *Sharp senses:* The being's senses are perfect, able to pick up the most minute sound, scent, even an intuitive sense that something seems 'off.'
- *Soulsight:* Can always see a creature's true form and a human's past lives.
- *Body protection:* All **Harm** taken is reduced by **–1**.
- *Former servant:* If a human calls an azghoul by its True Name, the azghoul is forced to obey the human as its master.

Combat [5], **Influence** [1], **Magic** [2].

Combat [Exceptional]

- Overwhelm [causes **+1 Harm**, opponent gets *–1 to any attacking or avoidance moves*].
- Counter-attack [attacks immediately after being attacked, –2 ***Avoid Harm***].
- Destroy an opponent's weapon.
- Attack many targets simultaneously.
- Dash attack [Distance: room].

Influence [Weak]

- Offer guidance or knowledge in Metropolis.

Magic [Novice]

- See any creature for what it really is.
- Sense a human's wishes.

Attacks

Azghouls are frightening warriors capable of defeating most human foes when faced directly. These creatures' armor strengthens them and they have honed their skills in Metropolis over thousands of years.

Unarmed: Lift up [–] [Distance: arm, the target must ***Act Under Pressure*** to get free]; Throw [1] [Distance: arm, target knocked to the ground]; Crushing punches [2] [Distance: arm].

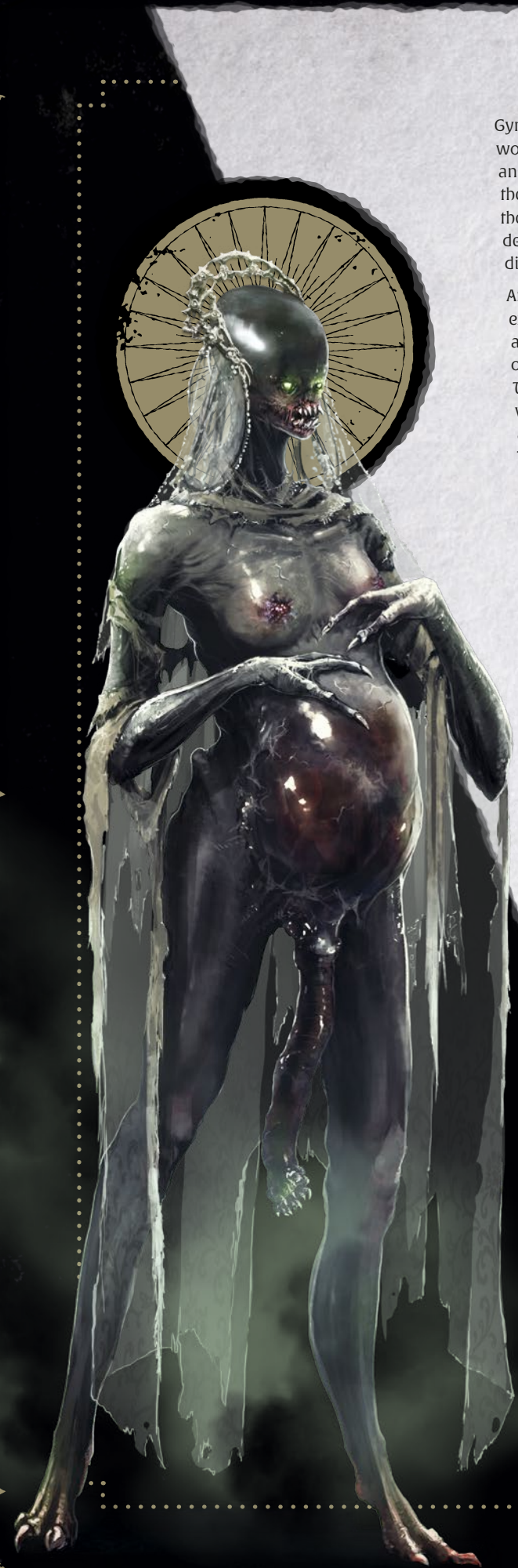
Arcaic blade and spike weapon: Dash attack [2] [Distance: room, attacks multiple targets]; Overwhelming attack [3] [Distance: arm, target gets *–1 to attacking and avoiding rolls*]; Destroy weapon [–] [Distance: arm, the attack destroys the opponent's weapon].

Throwing blade: Impale [2] [Distance: field].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○○ ☠

- The attack bounces off its armor.
- The azghoul immediately counterattacks [*–2* ***Avoid Harm***].
- A part of the armor is ripped from the creature's body, making it scream in agony [*+1 to next roll*].
- The azghoul flees away from the threat, leaving a trail of shimmering blood.
- The azghoul is knocked to the ground, seemingly dead...
- Dead.



Gynachid

Gynachids

Gynachids are solitary carnivores, which hunt in Metropolis and other worlds beyond the Illusion. They are vaguely anthropomorphic creatures, and can move on two or four legs. Their skin is dark grey and sticky, and their genitalia is a meandering, tentacle-like organ. Once upon a time, they were our slaves, and in order to control their strong and pugnacious desires, we took away their ability to create offspring. Only through our divine grace, and a spark of our soul, could their fetuses live on.

After we were enslaved by the Demiurge, the gynachids started to go extinct. However, they discovered the pathways into Elysium, and found a way to live in symbiosis with us. When a gynachid mates with another of its species, the fertilized egg cannot develop in the creature's womb. Therefore, it seeks out a human woman and implants the fetus in her womb. After six months, the infant gynachid is brought into the world, appearing unremarkably similar to a human child during its first months. Three months later, it starts developing gynachidian features. Between six months and a year of age, it rapidly grows into a full-sized gynachid. Before this happens, the gynachid's true parent comes to fetch its child, in order to raise it in the wastelands of Metropolis.

As thanks, gynachids usually leave behind strange crystals or metal decorations for the surrogate mother. On occasion, an adult gynachid seeks out its surrogate mother or human siblings later in life.

Sometimes they attack people, which they view as an exciting game. Deep within, they still worship us devotedly. They are entranced by our music and art, and want to be more like us. Their limited perceptions do not quite understand what happened or why we lost our divinity, but gynachids constantly see the entire situation as a fun new game, or perhaps have simply resigned themselves to the new situation without question.

Gynachids strut and prance with delight from being petted and stroked, emitting a purr-like, burbling sound from their diaphragm. They also possess an eagerness to mate, play, and satisfy – something which, in our non-divine state, can be shocking and even lethal.

They have a natural hatred towards angels and dread the Citadels. They often lie in ambush atop buildings and in deep shadows. An angel who is careless will be clawed asunder and eaten alive by a furious gynachid.

Tekrons

Tekrons are creatures of meat, bone, and plastic, cybernetic life forms originating from the Machine City where they tend the ancient machinery. Some move on spider-like legs, some hover through the air, and others inch and crawl their way forward. They have little intelligence, as they were only created to keep technology alive and repair anything broken. They do not understand, or simply refuse to accept, that Metropolis and its old order have crumbled. They cannot imagine any other type of existence, so they continue maintaining the aging systems. People who get in their way are viewed as intruders, but their bodies might be seen as spare parts. Sometimes, Tekrons are used by Metropolis' other residents, as they follow orders to the letter without questioning them.

Tekron

Home: The Machine City, Metropolis.

Creature Type: Servant to the Archons.

Abilities

- *Cybernetic:* The creature can connect to computers and machines and communicate with and control them.
- *Half machine:* The being is not affected by smoke, poisons, or gases, and does not feel pain.
- *Well equipped:* Possesses the exact gear required for the particular situation – tear gas grenades, gas mask, climbing rope, glass cutter, knock-out drug, binoculars, etc.
- *Unreadable:* This being is inscrutable and cannot be read in any way.
- *Body protection:* All **Harm** taken is reduced by **–1**.

Combat [3], **Influence** [3], **Magic** [3].

Combat [Considerable]

- Acid blood [**1 Harm** if in close distance when the tekron is hurt].
- Inflict electrical shock [**2 Harm**, *knocked out* if failing to ***Endure Injury***].
- Scuttle up a wall and escape.

Influence [Considerable]

- Hack into a network.
- Reveal their knowledge of The Machine City.
- Control the electricity in a building.

Magic [Considerable]

- Create a magical apparatus or artifact.
- Repair a living being or object.
- Become one with a machine.

Attacks

Tekrons are pragmatic creatures that don't care about other creatures if they aren't a hindrance to the tekron's immediate goal. Then it tries to subdue the target to return to its mission. Opponents that seem subdued are ignored.

Tools: Drill/saw/weld [2] [Distance: arm]; Electrical shock [2] [Distance: arm, automatically *knocked out* on a missed endure injury].

Magic: Become one with machine [1–2] [Distance: field, the tekron uses the surrounding technology to explode lamps or create power surges]; Repair [–] [Distance: arm, the tekron can repair anything, even living tissue, and replace it with mechanical parts].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○ ☠

- The attack falls harmlessly on the metal armor.
- A mechanical limb, tube or cable is cut and acid sprays from it [**1 Harm**].
- The tekron flees up on the nearest wall.
- Short circuit (subdued).
- The tekron explodes and dies [**2 Harm** for everybody in distance arm, **1 Harm** for everybody in distance room].
- The tekron dies.

The Tomb Guardian

Acrotides

Enfolded in dark veils covering their entire bodies, the Acrotides move silently and sweepingly through the labyrinthine passages of their Archon's Citadel. Beneath their shrouds, they are skeletal humanoids of bone and cartilage, sinew and veins lie exposed, and their grey eyes rest deeply within the desiccated skull, which constitutes their face. Despite their brittle appearance, if they enter battle, they draw their Kirashts, razor sharp scythe-like blades, and dive at their adversaries in a swirl of black robes.

The Acrotides blindly serve the Archon they are tied to, and to humans their behavior is incomprehensible. They can be seen wandering through the Citadel, carrying out curious rites, taking notes of events in an old ledger, lighting candles in narrow alcoves, and sacrificing viscera to blackened machinery. The Acrotides who served Archons who were annihilated, also, to a large extent, expired alongside their masters. However, some of them live on, either as servants to some new master, or wandering aimlessly in Metropolis, bereft of purpose.

The Tomb Guardian

In the City of the Dead, the Tomb Guardian stands silent vigil over the Empty Chapel. He is quiet, serene, and wrapped in tattered veils. He holds a sword etched with magical runes. He allows no one over the threshold to the Empty Chapel, and will first attempt to turn them away politely before drawing his weapon. The Tomb Guardian cannot be influenced by any known magic, and if he should somehow be annihilated, his body and equipment are soon resurrected in close proximity to the Chapel so that he may take up his vigil once more.

The Tomb Guardian

Home: Metropolis.

Creature Type: Unknown.

Abilities

- *Relentless:* Immune against mental powers and magic. Unaffected by cold, poison and heat.
- *Heavy armor:* All **Harm** is reduced by **–2**.
- *Undying:* If the Guardian is slain in battle his body is recreated and returns some minutes later.

Combat [6], **Influence** [–], **Magic** [4].

Combat [Legendary]

- Keep enemies at bay [***Act Under Pressure*** to attack in close combat].
- Hurl someone away.
- Destroy an opponent's weapon.
- Attack several targets simultaneously.
- Impale someone on the sword [**+2 Harm**].
- Cut off limb [**Critical Wound**].

Magic [Considerable]

- Shadow of death [**–2 Stability** in the Keepers vicinity].
- Create living dead.
- Resurrect a dead person.
- Open the gates to the Empty Chapel (very unlikely).

Attacks

The Tomb Guardian attacks anything that tries to enter the Empty Chapel. The being is relentless and silent, his sword swings sing of coming death.

Rune sword: Swinging attack [2] [Distance: room, attacks multiple targets]; Impale [4] [Distance: arm]; Destroy weapon [–] [Distance: arm, the attack destroys the opponents weapon]; Cleaving cut [Critical Wound] [Distance: arm, the victim gets +1 to ***Avoid Harm***]; Hurl opponent down from the fresbold [–] [Distance: arm, the victim has to ***Act Under Pressure*** or be thrown aside].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○○ ☠

- The attack bounces harmlessly off his armor.
- The Tomb Guardian ignores the damage.
- The Guardian counter-attacks [***Harm for Harm***].
- The Guardian is knocked back, giving the attacker an opportunity to run past him [***Act Under Pressure***].
- The Guardian raises dead opponents as living dead, fighting on his side.
- A weapon penetrates the Guardian's body [***Act Under Pressure*** to detach].
- The Guardian falls to a knee, praying to an unknown entity [*+1 on next roll*].
- The Tomb Guardian collapses.
- The Tomb Guardian is destroyed and dissolves into dust only to be recreated later.

Yeoman – The Lost God

Yeoman, the Lost God, ruled over a world of sparkling purple seas, and multiple suns burning in the sky. It ruled its subjects from atop the magnificent machines towering over the purple waters. Yet its world crumbled, dismantled bit by bit by the old rulers of Metropolis. Yeoman was fettered in its temple on one of the 7,777 hills, in order to be viewed in its submission and humiliation. After the Fall and the death of Metropolis, Yeoman's chains slowly mouldered away until it broke free and fled the temple, venturing into the sombre city.

The Lost God can still recall the purple sea and hear the murmur of its waves, but all it encounters now is ruin, silence, and ash. It remains close to the temple which served as its jail, for it is the only home that it knows now. The Lost God uses its limited powers to lure the unwary, creating illusions for all five senses. Its voice can imitate all sounds and voices, from a child's shriek to a mother's soothing lullaby. Its pores can produce alluring scents: a character's favorite food, cigarette smoke, coffee, and so on. Whatever one desires, Yeoman recreates as an intricate phantasm. In many ways, it is like a lost child, scared and confused. When it captures wanderers and creatures, Yeoman asks them about the purple sea and the flaming throne. If they cannot answer its questions, it usually tears them apart out of frustration and grief.

The Savage Beasts

Metropolis' ruins, streets, and enormous buildings have become home to feral creatures and bloodthirsty predator, grotesque abominations, or experiments set loose before or after the Fall. Some of them live on the borderland, biding their time and occasionally slipping across to find prey in Elysium.

Crustacz

Fly-like creatures with human faces and bodies half a meter long and semi-transparent. Yellow-grey wings trail after them on the ground. They live in crevices and cavities of the Abyss. They inject an anesthetic poison into their prey, and then drag them down into the dark in order to lay their eggs in the still-living flesh.

Erinyes

These airborne scavengers exist across Metropolis. Biomechanical in nature, they resemble disassembled pterosaurs. They have a wingspan of two meters and often hunt in packs. On occasion, they attack living prey and attempt to fly away with it to a lofty ledge, where it is torn to pieces and eaten alive.

Ferocco

These large, four-legged predators have withers roughly 150 centimeters in height. They appear tiger-like, but are hairless and can camouflage their skin in order to blend into the environment. They can climb up vertical walls and are capable of boring their claws into a roof, allowing them to linger there, motionless, waiting for prey. Ferocco hunt alone.

Jatharna

Unnaturally thin humanoids, close to six meters long. Like stilt-walkers, they wander slowly along the streets, as though they were walking on the bottom of a black sea. Their eyes are large and glow with a pale phosphorous sheen, which illuminates their faces. Their lonesome calls echo dismally between the houses. They are naked and their skin is grey-white and hangs in folds around their bizarrely slender bodies. Their teeth are sharp, and their fingers are long and spindly. They sniff the air, fumbling their way forward. If they get hold of anyone or anything, they bite it asunder with their powerful jaws and squeeze the contents into their thin mouths. Sometimes they stand in one place, slowly rocking from side to side, and staring listlessly towards one of the Citadels or down into the Abyss.

Methusa

White-grey, slimy leeches living in rivers and sewers, growing to be between two and four meters long. They curl around their prey, opening up a deep, wet fold in their body in order to engulf the victim – a painful process taking several hours. Once the prey is completely engulfed, the Methusa enters torpor until all organic parts have been devoured and digested.

Wolven

Wolvens are meter-tall, four-legged carnivores with alligator-like skulls. Their teeth are black and jut outside their jaws, and their long, blue-black tongues have sharp tips for spearing an unwary victim. Wolven are pack animals, hunting with great coordination.

People in Metropolis

There are also people living in the Eternal City, who strayed into Metropolis at some point and never found their way back. Many have been made into beasts or strange aberrations, while others live in small enclaves with alien cultures.

The Entranced

The Entranced live in small tribes in Metropolis. These are survivors, scrap collectors, and hunter/gatherers who live in post-apocalyptic conditions, scratching out a meager existence. They adhere to strange customs and all have their own mythological explanations for who they are and what kind of place the Eternal City is. They worship, sacrifice, and maintain ritualized laws in order to create a sense of purpose for their gloomy existence. Some of the tribes serve or revere Metropolis's machines, animated buildings, forgotten gods, Archons, angels, or prophets. The Entranced are some of the most skillful wanderers, who can safely guide you through (their part of) the dangerous labyrinth of Metropolis.

People of the Shadows

These strange people have been changed by Metropolis' shadows. Their bodies are white as snow, all color having deserted them, devoured by darkness and cold. Even their blood is unnaturally white. They feed on the body heat of various creatures, and are surrounded by a strange perfume. Moths and other winged insects are drawn instinctively to them, only to wither away from their radiating chill.

Dissection (or vivisection) reveals that they are dramatically altered within. In their belly, glands replace their stomach. The glands are porous-like. If you would eat them they taste like soft fat and melt in your mouth, leaving a slimy residue. Doing this creates a rapture that opens gates to Limbo. There are those who hunt the People for this treasure, killing them on sight. Others bargain with them or bestow sacrifices to them, in exchange for them coughing up secretions, which are collected in small glass bottles and sold to those desperate to dull their pain.

The Feral

These were once people, but have developed into feral abominations and now live in Metropolis's ruins and shadows. They have been distorted by contagion, poison, and other, worse things. Many suffer awful mutations, while others can no longer even be called human. Grey-skinned, filthy, and hollowed-eyed, their faces are hidden behind tangled hair. Most have sharp teeth and move with a crouched, animalistic gait. They sleep close to each other, as unmoving as piles of corpses, pressing their naked, anorectic bodies together to conserve body heat. If one of them picks up a scent, they begin slowly moving as a whole, sniffing at the air and smacking their chapped lips. They make their homes on ledges, under bridges, and in rooms with several exits in order to stay clear of the other predators hunting through the city's vaulted halls. They are cannibals themselves and slaughter wanderers, eating the meat raw and steaming. If they cannot find meat, they rummage through the ruins with sooty hands to find something to eat, scraping off deposits, mould, and outgrowths from moist walls for the organic material. It may sit upon their tongues with the taste of a stale sewer, but it is nourishment. The feral's sole objective is to survive.

Feral

ANGELS

The angels were created by the Demiurge. They were part of the ten Angelic Choirs, which were subordinated to each of the Archons. They guarded the Demiurge and celebrated His grandeur, as proclaimers, sentinels, executioners, and soldiers. Connected to Him through powerful blood-ties, angels were part of His soul, intellect, and will. As such, when the Demiurge disappeared, it was as though the angels themselves were ripped apart. The Demiurge's burning presence, which provided them with direction, clarity and permanence, was violently denied them. Many angels simply perished there and then, succumbing to the tidal wave of sorrow. Others descended into insanity. Those who survived were left broken and confused.

Unfortunately, they had little time to recover before Malkuth launched her rebellion and the Archons descended into infighting. The angels drew their swords and slaughtered each other. They couldn't refuse their new masters, faithfully obeying the Archons' will. It was a time of blood and slaughter, as mauled bodies rained down across Metropolis, filling the air with swirling, bloodied feathers. The last remnants of their souls died during this slaughter. Angels always need something to believe in. They require clear direction. To be an angel means to see the world in absolutes. Now they are compelled to question their own actions and deeds

Many of them threw themselves on their own swords. Others sought a power to whom they deferred and chose to serve blindly, in order not to have to think and question. Usually they allied themselves completely with one of the Archons, Death Angels, Astaroth, other divine entities, or even human beings. A tiny fraction of them broke free and chose to roam the worlds or enter Elysium.

Little remains of the angel's past hierarchies, stately ceremonies, or former duties. They are ragged fragments of a Celestial hierarchy now irretrievably broken. Without divine guidance, they are lost. Some of them still carry out their tasks, but do so mechanically, like workers on an assembly line where production has ground to a halt.

Chayot Ha Kodesh

The most powerful of the Angelic Choirs are sworn to Kether. They maintain the Demiurge's abandoned throne and proclaim His power and exclusive right to rule. Their songs sound through the worlds and make lower creatures tremble before the power of the Demiurge. They stood the closest to heavenly fire, so they also fell the furthest during the Schism. Few Chayot Ha Kodesh remain now, as most perished from sorrow when the Demiurge disappeared. These rare, yet powerful beings dwell on the Citadel's highest peaks, where they faithfully await the Demiurge's return in black sarcophagi or on ebony thrones.

Ophanim

This Angelic Choir served the Archon Chokmah. They were beings with a thousand countenances, who drew humans into religious submission. They were proclaimers, standard bearers, and the Demiurge's whispers in our ears while we slept. Virtually all Ophanim were slaughtered in the war between the Archons, and the surviving few have fled Metropolis. Some ventured into Elysium and have disguised themselves as false gods, muttering deranged prophecies to the lost. Other Ophanim have bound themselves to the false idols they created long ago, or now worship celebrities and fashionistas, following shallow ideologies in their desperate need to obey, believe, and be part of something.

Erelim

The Angelic Choir who served the Archon Binah, the Erelim are worshippers and guardians of the Holy Blood and sacred genealogies. Their past duty was to punish any who went against the sanctity of Family and find infants who bore the taint of Awakening within their hearts. These children were stolen from their families and stored in blood-filled, copper urns sealed with holy runes. Erelim are all identical in appearance, bearing the same name. Only their personal holy shrouds and symbols differentiate them from each other. They lack fear and see themselves merely as part of the Whole. If one of them dies, the rest live on. They still carry out their sacred duties, albeit confused and lost.

Hashmallim

The shattered and rare fragments remaining of this Angelic Choir were in service to Chesed, and have been distorted by madness. They were tasked with guarding humanity and lulling us into a false sense of security so we would not try to break the Illusion. They gave us closeness and warmth, consoling us with their bodies and words. They enchanted us with fairytales, delusions, and hope. Now their songs have been silenced. Those angels who remain are primitive, squalid beings who have lost their minds and now exist as parasites and predators. Their previously crystalline voices have devolved into grating howls.

Seraphim

The Seraphim serve Geburah and are sworn to uphold the Law. The Angelic Choir maintains the age-old decrees of the Demiurge and studies ancient tenets preserved on tablets of iron, attempting to follow them dutifully. Their narrow perceptions and countless rules have fettered them, allowing them to cope with the Demiurge's fall and the war between the Archons. They have not allowed themselves to feel and think, but instead follow what the laws say about how they should act. The Seraphim are fearsome warriors and Geburah dispatches them over the worlds occasionally, in order to solidify his power.

Malakhim

Under Tiphareth, this Angelic Choir were messengers, courtesans, and heralds. They travelled between the worlds, the courts of the Archons, and the Demiurge's Citadel with decrees, court rulings, and accolades. The Malakhims' beauty was enchanting and stirred desires in everybody who encountered them. The Demiurge named them as His favored children, and as such His disappearance became ever so fateful for the Malakhim. Their intimate connection to the divine ruler caused their souls to be torn asunder. They wasted away in sorrow, a rare few surviving. Some still serve Tiphareth, while others have surrendered themselves to the winds, bewailing their creator in the wilderness. Others struggle to forget who they are in Elysium's cities.

Elohim

Loyal to Netzach, the Elohim were the Angelic Choir containing the most powerful warriors. They annihilated everything the Demiurge directed His will against. In the war between the Archons, the Elohim committed the most dreadful deeds against their brothers and sisters. Those scant members of the Elohim remaining in our day are unstoppable, bloodthirsty creatures, who live for war and bloodshed. Most of them are incarcerated in cells of iron in Netzach's Citadel, and are only released when death and blood are demanded. Many of the remaining Elohim have found their way to Inferno, and have taken refuge in Hareb-Serap's court, or knelt before other Death Angels, swearing fealty to those who allow them to engage in violence unfettered.

BeneiHa'Elohim

This Angelic Choir was loyal to the fallen Archon Hod. Knit together by strong ties of etiquette and blood oaths, they served as guards and executioners. They were repudiated from the Demiurge's throne after they were tricked into helping humans in our early history. They enmeshed their blood with us, gave us equipment and insights, and helped us understand our prison. After the Demiurge's disappearance and Hod's annihilation, many of the BeneiHa'Elohim abandoned the last vestiges of their honor and ventured into Inferno, submitting themselves to Hod's shadow, Samael. Others are scattered and have abandoned their former calling.

Cherubim

This Angelic Choir was placed under the fallen Archon Yesod, acting as servants and governors. They managed all practical affairs and made sure the aging and complex machinery functioned, assuring the Illusion remained strong. Seldom were they granted the honor of standing before the Demiurge's throne, and therefore his fall was not as devastating for them. When the war among the Archons started and Yesod fell, the surviving Cherubim fled. Many were captured and killed, but those who escaped have come to walk their own paths. Most of them have ventured into Elysium and are amassing power and influence there, building their own little power centers, even though some have reverted back to serving Yesod.

Ishim

Subordinate to Malkuth, they were tasked with guarding humanity. They moved around in Elysium, observed us, searching for signs of our divinity, and enticing us away when they saw we were on to something. Ishim were vassals to the Egyptian dynasties, Roman senators, and Imperial advisors to China's emperors. They indirectly commanded the lictors, who openly despised the Ishim. When the revolt came, Malkuth summoned the Ishim, provided them with weapons, and allowed them to rush into Metropolis and slaughter Chesed's Angelic Choir and raze its Citadel. In the Great War that followed, most of the Ishim were destroyed, but the remaining few reside in and around Malkuth's Citadel, constantly dreaming of Elysium.

