

CITY of MIST

NIGHTS PAYNE TOWN



A STORY ARC BOOK FOR CITY OF MIST ROLE-PLAYING GAME

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A CITY OF MIST STORY ARC



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CONTENT WARNING

This game contains mild language as well as strong themes of violence, crime, and immorality. It does NOT contain explicit representation of sexual acts. Parental guidance is advised.

NEON LIGHTS, SMOKE, CAMERA ROLL, AND... ACTION!

The detective poised himself behind the blonde thief, blocking her way out of the alley. "Why'd you do it, Goldie? And don't give me that too-hot-too-cold crap. I ain't buying it no more." Cornered, she turned around, her eyes like the eyes of a deer, caught in the beam of his flashlight. With a mane of blow-dried hair and iridescent plastic bangles, you could hardly tell her from a Downtown streetwalker, but no, she was different.

"How'd ya find me? Listen, Holliday, I didn't mean to..."

"Save it," the detective brought his revolver up, "I just want to know why."

"Look, I don't know anything else, all right?" She dropped the duffle bag that was slung over her slender shoulder, "I'm reaching for a smoke, okay?"

The detective nodded. She pulled out a cigarette pack and, when she saw he wasn't going to offer, a lighter. After a few puffs, she leered at the gun's gaping barrel nervously.

"Everyone's running from something, Tom. You know this better than anyone."

"What you running from?"

"Routine, I guess. A home. It scares the hell out of me, makes my lungs burn."

"Sure it's not the smokes? Never stopped you from getting into other people's homes and take what you want. And what's so bad about a home, anyway? We could have had everything."

She took another drag, "Sometimes I think maybe I could be happy, and then, this thing inside me, it wants to tear it all to shreds."

"I'll help you. We'll get you the best doctors."

"It's not like that! You can't see it. No matter how sharp a detective you are, you never see it. It's this god-awful town, with its demons and kings. It's built this way. All those dead-ended alleys." She turned to stare at the tall brick wall that was blocking her escape on the other side. "Someone built it this way, to make us hurt. I'm not sticking around, Tom. I'm gonna keep on running."

"I can't let you go." A small sigh escaped him. "Not after what you did."

She picked up the duffle bag, slung it over her shoulder again, and put out her cigarette on the wet asphalt with the pointy tip of her shoe, "You do what you need to do."

The subway passed underneath, shaking the street and blowing smoke and steam into the alley. The thief dashed over to a nearby dumpster, ready to climb the wall at the alley's end. The street lights flickered. The detective took his aim.

A click, the kind that lets you know you've been fooled again. He quickly flicked his revolver's cylinder open; the rounds were gone. He heard them falling one by one from her spindly fingers to the floor, all the way there, by the dumpster. She seemed sad, tired, like she was feeling more than she could bear.

"How the hell did you do that?"

"Good bye, Holliday. Take my advice and get the hell outta Payne town. This place is ready to burn."

Welcome to *Nights of Payne Town*, the first published City of Mist story arc and collection of cases. Here, myths and legends are incarnated as gritty detectives and crooks, destined to reenact the drama of their ancient stories in a moody, modern, noir world. Bullets whistle through the air as street gangs and police exchange fire, only to be stopped by a knight's shimmering armor or an old witch's magic spell.

Greed, hatred, and a lust for power drive countless people to commit atrocious, but ultimately human, crimes: crimes of passion, crimes of pre-meditation, and crimes written in the stars. Their pain, and the pain of their victims, is glowing like neon in the night...

Will the lead characters, the PCs, try to stop them or join them? In doing so, will they stoop to committing wrongs of their own or betray one another? Will they try to heal all this pain and bring the City together? Or will they watch the City's open wounds fester until it's too late? Let us find out.



WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK

WARNING FOR PLAYERS

This book contains case information intended for the Master of Ceremonies (MC). If you intend to play as a player in one of the cases given in this book, reading the information here will reveal the details of the investigation and may spoil your sense of mystery and enjoyment.