CHAPTER 19
INFERNO

INFERNO IS A PLACE OF TERROR, SUFFERING, AND UNSPEAKABLE BEAUTY. It is a world of winding staircases, yawning shafts, torture chambers, majestic halls, and dark catacombs. In Inferno's endless labyrinths, the traveler can encounter raging storms, devoted pilgrims, and grand and terrible sights. Blind augurs bend over autopsy tables of stainless steel, desperately trying to discover truths and predictions in steaming entrails. Nailed to nightmarish monuments, entranced lunatics sing their praises to the Death Angels and pain itself. Here, Astaroth and his Death Angels rule from their enormous Citadels. Those seeking answers to the riddles of Time and Space may find hidden truths in Inferno's lofty towers, abandoned libraries, or in prostration before its alien cogwheels and machines. In deep meditation, the nephilites stretch out their minds to find paths into Elysium, tasting our ripe world, luring the unwary, and trying to slip through. Our torture institutions, prisons, death camps, and psychiatric hospitals all border on Inferno, as are countless other places baptized in blood and suffering – the home of a serial killer, mass graves after innumerable executions, and war zones. A world so distant, yet so terrifyingly close.

The Black Citadels

The Black Citadels of Inferno are the mirror images of the Archons' citadels in Metropolis. They stretch upwards to the sky and deep down into the Underworld. They are grotesque buildings created from the impossible architecture of nightmares. Gothic towers with patinaed statues, twisted passageways, stone arches, vast machine halls, and metallic grids all mix together in an architechtural tour de force. Mold, creeping vines, and poisonous plants cling to their facades and rusty pipes, perpetually leaking garbage and chemical waste. Within their walls, there are deep shafts, rattling elevators, stairs, and tunnels descending into the depths. Beneath the ground, they spread out like enormous labyrinths, an endless network of torture chambers, dank cells, great halls, flaming kilns, glittering shrines, charnel pits, echoing amphitheaters, and stygian catacombs. Behind each door and beyond every portal, waits something wondrous and terrible. Here, the souls tied to Inferno are tortured and death gives no release.

The screams of the tormented ring throughout the halls, abysses, and galleries of steel. On operating tables, helpless victims are vivisected time and time again, their blood splashing over the tile walls, entrails torn out and thrown to the cement floor with a wet thud. Upon altars of marble, children are flayed alive by leering nepharites while their parents are forced to watch, only to then be forced to skin their loved ones themselves, dragged deeper and deeper down into madness. In thundering machine halls, rusty drills are driven into weeping, praying sinners while priests hold mass and collect the shed blood in golden vessels. Delicate, gossamer mirages tremble in the silent catacombs, echoing whispers of still-existent hope, tenderness, and love, only to dissolve like fog in the darkness. Naked purgatides impale their victims on skewers, drown them in waste oil, or burn off their faces with blow torches. Those waiting their turn listen to the screams and caress each other into ecstasy, searching in vain for some respite from the agony. The vestals of pain create works of art from peeled skin and viscera under black stone arches, while bawling infants are eaten alive by insects crawling at their feet.

Feral people dwell in sewer-like, claustrophobic culverts; occasionally they manage to find their way into our world. Amid chains and hooks, demons and lost souls find solace in the most forbidden sexual desires, their semen and vaginal discharge churning with blood and bile. In stinking cesspits, the innocent are force-fed each other's urine, feces, and vomit. Bodies scream, tremble, sob, and beg for mercy, although they should be long dead. Here though, they find no peace, no reprieve, as Inferno's surgeons patch them up again so their tortures can be resumed anew. Existence is an odyssey of entrancing, unparalleled cruelties. Humanity's aggregate desires and sadistic tendencies have been condensed down into hellish experimentation, where souls are punished, mutilated, and torn asunder in ceaseless repetition until their sense of self is completely obliterated.

Occasionally, kidnapped or unlucky servants of the Archons are subjected to the most insane suffering in Inferno. Angels are raped on altars of basalt, while lictors are cut up bit by bit, but are not allowed to die.

Only through submitting themselves completely to Astaroth, drinking the god's murky blood from the veins of his Incarnates, and devoting themselves to torture can they hope to continue to exist as his faithful servants.

Suffering's Oubliette

The suffering experienced by those tortured in Inferno is as horrific as it is sublime. Every voice is like an instrument, and when heard together the hundreds of thousands of souls become a wondrous symphony, echoing throughout the worlds, magnificent and awful. Just as a terrible storm can be beautiful to behold, suffering is like an unbridled force of nature, and every bit as entrancing. When souls are mangled, broken down, mutilated, and shattered over and over again, the experience in and of itself becomes a work of art, carried out with religious fervor.

The souls are drawn into the Death Angels' Citadels or into numerous purgatories. Each and every soul is drawn to the Principle they have been closest to, or torn apart and divided between the Higher Powers. Thereafter, their thoughts, sensations, desires, and knowledge are extracted out of them via torture and degradation. This spiritual force nourishes the creatures of Inferno. Astaroth cups his hands and holds them out, capturing our souls pouring down like sacrificial wine for him to drink from. He lets his Death Angels share in his gluttony, helping them to grow and extend their influences.

When only apathy remains, all memories, sorrows, thoughts, aspirations, fantasies, and dreams have been torn away, and our souls are completely depleted, we are finally set free. We have nothing more to give our captors and our suffering lacks meaning. Often these empty souls are allowed to wander across Inferno in desolate pilgrimages, tattered and lost, before finding their way to Astaroth's Citadel. They enter the black portal, descend into the black sea, and finally achieve peace – only to be reborn in Elysium.

Not all who end up in Inferno become its victims. The most creative murderers who do not feel any guilt or shame can be honored as gods or heroes. They are invited to lavish tables to eat and drink, and thereafter continue to spread their suffering. Those who suffered unimaginable torments in life are given crowns and allowed to live as tyrants, while others become their slaves. But this blessing is a temporary deception, and soon the roles shift, allowing the slaves to punish their tormentors. Those who have the greatest insight into dark truths, distinguishing themselves in cruelty, or lust for torment are sometimes embraced as disciples and baptized in blood. It is always possible to climb upwards in Inferno's hierarchy. Displays of utter ruthlessness are always rewarded. Some of these aspirants become purgatides and razides, or are taken into the nepharites' clergy. They become part of their Death Angel's Principle and have its mark branded into their soul.

Astaroth's Citadel

Purgatories

Purgatories are a special kind of hell. Individually unique, these prisons are created out of our own memories, dreams, fantasies, and thoughts, all in a toxic stew of feelings of shame and guilt. Once there, we are forced to confront what we most dread and desire. The nephariteS can read our wants, motivations, and fears and create a suitable prison for us, but subconsciously we allow them to fetter us.

In their purgatories, sinners experience their nightmarish lives over and over again, trapped in dreamlike worlds formed from locations from their past or their most terrible fears. A suicide bomber is forced to blow himself to pieces time and time again, but cannot die. His fragmented meat is alive and screaming, as it painfully reassembles. He realizes those killed on the bus he bombed are his own family members, who must join with him, suffering together and filled with hatred for him. The mother who drowned her own child is so overladen with guilt she is forever forced to wander the slimy seabed, searching for her little son while eels lay eggs in her belly and fish devour her eyes. The sun, glittering on the water's surface, and hope of forgiveness remain constantly out of reach.

In contrast to Inferno's torture halls, purgatories often exist very close to our world, hovering on the Illusion's outskirts. They form pocket universes of their own, not quite unlike the tattered dream worlds of Limbo. They exist close to locations where each sinner perished or where they had their strongest ties. Therefore, purgatories are places where the Illusion is weak and creatures can sometimes move between the worlds.

Astaroth

At the heart of the circle of the Death Angels' Citadels is Astaroth's seat of power, a black mountain standing against the sky. It is a universal node around which everything else rotates, a monument of raw will, a primordial Principle. As the Demiurge's shadow, Astaroth is now the only remaining true God. His entire dominion radiates with a wondrous, euphoric feeling. One can feel how forces here move in the firmament and on the ground. Energy and magnetic fields seethe, while violent winds and maelstroms of water swirl painfully, intertwining and coalescing.

Inferno's ruler, Astaroth is the Demiurge's twin. He is a primordial force, a lighthouse of darkness, a pulsating will streaming from his saturnine Citadel and permeating the worlds. His consciousness can influence several places simultaneously, while his Incarnations work in parallel. His awareness is too vast and complex to understand. In truth, the Death Angels are all aspects of Astaroth in the same way the Archons were aspects of the Demiurge.

When the Demiurge disappeared, it is said Astaroth departed in search of his twin. He traveled through Elysium, Metropolis, Limbo, and the Underworld, as well as the alien, distant worlds and shards of humanity's creations. Finally, he descended into the Abyss where the Demiurge's Citadel once stood, only to return enfeebled and mangled, dragging himself back into Inferno and his Citadel. He has since turned his will against Elysium.

The Principles of the Archons and the flagging power of the Demiurge are what ultimately maintain our prison, their wills ensnaring us. They pull the Illusion's veil over our eyes and yank our strings, making us dance to their melodies. After death, they drink from our souls until we are completely empty, then allow us to be born anew. Astaroth's current goal is to break this cycle and pry away the Archons' grip over Elysium, thus setting his Principles up as lords of our reality.

Inferno's Clergy

Inferno's clergies are as much preachers as they are interpreters of the Death Angels' Principles. They all have their individual methods of understanding their commands, creating many schisms between them about what is the correct interpretation and what is not. Each Death Angel has its devoted clergy preaching its commands through words, actions, and deeds. Their clerics consist of mangled demons, zealous worshippers, and mad dreamers who have been accepted into the hierarchical structure of age-old customs and esoteric knowledge. Most are nephariteS, but in their ranks are also mundane humans, corrupt angels, converted lictors, dream beings, fallen gods, insane phantoms, sundry abominations, and the surviving remnants of wiped-out civilizations, who have heard Inferno's call or have been forced into subservience.

Thaumiel's Clergy

Thaumiel's followers are also the most devoted to Astaroth. They are powerful and magnificent specimens, and their various regalia are looted from thousands upon thousands of ravaged worlds. Slaves throw themselves at their perfumed feet, devotees submit themselves to be skinned in ecstasy, and all dream of being able to serve them. Their laws and commandments are proclaimed upon murals of gold and tarnished silver. Within the clergy, an extreme power struggle persists, and those few at the top are only there because of virulent devotion, utter ruthlessness, and powerful alliances. Many clever and ambitious acolytes have been annihilated before having even passed their initial rites.

Chagidiel's Clergy

Chagidiel's proclaimers keep their acolytes and apprentices naked and chained like animals. Many of these are children who lived in abject wretchedness before being offered a chance to enter the sacred order. Those who are initiated are exposed to innumerable physical and mental assaults, cruel operations, and constant brain-washing. Only through the religious worship of Chagidiel can they keep their psyches intact, albeit twisted. This process breaks down the soul's essence and then remolds it into something dark, macabre, and beautiful. They laud suffering with throat-singing and self-mutilation. The followers joyously recite pious mantras and confess all their innermost truths in chambers of black basalt.

Sathariel's Clergy

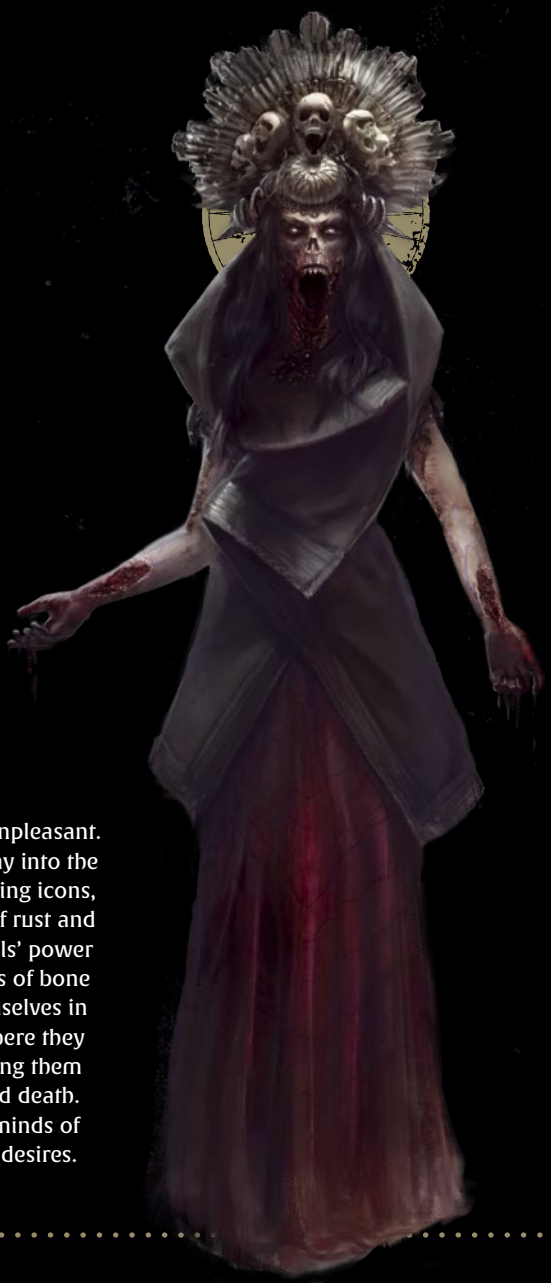
In desolate cells, halls, monasteries, and prayer chambers dwell the members of this clergy. They sit crouched over thick tomes and write down visions and poetry to reflect Sathariel's will with quills from tortured angels and the blood of suicides. The clergy seek insight in isolation and tranquility. They make pilgrimages into the desolate landscape of Inferno, meditate in iron cells, or allow themselves to be buried alive in order to attain insights into the unknowable while locked in the dark emptiness. Typical neophytes allowed into the clergy were usually outcasts, loners, or those who have committed suicide in life. Sathariel's faithful do not preach to the masses. The sacred truth is open to each and every person, alone.

Gamichicoth's Clergy

Whispers, secret signs, and occult symbols hide meaning in every word and act preached by Gamichicoth's clergy. The clergy are the secretive diviners of the Death Angel's will, trying to interpret his truths in dreams, numerology, and madness. Blind victims bear thousands upon thousands more lies, their ears filled with horror and mistrust and, thereafter, they are set free. Every movement, every gesture is studied and made note of to see whether a truth can be distilled from fear, insanity, and resignation. The clergy's whispers consciously spread like wildfire and sprout into rumors, mistrust, despair, hope, or conviction.

Golab's Clergy

With knives, pliers, hooks, and electrical apparatuses as their ceremonial tools and pain as their gospel, Golab's clergy grace the faithful with the truths found in exquisite suffering. The sacred words are carved into flesh, blessed nails are hammered into skulls, and teeth are torn out with pliers and collected in sanctified bowls. Sex organs are cut off and sacrificed in sacred fires, and glowing skewers are thrust into various orifices. The stink of burned flesh and the screams are tributes to Golab. The clergy adhere to a draconian set of rules, inflicting cruel punishments for the smallest infractions. They hope to find enlightenment and Golab's will in pain, suffering, and the soul's destruction.



Togarini's Clergy

Togarini's clergy sing hymns as beautiful as they are unpleasant. The notes are distorted, dissonant, and worm their way into the deepest nooks of the soul. The ecclesiastics study peeling icons, mural paintings, and the odd patterns in stains of rust and mold. Their prophets pay homage to the Death Angels' power through surreal and macabre art, building monuments of bone and wearing shrouds of human skin. They lose themselves in protracted dervish dances, rites, and processions where they copulate with recently deceased bodies, and then bring them to life in order to create acolytes who exist beyond death. They whisper dark truths and project images into the minds of their slaves, forcing them to carry out their unchecked desires.

Hareb-Serap's Clergy

Their sacred shrouds cannot conceal the automatic weapons, the crooked swords, the grenades and the bayonets. For Hareb-Serap's clergy, violence becomes a sermon of its own. Their will to fight and die for Hareb-Serap is unwavering. Devotedly, they fall to their knees and offer prayer to the Death Angel's Citadel, wailing their hope of being accepted into his bosom. Each faithfully proves their readiness through acts of violence and struggle. In arenas of rusty iron, gladiator games are held featuring barbed weapons and where the victors can feast on the flesh of the fallen, and thereafter be sanctified by the clergy who accept them into their ranks.

Samael's Clergy

Those filled with hatred are allowed to confess before Samael's silent vestals. They share all the injustices and slights they suffered, creating their sense of powerlessness. Thereafter, they are given the will and the means to exact their revenge. The consecrated wafer placed on their tongue is a razor blade, which is to be swallowed if they fail. The clergy show no mercy. Human sacrifices are common and the clergy use the steaming intestines of the dying to see beyond Time and Space. They conceal black daggers under their shrouds, and thrust these into anyone foolish enough to turn their backs on them.

Gamaliel's Clergy

Gamaliel's clergy seek the mysteries hidden within the darkest desires, finding them in sweaty bodies, penetration, sensual blessings, and precious bodily fluids. They let the flesh speak, believing their perverted enjoyment will lead them to divine insight. In Gamaliel's labyrinth-like temples they maintain their vast harems, collecting the holy seed in jade vessels. Some clerics are obliterated by their desires, while others are empowered by them, but all are unified by their shared perversions. The clergy proclaim Gamaliel's commandments, and the faithful are invited to show their devotion with their bodies.

Nahemoth's Clergy

Nahemoth's clergy are the harnessers of the world. They operate age-old machines, bending nature to their will, and look for signs in the tempest's fury, the lashing rain, and the somber sounds in the stillness of the night. Worshippers are led through razor-sharp labyrinths, forced to solve tasks amid cogwheels and fiery kilns, explore dark skies from observatories, and drown in brackish water, only to be reborn. The clergy's bodies are replete with deep cuts, fungal infections, barbs, and growths of radioactive contagion. They attempt to discover Nahemoth's will in the physical world: in raggedy mosaics, discarded dice of bone, and the rhythmic thrumming of machines.

A World of a Thousand Shards

Shantytowns and temples have grown up around the Black Citadels, populated with large crowds of afflicted beings, pilgrims, devotees, and sinners alike. Huddled around their fires, they pay homage to the rulers of Inferno with sacrifices, prayers, and self-mutilations. Zealous worshippers spill their seed in sacred vessels for the nepharites to imbibe. In return, nepharites preach the truth of suffering and allow those chosen to lick the blood directly from their eternal wounds. Celebrants take vows of silence by driving rusty nails into their tongues, and making pilgrimages into Inferno's sublime landscapes.

Beyond the Black Citadels, Inferno is surrounded by empty, untamed wilds – the shards of thousands upon thousands of shattered realms. This macabre mosaic consists of the remnants of worlds torn asunder and thrown away when the prehistoric divine rulers built their eternal city. Inferno's wasteland is as beautiful as it is nightmarish, filled with sharp mountains, ravaged lands, dead forests, rusting landscapes of metal and splintered stone, deep ravines, plains of ash, and coiling fens growing in the toxic haze. Rivers and seas are polluted and sick, their beaches sanded with shards of glass, corroded steel, and dirty plastic. Everything is tattered, fragmented, and brittle, from the lofty plateaus to the abyssal depths. Toxic vapors swirl like crackling auroras under the swollen sky, bestowing a sickly light. Yet, the heavens revealed between the clouds are wondrous. Alien stars, shredded celestial bodies, and wild nebulae move dreamily like spilled paint over the blackness. Pilgrims have beaten paths between sacred sites, where the suffering ones are tortured to the glory of the Death Angels.

The Influence of Inferno

Inferno is a place of wondrous phenomena and mysteries. The following are Moves the gamemaster (GM) can use when player characters (PCs) are in Inferno, in Inferno's borderland, or in a purgatory.

• Death is Only the Beginning

A person who dies in Inferno wakes up again. Sometimes their memories of what happened can be foggy, and they find themselves in a completely different place, such as someone's purgatory, a Black Citadel, or deep in the wastelands.

• Shadow from the Past

Meeting with an enemy, loved one, sibling, parents, or anyone else with whom they've had a close relationship. Maybe the person is trapped in a purgatory, being tortured in hellish machines, imprisoned in a cell, wandering in Inferno's wastelands, or has become one of the tormentors.

• The Influence of the Death Angels

The PC falls under the influence of a Death Angel, and the GM can compel the PC to act according to its Principle. With a soft Move, the character feels strong emotions washing over them. With a hard Move, they are forced to act in accordance to the Death's Angel's Principle until its influence subsides.

• Soul Slaughter

The character becomes trapped in one of Inferno's many torture chambers and is slaughtered body and soul. As they are subjected to innumerable assaults, everything superficial is stripped away, leaving a naked, bare wound. In these times of extreme pain, they are provided glimpses of the Divine, and occasionally the suffering turns into perverse pleasure. If they successfully break free, they should be eternally altered by the experience.

• Offered a Pact

There are beings in Inferno who need servants in Elysium and are eager to form pacts. In exchange for servitude, the creature may offer the person knowledge, to find someone or something, or lead them out of Inferno's winding halls. For more information, see the rules for making pacts in *Chapter 21 – Pacts and Magic*.

• Branded by Inferno

After you have been to Inferno and returned, you are branded by the experience. This manifests in many ways, such as wounds that won't heal, recurring nightmares, or altered perceptions, allowing you to sense where the barriers to Inferno are weak. Perhaps, you return with some kind of infernal being, such as a nepharite's consciousness, entwined with you. The GM can choose to give the PC a new Disadvantage, such as ***Haunted***, ***Nightmares***, ***Repressed Memories***, ***Involuntary Medium***, or ***Harassed***.

• Followers

A being or a wanderer becomes a guide, follower, or someone who secretly tracks behind you and observes.

• Entrancement of the Soul

Surrounded by the surreality, grotesqueries, and macabre wonders of Inferno, the PC is entranced by the beautiful symphony of screams, finds truths and wisdom in the insane architecture, and gazes into themselves, finding pieces of the mysterious puzzle constituting their soul. The ember of the Divine reignites, and maybe they accidentally distort the surrounding world, speak in tongues, or share portions of their consciousness with others. These awesome magical experiences only last briefly, but will never be forgotten.

• Intimate Moment

The character experiences a moment of extreme intimacy. They are offered the chance to torture a willing victim, fuck one of Gamaliel's nepharites, meet a person from their past, or have a Pilgrim of Suffering ask about the fantastic wonders of Elysium.

CULTS

The Sacred Brotherhood

Ties to Powers: The Death Angel Hareb-Serap, but also influenced by the Archon Netzach.

Members: Fanatics, lost youths, war veterans, and outcasts. Many of them originate from the Middle East and all of them have strong Islamic convictions.

Agenda: Spreading fear and chaos through cruel deeds and acts of terror; incite a war between the West and the Islamic World.

Moves: ***Suicide Bombing***, ***Procuring Weapons***, ***Acts of Terror***, ***Scaring People into Silence***, ***Unflinching Fanatic Zeal***, ***Invoking Beings from Inferno***.

This terror group see themselves as part the Islamic jihad against the Western world, and have fallen under the influence of the Death Angel Hareb-Serap. Many of the members have been to training camps in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, or Syria, but they are now primarily a sleeper cell headquartered in the West. They plan and execute acts of terror, collect information on targets, and enroll new members to participate in their holy war. Enrollment usually occurs via the Internet or through direct contacts in mosques, family businesses and prayer halls. The Sacred Brotherhood's leader is Hafiz Wahidi, a razide. Under Wahidi's leadership, the Brotherhood has increasingly come to worship death and use torture, executions, and threats to spread terror. Their primary victims are often other Muslims, who they see as a necessary sacrifice to the war effort. The cult's inner circle have begun studying death magic and executions have become their regular sacrificial rites, where heads are sever with broad knives, accompanied by preaching and chanting. For the Brotherhood, Hareb-Serap has replaced Allah, and only through him and total war can their new world be born. The cult's main bastion is an industrial facility, which lies in the borderlands of Inferno, and members who have died in the Brotherhood's fight occasionally return here as damned legionnaires.

White Eagle Conglomerate (WEC)

Ties to Powers: Thaumiel, but also a connection to the Archon Yesod.

Members: Billionaires and multi-millionaires. Razor-sharp manipulators and tastemakers within the corporate world and politics. Excessiveness, access to capital, and the ruthless social climbing are pervasive personality traits in the membership.

Agenda: Divide and conquer. Amass power and fortune, buy political power, and dismantle all laws and regulatory frameworks standing in their way.

Moves: ***Call in Soldiers of Fortune***, ***Buy Rulers***, ***Control the Media***, ***Manipulate the Justice System***, ***Exploit their Enormous Resources***.

Through daring ventures, luck, and contacts, WEC have quickly ascended in the world market. They buy public companies, dismantle them, sell their shares, and let the employees fight for their positions. The WEC encourage elitist power-struggles to their logical extreme. If you do not deliver, you are thrown out – or worse. The virtues of raw, calculating capitalism are extolled in their financial publications. The company's CEO, David H. Bachmann, is one of the United States' wealthiest individuals with major influence in the Republican Party. He is an advocate of the right to bear arms, speaks out against abortion and the LGBT movement, denounces any kind of federal health insurance or social aid systems, praises the books of Ayn Rand, and, outwardly, is a devout Christian.

In reality, David H. Bachmann is a devoted servant of Thaumiel, and his conglomerate advances the Death Angel's agenda. He only sees value in people who can deliver results. The strongest, most manipulative, and devoted members are invited into his inner circle, and initiated into Thaumiel's sacrament. These devotees are sworn in via rituals in luxury apartments and country estates. The members travel worldwide in private jets, as likely to attend business meetings as they are human sacrifices. The conglomerate's main objective is to gain total financial power over North America, allowing them to incite desperation and greed in the population, and then kick away all supports, creating a law of the jungle mentality, where only the strongest and most ruthless survive. Bachmann has even won over a number of lictors to his side, which have abandoned their former rulers and have come to serve Thaumiel.

CREATURES

Inferno is a world of diverse abominations, entities, and suffering souls. Below are descriptions of some of the beings residing here, or which have an influence in other worlds.

Nepharites

The nepharites are the true interpreters of the Death Angels' will and constitute the backbone of the ten Clergies. They are prophets, actors, soothsayers, heralds, soul twisters, and torturers. For them, pain is a sacrament. Each of them is born out of extreme rites of torture, and baptized in the Death Angel's Principle – the essence of their creation.

Their core purpose is to be Inferno's torturers and soul butchers. With their skinning knives, magic, and sermons, they peel away their victim's sorrow, pain, hatred, love, lust, secrets, and dreams, layer by layer. They weigh the soul's suffering on scales of brass, and sacrifice them at sacred altars devoted to the Death Angels' Principles. To them, torture is divine and the nepharites devote themselves to it with religious zeal, in order to extract every morsel of anguish, agony, and passion, time and time again, until nothing remains.

The nepharites are bound to Inferno, and for them Elysium is distant and difficult to reach. They can only cross into our world through magical summons, cracks in the Illusion, the weakened barriers found at purgatories, or by finding a victim to which to bind themselves. Extreme feelings of anxiety, guilt, or physical pain can attract a nepharite, even in Elysium.

Nepharites have varying appearances and can alter their appearances whenever they wish. Typically, they appear mostly human, albeit mangled by instruments of torture, exhibiting open wounds, flayed skin, and penetrating hooks, clamps, and sharp blades. Their macabre robes are usually priest-like and magnificently tailored, though in a grisly fashion. In the Illusion, they can assume the façade they most desire, but often there is something alluring and dangerous about them. The attentive observer will notice the sickly scent of iron, blood, and incense.

Weaver (Nepharite)

Home: Inferno.

Creature Type: Nepharite under the Death Angel Gamichicoth.

Weaver is a nepharite and a devoted follower to the Death Angel Gamichicoth. She is often sent into Elysium to hunt those who have escaped from hell or to claim the souls of those who have entered into desperate pacts with her or her master. Weaver surrounds herself with ritual objects so she may initiate followers instantly into the sacraments of Gamichicoth.

Abilities

- *Bound to Inferno:* If the creature is annihilated in Elysium, it will be resurrected in Inferno.
- *Domain (purgatory):* The creature is bound to its domain and immediately becomes aware if anyone intrudes on it, even if the creature is elsewhere.
- *Master torturer:* The creature possesses intimate knowledge of how to utilize pain, humiliation, and suffering to break someone else's will and draw out all their shame and truth. Resisting this torture requires ***Keep it Together*** at –2.
- *Pact-weaver:* This being can seal pacts with humans. See ***Chapter 21 – Pacts and Magic***.
- *Shapeshifter:* The creature can alter its physical appearance and form at will.

Combat [3], **Influence** [3], **Magic** [5].

Combat [Considerable]

- Grapple someone with supernatural strength.
- Teleport somewhere within line of sight.
- Tear out someone's heart.

Influence [Considerable]

- Lead purgatides.
- Manipulate someone in accordance with their deepest fears.
- Spread the Principle of Fear.

Magic [Exceptional]

- Turn people against each other.
- Distort and warp rooms, streets, paths, and stairs.
- Spread fear and rumors in a whole town.
- Gaze into somebody's soul and past lives.
- Summon purgatides.

Attacks

Weaver would rather use magic or intelligence, but can also attack with ritual blades or raw strength. When dispatching a victim she holds them down and sings a hymn as she slowly tears out their heart. With her magic she keeps their body alive for as long as she holds their heart in her hand – usually long enough to enter a pact with her. When she drops the heart they die.

Ritual blade: Cut up [2] [Distance: arm].

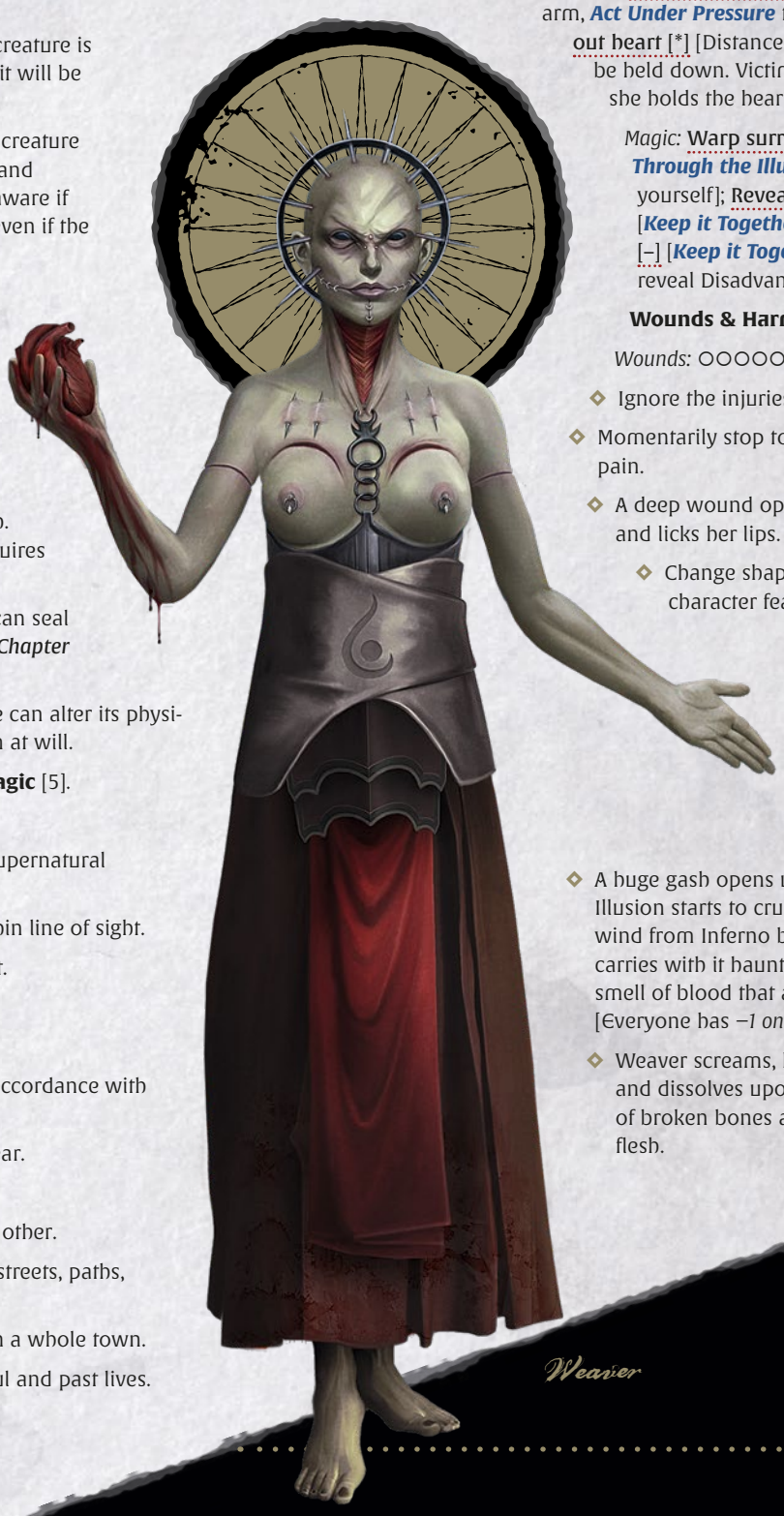
Raw strength: Grab and hold down [–] [Distance: arm, ***Act Under Pressure*** to get away]; Tear out heart [*] [Distance: arm, target must be held down. Victim is alive as long as she holds the heart in her hand].

Magic: Warp surroundings [–] [***See Through the Illusion*** to orientate yourself]; Reveal true shape [–] [***Keep it Together***]; Gaze into soul [–] [***Keep it Together*** so as to not reveal Disadvantage or Dark Secret].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○○○ ☠

- Ignore the injuries.
- Momentarily stop to appreciate the pain.
- A deep wound opens up; she smiles and licks her lips.
- Change shape to someone the character fears.
- Screams in pain and images of Inferno are projected into the mind of all present [***Keep it Together***]
- A huge gash opens up in her body. The Illusion starts to crumble and a dark wind from Inferno blows out of her. It carries with it haunting screams and a smell of blood that affects a large area. [Everyone has *–1 on next roll*]
- Weaver screams, her body contorts and dissolves upon itself, a mass of broken bones and torn flesh.



Weaver

Purgatides

Purgatides are what remains of the tattered, mutilated, and mangled human bodies after Inferno's endless tortures. They are little more than a wet collection of metal shards, nails, scars, exposed muscle tissue, stitches, and open wounds. In certain cases, sexual characteristics are surgically removed, while others are kept together by metal clamps and thread. Their butchered bodies are concealed by long coats, but the purgatides frequently leave an unbroken trail of blood and pus behind. In the Illusion, they appear as pale, sickly individuals with a feverish and fanatical gaze.

Purgatides are usually sent to Elysium to serve a razide or similar power. They are brainwashed from their years in Inferno, and have difficulty in acting human over a long period.

Purgatide

Purgatide

Home: Inferno.

Creature Type: Slave to a Death Angel, razide, or nepharite

Abilities

- *Fanatical:* Cannot be reasoned with.
- *Resistance to injury:* Firearms and edged weapons do **–1 Harm**.

Combat [3], **Influence** [–], **Magic** [1].

Combat [Considerable]

- Prepare an ambush.
- Surround someone.
- Torture.

Magic [Novice]

- Contact master.

Attacks

Normally armed with knives, chopping weapons, and torture instruments. Will sometimes carry firearms.

Edged weapons: Cut up [2] [Distance: arm]; Nail down [1] [Distance: arm, ***Act Under Pressure*** to get loose]

Chopping weapons: Brutal slashing [3] [Distance: arm]

Revolver: Direct fire [2] [Distance: room]

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○ ☠

- Ignore the injuries.
- Lose control of something.
- Appear defeated.
- Die.

Razides

Sometimes, screaming victims are removed from their purgatories and fettered inside infernal machinery. Their human bodies are reshaped with scalpels, hooks, razor blades, drills and syringes. Bizarre mechanisms, tubes, and pipes coalesce with their flesh, intertwine with their nerves, and are bolted into their skeleton. Finally, a larvae – a black, slimy leech collected from the Underworld – is implanted into their chest, as insurance of the victim's obedience. These mangled abominations may now kneel before their rulers, ready to serve. A razide is born.

Razides are slaves to the Death Angels. They are created and selected as guards, warriors, and torturers. They are also sent into Elysium to spread the Death Angels' Principles and increase Inferno's influence over the Illusion. In contrast to nepharites and many other of Inferno's beings, a razide is intimately connected to its body. If its body is killed, the razide truly dies. If the razide should be slain, the surviving larvae escapes from the cadaver and tries to find its way back down to the Underworld.

A razide in its actual form is terrifying to behold; a ragged, mangled, and putrescent monstrosity with machinery enmeshed with its flesh. It is often taller than most humans, and possesses sufficient strength to tear apart its adversaries with its razored fingers. When viewed in the Illusion, they appear human, but there is often something menacing and dangerous about them. Razides are often connected to cults and organizations devoted to spreading the Principles of the Death Angels or trying to manipulate human society and sweep away the power of the Archons.

Hafiz Wahidi (Razide)

Home: Inferno.

Creature Type: Servant of the Death Angel Hareb-Serap.

Hafiz Wahidi is sent to Elysium to strengthen the Principles of the Death Angel Hareb-Serap. He has taken control of the Sacred Brotherhood, a terrorist organization. He has corrupted it into worshiping Hareb-Serap and uses its fanatical members to gain power and influence. Hafiz Wahidi takes pleasure in war and bloodshed and is now using the members in his cult to strike at the servants of the Archons.

Abilities

- *Monstrous form:* Those who see the razide's true form must ***Keep it Together***.
- *Gigantic:* Cannot be grappled or knocked over in close combat.
- *Natural weapons:* The creature has weapons embedded in its body, either implanted or natural.
- *Body of metal and machinery:* All **Harm** taken is reduced by **–1**.

Combat [5], **Influence** [4], **Magic** [3].

Combat [Exceptional]

- Attack two opponents at once.
- Impale on claws [***Act Under Pressure*** to get away].
- Move a considerable distance in a single leap.
- Rip someone apart [**+2 Harm**].
- Destroy opponent's weapon.

Influence [Powerful]

- Leader of terrorist group (The Sacred Brotherhood).
- Get hold of military weapons and explosives.
- Fanatic followers.
- Network of contacts in the muslim community.

Magic [Considerable]

- Reveal a gate to Inferno.
- Create damned legionnaires.
- Adept in **Death Magic (III)**.

Attacks

In human form, Hafiz uses his assault rifle or a handgun. When he assumes his true shape, he fights like a raging animal, trying to rip and slash his opponents to shreds.

Knifelike claws: Slash two opponents [2] [Distance: arm]; Impale [2] [Distance: arm, ***Act Under Pressure*** to get loose]; Rip apart [4] [Distance: arm, target must be impaled]; Destroy weapon [–] [Distance: arm, targets weapon is torn to pieces].

Assault Rifle: Controlled fire [3] [Distance: room/field]; Mow down [3] [Distance: room/field, attack up to three targets in close vicinity to each other].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○○○○○ ☠

- The attack reflects off the creature's metal hide.
- Turns his focus on the most recent attacker and ignores the others until she's defeated.
- In an uncontrollable rage, dashes at the nearest attacker with his claws (***Avoid Harm***).
- A tube cuts open, splashing a red-black, slippery fluid over the floor (***Act Under Pressure*** to move around).
- The attack destroys one of the razides eyes (*+1 on next roll*).
- One of the razide's arms is broken, shot off, or severed (can't attack multiple opponents any more).
- The razide's leg is maimed (can't move fast or leap any more).
- A big wriggling larvae is exposed in the razide's chest (***Act Under Pressure***: *–2 to hit*, **+2 Harm**).
- The razide dies with an inhuman scream.

Damned Legionnaire

The typical damned legionnaire's body is broken, marked by the ravages of war, mangled by splinters, deep bullet holes, sword cuts, napalm, bayonets, or mustard gas. They are soldiers who have died across the course of history, their souls captured and converted in the purgatories of Inferno. Some still wear their old uniforms or suits of armor, and carry archaic weapons, such as rusty swords, bows, or rifles from the trenches of WWI. They are absent-minded, almost apathetic, and can only express themselves through simple sentences and the odd word. Even in the most violent situations they never show any emotion whatsoever. In Elysium, they look like rough, powerful men and women with distant, dead stares. They stink of damp and must, like rancid meat and swamp water. They are always armed and usually under the control of a razide, nepharite, or death conjurer.

The Pilgrims of Suffering

Depleted souls that are only driven by total devotion to the Death Angels' will and the mysteries of Inferno. They submit to those that are more powerful than them and try to seek to convert and save those who cannot see the truth. They gather in large numbers to pray at the Citadels, wander along the pilgrim routes, or serve Inferno's heralds while crawling about on the ground.

Astaroth's Incarnates

Astaroth's consciousness is too expansive and profound for us to comprehend. It is like a primordial sea, seemingly endless, and we may only guess what lurks beneath the darkness. Occasionally, Astaroth's spirit manifests in physical form in various guises in the different realms. Whether this is done consciously is impossible to say, but the Incarnates are in many ways unique, and do not seem to act with any set plan or function. They are intimately tied to their drives, appearing to be aspects of Astaroth's psyche. They are all sources of insight into the dark deity and Inferno, and thus occultists and other beings try to find them. Below, a number of Astaroth's Incarnates are described.

The Wild Beast: An incarnation of blind rage, a desire to murder, and unbridled hatred. The Wild Beast is barely human. It travels along lonely roads, aimlessly slaying people that cross its path. Often the Wild Beast is a large man with a savage gaze and innumerable scars all over his body. The few words he utters are little more than primitive grunts. Between the years 1921 and 1937, the Incarnate was locked up in a sanatorium in France, and the patient journals Doctor Hollebecque compiled during that time are said to reveal many secrets about Inferno.

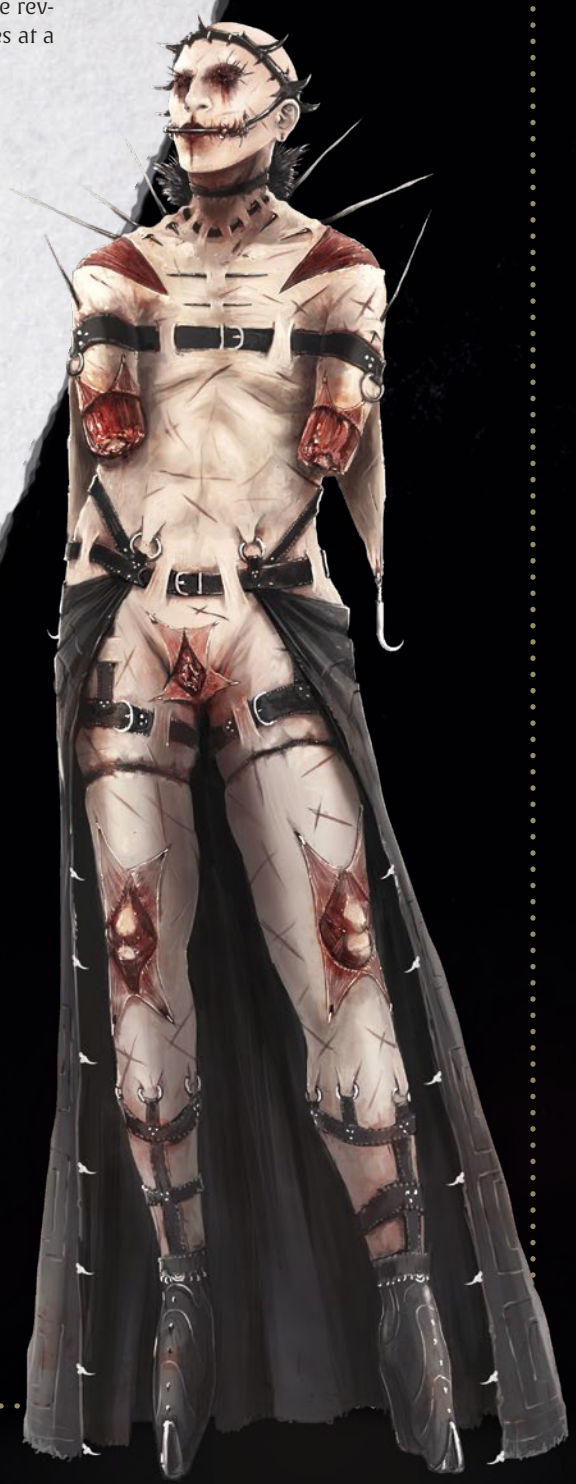
The Revolver: The Incarnate takes the form of a heavy-caliber revolver of unknown model and manufacture. Outwardly, it appears to have been manufactured in the early-20th century and is covered with patina and deep scratches. The revolver can be discovered in a box, at the bottom of a ditch, in the dead hand of a veteran who committed suicide, or in a high school student's locker. It seemingly appears in various places completely by chance. Anyone who has the revolver in their possession, does not feel safe without it and begins suffering from extreme paranoia, as if they are constantly being followed. Their insanity progresses, taking hold over them, invariably ending in violence.

The Prostitute: You can find her in the filthiest brothels or in back alleys, where she sells her body night after night. She is emaciated, covered in bruises. There are scratch marks on her knees and innumerable needle marks along the bend of her arm. She carries venereal diseases of every kind, and those foolish enough to use her services are often overcome with hatred and disgust towards her, even while she begs to be exploited. But for some of her customers, something awakens inside them; a dark seed planted. They gain insight into the world and the Awakening, as well as an gnawing attraction towards Astaroth and Inferno.

Yes, You Can Dance: This Incarnate takes the form of a shoddy music video from MTV's heyday. The unknown pop group dances around in an industrial landscape to a zippy song. Sometimes, the video is found on a VHS tape, or is uploaded on YouTube or Vimeo for a short time before being removed. The song and its catchy refrain lodge in your mind immediately, creating a relentless earworm. When you sleep, a dream world manifests from the music video – but here the music is dissonant, distorted, and hints at a concealed message. Those who are afflicted eventually try to stop it by piercing their eardrums, taking their own lives, or desperately seeking out the strange industrial landscape from the video, trying to stop the haunting at the source. The industrial landscape is, of course, at the foot of Astaroth's Citadel.

The Child with the Lantern: This child with stitched-up eyes wanderers between the worlds. In her hand, she holds an archaic, silver lantern with an uneasy light. Lost souls, mangled purgatides, phantoms, and lunatics follow the child, who leads them down to Inferno, roaming its many crossroads until finally entering Astaroth's Citadel, where they drown in the black waters and their suffering can cease at last.

John the Baptist's Head: This mummified, human skull is rumored to belong to the biblical figure, John the Baptist. The skull is usually placed in a reliquary and is kept hidden in the attics of isolated monasteries. Monks hold vigil over it, day and night, as the skull can spring to life, open its dessicated eyes, and speak prophecies and heavenly lies through cracked lips, pretending to be a vessel for the Demiurge himself. Even if the knowledge it conveys is true and important, the revelation comes at a price.



Pilgrim of Suffering

CHAPTER 20
GAIA

GAIA POSSESSES INCALCULABLE ASPECTS, HER MANIFESTATIONS mercurial and immeasurable. She is the dripping sweetness of raw honey, the north wind's bitter chill, the swamp's fetid mist, the roaches scuttling around the floor drain, and the maggots writhing on a carcass. She is the imposing mountains, boundless seas, blistered deserts, tangled jungles, and frozen tundra. She is airborne contagions, cleansing waters of the cold spring, the lover's warm depths, the rumble of earthquakes, the cancerous lump growing inside you, the unstoppable tidal forces, and the infant suckling upon the breast. She is the faint light of distant stars, prismatic nebulae, blinding pulsars, devouring black holes, and the infinite vacuum of space. She is the pattern in cobwebs, the toxins of plants and mushrooms, the wolves' predatory instinct, and the endless cycle of night and day, dawn and dusk. She is the physicalities of stubble, breast milk, bodily waste, orgasmic fireworks, nagging migraines, the salty taste of sex on the tongue, and the inescapable decline of old age.

Ruthless Nature

Gaia is the remorseless *Vis Vitae* – life and death as an end unto themselves. She is the embodiment of the true wilderness, of all desolation and mindless creatures. She is the elemental forces above and below. Gaia comprises the physical Universe as we know it, and encompasses the entirety of physical reality. The parts of her essence we experience in the Illusion are harnessed and constrained by Malkuth. But those who wander deep enough into the forests or trek the most remote mountains areas will find the forgotten pathways leading into the true wilderness. Into Gaia's dark embrace.

To understand Gaia, one must first understand her ruthlessness and capricious nature. In her realm, only the strongest survive, yet only until they grow old, weak, and are torn to pieces by the younger generations. Sympathy and empathy hold little meaning, existing only in order to ensure one's own survival. Gaia creates merely to later destroy, like a mad toymaker who sadistically compels her creations to fight each other and then demolishes the lone victor. Things perish, molder away, and are soon reborn; an eternal cataclysm of repetitive cycles in a world devoid of purpose and meaning. The randomness and waste are staggering – out of thousands of acorns, only one becomes the oak tree, only the lone sperm out of millions grows into the child. There is an endless sacrifice to nature's dark mother.

Gaia invades our world, striving to destroy all we've created. Her grass and weeds crack open asphalt, her rain makes buildings rot, and the sea ceaselessly erodes coastal cities. Out in the Cosmos, she rips apart entire planets and celestial bodies. Her every breath ignites stars into supernovae, destroying their circling worlds.

Gaia is unfettered, uncontained. Neither the Demiurge, Astaroth, Mankind, nor any of the other gods have succeeded in mastering her completely. We have succeeded in building our bastions, defying her hunger, and utilizing parts of her to serve our own ends. But we are little more than fleas living on a famished beast. Her strength, thoughts, and wishes remain distant and so utterly alien they cannot be comprehended. Even so, she is the basic instincts coursing through our veins, driving us. The instincts to devour, to live on, to kill, and to be transformed.

Mankind and Gaia

Like a surgeon, Malkuth dissected a thin slice of Gaia and then reshaped it into the physical world. This place between worlds now serves as our prison, an Eden where we are kept captive and blind. At the early stage of our captivity, we were thrust into a reality resembling Gaia in her original form. We were primitive, vulnerable, and lost. Our bodies succumbed to weather, disease, and nature's wrath. We lived in utter humiliation. But slowly, unconsciously, we started creating primitive representations of the world we had been denied. We founded our first cities and began to harness Gaia. Our jailers could not prevent us in this quest. Our inner longing to recreate Metropolis, our primordial home, was too strong. The Illusion's weave verged on crumbling after we realized our place in the wilderness was an imposed falsehood.

The Portal into Other Worlds

To wander from Elysium, through the borderland, and then out into unbridled wilderness is to encounter nature in its most pristine form – a raw power without parallel. Here, the reaches, the mountains, deserts, rivers, and ice sheets are not bound by the machinery of the Illusion. Time and Space remain in constant flux, and by trekking these landscapes you can access lost realms, monuments, forgotten gods, and alien worlds incomprehensible to even the most majestic mind. Gaia is the key, opening pathways into every level of existence. From here, you can enter the dream worlds of Limbo, Inferno, the Underworld, Acblys, and even Metropolis. In humanity's glory days before the Fall, we explored the marches of Gaia with our heightened senses, discovering the worlds and places we desired, and thereafter enslaving them. We dissected the parts we needed and amalgamated them into our creations.

The Borderland and its Creatures

The borderland is the distorted realm between Elysium and Gaia where the Illusion delimits the two worlds. Here in this untamed wilderness dwell creatures lasciviously peering towards Elysium. They sense the lights of our cities, hear echoes of our voices, and smell the scents of exhaust and sweat. Yet, like us, they remain trapped beyond the veil of the Illusion, albeit on the other side. Perhaps it is our souls drawing them to us, for it is in Elysium that the keys to breaking the Demiurge's chains can be found. Or do they merely fear the great wilds of Gaia? The borderland can be likened to a feral shanty town – its creatures live in a quasi-existence between civilization and pristine wilderness. Here in the borderland dwell the Enwildened Gods, abominations from Gaia's womb, and wardens who once served the Demiurge and Malkuth.

The Enwildened Gods

Once upon a time, the Enwildened may have been enlightened people who traveled Gaia's wilderness or were simply beings and gods from other worlds. The Demiurge's trickery depleted much of their divinity, but was unable to extinguish it entirely. Deep inside Gaia's wilderness, they sought refuge and sipped the sap from the trees, thus becoming infused with her chaotic essence. They are now beings of savagery, brutality, and passion. They pass the time by copulating in hallucinogenic ruts, participating in cruel games of hunting and killing, roving and rampaging across plains and tundra, and ruling like kings and queens in the deepest forests – wearing crowns of thorns and brambles.

They are creatures of extremes, propelled by their frenzied passions and primal convictions. Conflicts are common, and they can be afflicted with an animalistic rage and cruelty, only to suddenly explode into laughter and love

making. They live in cycles of constant rebirth. Nothing is eternal for them – not even death. When their physical forms are slain, their souls endure until the time is right or they are summoned, and then make their homes in new bodies.