Nights of Payne Town contains ten individual cases. Each case has everything you need in order to run a *City of Mist* story: its background, an investigation flowchart known as **the Iceberg**, detailed information about the locations and the NPCs involved in the case, Danger profiles for all the threats, and some maps for visualization. Depending on your group's style of play and the specifics of the case, each case could take between one and four sessions to complete.

The cases in this book can be run separately from one another. However, **this book also contains information on how to run all cases as a single interconnected story arc**, allowing you and your group to play it as an entire series (campaign). All the cases in the book are laid out on a **story arc Iceberg**, which helps you navigate the connections between the cases and decide which case to run next or even in parallel. You can find more information about the story arc starting on page XX.

CASES IN THIS BOOK

The book is divided into three sub-arcs – the personal, the criminal, and the mystical – each comprised of three cases.

THE PERSONAL VEIN

Cases about and around individuals and their personal and emotional turmoil, instigated by minions and victims of the psychiatrist villain **Dr. Krystal Knight** (The Snow Queen).

- ***Killing Her Softly***: A jazz singer asks for help with stopping a stalker, who she claims is responsible for the many strange deaths around her. (Banshee, Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come)
- ***Carnival of Machines***: A demented scientist, who draws a twisted sense of control from deconstructing Rifts, creates an elaborate fairground wonderland to lure them to their deaths. (Hephaestus, Goldilocks, King David, Paul Bunyan)

- ***Broken Glass***: A psychiatrist turned asylum patient and her army of malicious therapists poison Rifts against one another and plot to spread Rift-hatred throughout town. (The Snow Queen)

THE MYSTICAL VEIN

Cases about a strange cult that transforms Sleepers into Rifts, as contrived by the alchemist villain **Armand Kai** (Flegetanis, the heathen astronomer and alchemist who first wrote of the Grail).

- ***The Furnace***: A new drug circulating in the City lures Rifts into a trap, where their very Mythos essence is drained out of them. (Hansel and Gretel)
- ***Cult of the God King***: A cult takes over the City's youth, using unwitting members as guinea pigs for mystical experimentation. (Magnus Opus, Yokai)
- ***The Alchemist***: The Elixir of Life awaits in the manor of an aging alchemist, guarded by his disciples and alchemical creations. (Alchemy)

THE CRIMINAL VEIN

Cases about the crime lord **Lance Beaumont** (King Arthur), his attempt to take over the City, and the turf war that ensues as a result.

- ***Albion Awakens***: A gang of bike-mounted hooligans seeks to carve out a new and peaceful kingdom in one of the City's neighborhoods. (Knights of the Round Table)
- ***Home Is Where The Heart Is***: An aggressive real-estate agent takes over neighborhood after neighborhood, sucking the tenants' blood dry in more ways than one. (Wendigo)
- ***The Streets Bleed Neon***: The City is dragged into an all-out faction war as a crime lord from its past reawakens and attempts to violently seize power, vowing to protect the City from impending doom. (King Arthur)

Finally, the tenth case is an overarching case which can encompass the entire story arc, but can also be played as a standalone

- ***Percival***: The PCs seek the truth about Corbin Payne, the City's long-forgotten construction tycoon, the Rift of the Fisher King, and keeper of the Grail. To stop him from hurting the City, they must find the only soul in town who uncovered the secret of the Grail. (The Fisher King, Percival)

CITY OF MIST CASE STRUCTURE

City of Mist is a cinematic “sandbox” game, which allows the players the freedom to choose how to continue in their investigation at each point (within the boundaries of the case). *City of Mist* cases are designed to support this style of play. Each case is described using a flowchart called **the Iceberg**, which shows the potential steps the PCs can take to solve the case.



The building blocks of the Iceberg are **locations**. Each location contains information that could lead the investigation forward or potential interactions that affect the investigation. Whenever the crew arrives at a location, a scene is played there.