They dwell in the borderland because Elysium's proximity captivates them like a flickering, nocturnal flame. In the same way we gaze up at the northern lights or listen to the song of an exotic bird, the Illusion is enchanting and enigmatic to them. They merely detect shadows of our goings-on, but remain spellbound and are nourished by our dreams, sorrows, and passions. While they cannot avert their gaze from our prison, they still fear it. Those Enwildened who have found their way into Elysium seldom return. They become mesmerized by the Illusion and the transience of the material world, forgetting about their origins. The primal passions propelling them soon flag, leaving them tethered and listless. Some are reborn in Gaia once more – eternally altered. Some are caught up in the Demiurge's machinery, and others simply disappear forever.

The Sentinels

When Malkuth wove the Illusion, she also created sentinels to prevent us from escaping back into Gaia's wilderness. They were erected in the borderworlds like bastions against Gaia, and they have now become wild, cruel, and insane since the Demiurge's disappearance and the imbalance of the Archons' ten Principles. Some have succumbed entirely, while others have begun using their awareness to reach through the Illusion to get a grip on humanity or tear apart everything in their proximity.

The sentinels can assume many shapes and semblances. The malicious Black Tree filters into our nightmares with its meandering roots and majestic canopy. The rusty Monument of Iron creates madness and hallucinations with its resonating bass notes. In the expansive fenland, drowned bodies crawl up from the sludge and drag those they overtake down into the mire. The Ziggurat of Black Glass rises up from the ash-white desert sands, where mirages trick travelers into believing water and shade may be found. The razor-sharp maze of cogwheels, girders, and chains waits in the arctic ice.

The Touch of Gaia

It is never safe to venture into Gaia. You don't know what you will encounter and how the experience will change you, both body and mind. A gamemaster (GM) can pick scenarios from the lists below (or use them as inspiration to invent own) when introducing the touch of Gaia. It is divided into two segments, *In the Borderlands of Gaia* and *In the Depths of Gaia*. The second one is more severe, fantastic, and horrible and is for those that have ventured deep into the wilds or been in Gaia's embrace for a long time.

In the Borderlands of Gaia

- Beneath the twisted roots of a gnarled tree you discover a mummified humanoid creature; it seems to have been drained of all fluids from a hole in its chest.
- A purple-blue glow emanates from the surface of a still lake. The glow makes your head spin and lures you towards the water.
- The ground abruptly ends in a deep abyss. You can see the bottom far, far below.
- The air becomes damp, moist, and hard to breathe. Reddish-blue lichen and oozing mold cling to everything. The ground is slippery and things seems to be moving beneath the soil.
- A strange sound, sorrowful and filled with longing. beckons from the distance.
- The air is filled with pheromones and a bestial lust to mate takes over. All other needs and thoughts are second to this.
- The deep jungle is humid. Everything is wet and dripping. Nectar seeps from the flowers; there is a smell of honey in the air. Your body slowly starts to bleed through the pores, soaking your clothes and leaving a long, crimson trail behind.
- A tidal plain filled with banks of mud and puddles of brine. You leave footprints where you walk and strange, white, lobster-like creatures crawl up from the seabed and follow you at a distance.
- A dark forest where the ground is covered in a brownish-black rot of fallen leaves. Clothes and equipment start to deteriorate and slowly fall apart.
- Nature is filled with life. Fruit, flower buds, and berries grow in front of your eyes, then burst. Everything sprays out and it repeats again and again. The air is filled with spores and buzzing insects.
- You come upon a wild animal that is eating its own flesh. It rips loose big chunks and then gulps them down.
- The air is filled with clumsy, fluttering butterflies. All of a sudden, they hurriedly land and hide in cracks in the trees and among the rocks. A minute or two later, the air grows chill and snow starts falling.

- Some strange kind of creature appears in the light of your flashlight. Then, just as suddenly, it disappears into the night.
- An animal crosses your path. It stops and looks at you. It looks like an animal from the world you know, but different. It's bigger, more feral, and primal.
- The air is filled with strange distortions and illusions, as if there is a tremendous heat mirage in front of you. You think you see buildings there, and was that the sound of a car you just heard?
- A murderous howl is heard farther behind you. Something has discovered your scent and is now hunting you.
- Every sound made echoes back, and then back again, in an endless cacophony. Loud noises, such as gunshots and screams, are painful to the ears, and they increase until the eardrums burst.
- An eerie mechanical tower rises from the wilderness. It looks like an old drilling tower, only much bigger. An old gateway leads into the tower itself, but it will not open unless smeared with human blood.
- The stars are moving across the sky; they shift and flow like they were moved by an invisible force. A whole galaxy seems to come nearer and stars flare up as they go supernova. The display continues throughout all of the night.
- An animal bursts open in a spray of blood. Inside there is a cancerous thing that has awakened to life, a wet shape made from rows of teeth and slithering intestine. It looks at you and, mistaking you for its parent, it starts to follow you around, suckling blood from your fingers if you let it.
- Moans and soft sounds are heard from the deep moss. A small creature, no bigger than a hand, calls to you.
- A fear grips you, a panic you cannot explain, and all kinds of modern technology fill you with terror. You can't bring yourself to pick up a gun, use a cellphone, or look through a pair of binoculars. In fact, if you are forced to touch them, they seem to deteriorate and break.
- Thin strands of mycamine fiber hang in the air. Yellow and light, they break in the breeze and drift away. When they touch a living creature they seem to melt into the flesh.
- The snowstorm is roaring. It is freezing cold and the snow and thin shards of ice cut deep into you. If you do not find cover, you will be flayed alive or frozen dead, whatever comes first.
- The air is stale and everything is gloomy and dark. Glow worms crawl over murky logs and petals float in the still waters. You notice that your skin is glowing as well. Especially your veins, as if they are filled with a blue fluorescent fire.
- A network of caves open up before you, its gray-green limestone walls slick with water. A dripping sound is heard. And far, far in the distance is the sound of machines.
- The woods are so dense that they are almost impossible to walk through. There are hollow stumps, deadfalls of jagged branches, and rotten logs.
- Everything is covered in a stinking, milky secretion. If it is touched, oozing mold spreads out over your fingers in a couple of seconds.
- Oversized insects crawl everywhere; chitinous carapaces, antennae, mandibles, and the drowsy fluttering of wings. They fear light, but otherwise move ever closer and try to lay eggs inside living creatures.
- The ground gives in and you sink up to your shoulders into dank, stale water. You are able to drag yourself out, but then feel a sting of pain. A thick, mustard-colored leech, big as an arm has bitten into you, and you feel how it pulsates and slithers against your body.
- There seems to be a lack of oxygen. The damp air makes it almost impossible to breathe. Your head is swirling and you fall into the deep moss. Everything goes black. When you awaken, you are someplace you would not expect.
- A shadow is seen above the treetops. And then there's a scream; a body falls from the sky and lands right in front of you. It breaks open from the fall, blood and gore splattering over you. The shadow retracts back up into the clouds.
- Your wounds are infected, dripping with pus, but they are still healing. Except now your flesh is reshaped and reformed in a twisted and mutated way.
- The sea is dark, oversized plankton drifts in the currents and gelatinous sea creatures give off a ghostly glow. You cannot stick a hand into the water without something touching it. It seems to be a breeding pool overflowing with life.
- You come upon a seashore. There, on the dark sands, you find a human body. But something seems to be living inside it.
- The air is filled with spores and particles of dust. When inhaled, or in contact with open wounds, they cause parasitic infections.
- In front of you there is a whole network of ravines, and natural labyrinths with sharp cliffs. Even when the air is warm, the shadows in the ravines are absolutely freezing.
- From a small cave, strange sounds are heard. Something inside is rustling, shuffling, and changing positions. You can hear a deep growl and the sound of meat being torn from bones and eaten.
- A still lake with stagnant water is in front of you. On its surface, you see the reflection of a vast city. Yet no city is to be seen on the other shore of the lake.

In the Depths of Gaia

- You feel strong, potent, and powerful. Wounds heal, tattoos fade, and your hair grows. You feel like a predator. Your sexual lust is strong, as is your will to dominate and make others obey you. You are now the leader of the pack.
- Howling abominations rush through the wilds in search for flesh. If encountered, they are feral beings with double rows of teeth and razor-sharp claws.
- You step on a puffball mushroom and the spores envelop you. You can't breathe; your body becomes heavy. A sense of falling and then everything goes black. There is a strange sensation like a limb popping loose, and then you drift free. You see your body lie beneath you, as you glide upwards toward the heavens.
- An ache spreads through your jaws; some hours later, your teeth loosen one by one and then fangs grow out to replace them. You now have a jagged maw for a mouth.
- A vast sea stretches out in front of you. Sunken ruins of what must have been an ancient, high-tech civilization protrude through the surface. The water is extremely salty and red with rust.
- In front of what looks like a primitive altar, a group of hairless, anorectic creatures with long, slithering tongues performs some sort of worship.
- A great swarm of birdlike creatures fills the ashen sky. A strange humming is heard from them, intensifying until the earth cracks asunder. There is a new opening downward.
- Beneath the ground, a network of caves spreads out, ever downwards, leading to the Underworld. The farther you walk, the weaker gravity becomes. Soon, you float through the caves, slow and dreamlike.
- Everything tastes bitter and it is impossible to keep food down. When vomited up, it is crawling with fat worms. These evolve and metamorphose into a grotesque, mutated, abomination that looks like its host.
- It starts with a stabbing pain in the bowels. Your stomach slowly swells to an unnatural size. You break into a cold sweat, and your bowels and bladder empty just to make room. A grotesque, wormlike creature, as big as an arm, starts to push its way out through your rectal opening. It sings and hums with a hundred tiny mouths.
- A cancer grows inside you. It swells and expands, and starts to deform your flesh. Later, it buds loose and continues to live its own existence.
- After you awaken from a long night's sleep, you find that you now have a new orifice – a slimy hole that leaks a sour-smelling secretion. If you feel it with your fingers, you discover it has small, jagged teeth on its insides.
- You are engulfed by a cannibalistic hunger. The smell of human flesh makes your mouth water, and you feel how your teeth are getting sharper. All other food disgusts you. You need human flesh; if you can't get others', you will eat your own.
- Nature itself caresses you. Grass, vines, and flowers slowly lean toward you, and if you stop for a moment's rest you will be entwined by them and engulfed, bound in an evergreen prison.
- Your body is changing; bones and cartilage shift and are reformed. You now run faster on all fours than on two legs. The memories of your past, your childhood, and your family feel very distant and vague like a dream.
- You find yourself in an area of carnivorous plants with acidic innards, big enough to swallow a human whole. They lure their prey with strange songs and hallucinations. From one of them, you hear a human-like scream.
- The rotting carcass of some ancient behemoth lies swollen in the sun. Strange and stinking fluids leak from its orifices and pollute the soil.
- The sky is covered with dark, ashen clouds. You can hear the distant rumble of thunder. Suddenly, they descend like some invisible barrier keeping them aloft has been pulled away. They softly fall and spread out over the ground. Everything turns damp and cold, and visibility is no more than a couple of meters. But still you can hear the rumble of thunder from within the clouds and your hair stands on end, charged with electric energy.
- The landscape becomes twisted, as grass and roots coil around each other and the world seems bent. The horizon is only a couple of kilometers away and sharply curves downwards.
- Vast and strange choirs erupt from nature itself. The wind, the trees, and the earth hum with this melody. Soon you notice that you are part of the tune itself. You sing until you can sing no more and then suddenly it stops. Now the song has ended, you realize you are in a different place.
- A wide and dark river blocks the path. Slippery stones make it possible to try to cross it without swimming. When you step on one of the stones, it opens and reveals a meaty mouth like that of a lamprey.
- The forest grows denser and denser, trees are everywhere and there seems to be no air. It is impossible to see the sky. You will have to crawl across the stem of the bark, not knowing what is up or down.
- In a shallow pit lies something that looks like a meaty egg, big as a human head. It is surrounded by a swarm of foot-long spermatozoa that slithers in a slimy fluid, trying to penetrate the egg.
- Hunger grips you. Nothing you do seems to sate it. You feel like you're losing weight by the minute, and soon your clothes hang around you as if you were a skeleton. You need something fresh and bleeding to sate the beast.

- A giant, vertical mountain wall appears in front of you. It reaches straight up into the sky, several hundred meters. You can see enormous fossils in the face of the cliffs.
- The animals around you scream in pain; birds flutter in the air, a fox coils around itself and shrieks. Worms slither and the bark on the trees cracks. You feel a spike of pain and you fall to the ground. You feel and hear how the organs inside you shift. Everything goes black. Upon awakening, you realize that you have changed – you are now something different.
- A hot wind. Dunes after dunes of ebony sands stretch to the distance. From the top of one of the dunes, a sea of purple can be seen and in the sky there are three moons.
- An eclipse makes the day as dark as night, and the sun does not return. Now the world is trapped in an eternal gloom.
- The rivers and currents of time flow backwards. Anti-creation. The green doesn't grow, it shrinks. Animals get younger and smaller. It's the same for humans. You lose several years. An old man becomes middle aged; a young man becomes a child.
- A guttural sound is heard and a vast, lumbering creature moves across the landscape. Excess skin is dragged behind in a slimy trail.
- Your breasts swell up; soon thick, yellowish milk starts to flow from your nipples. There is a crawling sound from the underbrush, and small twisted creatures start to lick the milk from the ground with long pink tongues.
- You wake up; you must have fallen asleep, for now you are smeared with blood and have raw flesh in your mouth. A feeding frenzy still rides you and you just now begin regaining control enough to realize what – or whom – you have been eating.
- You go through a stage of metamorphosis. You fall into a deep coma from which you cannot be awakened. A cocoon of old skin cells grows around you and you begin changing. When you emerge, you are different and you also see the world through a whole new set of eyes.
- There is a flickering light in the distance. An old lighthouse stands over a dried out coastline. At the top, a blue fire is burning. Old, rusty ships can be seen on the bottom of what was once an ocean.
- In the dark sky, northern lights are seen: giant ghostly curtains of purple and green slowly flowing back and forth. Standing in their light burns the skin. Sleeping the entire night beneath them has the same effect as being subjected to a lethal dose of radioactivity.
- You enter a network of caves and glaciers, full of blue light and water below freezing. You see a shadow in all the blue, which could only be an atomic submarine frozen into the ice.
- Your skin feels loose and strange, as if it does not stick to our bones. You can pull it out to extreme lengths without it causing any pain or bruising. It is like you are wearing a tight rubber suit. And it itches. It feels unnatural. You have the urge to rip it open and pull it off, but you are also afraid of what you might find beneath.
- Your fingers sink into the murky trunk of a tree. It groans, perhaps a sound of pleasure. Sap flows out and you feel how the tree itself closes around your hand like a giant muscle.
- A hideous landscape filled with trash, garbage, broken plastic containers, and spilled oil stretches to the horizon. It is like a garbage heap of eternity. Centipedes of enormous size slowly crawl over the dunes. Sickly green vapors hang in the air. You need to cover your mouth.
- The path is blocked by a strange creature with many shapeless limbs and strange openings like some deep-sea dweller. It is hissing and slithers closer.
- Something dark and gargantuan moves up in the clouds. It resembles a whale, if one could float freely and gracefully above the firmament. Then it is gone.
- A landscape of thorns, long and sharp as daggers, blocks your path. In the distance, strange creatures like stilt walkers stride around in the barren land on thin legs. You see their long necks suddenly dart down and catch something from the thorny bushes.
- In this place, the moon shines forever. The white flowers hang heavy with nectar and there is an ominous atmosphere in the air. In this wild garden, an onyx temple is raised, a home for one of the Enwildened gods. And from the inside you can see a gentle, glowing light.
- At the last second, you realize that a disfigured creature, far larger than you, has soundlessly crept up on you. You meet the creature's gaze and hear a low growl from its throat. Its slithering sex organ swells and grows erect. You must be its mate.
- You're in a crater-like landscape, filled with stagnant pools. At the bottom, there is a murky mineral liquid. Slimy, eel-like creatures slither between the pools and hide on the bottom. If one drinks from the pools, they have a transcendental experience and may travel, in spirit form, across the worlds.
- Something dives down on you from above and drives you to the ground. The creature looms over you and claws at you. Suddenly, another pain: your tongue explodes in a spray of blood, as a tentacle with a razor-sharp point darts out of your mouth, slicing the creature's throat. Your mouth is filled with your own blood as your new serpentine tongue retracts down your throat, its sharp spike ready to strike again.

In the Wilderness' Grasp

In Gaia's depths and borderlands, the Illusion's natural laws cease to be valid. These are moves the GM can make use of while in this realm.

The Beast

In Gaia's depths, much of our humanity is peeled away, revealing the beast within. In traumatic situations, or when realizing Gaia's infinity, people can regress into a primitive, animal state and conform to their primal nature – both mentally and physically. In spite of the person losing much of their previous personality, they still come closer to Divinity, as the Principles detach themselves from us, one by one.

Decomposition

Manmade objects, clothes, gadgets, and weapons rapidly decompose. In particular, advanced technologies cease to function. It is as if Gaia attempts to devour anything disturbing the natural order. Rust corrodes metal, textiles rot, and the cell phone is damaged by moisture and fills up with mold.

Virgin Births

Virgin births are common in Gaia's fertile aura. The chance for parthenogenesis remains ever present, which means that women visiting Gaia run the constant risk of being impregnated with a clone of themselves.

Out-of-Body Experience

Gaia has a wondrous influence on us. There, within nature's bosom, it is easier for our soul to depart from its corporeal prison. On special occasions, particularly at night, characters may sense how they can free themselves from their bodies and, via their spirit, wander across the skies, even venturing into other worlds.

Cults

The Sentinel Cults

Ties to Powers: Beings in the borderlands of Gaia, and sometimes the clergy of Nahemoth.

Members: People in the countryside and in small communities. Most of them are men who spend a lot of their time outdoors, devoting themselves to hunting, fishing, and living in the wilderness. Members are often initiated into the cult in their tender years, and are allowed into the forest to discover its secrets.

Agenda: Protect the creatures of the forest and ensure continued life and traditions in the rural communities.

Move: ***Summon the Men***, ***Make People Disappear***, ***Ambushes***, ***Invoking the Creatures of the Forest***, ***Survival in the Wilderness***, ***And Everyone Knows Everyone Else***.

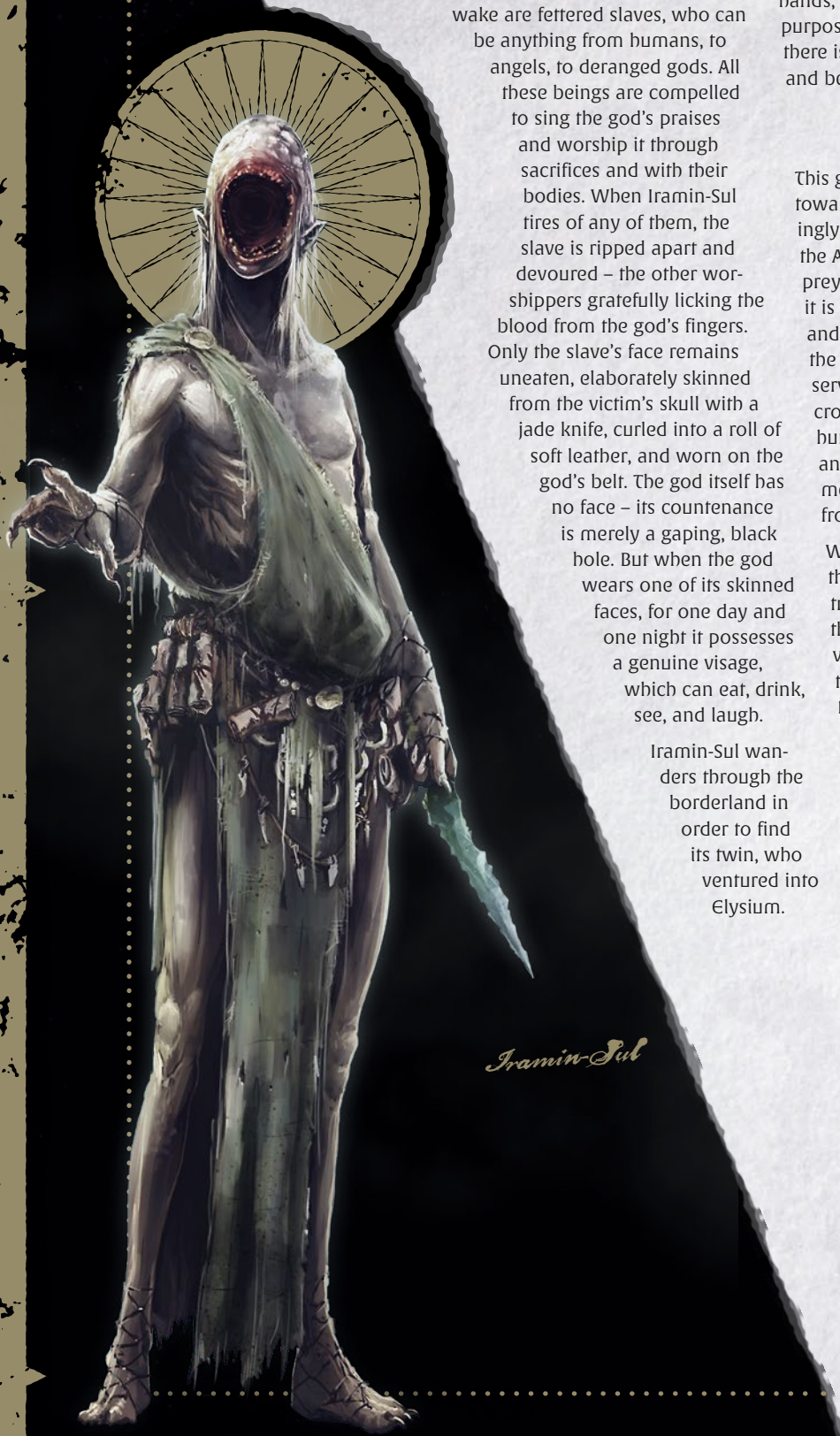
These cults can be found all over the world. They are formed near the wilderness, where Gaia's presence is at its strongest. Members are those who have fallen under the spell of the beings and manifestations emanating from the Living Earth. The cults tend to pay homage to and worship these beings, which dwell in the depths of the wilderness, via acts of fidelity and sacrifice. Their loyalties are clannish and solidly interwoven, and they often view the outside world as a threat corrupting youths and as something to be wary of. While in nature, they find true ecstasy and exist where they can feel part of something greater.

CREATURES

Iramin-Sul

Iramin-Sul dances across the tender forest moss, the scorching desert sands, and the frozen plains. Following in the god's wake are fettered slaves, who can be anything from humans, to angels, to deranged gods. All these beings are compelled to sing the god's praises and worship it through sacrifices and with their bodies. When Iramin-Sul tires of any of them, the slave is ripped apart and devoured – the other worshippers gratefully licking the blood from the god's fingers. Only the slave's face remains uneaten, elaborately skinned from the victim's skull with a jade knife, curled into a roll of soft leather, and worn on the god's belt. The god itself has no face – its countenance is merely a gaping, black hole. But when the god wears one of its skinned faces, for one day and one night it possesses a genuine visage, which can eat, drink, see, and laugh.

Iramin-Sul wanders through the borderland in order to find its twin, who ventured into Elysium.



With the music and accolades, the god aspires to reach in through the Illusion and find its beloved sibling, awaken him from his obliviousness, and then lead him back to Gaia. The god is capricious, but if approached with respect and offerings, you can eat, drink, and sing with it for a night, as well as pose questions to it. Suitable gifts include objects removed from Elysium. The god studies these with fascination, turning them around in its clawed hands, trying to understand how they work and for what purpose they were made. Should you enrage the god, there is a considerable risk you will become its slave and be forced to follow along in its eternal dance.

The Black Tree

This gnarled and majestic primordial tree towers towards the sky. Its twisted branches murmur menacingly and portentously in the wind, and within them the Angels of the Ashes congregate like black birds of prey. The Black Tree once served Malkuth, but now it is a savage being that haunts people's nightmares and is its own ruler. Its will has corrupted some of the Demiurge's angels, and has forced these into serving it in every regard. They live in the Tree's crown and take to the air like a flock of birds to hunt for prey. Victims are torn apart in the branches and its trunk is soaked in their blood. Around the meandering roots lie rotting carcasses and bones from countless creatures.

When one of the Enwildened Gods is captured, they are dragged down through a rift in the Tree's trunk. A pathway leads into the depths, where the gods are chained in eternal torment to prevent their rebirth. Through prolonged torture, the Tree's mistress – a nepharite subordinated to Nahemoth – extracts fragments of knowledge from the gods, learning about the secrets of the borderland. It is said if you continue to the Black Tree's depths, you will eventually enter Inferno close to the citadel of Nahemoth.

The Angels of the Ashes

The Angels of the Ashes were once the Demiurge's sentinels in the borderland. The cruelest and most savage of his angels, they were acclaimed and fought for the only god, standing guard outside our jail. Once they might have been noble beings, but the memories of that are long gone. Their imposing garments, weapons, and writings now lie piled up amid feces and filth, deserted along with their dignity and intellect. Their eyes are hollowed out, ammonia soaks their hands, and their wings are black and fierce. Like dark ravens, they sit in the Black Tree, which has become their new god. On a given command, they erupt like a flock of predatory birds up towards the dark sky. Sadistic and cruel, they maliciously cackle as they tear, bite, and eat anything in their path.

The Angels of the Ashes

Home: Gaia

Creature Type: Former angels of the Hashmallim, now servants to the Black Tree.

Abilities

- *Animalistic intellect:* Cannot be influenced or charmed.
- *Blood drinker:* Heals **Wounds** and regains power by drinking blood.
- *Beast-lord:* Nearby animals become enthralled by the being and obey it slavishly.
- *Vicious when bloodied:* After the creature has taken **3 Wounds** it will devolve into a state of unthinking rage, during which all **Harm** it inflicts is at **+1**.

Combat [4], **Influence** [–], **Magic** [–].

Combat [Powerful]

- Dive attack [**2 Harm**, distance: field].
- Swarm [target is surrounded, *–1 ongoing* until breaking free].
- Fly up with someone in the Black Tree.
- Infectious claws [if hit, roll ***Endure Injury*** after battle to see if infected, **(10–14) Serious Wound** = minor infection, **(–9) Critical Wound** = major infection].

Attacks

The Angels of the Ashes act as rabid, hungry animals. They see every intruder as food and fight viciously with their prey and between each other to get a taste of fresh meat.