THE WASHBOARD

Tucked in the basement of a grimey brownstone building overshadowed by Downtown's great skyscrapers, the Washboard couldn't be located any lower without dropping into the sewers. Faint cello and piano notes echo in the maze of alleyways and underpasses that leads to its front door, below street level. The place seems scrubbed, as if trying to rise up to the occasion of

having a fleeting shot at glory. The front door is covered with posters heralding Martha Ellis' next gig.

The Washboard is a long-standing establishment, a jazz and blues venue from the days the City was young...

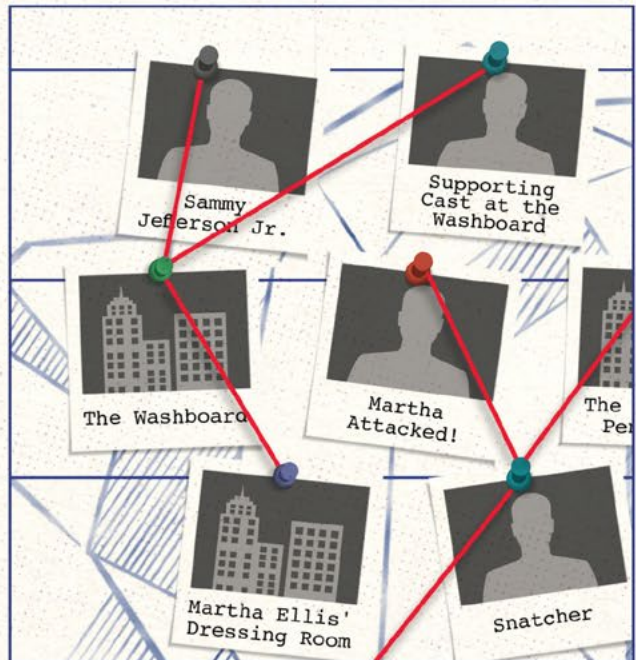
Another component of the Iceberg is **triggered scenes**, scenes that you, the MC, initiate when certain conditions apply, such as a gang attacking the crew or a serial murderer striking again, thus creating a new crime scene. Triggered scenes don't wait for the players to reach a location; they happen when the MC wants them to happen, drawing the crew in.

MARTHA WAS ATTACKED!

You're startled by the sudden ring of your phone. On the other side of the line, Officer Chaavi Das sounds infuriated. "The killer got to her. He jumped Martha Ellis. She made it somehow, but she's roughed up. You better come down here."

Sooner or later, Nowak finds his way to Martha Ellis ...

Locations and scenes are arranged on the Iceberg in **Depths**: the closer a location or a scene is to the final truth of the case, the greater its Depth. The bottom Depth represents the location where the ultimate truth of the case can be revealed.



At each location, the information pertinent to the investigation is arranged as **clues**, shown as yellow cards. This information is usually accessible to players when their characters investigate, using the **Investigate** Core Move. The players then spend Clues (game resource) to ask the MC questions and the MC should incorporate the information from the location clues into her answers. In other words, when the players spend their Clues to ask the right questions, they get the case clues in the yellow cards.

The coroner report says Darnell Fox died of unexplained heart failure.

Clues that point the investigation to another case on the story arc outside the current case are called **red clues** and have a slightly different design. Their use varies depending on the mode of play you choose (see below).

In a locked drawer, among lots of memorabilia, there's the calling card of a therapist, Dr. Selma Perrin, of a therapist association called Mending The Broken. [...] See a possible encounter with a Mending The Broken therapist in the case Broken Glass (page XX).

Any threats to the PCs or their investigation at a location are described using **Danger profiles**. See Chapter 3: This is MY City! in the *MC Toolkit* book for guidelines on using Dangers in your game.

SYRUS, THE BOUNCER ★

Syrus has been a bouncer at the Washboard for the past few months. A typical muscleman, he towers over most patrons at 6'4" and has arms like logs and a torso like a barrel. A shining bald head, a tight black T-shirt, and a thin stache keep him cool but threatening.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / BRIBE 2

- **Not on My Shift:** When Syrus enters the scene, give him *alert-2*.
- **Boxer Moves:** When Syrus is attacked with mundane hand-to-hand physical blows or weapons, reduce the tier of the resulting status by 1.
- Thump someone (*disoriented-2*) or put them in a headlock (*restrained-3*)
- Throw a disoriented or restrained person outside (*humiliated-2*)
- Look down on someone over his huge folded arms

USING CASES IN YOUR GAME

ADDING STORY ELEMENTS FROM YOUR SERIES

Your *City of Mist* series is more than just the content of its cases, it's about the lead characters and the crew. You can and should incorporate some of your series' **story elements** into the cases of *Nights of Payne Town* (see the MC Toolkit book, under Series Resources, page 105). *City of Mist* games truly shine when the campaign focuses on the lead characters and brings out their personal stories. This can be done by including:

- The nature of the crew, its goals, and its Mystery or Identity
- The lead characters' Mysteries and Identities
- The relationships between the crew members
- Symbolism related to their Mythoi
- Complications arising in their lives (their career, relationships, obligations, etc.)
- Their supporting cast, especially as victims, accomplices, or bystanders in the events of a case
- Nemeses
- Memorable NPCs from previous cases you played
- As you play through the cases of *Nights of Payne Town*, you can add these story elements into the locations and scenes described in the cases. You can also give airtime to the lead characters' lives and interests by playing scenes that are not described in the case. Ideally, try to keep things connected and have the case and the series interpenetrate one another: supporting cast get mixed up in the case, around-the-clock case investigation hurts the PC's personal lives, etc.

PRE-WRITTEN CONTENT VS. ACTUAL PLAY

City of Mist puts a lot of power in the hands of the players, allowing them to drive the narrative (especially when they **Stop. Holding. Back.**). Your cases will not always go down the Iceberg as presented in this book: players may lose the investigation thread, the lead characters may befriend the crooks and betray the victims, or they may choose to sacrifice everything to destroy an arch-villain in one fell swoop. It's all good, because you're here to play to find out.

In practical terms, this means you may be forced to retrofit some of the locations, NPCs, and Dangers in the case to the new situation. Instead of ignoring unused content altogether, aim to find creative ways

to introduce NPCs and Dangers that were skipped in a different way than stated in the case. For example:

- When your crew is avoiding a key location, you can have an NPC from that location come to them.
- If the crew exposed the culprit in the case early in the investigation, focus the case on any follow-up actions they may want to take against (or with) the culprit.
- Convert a Danger that was supposed to guard clues at a location to one that directly attacks the crew as a triggered scene.
- Once the bulk of the case is solved, have an NPC ask the crew to clear up some of the loose ends.

MODES OF PLAY

You can use the cases in this book in a number of different ways, each with its own requirements, challenges, benefits, and downsides.

ONE-SHOTS (SIMPLE)

You can run each case in this book separately from the others, ignoring the story arc completely. The focus in each case becomes the crime or wrong at its center and any loose ends are either wrapped up or remain a mystery. This option is useful for casual games and one-shots, but it strips away the deeper subtext and mounting drama of the series.

This mode of play requires the least prep and tracking. It is advised to read each case before you run it, but there's no need to read or keep track of the greater story arc. During play, you should omit red clues or use them only as flavor, in order to avoid pointing the players in the wrong direction or to other cases in the arc.

CASE-BY-CASE (STRAIGHTFORWARD)

You can run the entire story arc, playing one case at a time. The investigation focuses on one crime or wrong at a time, bringing it to some kind of resolution before moving on to the next case. This allows you to enjoy the full impact of the story arc, without the overhead of tracking multiple cases at once (like in the sandbox option, below).

This mode of play requires you to become familiar with the story arc information for context, but you only need to prepare one case at a time. Red clues should be given at the end of each case, to avoid crossing over to another case in the middle of an ongoing investigation.