Claws: Dive attack [2] [Distance: field]; Swarm [–] [Distance: arm, *–1 ongoing* until succeeded ***Act Under Pressure*** to get free]; Tear and bite [2] [Distance: arm]; Fly up with prey [1] [Distance: arm, target is captured and carried up the Black Tree, ***Act Under Pressure*** to get free, with **0–2 Harm** in falling damage].

Wounds & Harm Moves

Wounds: ○○○○ ☠

- The angel shrugs off the attack.
- The angel attacks the nearest opponent in utter rage [***Avoid Harm***].
- The creature screeches as an open wound is cut into its body.
- One of the angel's black wings is maimed [can't fly any more].
- The angel tries to flee.
- The angel dies. Its brethren immediately start to eat the body [*+1 on next roll*].

Strigatumulus

Consisting of sharp bone plates, antennae, mandibles, and multiple legs, the beetle-like strigatumulus crawled in from Gaia, passed through the borderland, and is now making its way into Elysium. It often hides beneath the loam and digs passages in loose soil. It can fly, albeit clumsily, emitting a loud buzzing noise. Despite its insectile appearance, it does have certain humanoid characteristics, such as often standing on its hind legs, and the ability to hold and manipulate items with its front legs. It communicates with hissing noises and curious clicking sounds.

Perhaps most horrifying, the strigatumulus has a long sharp antenna, which allows it to inject spores its victims' mouths. The spores attach to the palate and pharynx, where they begin to sprout. This starts with an unpleasant taste in the mouth, followed by pain when swallowing, and the sinuses begin to ache. The yellow-white fungal infection colonizes the mouth's entire interior, migrating over the lips, and then around the eye sockets. It worms its way down the trachea into the stomach, and then the alimentary canal. The victim's body starts to dissolve from within, and with swilling sounds, blood, excrement, and bile pour out of the rectum. The body becomes a listless slave under the creature's control, a zombie-like shell mindlessly obeying commands. People and animals may all become part of this herd. Because of this ability, magicians tend to use the creature to gain insight into the mysteries of death and direct it towards their enemies.

CHAPTER 21
PACTS AND MAGIC

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO BORROW SUPERNATURAL power, or discover it within yourself. Some of those greedy for insights make unsavory deals with beings from beyond the Illusion, while others follow strange rumors to seek out obscure and dangerous artifacts. Finally, there are those who dig deep within their own psyche, use ancient and sinister rituals, or lose themselves in the sensations provided by drugs, sex or other excesses, in order to uncover their innate magical potential.

PACTS

A pact is a magical covenant between a player character (PC) and a Higher Power or other powerful entity.

How Pacts are Sealed

A PC knowledgeable in magic can summon an entity for the purpose of sealing a pact with them. Regular PCs may have already entered into a pact prior to the start of the story if they have the Dark Secret ***Pact with Dark Powers***. They may also meet entities in the course of the story that offer them pacts in exchange for their servitude or souls.

The ability to seal pacts with humans is not something all entities are capable of. Generally only the higher powers, ancient divinities, and other powerful entities such as nepharites and angels can seal pacts. This ability is denoted where the creatures are detailed throughout this book by the Ability *Pact-weaver*.

As a rule, some sort of ritual or other symbolic action is a necessary component of sealing a pact. This signifies the parties' mutual willingness to enter into the covenant. It is common for such actions to involve sacrifice in the form of pain or blood. It can also involve sexual communion between person and creature, or the consumption of the creature's blood or other bodily fluids.

The entity can grant the PC power and wealth, but the pact also demands sacrifice. The longer the pact holds together the greater the magnitude of sacrifices the entity will demand, and it's not uncommon that a pact ends with the PC becoming enslaved to the entity body and mind. Only know-nothing amateurs or the most desperate and power hungry magicians will voluntarily enter into a pact with demonic forces.

• Services

Once the PC has sealed a pact she can request services from the entity. *Each time the PC requests a service*, **roll +0**.

(15+) The debt remains the same.

(10–14) The debt increases by **+1**.

(–9) The debt immediately goes to **+5**.

Regardless of the outcome, the PC can ask the entity for one of the following:

Services:

- The answer to a query.
- Guidance to a location in one of the dimensions.
- A weapon the PC can use against their enemy (this can also constitute a creature, knowledge, or direct interference on part of the entity).
- The opening of a portal to one of the dimensions.

Debt

The pact's balance of debt is initially **+0**. The PC can decrease the debt by **–1** (down to **+0**) by providing the entity with a human sacrifice.

MISSION

If the debt increases to **+5**, the demon will ask the PC to accomplish a mission. The mission will give the PC a third dramatic hook, which will grant no **Experience** when accomplished. In general, entities will demand offerings, sacrifices, hazardous undertakings, or dark perversions. The GM chooses between the following key words:

- Kill
- Kidnap
- Steal
- Destroy
- Sacrifice
- Create
- Sabotage
- Liberate
- Deliver
- Seduce

Once the mission is accomplished, the debt is reset to **+0**.

Should the mission not have been accomplished by the conclusion of the next game session, the debt will be reset to **+0** anyway and the drama hook will be erased. However, the entity will personally or through its servants affect one of the following:

- Remove one of the PC's **meaningful (+1)** or **vital (+2) relations**. Could the person or thing be saved somehow?
- Violently take a bodily tribute from the PC (tear out an eyeball, sever a hand, remove their tongue, or similar). The PC takes **1 Serious Wound**.
- Mark the PC as being their servant (for example, a wound that can't heal, rotting skin, a tattoo or brand, or an inhuman body part, such as an extra eye or mouth somewhere on the body).
- Punish the PC in a way that breaks down their psyche (the PC takes a new Disadvantage chosen by the GM; for example ***Nightmares***, ***Mental Compulsion***, ***Schizophrenia***, or ***Sexual Neurosis***).

Breaking a Pact

It can be very difficult to break a pact unless the PC can trick or destroy the entity, usually only through the use of powerful magic. Aware PCs would typically have to find powerful allies that could help them break a pact. Magicians of such might tend to demand costly in-kind services before offering the PCs their assistance.

Magical Artifacts

Magical artifacts are objects created by magicians or non-human entities in order to give them power over Reality. They may transport the user in Time and Space or open portals to other dimensions, summon or banish demons, endow the user with temporary supernatural abilities, grant knowledge, or act as weapons capable of injuring particular kinds of demonic creatures.

An artifact is often constructed for a particular purpose. They are uncommon and often dangerous to use for humans who don't know how they work. Magicians can generally create only minor artifacts – the powerful ones typically originate from other dimensions. Frequently, an extradimensional creature who made an artifact will intuitively know when it is being used.

Some artifacts are not intended to be special, but merely originate from dimensions so alien to ours that the artifact's purpose is simply unknowable to regular humans. Such artifacts may be brought to Elysium by visiting alien creatures or humans capable of travelling between worlds.

Examples of Artifacts

The GM can make up artifacts either before the game or during the course of a story. Here are some example artifacts she can use as written or as inspiration:

Hasselblad SWA-2

The SWA-2 is one of ten unique camera models of Hasselblad's SWA-series from the '50s. It looks just like all the other SWA models: a small black box with a lens on the front.

When you snap a photo with the Hasselblad SWA-2, an image of the true Reality will be captured on the film. The result is only visible after development.

Reality's prison guards actively try to locate all Hasselblad SWA-2s and the owners usually disappear without a trace, along with their cameras.

The Black Armor

The Black Armor is an archaic set of armor of an unknown material reminiscent of thin black stone, light as aluminum and indestructible by human weapons (**Armor +2**).

When you don the Black Armor, **roll +Soul**.

(15+) An Incarnation of the Lord of Bloodthirst, Hareb-Serap, is summoned in the form of a giant, naked, blood spattered man with wide-open staring eyes, trophies of dead former foes hanging from his long black hair, and hands dripping with blood. His rage is contagious and the PC gains the Advantage ***Rage***. The Incarnation is neutral towards the wearer and offers to fulfill a wish. Asking something of the Incarnation seals a pact with them, with a debt starting at **+0**.

(10–14) The incarnation appears, giving the PC the Advantage ***Rage***. The Incarnation is furious with the PC and demands servitude. Agreeing seals a pact with them, with a debt starting at **+5**, which results in the Incarnation immediately giving the PC a mission to complete.

(–9) The armor takes the wearer to *Hareb-Serap's clergy* in the Death Angel's Citadel in Inferno.

The Nippur Puzzle

The Nippur Puzzle is a puzzle made up of 999 hexagon shaped stone tiles, discovered in 1908 at the excavation of the Babylonian city Nippur.

When a player character starts piecing the puzzle together, **roll +Soul**.

(15+) A hypnotizing pattern takes shape within the puzzle, creating a portal to the purgatory of the nepharite Ereshkigal. The PC retains the wherewithal, if they so wish, to disassemble the puzzle to shut the portal.

(10–14) The portal opens, and cannot be closed again by anyone other than Ereshkigal.

(–9) The puzzle sucks the PC into Ereshkigal's purgatory and seals the portal behind her.

Ereshkigal's Purgatory: Ereshkigal is a nepharite in Togarini's priesthood, whose purgatory is created as a monument to living art. In this enormous babylonian stone temple featuring ingenious gardens, enormous halls, and winding passages, thousands of still-living humans are tied, sewn, broken, flayed, and pierced into seductively beautiful yet entirely insane works of art. Ereshkigal herself wanders the temple

admiring her artistic works. The only way of convincing Ereshkigal to let the PC return is to make a work of living art in the nepharite's honor, and seal a pact where the PC promises to continue creating similar works in Elysium.

The DVD Disc

An unmarked DVD disc in a black plastic sleeve. When the movie is played, one will first see only static, eventually transitioning to a lengthy camera recording of a sadistic scene of mass rape. Men, women, and children are repeatedly raped and tortured by men and women in extreme costumes and masks portraying them as demonic creatures.

When a PC has watched the DVD for a few minutes, **roll +Soul**.

(15+) The PC is sucked into the movie as an observer along the edge of the room. She is able to return by turning the movie off using the remote.

(10–14) It is up to the demonic creatures to decide when the PC is allowed to stop watching. The GM chooses 1 option:

- A demon pushes forward a naked person the PC would find attractive, forcing them to perform oral sex on the PC. If the PC accepts these ministrations, she bends the knee to Gamaliel and gains the Disadvantage ***Sexual Neurosis***.
- One of the razides start fucking the PC. If the PC allows this, the razide will possess her to perform future sexual assaults through the PC's body. She gains the disadvantage ***Haunted***.
- The PC is dragged into the room among the group of demons and is sexually assaulted until her bleeding, abused body is ejected back into Elysium. She suffers **1 Serious Wound** and takes **Stability –4**.

(–9) The PC is stuck in the room until the razides decide when – and if – they are allowed to return.

The Bone Flute

A flute carved from a human femur. The Bone Flute is covered with thousands of very small runes. If a PC blows into the flute, it emits a high, resplendent tone that brings all humans present to tears. The flute summons the sublime Malakh Puriel, singer for the Archon Tiphareth, who sings a song that instills anyone listening with an irresistible urge to tear their own throats out (***Keep it Together*** to resist).

Adler Tippa S

A black typewriter with beige keys of the German brand 'Adler Tippa S Manual Typewriter Portable w/Case', manufacturing year 1967. The typewriter can collapse into the size of a briefcase and features a carrying handle and accompanying protective case. When a PC uses the typewriter, they will notice the text printed on the paper is completely different from what they are typing, taking the form of a message communicated by an unknown sender. The typewriter bends Time and Space allowing those who use it to converse with others at any point in history. The sender might be someone from the past or future who wants to warn the PCs or solicit their assistance.

Magic

Magic is a method by which one may see through the Illusion and manipulate Reality through use of force of will. Through magic, humans can temporarily unlock those powers that used to come naturally to us prior to our imprisonment inside the Illusion. Various occult traditions describe different ways for humans to break through the Illusion and tap into their magical potential. There is no one single true way, as the exact methods utilized or particular entities summoned don't matter in the end – the magic is intrinsic to the magician's being. The performance of rituals is merely an assistive tool magicians use to channel this force. Two magicians might perform completely different rituals, yet achieve the same effect. Thus, there is not one 'correct' occult tradition, but all of them are capable of creating real magical effects – if the magician performing the ritual has sufficient strength of will to reach inside herself and channel her own divinity.

Even non-humans who utilize magic channel their power from within themselves. Though some rituals demand a sacrifice to Higher Powers such as Archons or Death Angels, these sacrifices truly serve only to allow the magician to focus her own powers through the sacrificial act.

Schools of Magic

The schools of magic serve to direct the magician's knowledge and insights, allowing her the power to manipulate the different aspects that make up Reality. Magicians are generally specialized in a single school of magic, granting her information on a particular dimension and its inhabitants. Each school of magic provides its own distinct world view. Several cultural traditions of magic can have a single school of magic in common.

Entities with magical powers typically have insight only into the school of magic that is connected to their original dimension.

Madness

Dimensions: Elysium, Metropolis, the Underground.

Madness is the most commonly encountered school of magic and is utilized by humans who have embraced insanity. Its rituals are often taught by the homeless and mentally ill and are spread by oral tradition from master to apprentice. Madness magic typically demands personal sacrifice and illogical rituals involving the magician releasing their tenuous grip on the Illusion. A magician following the school of Madness is able to open portals to Metropolis, the Underground, and the fleeting realms created by human hallucinations, as well as summon demonic beings from those dimensions. They can also summon and banish creatures of Madness, alter and warp humans in body and mind, and summon others to their own hallucinations. In addition to assorted mental illnesses, magicians of Madness are often afflicted by corporeal alterations.

Time and Space

Dimensions: Elysium.

Magicians of Time and Space are extremely rare. They manipulate durations, velocity, distances, and angles, using advanced machines, architectural features of buildings, patterns, and mathematical computations. Magic of Time and Space typically demands lengthy preparations and calculations. In return for their labor, the magician can gaze into faraway places, the past, and potential futures, and even travel there. Time and Space magicians can also summon and banish beings associated with Time and Space, and they can scry the past of any object and perceive its potential futures.

Dream

Dimensions: Elysium, Limbo.

Dream magicians have the ability to direct and manipulate dreams. Some people learn Dream magic intuitively, but on occasion powerful dream walkers notice others with talent and take them as apprentices. A Dream magician usually reaches into Limbo only while asleep, but extremely talented ones may be able to open portals between Limbo and Elysium to transport her own and others' physical bodies between the dimensions. Dream magic also lets a magician enter another's dream and manipulate it. They can also summon and banish creatures from Limbo.

Death

Dimensions: Elysium, the Underground, Inferno.

Death magic is extremely dangerous and very powerful. A prospective student can learn it through occult tomes, Dark Net chatrooms, or apprenticeships within grisly cults or under paranoid mentors. Death magic always demands sacrifice; either by the magician herself or from other living creatures. It grants the practitioner the ability to open portals to the realms of Death, such as the Inferno of the tortured, the personal purgatories of the guilt-laden, and the Underground realms where life and death blend together. The Death magician can also summon and banish demons and spirits, and bind the souls of the dead in replacement physical bodies.

Passion

Dimensions: Elysium, Gaia.

Magicians of Passion manipulate the emotions of humans and other living things. It is typically taught by cults and mentors, and is practiced in pornography rings, sex clubs, and Wiccan cults. Passion magic channels the power of sex and lust. Its powerful euphoric rituals demand a multitude of participants, making it most commonly practiced in larger groups. Since Passion seeps into the dreams of humans and echoes through the halls of Inferno, magicians of Passion are able to open portals even to these places where Passion is particularly prominent. The magician can manipulate the emotions of others, and affect the Illusion through crowd work. Passion magic can also affect unborn fetuses, creating physically altered humans or causing souls to be reborn into new bodies. A Passion magician often has an attractive sexual aura, and tends to shamelessly dedicate themselves to their particular passions.

Temples

A magician's temple is a sanctum where they can perform their rituals undisturbed. It is forbidden for anyone other than the magician and any beings affected by, or participating in the ritual, to enter the temple. It is usually sanctified in accordance with the traditions the magician adheres to, which can vary widely between different schools of magic, but are always adapted to the magician's own personal style. Assuming she has all the necessary tools and resources available, a magician can prepare a new temple in seven days, and can maintain several temples in different places simultaneously. If the magician lacks access to her temple, she runs a much higher risk of losing control when performing her rituals. If necessary, a temporary temple can be prepared for the purpose of performing a specific ritual in 24 hours. After this ritual is performed, the location loses its sanctified temple status.

Rule: A magician performing a ritual outside of a temple takes *–2 to the roll*.

Examples of Temples Common to Different Schools of Magic:

- *Madness:* Alleyways; sewers; abandoned industrial warehouses; desolate subway tunnels; a circular room with padded walls and floor with an operating table in the middle of the room serving as an altar; condemned buildings; forgotten spaces underneath overpasses and bridges.
- *Time and Space:* A makeshift astrolab in a dilapidated clock tower; buildings constructed on the basis of advanced mathematical formulas; mosaic atriums; St. Peter's Square in the Vatican; astronomical temples; Stonehenge.
- *Dream:* The dream magician's temple is generally located in Limbo, where it can take any form the magician wishes.
- *Death:* A basement under a house in an idyllic suburb; the dark attic in an old house in the shadows of the skyscrapers; a damp stone chamber hidden in the forest; ancient catacombs; mortuaries; the centre of an abandoned battlefield; a defaced tomb in the largest cemetery in the middle of the city; the forgotten murder scene in a closed apartment.
- *Passion:* A Victorian salon with mirrors mounted in the ceiling; a sterile industrial space featuring ropes, chains, and other constructions used for BDSM; an empty basement furnished only with a long wooden table with leather straps; a richly veiled bedroom with an enormous poster bed, erotic paintings, soft pillows, and nude statues; a natural cave near the top of a dormant volcano.

Equipment

Many rituals require particular equipment to enable certain actions or as symbolic representations of aspects of Reality. Candles, incense, statuettes, fabric, knives, swords, crowns, rings, bowls, staffs, mirrors, alcohol, stones, glass, and altars are some commonly used ritual equipment in many schools of magic, but there is no fixed limit to what kinds of equipment magicians may use in their rituals. If a magician feels a servant of Yesod could be represented by a crumpled dollar bill, that's entirely possible.

Sacrifice

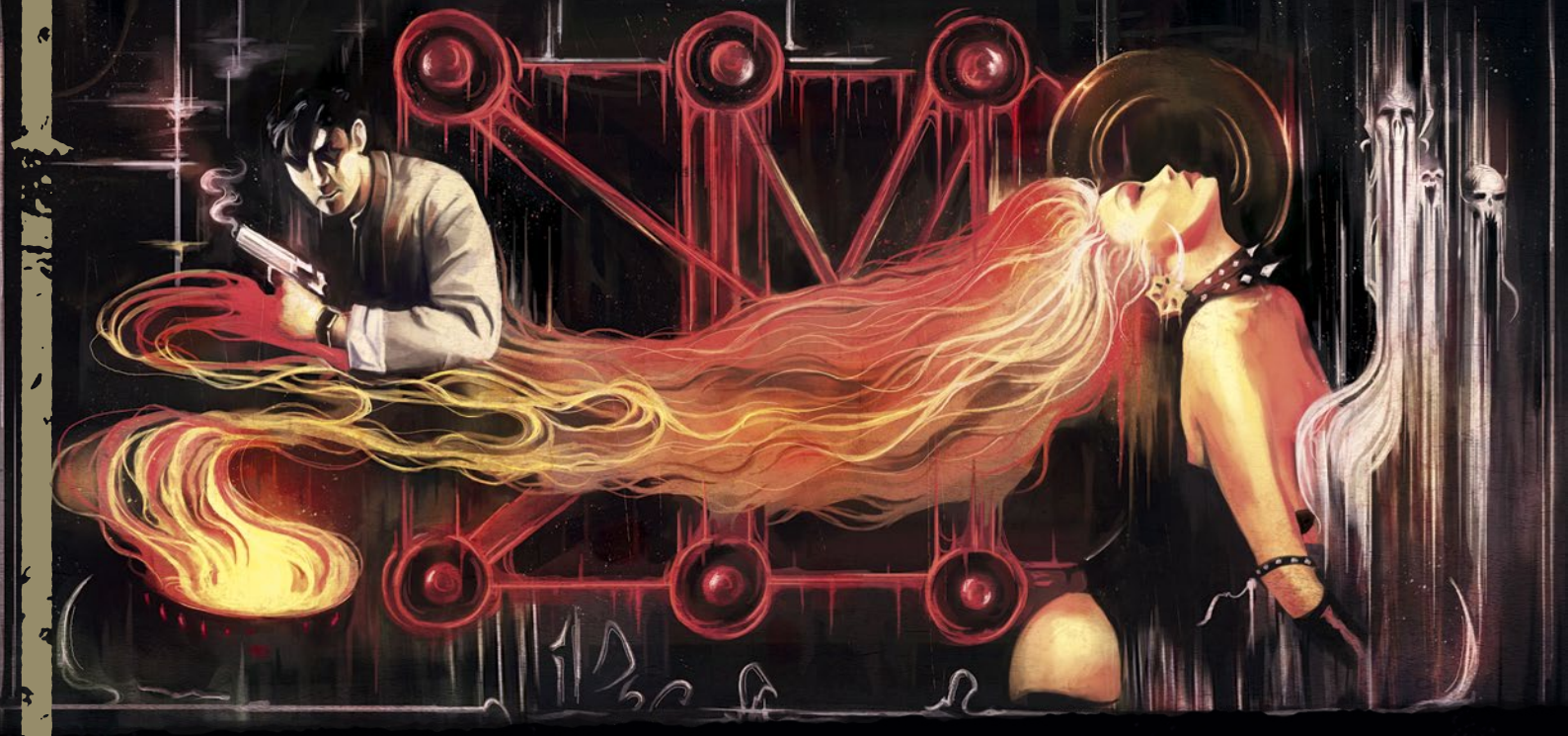
Many rituals require sacrifice. A sacrifice doesn't necessarily have to be some living creature, but could also denote a sacrifice of food, drink, or the destruction of an object. Bodily sacrifice can be in the form of sexual acts, physical pain, blood, or body parts. In major rituals, particularly within the school of Death, magicians may also be required to sacrifice living creatures – animal or human – or other entities. Even in other schools, where the rituals alter or curse a creature, this can itself be considered a sacrificial act. Sacrifices can even be more abstract than this, such as the loss of a memory, sensory or emotional capacity, several years of your lifespan, or even one's soul to a higher power or other being. Mortal self-sacrifice is quite uncommon, but may play a role if the magician is trying to perform extremely powerful rituals with the aim of being reborn in a particular body or to leave their physical body behind in favor of a divine form.

Playing a Magician

Magicians are rare and mighty people with the power to open portals to other dimensions and bind creatures to their own will. In a typical story, magicians will be non-player characters who the players' characters will join forces with if they're lucky, or come into conflict with if they're not.

KULT: Divinity Lost's core rules focus on playing Sleepers or Aware Archetypes, where the PCs have little or no understanding of the true nature of Reality. Characters may develop into Enlightened Archetypes, such as *The Death Magician*, through an Aware Archetype such as *The Artist*, *The Criminal*, *The Detective*, and others. When a PC develops all the way from *Sleeper* through Aware to Enlightened, the player will develop their own understanding of the world's reality alongside their character. But playing an Enlightened character from the story's start will mean the GM has to reveal part of the Truth to the player.

The Enlightened Archetype *The Death Magician* is available in ***Chapter 22 – The Awakening*** alongside three others, giving players the ability to play as a magician and granting the GM some insight into how magic works. The GM should be aware that this Archetype alters the balance of the game considerably. Future supplements will contain further Enlightened Archetypes along with rules and suggestions for how to play stories featuring Enlightened characters. One Enlightened Archetype will be available for each school of magic, allowing players to portray magicians of Dream, Time and Space, Passion, and Madness.



CHAPTER 22
THE AWAKENING

TO TRULY AWAKEN, ONE MUST CAST OFF THE SHACKLES OF THE ILLUSION AND return to their divine nature. However, there are no clear steps to achieving this goal, so the journey towards one's divinity is always a lonely one. The path taken depends on each individual. Some Awaken by sinking deep into madness and affirming their most primitive nature, severing their social ties, breaking all taboos, and committing cruel deeds to become so traumatized and inhuman they tear back the Illusion's veil. Others devote themselves to analysis, mathematics, and accumulating knowledge to take control of all desire and suppress their distracting emotions. Through art, some have learned to depict reality and its lies with such clarity they can start seeing themselves and the world beyond the Illusion's restraints. Total insight into the nature of the Principles, learning to harness death, and finding truth in madness are other possible gateways to Awakening. But every voyage towards enlightenment is a perilous one, and very few ever rediscover their lost divinity.

The Search for Our Divinity

Even as we fumble in our blindness, we constantly try to reacquire our enlightenment. We do this instinctively. In our sleep, we journey inwards and awaken parts of our slumbering souls. We use mathematics, magic, and natural sciences as tools to unshackle us. In the abstract corners of visual arts, music, poetry and literature, something familiar reaches us deep down. The lyrics of a moving song, the painting's brushstrokes, the graffiti on the concrete wall, and the novel's eloquent words can touch our soul and stir up memories mathematics and physics can never reach.

Everything we create carries the seeds of our divinity. A smartphone can serve as the gateway to Limbo, a strange key opens doors to forgotten rooms, and songs, paintings, and photographs are reflections of our true essence. We are building an invisible network of synapses, slowly weaving our memories back together. Previously, the oppressive veils of the Illusion successfully drowned these out, but now they are growing stronger and stronger, ripping our prison apart. Some of us have started to truly wake up. Some of us have started to truly see.

Insight into and knowledge of the Truth have nothing to do with age or education. An outcast, uneducated teenager may clearly see aspects of the hidden world, while an experienced occultist might search an entire life without finding a single clue. The maniac in the underground station can scribble words to bend Time and Space, while the rational physicist is kept captive by his own mind and logical equations. The hacker might step into Limbo and create her own universe, yet the devout priest searches for God and finds nothing but emptiness. The architect designs fantastical towers to break down the barriers to Metropolis, but the ambitious politician merely regurgitates established lies and advocates conventional policies, without changing anything. The homeless man sees the monsters and demons walking amongst us, while the rest of us drift by gazing down at our smartphones, oblivious.