Case-by-case, vein-by-vein: The first nine cases in the story arc (all but the grand finale) are divided into

three “veins”. Each vein is a thematically-linked set of three cases that could be the subject of a single season. To make tracking clues even easier, you can run the story arc one vein at a time, completing a mini-arc before moving on to the next one. In this mode, avoid or downplay red clues that cross over to other veins until the vein is completed. This is the recommended mode of play if you are running the campaign for the first time.

SANDBOX CITY (CHALLENGING)

You can run this story arc as an open-world game, allowing the players to investigate multiple cases at a time. The lead characters can visit locations from different cases in the same session and get NPCs from one case involved with NPCs from another case. The spotlight then falls on the lead characters, their lives, and the state of the City as a whole, as they try to put together many threads and uncover what is driving all the wrongdoing around them. This is the mode of play most open to player input and creativity, emphasizing a ‘realistic’ approach, which has the potential of evolving into a very gratifying and grand detective tale.

This mode of play requires the most of the players and the MC. As the MC, you will need to familiarize yourself with the story arc and its Iceberg to quickly switch between cases and you should either read the cases, have the ability to quickly glean what you need from a case during play, or be willing to improvise extensively. Red clues should be given whenever they are presented in the case. It is advised that players take it upon themselves to keep track of their clues and cases in order to take that duty off the shoulders of the MC. This mode of play also holds the risk of becoming as grinding and as technical as a real-world investigation if the players and MC don't hold fast to the cinematic consideration of “What would be interesting now?” and mix action, drama, and investigation to achieve a good cinematic balance.

THE ORDER OF CASES

The cases are numbered from 1 to 10 for ease of reference. While you can follow the numerical order of the cases to run the story arc, they can be played in any order that makes sense as explained above.

In each vein, the first two cases make good starting points and middle layers. The last case includes the details of the final clash with the vein's villain, so it should be played last in its vein.

When you play *Percival* in a story arc, it becomes a special case with three acts, each played after you complete a vein (see page XX).



THE STORY ARC OF THE GRAIL

"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Matthew 4:19

CORBIN PAYNE

The Fisher King, Keeper of the Grail

Why is this town the way it is – dirty, corrupt, and self-devouring? Why do people here wrong one another at every turn? Murdering, stealing, selling drugs and weapons, cheating – all of this has become the routine in the City, on all strata of society. Is it cruelty, plain and simple, that has blackened the hearts of the people? Is it greed, that selfish and all-consuming desire to have it all? Is it an ever-growing sense of indifference, as the citizens' humanity is further and further eroded by the Mist?

If you had asked criminal psychiatrist **Dr. Krystal Knight**, decades ago, she would have said that cruelty, greed, and indifference could all drive people to commit anti-social wrongs, to hurt one another. But it is pain, she would say, that is the root cause of all of these. The wish to be free of it drives us mad. When we try to pass it on to another, we are cruel. When we try to hoard money and power to protect ourselves from it, we are greedy and aggressive. And when we shut ourselves out to the suffering of others, so that we don't hurt, we are indifferent. According to this renowned therapist of the past, it is our own pain – pain we were born into, pain we have been subjected to, and the pain of merely existing – that drives us to hurt the world around us.

By now, you already know this City is run by legends. In their quest to re-enact their Mythos on a city-wide scale, Avatars of desire, of war, of lies, and even Avatars of hope, have turned this City into what it is today. But even before the oldest of them attained Avatarhood, there was a force in the City that shaped its very foundations. Silent and hidden, he continues to torment the City from the shadows, poisoning it, sending his knights to sow more and more misery. This story arc is his story, a story of suffering and how we pass it on – and the purpose it may serve.

CORBIN PAYNE'S TIMELINE IN A NUTSHELL

As with everything in the Mist, historical details and dates become fuzzier the further back in time one goes.

A CENTURY AGO

- Corbin Payne is the City's foremost construction tycoon
- Tormented by the lack of substance in the City (caused by his growing awareness of the Mist), he awakens as the Fisher King
- He is shot in the groin (by his own Conjuraton), an injury that marks the beginning of his demise
- The Grail appears in his possession and keeps him alive, but he cannot use it to cure himself
- His business empire crumbles, his death is announced, and he fades out of public memory

SEVERAL DECADES AGO

- Noble-minded Rifts seek Corbin Payne out for the Grail, but instead he breaks them and amplifies their own suffering
- They are sent back to the City as his so-called 'knights', further spreading suffering

TODAY

- The knights' plans or destinies come to fruition and they resurface from their individual dormant states

THE PAST

THE MAN WHO IS THE CITY

Corbin Payne built this City, but to most people, he is nothing but a fading name on a plaque. In the early roaring years of this town, when construction was booming and the City was expanding in every possible direction, Payne Construction Company was a name you couldn't escape. From residential neighborhoods to the financial district's most prominent skyscrapers and government buildings, this leading contractor built up the City like no other company, amassing a host of subcontractors under its financial umbrella. The Payne Construction Company logo and name was on every corner stone and its glorified founder cut one red tape after another.

At the time, newspapers estimated the company was involved in constructing over 60% of the projects in the City, and was branching out to the construction of the subway tunnels, expanding the port, and building a new airport for the City. Politicians were divided: some were alarmed by the sheer financial power of the construction giant while others commended its spirit of entrepreneurship which has generated tens of thousands of jobs for the City. Reporters started calling the City “Payne’s Town” or “Payne Town”, a name that in time would be the only legacy Corbin Payne left in public memory, as his empire would turn to figurative ashes. The tall, striking, and stout tycoon whose black-and-white picture once featured daily in every newspaper would soon all but vanish from living memory.

EXISTENTIAL TORMENT

Unlike his contemporaries, who were still largely unaware of their Mist-bound sleep, Corbin Payne achingly felt the futility of everything he did and the unreality of life in the Mist. While his endeavors to build up the City were celebrated, he questioned the point of it all, coming to a realization that the ‘real world’ was not as real as it seems. This existential angst deepened and worsened, until it became the tormenting self-doubt which led to his awakening as **the Fisher King** (or the Wounded King), the guardian of the Grail in Arthurian legend. Whether to end his suffering or to perpetuate it, Payne subconsciously created a Conjuration of a hooded man who attacked him one day as he was alighting from his limousine, shooting him in the groin. The mythic gunshot wound, which was supposed to kill him, festered and crippled Mr. Payne instead. He shut himself off from the world, neglecting his construction empire.

Recession struck and Payne Construction Company collapsed, although economists and historians are undecided on which followed which. Some say the dashing tycoon became an eccentric recluse, that his heart was broken, or that he fell ill. Whatever spin the newspaper gave it, Corbin Payne left the public life around the same time his company declared bankruptcy and its assets were seized and foreclosed by the banks. What was left of Payne Construction Company was broken down into its many subcontractors, each going on to seek its fortune independently. Years later, Corbin Payne’s death was announced and his meager estate was divided up to various past lenders, revealing that he had died virtually penniless. The Mist crept in, and this once great man was soon all but forgotten.

KEEPER OF THE GRAIL

Upon his awakening as the Fisher King, Corbin Payne discovered a strange cup on his desk. Every time he would look at it, the cup took the form of another type of receptacle. This cup was the Relic of **the Grail**, and it gave Payne hope that someday he may be cured; it also kept his wound from killing him by its mere presence. But the more he tried to activate the Grail, the more dormant the Relic became. Now forgotten by the world, Payne passed his days in the half-finished husk of his greatest construction project, **Corbin Tower**, which slowly transformed into an Enclave of the Grail Castle overlooking the City on one side and the sea on the other. Sometimes he would escape the broken spire to go fishing on a dilapidated dinghy off an abandoned port just outside town, but most days, he would sit in his empty chambers, in solitude.