Every human being exists at the center of their own universe, encircled by conflicts, joys, sorrows, and traumas. The individual fates and passions playing out in cheap housing are not any less true or important than what you see in the movies or read about on the Internet. It does not matter how large or how small one's life may be. In our shared prison, we are all wrestling with the same desires and ordeals. And each of us has the chance of clawing through the Illusion and gazing out on the other side. Every little insight we have in our short lives is a knife that pierces a hole in the Illusion and places us one step further up the staircase towards Awakening when we are reincarnated.

The Stages of Awakening

The Awakening is in itself akin to exploring a mental labyrinth – a world of veils, temptations, and confusion. We must find our way through cobwebbed rooms and dusty vaults, unlocking doors only we can open. No two human beings walk the same path in breaking free from the Illusion's grip, but each journey follows a similar progression. Generally speaking, one can categorize humanity's path to Awakening in four successive stages:

Sleeping: The Illusion has complete domination over the individual and their perceptions. Sleepers do not want to see the true existence and are comfortable with the lies. They have no insight into their origin or awareness of the supernatural. The Principles have an iron grip on their soul.

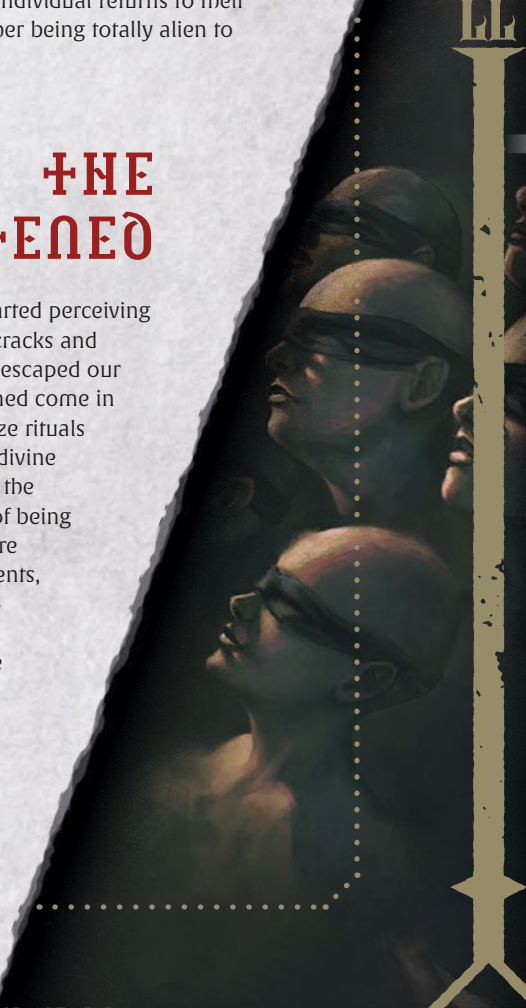
Aware: The Illusion has started to crumble slightly. The person realizes there is something fundamentally wrong with the world, at least, as they experience it. They are plagued by their Disadvantages and Dark Secrets and begin to notice the cracks in the Illusion.

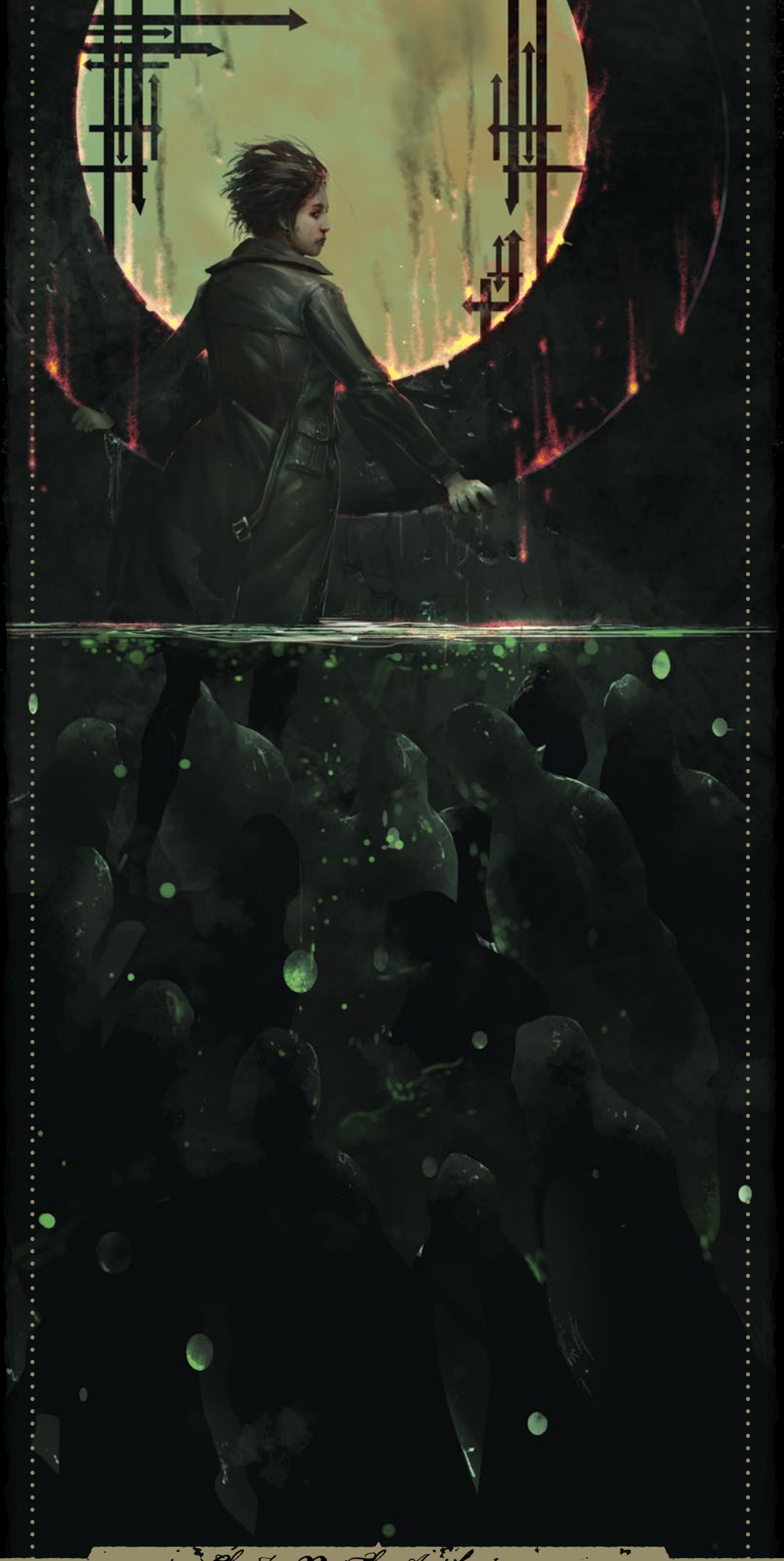
Enlightened: The Illusion crumbles away and the individual more clearly understands what lies beyond. An Enlightened could be one of the Children of the Night, a magician of Death, Passion or Dreams, or something else entirely. Only upon becoming Enlightened can one truly begin the journey towards Awakening. However, this pilgrimage is long and meandering, and very few ever reach its conclusion.

Awakened: The individual achieves their Awakening. The Illusion no longer blinds them and the individual returns to their original divinity. They are now a higher being totally alien to the rest of us.

The Enlightened

Among us, there are those who have started perceiving Reality for what it truly is. They see the cracks and sense what lies behind them. They have escaped our collective disorientation. These Enlightened come in many kinds, such as magicians who utilize rituals and incantations to unlock parts of their divine soul, and those who serve the Archons or the Death Angels devotedly in the vain hope of being rewarded with power and insight. There are the victims of misguided medical experiments, Children of the Night, and tormented survivors who have gained insight into insanity. There are wanderers and seekers who have successfully laid bare aspects of their divinity, led by dusky memories and prophetic predictions they've screamed out in their nightmares or notes they write themselves while high on hallucinogens. Even in the darkest cities of Elysium, these Enlightened exist and move closer to full Awakening.





The Magicians

Magicians use magic rites to unlock their divinity. Their path is defined and guided by the higher power they follow. These include:

Death magicians: *Those who break down the barriers between life and death. They can weave souls together, resurrect dead bodies, voyage into the torture chambers of Inferno, and endure the spiritual oubliettes of Metropolis.*

Magicians of Madness: *Those who find insight in Madness. They can create beings from the essence of Madness, pass their insanity on like a contagion, and smear horrors and psychoses upon the human psyche as though they were finger paints.*

Passion magicians: *Those who have found the power residing in unbridled passion. They can make desires flare up, create and shape bodies, and use whispered words to ignite storms of obsession.*

Dream magicians: *Those who have realized humanity's creative power lies in the dream – specifically, in Limbo. They can visit the realms of Dream Princes, tear up dream worlds as though they were cobwebs, explore alien realities, and touch the consciousness of those asleep, finding secret knowledge or placing hidden messages there.*

Time and Space magicians: *Those who see the intricate structures in our prison and the silhouette of the world beyond them. They can wander between worlds, stem the flow of time, solve the Illusion's puzzles, unbind others from time itself, and explore the hidden rooms of the Labyrinth.*

Herald of the Powers

Those who have submitted their will to one of the Archons or the Death Angels. They follow the Principle of their ruler, greedy devourers of divine insights, who possess access to the sealed vaults and the rites which open the gateway to their ruler's throne. Many of them lead cults, sects, or associations that spread the will of their lord.

The Children of the Night

Once upon a time, the Children of the Night were humans, but now they are something else, something monstrous. Here are those who have been changed by madness and passion, those who live beyond death, those who have been exposed to experiments and rites, or those who wander one of the many paths of Awakening but have been uncontrollably distorted and trapped in a nightmarish state. They have many enemies among the servants of the Archons and the sleeping people, therefore many fled to society's borderlands or into the Underworld itself. None of the Children of the Night are exactly alike. All are formed by their divinity, and this experience has changed them.

The Children of Death: *Those who live in the borderland between death and life. Those who sustain themselves on the blood of the living, those who strangle the newly-born in their incubators, the grief-ridden suicides, the cannibals, emaciated phantoms, the heroin addicts' stillborn children, and the drowned who cannot rest.*

The Children of Madness: *Those who have been distorted by their own madness and their inner horrors. Wild-eyed lunatics, prophets and truth-speakers, dancing illusion weavers, the mothers of a thousand monsters, and the vassals of the screaming flesh.*

The Children of Passion: *Those who are devoured by passion. Creatures of lust, truth-speakers and spreaders of incense, the prophets of the flesh, the vestals of the many bodily apertures, the whisperers of the forbidden fantasies, and the dancers of utmost sensual pleasures.*

The Children of Dreams: *Those who exist between dream and reality. Elusive semblances, transient and molting, rust-red leaves and purling laughter, sad looks and stray songs, the heralds of REM sleep, the flickering impulses over the Internet, and the eyes staring out from your computer screen.*

The Children of Time and Space: *Those who lead a confused existence outside Time and Space. The stray souls, the prisoners of the moment, the orphans behind the mirrors, the one who steps across time, a thousand reflections of the whole, and the one with a new face for each evening.*

The Children of Distorted Flesh: *Those who have been distorted via experiments and operations. Genetic misfits, breeding experiments, ritual interweaving of DNA, tormented and distorted fetuses, and half-demonic abominations.*

Enlightened Archetypes

An Awakened individual is rarely suitable to play, as they exist far beyond ordinary human ability. Enlightened characters, however, are those who have only begun to Awaken. Presented below is a small selection of Archetypes for such characters. Playing an Enlightened Archetype means the character has greater insight into the Illusion, the Truth, and the other dimensions at the start of the game. The character also knows of other powerful creatures in the story's setting, and may choose allies and enemies among these during character creation. Playing stories with Enlightened Archetypes means the game leaves part of the mysticism behind in order for the characters themselves to be part of creating the horror, as a result of the PCs' choices in their search for power and Awakening.

The Archetypes below, *The Abomination*, *The Death Magician*, *The Disciple* and *The Revenant* are just four examples. There are as many Enlightened Archetypes as there are Enlightened people, and they cannot all be documented in this book.

The Abomination

Through radical experiments, magical rituals, or the darkness within her, The Abomination has been transformed into something not entirely human. A raging monstrosity lives inside her, always ready for an opportunity to tear its way out and cause violence, terror, and death. The Abomination continually struggles against this monster inside of her to avoid losing the last remnants of her humanity. She hides from society, who loathes and fears her, and Elysium's prison guards, who hunt and torment her. Only among the misshapen and insane can The Abomination find peace, forever condemned to look out at a humanity she has lost.

Occupation

Choose your Abomination's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Homeless, soldier, mental hospital patient, prize fighter, escaped experiment, mad scientist, occultist, hunter, criminal, freak, murderer, war veteran.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Curse
- Family Secret
- Occult Experience
- Pact with Dark Powers
- Victim of Medical Experiments

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Creator*
- Curse
- Jealousy
- Nemesis
- Schizophrenia
- Stalker

** See description later in this chapter.*

Abilities

Choose 3 Abilities from the list below.

- Dark Vision
- Immunity
- Invulnerability
- Memories of Past Lives
- Natural Weapons
- Quick
- Regenerate
- Unnaturally Strong

Limitation

Being warped into something inhuman has limited you. *Take 2 Limitations for your character:*

- Cannibalism
- Hunting Instincts
- Inhuman Appearance
- Sensitivity
- Uncontrolled Shapeshifting

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +3, +1, and +0 to the three passive Attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +4, +3, +2, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the other seven active Attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Worn and dirty, blood-stained, leather and fur, athletic wear, street, or ill-fitting.

Face: Worn, hard, disfigured, ugly, bearded, grim, captivating, or mutilated face.

Eyes: Angry, burning, mad, desolate, sorrowful, curious, empty, or suspicious eyes.

Body: Massive, deformed, sinewy, fast, hunched, strange, scarred, muscular, or tall body.

Name

Choose a name for your character suitable to the locale in which the story is set.

Alliances

Ask the GM if you should select from pre-generated power brokers or develop them in conjunction with the GM and the rest of the group (see *Power Brokers* later in this chapter).

Choose one power broker as your ally and another you are in conflict with.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters knows you from when you were still human. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- You have accidentally harmed one of the other characters.
- One of the characters has seen your true nature.
- You are secretly in love with one of the characters. Take **+2 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters trusts you to remain in control. They take **+1 Relation** with you.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: one **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

Advancement

Choose One of These:

☐ Add +1 to any Attribute (max +5).

☐☐☐☐☐☐ Add +1 to an active Attribute (max +4).

☐☐ Add +1 to a passive Attribute (max +4).

☐☐☐ Gain an Ability available to your Archetype.

After 5 Advancements You May Also Choose:

☐☐ Add +1 to any Attribute (max +5).

☐☐☐ Gain an Ability or Advantage of your choosing.

☐ Finish your character's story and make a new PC.

☐ Change your character's Archetype to a new Enlightened one.

After 10 Advancements You May Also Choose:

☐ Start your journey towards Awakening.

The Death Magician

The Death Magician wants to understand and control the power of Death. Quimbanda and voodoo utilize ancient knowledge from African spirit religions. Indian tantrics devote their lives as vamachara, the ash-clad guardians of enormous crematoriums. Western ceremonial magicians study meticulously in an effort to comprehend the secrets behind life and death. Curious teens find websites with simple instructions for contacting the dead. The Death Magician's motives range from altruism to ruthless egotism, but regardless of their reasons The Death Magician is always approaching the edge of an invisible precipice. One minor misstep and she will tumble screaming into the void, where the creatures of Death's kingdom hunger.

• Perform a Ritual

When you perform a ritual, you explain what you intend to do and the GM will let you know what you require to proceed, based on the list below. You will always be required to make some form of sacrifice, be it a living or inert offering.

If the effect is particularly demanding:

- The ritual takes several hours or even days to complete.
- You need one or more assistants to complete the ritual.
- You must perform the ritual in a particular location, or at a particular point in time.
- You need a particular object in order to complete the ritual.

For every condition you cannot fulfill, you must take *–1 to your roll.*

Roll +Soul to determine your degree of control.

(15+) Choose 2 options from the list below.

(10–14) Choose 1 option.

(–9) Choose 1 option, but the ritual has unexpected consequences, making it either more powerful or weaker than anticipated, causes the magician to attract extra-dimensional beings, or the Illusion tears. The GM makes a Move.

Options

- The ritual affects other dimensions.
- The ritual's effects last for as long as you actively uphold them.
- The ritual doesn't become unstable (cannot be chosen on a **(–9)** result).
- *Journeyman or higher*: You have protection from creatures and magical energies for as long as you remain within the protective circle.
- *Adept or higher*: The ritual affects several beings.

Occupation

Choose your Death Magician's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Voodoo priest, mortician, bookseller, nobleman, Quimbanda priest, sadhu, history professor, high school student, teacher, occultist, medium, unemployed, antiquarian.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Curse
- Forbidden Knowledge
- Guardian
- Occult Experience
- Pact with Dark Powers

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Bad Reputation
- Branded*
- Curse
- Nemesis
- Nightmares
- Marked
- Stalker

** See description later in this chapter.*

Abilities

You automatically gain the Ability:

- Initiate

Choose 2 additional Abilities from the list below.

- Adept (requires: Journeyman)
- A Second Chance
- Dark Aura
- Experienced
- Improviser
- Journeyman (requires: Initiate)
- Master (requires: Adept)
- Talisman

Limitation

- Field of Expertise

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +3, +1, and +0 to the three passive Attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +4, +3, +2, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the other seven active Attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features of your character.

Clothes: Old-fashioned, worn, casual, strange, expensive, or black clothes.

Face: Ravaged, tired, guilt-laden, tense, beautiful, dour, flat, or pale face.

Eyes: Arrogant, cheerful, ruthless, fearless, weary, desperate, youthful, or smiling eyes.

Body: Large, bony, slender, sickly, towering, stocky, dignified, or frail body.

Name

Choose a name for your character suitable to the locale in which the story is set.

Alliances

Ask the GM if you should select from pre-generated power brokers or develop them in conjunction with the GM and the rest of the group (see ***Power Brokers*** later in this chapter).

Choose one power broker as your ally and another you are in conflict with.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters is your ally. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters has gotten in trouble because of you.
- One of the characters has asked for your help with something concerning death.
- One of the characters fears you.
- One of the characters is your enemy.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: one **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

Advancement

Choose One of These:

☐ Add +1 to any Attribute (max +5).

☐☐☐☐☐☐ Add +1 to an active Attribute (max +4).

☐☐ Add +1 to a passive Attribute (max +4).

☐☐☐ Gain an Ability available to your Archetype.

After 5 Advancements You May Also Choose:

☐☐ Add +1 to any Attribute (max +5).

☐☐☐ Gain an Ability or Advantage of your choosing.

☐ Finish your character's story and make a new PC.

☐ Change your character's Archetype to a new Enlightened one.

After 10 Advancements You May Also Choose:

☐ Start your journey towards Awakening.

The Disciple

The Disciple has realized that independence is weakness, and has bent her knee to a Higher Power. Fear, fanaticism, idealism, greed, or submission, regardless of The Disciple's reasons, she is now that Power's loyal servant. By spreading her deity's Principle, The Disciple strengthens her Power's influence and expands the numbers of the faithful. However, being a Disciple is not without its risks. Any and all methods are permitted in the war for souls, and The Disciple is a prime target for the Higher Power's enemies. Through ancient rituals, unholy pacts, and the manipulation of fanatical followers, The Disciple wages her holy war for the power over Humanity. Perhaps she remains content serving her master, or perhaps she believes her servitude will allow her the knowledge and power she can one day use to pursue her own divinity.

Occupation

Choose your Disciple's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Politician, sect leader, company CEO, aristocrat, gang leader, mafia boss, occultist, video blogger, advisor, bishop, researcher, police, high school queen, celebrity, jetsetter, businessman, homeless, retiree, bureaucrat.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Chosen
- Guardian
- Guilty of Crime
- Occult Experience
- Pact with Dark Powers

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Curse
- Fanatic
- Greedy
- Nemesis
- Protégé*
- Stalker

** See description later in this chapter.*

Abilities

Choose 3 Abilities from the list below.

- Divine Strength
- Experienced
- Manipulate the Illusion
- Master of Rites
- Opener of Ways
- Summoner
- Templars
- Unyielding

Limitation

- Bound to Higher Power

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +3, +1, and +0 to the three passive Attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +4, +3, +2, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the other seven active Attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Spectacular, suit, clerical robes, odd, strange, occult symbolism, spiritual, or proper clothes.

Face: Reassuring, pronounced, innocent, dominant, indifferent, aged, or challenging face.

Eyes: Veiled, intelligent, calculating, evaluating, passionate, arresting, or power-hungry eyes.

Body: Dignified, tense, big, spindly, broken, scarred, graceful, or fragile body.

Name

Choose a name for your character suitable to the locale in which the story is set.

Alliances

Ask the GM if you should select from pre-generated power brokers or develop them in conjunction with the GM and the rest of the group (see ***Power Brokers*** later in this chapter).

Choose one power broker as your ally and another you are in conflict with.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters is your ally. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters is your Higher Power's enemy.
- One of the characters has accepted your help. They take **+1 Relation** to you.
- One of the characters despises you.
- One of the characters protected something valuable to you. Take **+1 Relation** with them.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: one **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

Advancement

Choose One of These:

☐ Add +1 to any Attribute (max +5).

☐☐☐☐☐☐ Add +1 to an active Attribute (max +4).

☐☐ Add +1 to a passive Attribute (max +4).

☐☐☐ Gain an Ability available to your Archetype.

After 5 Advancements You May Also Choose:

☐☐ Add +1 to any Attribute (max +5).

☐☐☐ Gain an Ability or Advantage of your choosing.

☐ Finish your character's story and make a new PC.

☐ Change your character's Archetype to a new Enlightened one.

After 10 Advancements You May Also Choose:

☐ Start your journey towards Awakening.

THE REVENANT

Sometimes when people die, their souls refuse to leave the land of the living. Instead, they manifest physically or possess another body in order to walk amongst the living. These creatures, who were once human, are called Revenants. Ruthless experiments, curses, and dark powers can also warp a human, causing her to lose part of her humanity and become a Revenant – forever condemned to walk the boundaries between life and death.

Occupation

Choose your Revenant's occupation from the list below, or invent one of your choosing.

Con man, model, playboy, actor, aristocrat, artist, club owner, avenger, escaped experiment, musician, politician, occultist, prostitute.

Dark Secrets

Choose 1 or more Dark Secrets. Suggestions:

- Curse
- Occult Experience
- Pact with Dark Powers
- Returned from the Other Side
- Victim of Crime

Disadvantages

Choose 2 Disadvantages. Suggestions:

- Curse
- Nightmares
- Oath of Revenge
- Persecutors*
- Sexual Neurosis
- Stalker

** See description later in this chapter.*

Abilities

Choose 3 Abilities from the list below.

- Bewitching
- Commanding Voice
- Ethereal
- Invulnerability
- Memories of Past Lives
- Mind Manipulator
- Telekinesis

Limitation

Take 2 Limitations for your character:

- Bloodthirst
- Controlled by External Force
- Sensitivity
- Soul thirst
- Symbol Bondage

Attributes

Assign the modifiers +3, +1, and +0 to the three passive Attributes: **Fortitude**, **Reflexes**, and **Willpower**.

Assign the modifiers +4, +3, +2, +1, +0, −1, and −2 to the other seven active Attributes: **Charisma**, **Coolness**, **Intuition**, **Perception**, **Reason**, **Soul**, and **Violence**.

Looks

Select or come up with your own distinguishing features for your character.

Clothes: Old-fashioned, kinky, latest fashion, revealing, attention-grabbing, or strange clothes.

Face: Pale, beautiful, cruel, sickly, childish, dignified, androgynous, or sad face.

Eyes: Indifferent, dark, intense, cunning, mad, understanding, or concerned eyes.

Body: Skinny, sexy, trembling, voluptious, frail, malformed, androgynous, or wispy body.

Name

Choose a name for your character suitable to the locale in which the story is set.

Alliances

Ask the GM if you should select from pre-generated power brokers or develop them in conjunction with the GM and the rest of the group (see ***Power Brokers*** later in this chapter).

Choose one power broker as your ally and another you are in conflict with.

Relations

Everyone introduces their character by name, looks, and personality. Take your turn. Write down the other player characters' names. Go around the table again to establish your Relations.

If you know any of the other player characters from before, choose one of these options to establish the relationship between the two of you.

- One of the characters is your ally. Take **+1 Relation** with them.
- One of the characters had something bad happen to them because of you.
- One of the characters asked you for help with something regarding death.
- One of the characters fears you.
- One of the characters is your enemy.

Decide the nature of three additional Relations: one **neutral (0)**, one **meaningful (+1)**, and one **vital (+2)**.

Advancement

Choose One of These:

☐ Add +1 to any Attribute (max +5).

☐☐☐☐☐☐ Add +1 to an active Attribute (max +4).

☐☐ Add +1 to a passive Attribute (max +4).

☐☐☐ Gain an Ability available to your Archetype.

After 5 Advancements You May Also Choose:

☐☐ Add +1 to any Attribute (max +5).

☐☐☐ Gain an Ability or Advantage of your choosing.

☐ Finish your character's story and make a new PC.

☐ Change your character's Archetype to a new Enlightened one.

After 10 Advancements You May Also Choose:

☐ Start your journey towards Awakening.

Power Brokers

Power brokers are powerful people, creatures, groups, or organizations who serve one of the setting's Influences. They can operate as both allies and adversaries in stories involving Enlightened Archetypes. Power brokers can be prepared in advance by the GM or created collaboratively by the whole group, with the players developing their own connections. Normally, there will be 3–5 power brokers in a story, so players often share them as both allies and opponents. Examples of a few power brokers include:

- *Harold Knight:* Lictor serving the Archon Yesod; CEO of *Knight & Alderton*.
- *The Violinist:* Time and Space magician connected to Malkuth.
- *The Guardians of the Labyrinth:* A cult connected to She Who Waits Below.
- *Ray Donovan:* Razide serving the Death Angel, Chagidiel, owner of the sex club *Xtreme Sensation*.

Enlightened Disadvantages

• Branded*

Death Magic has branded you, and now the dead are drawn to you like moths to flame. *At the first session and whenever you use magic*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You avoid the pursuing entities.

(10–14) An entity has latched onto you. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) Several entities, or one very powerful death-being, is on your trail. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend a Hold to make a Move for the entities. An entity might possess someone close to the character, reveal itself to them, challenge them, or stalk them. A portal might open to the Death realm. One or several entities may try to trick or lure them into the Death realm, or a malevolent being gains possession of them.

** This Disadvantage is only available to The Death Magician Archetype.*

• Creator*

You are the result of your creator's terrible experiment or inhuman ritual. You managed to escape, but they are still looking for you. *At the first session and anytime you show your true self for someone*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You are safe from your creator.

(10–14) Your creator catches your scent. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) You have revealed yourself to your creator. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend a Hold to make a Move for your creator. For example, your creator might send henchmen or other experiments to bring you back, target someone you care about, gives you an order and expects you to follow through, or provides you with unexpected insights into your origin or purpose.

** This Disadvantage is only available to The Abomination Archetype.*

• Persecutors*

You are hunted by a group or organization of people sworn to eradicate your kind. *At the first session and whenever you reveal your true nature to human witnesses*, **roll +0**:

(15+) You are safe from your persecutors, for the moment.

(10–14) You've left a trail for your persecutors to follow. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) Your persecutors have tracked you down. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend a Hold to make a Move for your persecutors. They might set up a trap, track down your hideout, infiltrate your environment, capture one of your allies, steal or destroy something you own, appear unexpectedly, or make common cause with one of your other enemies.

** This Disadvantage is only available to The Revenant Archetype.*

• Protégé*

You once had an understudy, who you tutored in the Truth before she disappeared. She might have been abducted by a Higher Power, or perhaps she turned against you and left of her own accord. Your protégé remains a weak spot for you and has the potential to inflict great harm, directly or indirectly. Take the protégé as a **Relation** at **+1** or **+2** (your choice). *At the first session and at any time where you have fulfilled your master's Principles*, **roll +0**:

(15+) Nothing happens.

(10–14) Your protégé makes an appearance. The GM takes 1 Hold.

(–9) Your protégé puts you in a difficult spot. The GM takes 3 Hold.

The GM can spend a Hold to make a Move for your protégé. For example, someone extorts you by threatening to harm your protégé, or your protégé might return to ask for your help, sabotage one of your plans, (threaten to) reveal one of your secrets, steal something of yours, or slander you.

** This Disadvantage is only available to The Disciple Archetype.*

Enlightened Abilities

The Enlightened Archetypes' Abilities work much like the Awakened Archetypes' Advantages, but are more powerful and often supernatural. Only Enlightened Archetypes are allowed to select Enlightened Abilities during the course of the story.

• Adept (requires: Journeyman)

You're starting to reach deeper insights into your school of magic. Choose 1 new ***Field of Expertise***.

Adept Ability: *Powerful.*

When you ***Perform a Ritual***, you can choose this option:

- The ritual affects several beings.

• A Second Chance

You have learned an ancient ritual. *When you die*, you may choose to possess the body of a human victim. You must have prepared the victim in advance, and they should be kept confined in your sanctum. Your victim's original soul doesn't leave their body, but is merely suppressed. Take the Disadvantage ***Haunted***.

• Bewitching

You exert a strong attractive force on people. *When you use your powers to manipulate someone*, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) Choose up to 3 options.

(10–14) Choose up to 2 options.

(–9) Choose 1 option, but you also make your victim become obsessed with you. They will be dying to meet you again, making every effort to do so.

Options

- Make your victim like you. They take **+1 Relation** to you.
- ***Influence*** your victim as if you rolled a **(15+)**.
- Make your victim desire you.

• Commanding Voice

You may order people and creatures about. *When you give an intelligent non-player creature an order*, **roll +Soul –magic level of creature**:

(15+) The person or creature must obey your order, unless doing so would cause them direct harm.

(10–14) The person or creature must obey your order, unless doing so would expose them to danger.

(–9) The person or creature acts unpredictably. The GM determines if they resist the order, misunderstand it, carry out your instructions incorrectly, becomes angered at you, or carries out your order, but gains a magic bond to you that it will exploit later.

When you give a PC an order, she must ***Keep it Together***. If she fails, she's unable to resist the order.

• Dark Aura

You have a dark aura of corruptive influence and sinister insights surrounding you. *When you let your aura touch another*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose 2 options.

(10–14) Choose 1 option.

(–9) Choose 1 option, but you leave a trace of your aura with the affected person – who gains a magical bond with you.

Options:

- You learn one of your target's weaknesses. Take *+2 to your roll* against her when exploiting this weakness.
- You can feel your target's soul, and can ask if it has been marked or tainted by supernatural forces.
- You curse your target. Her body starts to decompose, indicated by a **Serious Wound** that cannot be healed until she finds a way to break the curse.

• Dark Vision

You see just as well in the dark, as in the light. *When you use the darkness against your enemy*, **roll +Perception**:

(15+) Choose 3 Edges. You may save up to 2 until later.

(10–14) Choose 2 Edges. You may save 1 until later.

(–9) Choose 1 Edge, but the darkness is not as safe as you initially thought it was. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- *Attack from cover of darkness:* You can attack an opponent unexpectedly, but reveal your position when you do.
- *Dive into the shadows:* You disappear into the darkness.
- *Become one with the dark:* You hide yourself so well nobody can find you.

• Divine Strength

You can let your Higher Power imbue you with its strength. *When you channel your Higher Power's strength*, you take +2 to ***Endure Injury*** and all your attacks are at **+2 Harm** for the scene's duration. Until this divine power wears off, it manifests physically in your body; for example, your eyes turn all black, you radiate with a golden aura, or the shadows of wings appear on your back (the player describes).

• Ethereal

You are able to transform your body into a fine, ghostly mist. *When you assume your ethereal form*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose 3 Edges. You may save up to 2 until later.

(10–14) Choose 2 Edges. You may save 1 until later.

(–9) Choose 1 Edge but you attract spirits or other ethereal creatures. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- *Ghostly movement:* Move through a physical obstacle such as a person, wall, or door.
- *Weapons pass right through me:* Completely avoid physical **Harm**.
- *Unrestrainable:* Get out of a hold, bondage, or other physical objects trapping you.

• Experienced

You have life experiences and skills from your life prior to becoming Enlightened. Choose any 1 Advantage from an Aware Archetype.

• Immunity

You are immune to an elemental effect which is lethal to normal humans. *When you are subjected to this element*, only your clothes, gear, and other equipment suffer damage. Choose 1 option:

- Fire.
- Electricity.
- Radioactivity.
- Cold.
- Chemicals (acids/poisons/drugs).

• Improviser

You suffer no penalties to ***Perform a Ritual*** when outside your sanctum.

• Initiate

You are an amateur who recently started experimenting with magic.

• Invulnerability

You are invulnerable to a particular type of injury. *When you are subjected to this type of injury*, you get +3 to your ***Endure Injury*** roll. Choose 1 option:

- Firearms.
- Slicing and piercing weapons.
- Bludgeoning weapons and crushing damage.

• Journeyman (requires: Initiate)

Your studies and experiments in your school of magic has granted you new insights. Chose 1 new ***Field of Expertise***.

Journeyman Ability: *Protective Circle*

When you ***Perform a Ritual***, you can choose this option:

- You have protection from creatures and magical energies for as long as you remain within the protective circle.

• Manipulate the Illusion

You can manipulate the Illusion and use it against extradimensional beings and energies – be it defensively or offensively. If your action is in direct conflict against a being with magical abilities, you take a penalty to the roll equal to their level of magical expertise. *When you* ***Manipulate the Illusion*** *to dispel a magical force, rebuke an entity, or close a portal*, **roll +Soul –magic level of creature**:

(15+) You permit the Illusion's overwhelming force to cancel out the magic or rebuke the being.

(10–14) You permit the Illusion's overwhelming force to cancel out the magic or rebuke the being, but there are unexpected complications, such as the magic or being has time to affect you first, or your exertion of force attracts unwanted attention.

(–9) The Illusion temporarily rejects you. You may be overwhelmed, transported elsewhere, or become the target of beings who now see you clearly. The GM makes a Move.

• Master (requires: Adept)

You are one of the few people alive with magical abilities akin to beings from the supernatural realms. Choose 1 new ***Field of Expertise***. Additionally, you may always choose 1 additional effect when you ***Perform a Ritual***.

• Master of Rites

You have been granted the ability to perform rituals devoted to your Higher Power. Exactly how these rituals are performed is up to you, but generally they take a long time and must be performed in a location sanctified to your Higher Power. *When you perform a ritual designed to strengthen your Higher Power's influence or praise its might*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose up to 2 options anytime during the following scene.

(10–14) Choose 1 option anytime during the following scene.

(–9) The ritual failed for whatever reason. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- Imbue a group of human NPCs (consenting or not) with your Higher Power's Principle. They are now your followers.
- Enslave a person present to the Principles of your Higher Power. An NPC is bound to act in accordance with this Principle. A PC who fails to ***Keep it Together*** becomes bound to it, and gains **+1 Stability** when acting in accordance with the Principle, and **–1 Stability** when acting in opposition to it. A PC can break this mental bondage by using magic tied to the Higher Power's domain, or by killing *The Disciple*.

- Spread your Higher Power's influence in the local society. *Take +2 next time you use a suitable Ability in a way connected to your Higher Power.*
- Summon your Higher Power and ask it for something. It can reveal itself to you through visions, incarnations, or through its priesthood (be it angels or nephalites). The GM determines if you can have what you are requesting and, if so, what is required of you in return.

• Memories of Past Lives

Choose any 1 Advantage from an Aware Archetype.

• Mind Manipulator

You can intrude upon people's minds, in order to find information there or to implant false memories. *When you force yourself into someone's head*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose up to 3 options.

(10–14) Choose up to 2 options.

(–9) Choose 1 option, but you also open your mind to the person you're reading. They pick one option to use against you as well.

Options:

- Search their memories for a specific event. You experience this memory as if it was your own.
- Ask the person what their surface thoughts are at the moment.
- Search for specific information the person should know.
- Plant a false memory. It will fade and disappear within a few hours, but will feel real until then.

• Natural Weapons

Your body incorporates natural weaponry. These can include claws, fangs, tentacles, horns, armored limbs, or technological alterations, such as integrated knife blades. *When you* ***Engage in*** *(close)* ***Combat*** *using your natural weapons*, you deal **3 Harm**.

• Opener of Ways

You can open temporary portals to your Higher Power's residence. If the Illusion is weak in your current surroundings, you can open one immediately; otherwise, the process requires time. *When you open a portal*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) The portal is stable and remains so throughout the scene or until you close it. If you venture through the portal, you are able to reconstruct it leading back to the same location at will.

(10–14) The portal remains open for only a few minutes, after which it seals shut. If you venture through the portal, you must open a new one to return.

(–9) The portal is unstable; it can close at any time, lead to an undetermined location, interfere with the Illusion, or attract the guardians of the Illusion. The GM makes a Move.

• Quick

You are impossibly quick. *When you unleash your capacity for dazzling speed*, **roll +Reflexes**:

(15+) Choose 3 Edges. You may save up to 2 until later.

(10–14) Choose 2 Edges. You may save 1 until later.

(–9) Choose 1 Edge, but you attract unwanted complications. The GM makes a Move.

Edges:

- *Immediate interrupt:* Act before someone else completes their action.
- *Blur of motion:* Instantly transport yourself between two range increments before anyone can react; for example, moving from field to room, or from room to arm.
- *Attack with the speed of lightning:* Engage someone in (close) combat so rapidly they do not get a chance to ***Avoid Harm***.
- *Flurry of blows:* Engage in combat with one additional target, over and above the number of targets the attack normally allows.

• Regenerate

Your body heals unnaturally fast. Serious wounds vanish completely in a few hours and critical wounds heal within a day. However, severe injuries may leave ugly scars and misshapen tissue.

• Summoner

You have the ability to summon one of your Higher Power's servants to assist you with something. Archons are served by creatures native to Metropolis, while Death Angels are served by creatures from Inferno. You may summon a group of lesser creatures, such as purgatides or borderliners, or summon one more powerful being. If the summoned creature has magical abilities, you take a penalty to the roll, equal to their level of magical expertise. *When you summon a servitor creature*, **roll +Soul –magic level of creature**:

(15+) You summon the creature(s), who will obey your orders for one day.

(10–14) You summon the creature(s), who will either obey your orders for one scene or fulfill a single order that takes longer. You do not have full control over the creature(s), who will act on their own accord and interpret your orders as they wish.

(–9) You summon the creature(s), who are not under your power at all, but act according to their own whims.

• Talisman

You discovered a talisman with a spirit bound to it; for example, a mummified hand, a doll, or a yellowed photograph. The talisman can guide you in the realms of Death. *When you allow the talisman to guide you*, **roll +Soul**:

(15+) Choose 3 options.

(10–14) Choose 1 option.

(–9) The talisman fails you. The GM makes a Move.

Options

- Find a particular place in the realm of Death.
- Find a portal back to the lands of the living.
- Steel your senses against the influences of the realm of Death or the magic of its inhabitants.

• Telekinesis

You can move objects using the power of your mind, but the larger they are, the more mental effort is required. *When you use telekinesis as a weapon*, you can perform the following attacks:

- Launch a small object [1] [Distance: room, e.g., glass, vase, bottle].
- Launch a medium-sized object [2] [Distance: room, decreases **Stability** by **–1**, e.g., television, table, armchair].
- Launch a large object [3] [Distance: room, decreases **Stability** by **–2**, e.g., car, shipping container].

• Templars

You have a group of warriors devoted to you and your Higher Power. Give them names and describe how they are armed. The templars are fanatically loyal, for as long as you act in accordance with the Principle of the power they serve. With the templars by your side, you are considered a medium-sized gang (**3 Harm**), and you can have your templars accept risks and deal **Harm** when you attack. *When you send your templars on a mission*, **roll +Charisma**:

(15+) If carrying out the mission is reasonably with the realm of their capability, they perform their tasks flawlessly and exactly as instructed.

(10–14) The mission suffers some kind of complication. Maybe it works out okay but has unexpected fallout afterwards, or things didn't work out as you intended.

(–9) Something goes wrong. Maybe the mission isn't completed according to directions, serious problems arise as a consequence, or some or all of the templars are injured, captured, or killed.

• Unnaturally Strong

You are extremely strong. Actions like bending iron bars, bashing in doors, or lifting hundreds of kilograms are not a problem for you. You take **+1 Harm** to all close combat attacks, and once you have *locked* someone during unarmed combat, you can choose this attack option:

- Crush [4] [Distance: arm, victim must already be *locked*].

You are also capable of lifting and throwing heavy objects as a ranged attack:

- Throw heavy object [3] [Distance: room].

• Unyielding

By steeling yourself and lowering **Stability** by **–1**, you take *+2 to all rolls* to ***Keep it Together*** whenever you resist magical influence during this scene.

Limitations

Every Enlightened Archetype suffers one or several Limitations over and above their Disadvantages. As with Disadvantages, Limitations have certain mechanical effects, which can either be permanent, checked at the beginning of each game session, or activated under particular circumstances.

Bloodthirst

You must drink human blood to survive. If you haven't drunk the equivalent of one adult's or three children's blood supply within two week's time, you suffer a **Critical Wound** from withering away, which can only be healed by drinking the blood you require – if not more. If you go an additional week without sustenance, you end up in a coma. The week after that, you die, unless someone feeds you human blood. To drink blood without causing **2 Harm** is an ***Act Under Pressure***.

Bound to Higher Power

As a Disciple you are bound to an Archon or Death Angel, and must abide by and proliferate the Higher Power's Principle. *When you violate your Higher Power's Principle*, you provoke your Higher Power's wrath and risk retribution – **Roll +0**:

(15+) You receive a vision of your Higher Power admonishing you, but letting you off with a warning.

(10–14) You have a vision of your Higher Power demanding penance for your sins. Should you refuse this penance, the Higher Power punishes you as if you rolled a **(–9)**. Penance options include (GM's choice):

- You must select and offer up a living sacrifice to your Higher Power. The sacrifice should be one of the Higher Power's enemies, one of your followers, or someone you care about. The victim is forced to serve the Higher Power for life, or have their life ended.
- You must accomplish something that strengthens the Higher Power's Principle, GM's choice of what.
- You must be tested in a trial to prove your devotion to the Higher Power. It is the GM's choice how, but it should be dangerous.

(–9) Your Higher Power punishes you. The GM chooses 1 option:

- The Higher Power demands a blood sacrifice of their own choosing.
- The Higher Power marks you, so all can bear witness to your sins (e.g., stigmata, misshapen body part, rotting flesh, a symbol branded onto your face, unnatural eyes, or hairlessness).
- The Higher Power gives you a mission and withdraws the Abilities it conferred upon you until you have completed it.

The Higher Power determines which Principle you must follow, and what is considered to be a violation of it.

Kether – *Hierarchy:* Submit to someone lower than yourself, rebel against someone higher up.

Chokmah – *Submission:* Allow a heretic to go free.

Binah – *Community:* Break the bonds of family or collective or accept someone else breaking them.

Chesed – *Safety:* Do not grant help when it is asked for or cause fear in people enough to traumatize them.

Geburah – *Law:* Allow a law breaker to go unpunished.

Tiphareth – *Allure:* Destroy something beautiful.

Netzach – *Victory:* Give up in a challenge.

Hod – *Honor:* Allow someone who tarnished your honor to go unpunished.

Yesod – *Avarice:* Give away anything for free, overlook an opportunity for greater earnings.

Malkuth – *Awakening:* Deny yourself or someone else the ability to reach insight or knowledge.

Thaumiel – *Power:* Give up power or refuse to seize it when the opportunity arises.

Chagidiel – *Abuse:* Save a child or a weak person.

Satbariel – *Exclusion:* Invite an ostracized person into a community.

Gamichicoth – *Fear:* Soothe someone's fears.

Golachab – *Torment:* Stop someone's suffering.

Togarini – *Compulsion:* Stop yourself from giving in to an impulse.

Hareb-Serap – *Conflict:* Back out of a conflict.

Samael – *Vengeance:* Forgive someone for an injustice.

Gamaliel – *Lust:* Deny yourself sexual pleasure.

Nahemoth – *Discord:* Create order from chaos.

Cannibalism

You must consume human flesh in order to survive. If you haven't eaten the equivalent of one adult or three children within two week's time, you suffer a **Critical Wound** from decomposition, which can only be healed by eating the flesh you require – if not more. If you go an additional week without sustenance, you end up in a coma. The week after that, you die, unless someone feeds you human flesh.

Controlled by External Force

You have made a pact with a demon or Higher Power (see ***Chapter 21 – Pacts and Magic***). It could be a nepharite, an angel, a forgotten god, or even an Archon or a Death Angel. If the pact is broken in any way, you could lose your powers, become human again, or be obliterated.

• Field of Expertise

Field of expertise denotes what aspects of Death magic the magician has insight into. *Whenever the Death Magician* ***Performs a Ritual*** *in a field she's not familiar with*, she may not choose the option "the ritual doesn't become unstable."

At character creation, choose 1 ***Field of Expertise*** for your *Death Magician*:

- Communicate with the dead.
- Open portals to Inferno.
- Summoning.
- Affect the living.
- Bind and exorcise.

• Hunting Instincts

You are driven by instinct to hunt and kill a particular type of prey. Decide which prey you seek; examples include 5-year old children, murderers, police officers, singers, etc. *When your prey is within reach*, you sense it instinctively and must **roll +Willpower**:

(15+) You keep your ***Hunting Instincts*** at bay.

(10–14) If you choose to resist hunting your prey, it will mentally drain you. **Stability –1**.

(–9) You must have your prey now. If you cannot, you start feeling terrible. **Stability –4**.

• Inhuman Appearance

You look entirely inhuman and must wear a disguise to be able to exist around others. For example, your skin might be rotting and peeling off, your body parts are misshapen, your limbs are warped, mechanical objects have been integrated underneath your skin, or you have features of insects or spiders. *When humans perceive your true appearance*, they are overcome by disgust, fear, and panic.

• Sensitivity

You're particularly sensitive to something. You don't enjoy being in the vicinity of the element, and if you take **Harm** involving your sensitivity, you receive an additional **+2 Harm**. Choose 1 option:

- Fire.
- Electricity.
- Iron (not steel).
- Silver.
- Sunlight (take **2 Harm** when exposed to direct sunlight on bare skin).
- Water (take **2 Harm** when exposed to water on your bare skin).
- Wood.

• Soul Thirst

You must feed on people's life force to survive. The drinking from a person's soul usually occurs during sex, or by kissing/touching a sleeping or unconscious person. In order to survive, you must devour the equivalency of one human soul per week (**10 Stability** points). It could consist of one victim who you devour entirely – leaving an apathetic husk in your wake – or several victims, who are all tapped of a bit of their life force. Anyone subjected to the ***Soul Thirst*** without being devoured gradually loses their life force, becoming pale and depressed (**–1** to **–9 Stability**). When the victim's **Stability** reaches **0** (*Broken*), you devour the final remnants of her soul. If you fail to devour the equivalency of one human soul each week, you lose an amount of **Stability** equal to that which you lacked (i.e., if you lack **3 Stability** 'feeding' points by week's end, you lose **3 Stability**). If your **Stability** reaches **0** due to this, you become an ethereal phantom until you once again gain the chance to devour human souls.

• Symbol Bondage

You are bound to a symbol. It could be anything from a piece of jewelry to a building or a tattoo on someone else's body. Whenever the symbol is harmed, you suffer sympathetic injuries. If the symbol is destroyed, you are also obliterated. For as long as the symbol remains intact, you cannot truly die; rising from the grave, if you do. However, if someone discovers the symbol, they can gain power over you – even summon you to them to do their bidding. Furthermore, for as long as they possess the symbol, you cannot harm them.

• Uncontrolled Shapeshifting

When your emotions are heightened, you're transformed into an animalistic beast. Work together with the GM to describe the details of the monstrous form you turn into. Pick the emotion that triggers it for you (lust, anger, sorrow, jealousy, fear...) *Whenever you feel this emotion or experience traumatic events*, **roll +Willpower**:

(15+) You retain your human form.

(10–14) You gain some inhuman features.

(–9) You are contorted into something entirely inhuman. The GM takes control of your character until it wears off, at most one full scene after your transformation.

THE AWAKENED

Attaining the Awakening is to achieve full liberation from the shackles of the Illusion and reacquire one's lost divinity. An Awakened being has powers and abilities far beyond our reason. It requires a long period of searching and wandering to attain. In our human understanding it would take several lifetimes. The Awakened state causes them to be shielded from those who are still asleep or be regarded as alien or inhuman.

As an Awakened individual, one can see large chunks of reality, such as Metropolis, Inferno, the Underworld, the dream worlds of Limbo, Gaia, and the worlds beyond. The Awakened are liberated from death and do not lose their memories should their physical form be killed. Their body heals whenever it is harmed, and if completely destroyed, it will be recreated in some way – either through rebirth or through a new body being created from thin air. All their old memories and powers remain intact. The Awakened is free to decide and change their looks, sex, and is in every way superior to sleeping humans.

Awakened can manipulate matter and dimensions. Unfettered, they can casually harness forces we would otherwise only attain through magic rites, and can also distort and manipulate reality. Time and Space no longer have a grip on them, and they can cast off all disadvantages and ailments.

In a standard *KULT: Divinity Lost* game, it is not suitable to play Awakened characters, but they may (very occasionally) appear as NPCs.

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Tasiński, Kabbiel, Kai Enzweiler, Kai Schiefer, Kalysto, Kamboya, Kamuro, Kangaroo Princess, Karl Barbosa, Karl Broomé, Karl Wassholm, Karoly Barta, Karoly Kopataki, Kassandra Utz, Katakomb – teologisk verkstad, Katherine Simmons-Smith, Katreya Lovrenert, Kebab Khan, Keegan ‘Tinkergoth’ Bateman, Keijo Koskiniemi, Keira Val’Azr, Keith Preston, Ken Blakey, Ken Lowery, Ken McLennan, Kenneth ‘Corgthulhu’ Ross, Kenneth Centers, Kenneth Gatt, Kenneth Lundgren, Kenneth Munawar, Kenny ‘Tribble’ Fransson, Kenshiro Watanabe, Kenth ‘Lavskägge’ Sanfridsson, Kevin Caldwell, Kevin Freksen, Kevin G, Kevin L Horn, Kevin Wine, khalt, kibernick, Kid Death, Kim ‘Gothmog’ Ericsson, Kim Dahlin, Kim Hökerud, Kim Janfalk Carlsson, Kim Rosner Pedersen, King Metz, Kiraya TiDrekan, Kit Walker, Kitano, Kjetil Hansen, Klas Thuresson Eliasson, Klaudiusz Emmerle, Kobal Al Hakid, Kornel Kisielewicz, Kosta Kostulas, Kostas Papanikolaou, Kraig E Koranda, Kris Kelly, Kris Vanhoyland, Krister Persson, Kristian A. 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Concepcion, Link Hughes, Linnea Risinger, Linus Eriksson, Lior =^_^=, Lisa Ching, Lisa Padol, Livia von Sucro, Lluis ‘Aranduin’ Alvarez, Logan Scott, Loïc ‘lonekin’ Masson, Loïc Girault, Lord Fox-Huntington, Lord KB, Lord Lott, Lord Nabu, Lord Ström, Lorenz Thor, Lorrraine, Luc Snider, Luciano Vieira Velho, Ludo Bermejo, Ludovic Poiret, Luis ‘Araj’ Hidalgo, LuisEr Cáceres Ruiz, Łukasz Korczewski, Luke Maclean, Luke Parsons, Luke Port, Lykos Vlk, Lynx Firenze, M. P. O’Sullivan, M. Shanmugasundaram, M. Simpson, M3rauer, Macabulote, Macce Hson, Mad Gav, MadKeeper, Maganica, Magistergrefu, Magnus Bergqvist, Magnus Bjerregaard Knudsen, Magnus Fandén, Magnus Johansson, Magnus Wåhlberg, MajorEnby, Malte Hansson, Manfred Lill, Manny Payan, Mantikora, Marc ‘Londonmarc’ Kuczborski, Marc Lichtenfeld, Marc T. Davies, Marc’Aurelio Pozzi, Marcelo Henrique Marcos, Marcin ‘Meeks’ Kosiedowski, Marcin ‘Yarot’ Rauf, Marco ‘Mavco’ Perrella, Marco Andre Mezzasalma, Marcus ‘Hatten’ Larsson, Marcus Breaux, Marcus Brissman, Marcus Ericsson, Marcus Fransman, Marcus Gunnarsson, Marcus Lundgren, Marcus Pehrsson, Marcus Wiest, Mare Imbrium, Margarita Demoniaca, Maria & Henri Laine, Maria (dad`s loved daughter) Rivas, Mario Jack Demon Tranfa, Mario N Bonassin, Mario Truant, Marius Enge Bøe, Mark ‘Magic’ Rajic, Mark Cockerham, Mark D Davis, Mark Hanna, Mark Hughes, Mark N. Ziff, Mark Perry, Mark R. Lesniewski, Mark Sherry, Mark Solino, Mark Tudor-Williams, Mark Ward, Mark Warden, Mark Z., Marko Niskanen, Markus ‘Azzu’ Schoenlau, Markus A. Gockel, Markus A. Salmen, Markus Geiger, Markus Jöngren, Markus Jonsson, Markus ‘k7e9’ Enghardt, Markus Kruse, Markus T, Markus Wall, Marlo ‘The Iceman’ Tacla, Martin Dahlberg, Martin Ek, Martin Ellermeier, Martin Epel, Martin G Hills, Martin Glöckner, Martin Griesebop, Martin Haugerud Magnussen, Martin Holgersson, Martin Hovmöller, Martin Järlemyr, Martin Kaså, Martin Kronholm, Martin Lutz Carlsson, Martin Tiinus, Martin-Pierre Frenette, Martyna Pietrzak, Masaru Lee, Maskin Spelförening, Massimiliano LordMax Enrico, Mat Masding-Grouse, Matej Gr≈æeta, Mateusz ‘kruck’ Tomczak, Mathias Forsmark, Mathieu Mazzoni, Mats Liljegren, Mats Peltola, Matt Carey, Matt H, Matt MacGregor, Matt R., Matt Russo, Matt Stuart, Matthew Avilla, Matthew Broome, Matthew Cramsie, Matthew Dawkins, Matthew Moorman, Matthew Plank, Matthew Ryan Shoemaker, Matthew Skail, Matthew Walker, Matthew Wasiak, Matthew X. Gomez, Matthias Schramm, Matthieu Habusseau, Mattias Bokinge, Mattias Henriksson, Mattias Json_81 Jacobsson, Mattias Kasche, Mattias Storm, Mattias Swing, Mattias Westermark, Mauro Adorna, Mauro Lucio Campos Amado, Max ‘Arioch’ Caracristi, Max Körner, Max Sundeen, Maxence Delsaut, MC Arnold, Meera ‘The Fierce’ Barry, Mendel Schmiedekamp, mentalsmash, Merazaander, Merlin of Chaos, Mheila, Michael – An Eagle’s Lament, Michael Beck, Michael D Stein, Michael Daniels, Michael G Kinsley Jr, Michael G., Michael Harrel, Michael Hemmingsson, Michael Hitchens, Michael Hölzl, Michael Hwang, Michael J Kruckvich,

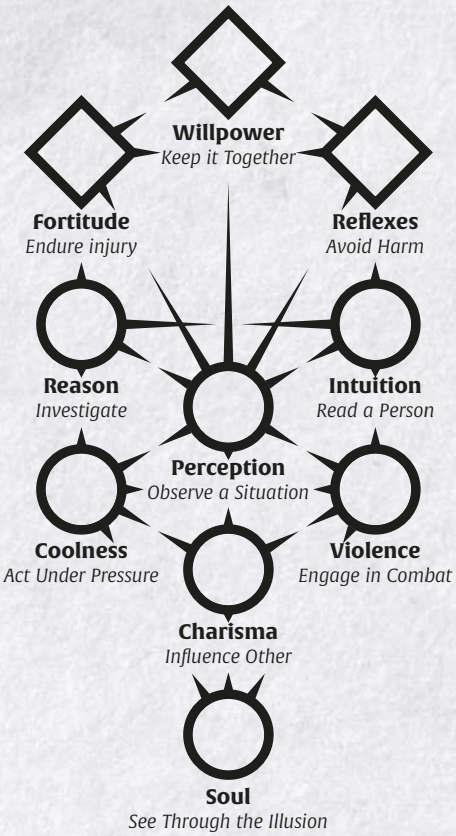
Michael Kayser, Michael Kelly, Michael Kusternig, Michael L. Jaegers, Michael 'Minder' Riabov, Michael Pietrelli, Michael Purgar, Michael Redlich, Michael S Poitras, Michael Scott Mears, Michael Sean Danforth, Michael Stagborn, Michael Stevens, Michael Wiseman, Michal 'Szoszana' Rozycki, Michał Pietrek, Michal Sołtysiak, Michel Cayer, Michel González, Michele 'Snake' Gelli, Michele Zanni, Mickus, Miguel Angel Galan Garcia, Miguel Esteban Carrero Torres, Mikael 'Krank' Bergström, Mikael Adlers, Mikael Åkesson, Mikael Andersson, Mikael Carl-Fredrik Karlsson, Mikael Jönsson, Mikael Sofran, Mikael Stenberg, Mike 'Aethyr' Wolf, Mike 'Reaper' Schultz, Mike Lawrence, Mike Lowrey, Mike Wallace, Mikel L. Matthews Jr., Mikko Kuosa, Mikko Mustajärvi, Milosz Nawrat, Minna Heimola, Minuet d'Ascoyne, Mirko F, mischievous.troll, Moa Fritbiofsson, Moe Lane, Monte Cook, Montgomery Lolen, Moreno Renga aka Sbarcrash, Morgan Hay, Moshe Zioni, Mostly Magnus Jonsson, MrD, Muamaidbengt, Mundo, Murt, Muzaffer Buyukkaragoz, Mythforger, mzi, Nadbir al-Nar, Nadia 'Ararun' Cerezo, Nándor Róth, Nanisia, Nat 'woodelf' Barmore, Natanael C. Lennartsson, Nate Fox, Nathan Mitchell, Nathania Wong, Nathaniel, Nathaniel Johansson, Neal Dalton, Neil Bennett, Neil Lovell, Nemcek, Nerdôncio Correia, Nicholas Beward, Nicholas D. Dragisic, Nicholas Guidotti, Nicholas Harvey, Nicholas Packwood, Nicholas Peterson, Nicholas V Passalacqua, Nicholaus Foree', Nick Carruthers, Nick Hopkins, Nick Lailey, Nick Lippolis, Nick McCarthy, Nick Price, Nicklaus Endicott, nicolas 'gobelinmalin' daniel, Nicolas Benloulou, Nicolas Brian, Nicolas Heitz, Nicolas Villatte, Nicole Gray, Nicole Mezzasalma, Nicolo' Zamperlin, Nienke Post, Niguel Vega, Nik 'TFK' Barbam, Nik 'the Psychonaut' Allen, Niklas Nox, Niklas Starck Westerberg, Nikolai Steen, Nils Sturman, Nils-Erik Johansson, None, Norbert Baer, Nornagain, Nruboc Enyaw, Nuria Yuny, Nuzzi Francesco, Nyx Bean, Observadores do Poente, Octavio 'Katatuno' Morales, Odinnscout, Olaf Kelling, Ole Ingvar Stene, Oliver Black, Oliver Kubles, Oliver T, Olivia G, Olivier Lefebvre, Olivier Nowak, Olle Nyman, Olof Bengtsson, Olof Johansson, Olofarvid, Olov Wallner, Ols Jonas Petter Olsson, Omar Amador, Onno MM Ebbers, Onur Dofüan, Oomizuao, Os the Golden Muchachos, Oscar Arellano, Oscar Hellqvist, Oscar Iglesias, Oskurus El Tremere, Osye E. Pritchett III, Otaku Kaiko, Pablo Martín Domínguez, Pablo Pérez Gómez, Pablo Saldaña, Paladin von Korff, Påledal, Panayjon, panopticon, Paolo Pedroli, Paolo Ramello, Paolo Vanini, Paradoja, Patrice Mermoud, Patrick & Sarah Pilgrim, Patrick Harris, Patrick Henry Downs, Patrick J. Holloway, Patrick Lewinson, Patrick Northedgers, Patrik 'Blaren' Hultén, Patrik Boblin, Patrik Cassersten, Patrik Hjorth, Patrik Moberg, Patrik Olterman, Patrik Standar, Patryk Adamski 'Ruemere', Paul Beakley, Paul Campini, Paul de Senquisse, Paul Eyles, Paul Gogarty, Paul Gunther, Paul Hayes, Paul J. Fleming, Paul Lukianchuk, Paul McBride, Paul Northway, Paul Rivers, Paul Townsend, Paulo Roberto 'Oculto' Alves de Oliveira Jr, Παύλος Νομικός, Pawel Daruk, Pawel Martin, PD Sundgren, Pedro Fresco, Pedro Ziviani, Pekka H, Penda Tomlinson, Per Persson, Persephone Repace, Peter 'Sunkan' Sundqvist, Peter Gates, Peter Keyser, Peter Klevvall, Peter Lundgren, Peter Metcalfe, peter peretti, Peter Rybarczyk, Peter Wimsey, Peter Winter, Peter York, Petr Shestov, Petri Wessman, Petter Cronsten, Petter Wäss, Phil McGregor, Philip 'xipebuz' Espi, Philip Tatro, Philip Tynne, Philipp 'Doc' Jeske, Philippe 'Sildoenfein' D., Philippe Niederkorn, Phillip Bailey, Phillip Thurlow, Pier Antonio Bianchi, Piero 'Gorgoneion' Pirro, Pierre Coppet, Pierre Ohlsson, Pierre Rosenthal, Pierre soulreaper Åberg, pinvendor, Legendary Merchant of Pins, Poddmeister, Professor Esoteric, Przemysław Skumbin, Pymtastic, PyroSite, Qlippoth (Rich White), Qualia, Quique de la Torre, R&R, R. S., R.Conway, Racoon King, Radoslaw Bozek, Raf Ceuls, Rafa Cerrato, Rafael Cordero, Rafael José Pardo Macías, Ragnar Modin, Ragnar Reynisson, Rain & Aidenn, Rain Kurosu, Rajaat, Ralf 'Sandfox' Sandfuchs, Ralf Northman, Randy Mosiondz, Raphaël Lallement, Rasmus J, Rasmus Nicolaj West, Raúl Carrasco López, RavenRyy, Rayston, Redpaintedblack, Renee M. Solberg, Reto Ughini, Reverance Pavane, Rhel ná DecVandé, Rhys & Isabel Haines, Riccardo Zampieri, Rich 'Bleujaune' Bailey, Rich (Lost Soul) Palij, Rich M., Richard August, Richard Broekman, Richard Cowen, Richard G. Bark, Richard Hickman, Richard Mosses, Richard Newby, Richard O'Connor, Richard Petermann, Richard Rayment, Richard Steinfeldt, Richard Tighe, Richard 'Vidiian' Greene, Richard W. Sorden, Rick Neal, Rik Geuze, Rikard Larsson, Rikard Molander, Rikard Törnblom, Rob Abrazado, Rob Deobald, Rob McKavanagh, Rob Rivera, Robb Thomas, Robert Biskup, Robert Burson, Robert C. Kim, Robert Carnel, Robert Engberg, Robert Gräsberg, Robert Hopt, Robert J Schwalb, Robert Lee Geddes, Robert M Felle, Robert McCuaig, Robert Ojamo, Robert SL Andersson, Robert Viola, Robert Winblad, Roberto 'Sunglar' Micheri, Roberto Mandrioli of Cœlo Duro, Robin 'Shids' Langholm, Robin Bengtsson, Robin Hermansson, Robin K. Johannessen, Robin Landén, Rocco 'moroboshi' Pier Luigi, Rodney Clow, Rodrigo de Salazar León, Roger Forsman, Roger Sjögren, Roger Vilaseca, Rogue Fithp, Rohel Terrazas, Roleplayers: Professional Game-Based Storytelling, Romain Grolleau, Roman Adamaszek, Ron Dautzenberg, Ron Duguay, Ron James, Ronald Lumsden II, Roney Lundell, Ronnie, Ronnie Bjurman, Ronnie Eriksson, Ronny Hansson, Roo Wetzel, Rooskapje + Isz, Ross Baker, Ross Smith, Rowen Drolwerd, Roy Högberg, Rune Printzlau, Rupert Sedlmayr, Russ Brown, Ryan H., Ryan Kent, Ryan Keyte, Ryan Linegar, Ryan McWilliams, Ryan Percival, Ryan Smith, S Donnelly, S J Beckett, Sable Twilight Schultz, Saif Ansari, Sal Vador 'TheDarkCloak'N, Sam Hillaire, Sam Wong, Samael Innanen, Samariel, Samuel Fiunte Matarredona, Sandor, Sandra Ahlqvist, Sandrine Bakaber, Sandy Newman, Sarah and Andy Donovan, Sarim Rune, Sascha H., Satariel, Sauli Samila, Saverio Iacono, Scambonious Funk, Scott 'Aldie' Alden, Scott B. Dyson, Scott Barnes, Scott E. Robinson, Scott Maxwell, Scott Skene, Sean 'Garg' McAlister, Sean 'Ariamaki' Riedinger, Sean Mattox, Sean McNeely, Sean P. Soderlind, Sean Park, Sebastian D., Sebastian Deterding, Sebastian Forsberg, Sebastian Fredenberg, Sebastian Gebski, Sebastian Laudon, Sebastian Permevik, Sebastian Solkrona, Sebastian Sterz, Sebastian Suarez, Sergio de Faria D. Moreira Filho, Sergio M. (Mast3rsurg3), Sergio M. Alvarez, Seth Baker, Seth Hartley, Seth Lassing, Seth Spurlock, Severin Keizer, Shadrakh, Shamain, the Cold One., Shane Trapp, Sharon and Jake, Shaun D. Burton, Shawn 'Sutekh' Glass, Sheiken, Sherry the DarkRose, Shin Hang-Pyo, Shohaib Hashemi, shrakti, Siddharta, Sigurd Løberg, Silas Haslam, Sillade, Silvio Herrera Gea, Simo Levanto, Simon Aubury, Simon Brake, Simon Brunning, Simon Ögander, Simon Whorlow, Simon Wyatt, Simone Biagini, Siobhan McKenna, Siritys, Skylar Fried, Skyler Malinowski, Slawek Hamerla, Smalls, Snowball,

Sophie Mächtl, Søren Berthelsen Holm, Soren Haurberg, Søren Parbæk, Søren Skæg Bregenov, Søren Smedegaard, SpiritCrusher, Staffan Rudnick, steelwraith, Stef 'Corpus Gehena' Pauwels, Stefan Anundi, Stefan Franck, Stefan Larm, Stefan Lindqvist, Stefan Lönn, Stefan Rice, Stefano 'Rosiello' Padelli, Stefano Borri, Stefano Miorelli, Stepfanie C Winter, Stephan Hamat-Rains, Stéphane Huart, Stéphane Penhoët, Stephen Ho, Stephen Mulligan, Steve 'Hexenritter' Corps, Steve Bush MRI, Steve Mortimer, Steve Robinson, Steven D Warble, Steven Fontenot, Steven Humphries, Steven Moy, Steven T. Myers, Steven Thesken, Steven Vest, Stew Wilson, Stewart Austin, Stewart Robertson, Stoo, Straw Dog, Stuart 'Anansi' Adam, Stuart Keen, Su'ad Shoukri (Allyenna), Sun Yat Babo, Sunkgida, Susan Lyon, Svante Landgraf, Sven Behrens, Sven Linker, Sven Schläpfer, Sven TS Holmström, Svenska Doomfrämjandet, Sverre B. Midthjell, Sylvain 'OgGy' Tanguy, Sylvain 'Wolion' Lumini, Sylvain 'Sly' Pronovost, Sylvester Thorn, Syndercat, Szymon 'Razide' Budzik, T.S. Luikart, Tabula Rasa, Tahd Inskepp, Talita 'Setheus' Amaral, Tamsyn 'Destroyer of Worlds' Kennedy, Tanya Irkin, Taoeris Majere, Tapio Unto Oskari Törrönen, Ted 'Sir_Allanon' Stjernkvist, Ted Govostis, Tefmon, Temple, Tenebricus Anima, Terje Hammer Meling, Terje Nordin, Terrell Scoggins, Terry Carroll-Beyak, Tetsuo, Tevlak, Th. Pesch, Thalles R de Mello, The Adventure Game Store & Dragon's Lair, The Dark Father, The Dark HEX, The Jellyfish, The Mordak, The Ogre M, The Ron Ashey, The Stalker Of The Dark, The Wandering Alchemist, Theo, Thiago Cabello, Thiago Gonçalves, Thiago Onofre, CFA, ThirdSoul, Thomas 'Jersey TOMato' Ambrosio, Thomas Evans & David McCosky, Thomas FavÜnacht, Thomas Hartvigsson, Thomas J Cavazos, Thomas Paradowski, Thomas Pichler, Thomas Schlesier, Thomas Schmeil, Thomas Sterchi, Thomas Tramantano, Thomas Varga, Thomas Weinbrenner, Thomas Wernberg, Tiago Marinho, Tiffany Korta, Tightrope Games LLC, Tim 'Kleehv' Shirk, Tim Brandis, Tim D., Tim Partridge, Tim Struck, Tim Sullivan, Tim Vert, Timmothy Clarke, Timothy Story, Tobias Blomkvist, Tobias Ekbom, Tobias Junghöfer, Tobias Radesäter, Tobias Sechelmann, Tobias Stamm, Tobias T-Röd Törnblom, Toby Green, Todd Biggs, Todd Knealing, Tom Hughes, Tom Ladegard, Tom Smith, Tom Zunder, Tomas Brännmark, Tomas Juhlin, Tomasz 'Sting' Chmielik, Tomasz Górski, Tomasz Piatkowski, Tombaux, Tommaso 'SOLIDToM' Galmacci, Tommaso De Benetti, Tommaso Gollini, Tommy Fredriksson, Tony 'fashco' Emerson, Tony Contento, Tony Reyes, Tony Söderqvist, Tony Strongman, Topher, Topher Burk, Torbjörn A O Johansson, Torbjörn Windahl, Tory Republic, Travis M., Trey Mercer, Tricia & Raier, Triffidos Activos, Trip Space-Parasite, Tripleyew, Tristan Ravn Salazar, Troels Pedersen, twin1on, Twist, Ty 'Enigma' Wilda, tzwenn aka The Franchise, Ulf Bengtsson, Ulf Hillebrecht, Ulf Kaupisch, Ulf Schyldt, Ulrik Laurén, Undead_Ichi, Urgewyrm, Vacare, Vahrhis the drunken hero, Valentinus, Vanessa Brannon, varbamse, Veles Svitlychny, Velrys, vesaN, vh, Victor Bernhardtz, Víctor Bueno, Victor Ekelund, Vincent Bouchage, vincent furstenberger, Vladimir Dzundza, Vladimir Zsarisky, Volker Jacobsen, Vox Doom, Wade Cornell, Wade 'Iblis' Jones, Wade Laboda, waelcyrge, Waldgraf Karl Athal Berth, Walmach Jeremy 'Lone', Wandering Skeptic, Wanying Zhao, Wayne Siu, Wee Andy Brown, weirdocollector, Will Nourse, William Engqvist, William Inskip, Winnowill Sianodel, Witchbunter Joe Lawrence, Wizbang the Mighty, Wojciech Sorbian, WOoDY GamesMaster, Wordspinner82, WP, Xavier Artigues, Xavier Precieux, xiangh, Xose Oscar Lopez Rascado, xsemaj, Y||B, Yannick 'Sephiel' Rouxel, Yargith, Yoann Calamai, Yrvi, yuval starkman, Yvonne Chung, Z Pavic, Zaccharius Rath, Zach King, Zachary Callen, Zachary Strong, Zachary Wright, Zaolat, Zed Lopez, Zedwimer, Zeinrich, Ziv P, Åsa Roos

KULT
Divinity Lost

- Name
- Archetype
- Occupation
- Appearance

- Attributes



- Dark Secrets
- Disadvantages
- Advantages
- Relations

• Wounds

Serious Wounds (–1 *ongoing*)	Stabilized
	☐
	☐
	☐
	☐

Critical Wound (–1 *ongoing*)	Stabilized
	☐

• Stability

☐	*Composed*	
☐	*Uneasy*	**Moderate stress:**
☐	*Unfocused*	–1 to Disadvantage rolls
☐	*Shaken*	**Serious stress:**
☐	*Distressed*	–1 ***Keep it Together***
☐	*Neurotic*	–2 to Disadvantage rolls
☐	*Anxious*	**Critical stress:**
☐	*Irrational*	–2 ***Keep it Together***
☐	*Unhinged*	–3 to Disadvantage rolls
		+1 ***See Through the Illusion***
☐	*Broken*	The GM makes a Move

• Dramatic Hooks

• Gear

• Notes

• Weapons

PLAYER MOVES

• Avoid Harm

When you dodge, parry, or block Harm, roll +Reflexes:

(15+) You emerge completely unharmed.

(10–14) You avoid the worst of it, but the GM decides if you end up in a bad spot, lose something, or partially sustain Harm.

(–9) You were too slow to react or you made a bad judgment call. Perhaps you didn't avoid any Harm at all, or you ended up in an even worse spot than before. The GM makes a Move.

• Endure Injury

When enduring an injury, roll +Fortitude –Harm. If you are wearing armor, add its rating to the roll:

(15+) You ride out the pain and keep going.

(10–14) You are still standing, but the GM picks one condition:

- ◇ The injury throws you off balance.
- ◇ You lose something.
- ◇ You receive a Serious Wound.

(–9) The injury is overwhelming. You choose if you:

- ◇ Are knocked out (the GM may also choose to inflict a Serious Wound).
- ◇ Receive a Critical Wound, but may continue to act (if you already have a Critical Wound, you may not choose this option again).
- ◇ Die.

• Keep it Together

When you exercise self-control to keep from succumbing to stress, traumatic experiences, psychic influence, or supernatural forces, roll +Willpower:

(15+) You grit your teeth and stay the course.

(10–14) The effort to resist instills a condition, which remains with you until you have had time to recuperate. You get –1 in situations where this condition would be a hindrance to you.

Choose one:

- ◇ You become angry (–1 Stability).
- ◇ You become sad (–1 Stability).
- ◇ You become scared (–1 Stability).
- ◇ You become guilt-ridden (–1 Stability).
- ◇ You become obsessed (+1 Relation to whatever caused the condition).
- ◇ You become distracted (–2 in situations where the condition limits you).
- ◇ You will be haunted by the experience at a later time.

(–9) The strain is too much for your mind to handle. The GM chooses your reaction: cower powerless in the threat's presence, panic with no control of your actions, suffer emotional trauma (–2 Stability), or suffer life-changing trauma (–4 Stability).

• Act Under Pressure

When you do something risky, under time pressure, or try to avoid danger, the GM will explain what the consequence for failure is and you roll +Coolness:

(15+) You do what you intended.

(10–14) You do it, but hesitate, are delayed, or must deal with a complication – the GM reveals an unexpected outcome, a high price, or a difficult choice.

(–9) There are serious consequences, you make a mistake, or you're exposed to the danger. The GM makes a Move.

• Engage in Combat

When you engage an able opponent in combat, explain how and roll +Violence:

(15+) You inflict damage to your opponent and avoid counterattacks.

(10–14) You inflict damage, but at a cost. The GM chooses one:

- ◇ You're subjected to a counterattack.
- ◇ You do less damage than intended.
- ◇ You lose something important.
- ◇ You expend all your ammo.
- ◇ You're beset by a new threat.
- ◇ You'll be in trouble later on.

(–9) Your attack doesn't go as anticipated. You might be subjected to bad luck, miss your target, or pay a high price for your assault. The GM makes a Move.

• Influence Other

When you influence an NPC through negotiation, argument, or from a position of power, roll +Charisma:

(15+) She does what you ask

(10–14) She does what you ask, but the GM chooses one:

- She demands better compensation.
- Complications will arise at a future time.
- She gives in for the moment, but will change her mind and regret it later.

(–9) Your attempt has unintended repercussions. The GM makes a Move.

When you influence another PC, roll +Charisma:

(15+) Both options below.

(10–14) Choose one option below.

(–9) The character gets *+1 on her next roll* against you. The GM makes a Move.

Options:

- She's motivated to do what you ask, and recieves *+1 for her next roll*, if she does it.
- She's worried of the consequences if she doesn't do what you ask, and gets –1 **Stability** if she doesn't do it.

• See Through the Illusion

When you suffer shock, injuries, or distort your perception through drugs or rituals, roll +Soul to ***See Through the Illusion***:

(15+) You perceive things as they truly are.

(10–14) You see Reality, but you also affect the Illusion. The GM chooses one:

- Something senses you.
- The Illusions tears around you.

(–9) The GM explains what you see and makes a Move.

• Read a Person

When you read a person, roll +Intuition. On a success, you can ask the GM/player questions about their character any time during this scene, while in conversation with their character:

(15+) You may ask two questions.

(10–14) You may ask one question.

(–9) You accidentally reveal your own intentions to the person you're trying to read. Tell the GM/player what these intentions are. The GM makes a Move.

Questions:

- Are you lying?
- How do you feel right now?
- What are you about to do?
- What do you wish I would do?
- How could I get you to [...]?

• Observe a Situation

When you observe a situation, roll +Perception. On a success you may ask the GM questions about the current situation. When you act on these answers, gain *+1 to your rolls*:

(15+) Ask two questions.

(10–14) Ask one question.

(–9) You get to ask a question anyway, but you get no bonus for it and miss something, attract unwanted attention or expose yourself to danger. The GM makes a Move.

Questions:

- What is my best way through this?
- What currently poses the biggest threat?
- What can I use to my advantage?
- What should I be on the lookout for?
- What is being hidden from me?
- What seems strange about this?

• Investigate

When you investigate something, roll +Reason. On a success, you uncover all direct leads and may ask questions to get additional information:

(15+) You may ask two questions.

(10–14) You may ask one question. The information comes at a cost, determined by the GM, such as requiring someone or something for the answer, exposing yourself to danger, or needing to expend extra time or resources. Will you do what it takes?

(–9) You may get some information anyway, but you pay a price for it. You may expose yourself to dangers or costs. The GM makes a Move.

Questions:

- How can I find out more about what I'm investigating?
- What is my gut feel about what I'm investigating?
- Is there anything weird about what I'm investigating?

• Helping or Hindering

When you help or hinder another player character's Move, explain how before their roll and roll +Attribute, where the Attribute is the same as the other player is rolling:

(15+) You may modify the subsequent roll by +2/–2.

(10–14) You may modify the subsequent roll by +1/–1.

(–9) Your interference has unintended consequences. The GM makes a Move.

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