THE KNIGHTS OF PAYNE

Decades passed by. Legends of the Grail started cropping up among the City’s Rifts, and brave heroes and heroines set out on a quest to find Corbin Payne and the Grail. Many perished or lost their minds and souls in the process, but a handful of Rifts were able to penetrate the veil of Mist and find the wounded tycoon in his skyscraper ruin.

Unfortunately for all involved, they were ill-prepared for what they were about to encounter. The old king, twisted and tormented by years of mythical pain and having lost all hope of unlocking the secrets of the Grail, has become a living maelstrom of misery. He laid their own pains bare, exposed their bleeding hearts and squeezed them till they burst. The vanquished heroes, who tried to cure the Fisher King but did not have in them what it took to awaken the Grail, were cast back into the world, reeling with pain. They became his knights, his messengers, who would spread his pain across the City as they wrestled with their own suffering. Through them, Corbin Payne insidiously and subversively infected the entire City with his pain, becoming the Avatar of the Fisher King.

There were many Grail Knights over the years. *Nights of Payne Town* focuses on the Fisher King’s three greatest knights, individuals who sought him in the heyday of the City (or were related to someone who did), decades after the demise of his empire, and were closest to healing him:

Dr. Krystal Knight (the Snow Queen), a criminal psychotherapist who hoped to treat Corbin Payne’s depression, spent years in sessions with him. She ended up losing herself in his sorrow, awakening

as the Rift of the Snow Queen and vowing to sow hatred towards Rifts everywhere in the City.

Armand Kai (Flegetanis) was a scholar who sought life everlasting. When he saw the crippling wound of the Fisher King he was so deeply appalled that he became obsessed with preventing his own mortality, creating a murderous alchemical cult with the sole purpose of allowing him to find the Elixir of Life.

Rio Beaumont (Percival) was the person closest to unlocking the secrets of the Grail, but, distracted by the Mist or her Mythos at the crucial moment, she failed. Heartbroken at her failure, she became a Sleeper and Denied the Beyond, disappearing forever to all Rifts in the City.

Holding the Fisher King responsible for the loss of Rio, her father, **Lance Beaumont** (King Arthur), swore to become powerful enough to stand against him, but his quest for security turned him into a crime lord, who would sacrifice anything for the power to defeat his enemy.

The three surviving Grail Knights have all disappeared long ago. The doctor was hospitalized in an asylum, never to be seen again; Armand Kai shut himself in his lab until the world forgot about him; and Lance Beaumont died, shot dead by his cousin in a gunfight. Now, with their plans and destinies finally coming to fruition, they have all resurfaced, ready to drown the City in the Fisher King's suffering. Rio remains inaccessible and forgotten, somewhere in the City.

THE PRESENT

Much to everyone's detriment, his own more than anyone else's, Corbin Payne is very much alive. The wounded king of a ruined empire, he is now a miserable and broken man on an epic scale, doomed to suffer eternally until a cure can be found for him. That cure remains infuriatingly close and yet out of reach in the form of the Grail, a fact which only adds to the old king's torment.

Corbin Payne wants this City to suffer. He wants to bear open her wounds – physical, historical, social, emotional – and rub salt in them until every individual shares his immense pain. So deep is his obsession with City-wide suffering and it is so blurred by his own physical and emotional misery that it's hard, even for

him, to tell what started it. Does he simply seek relief by passing his pain to others? Is he enacting vengeance against the City that forgot him? Or is he using pain to educate the City and spur it to awaken from its Misty sleep? Whatever his reasons are, Corbin Payne is a pain-monger that feeds off the City's crime, corruption, and alienation and the negative emotional charge they produce. While this old tycoon remains hidden, waiting to be cured, his unwitting so-called 'knights' rain suffering and wrongdoing on the City, perpetuating the state of affairs in Payne Town.

OVERVIEW OF PAYNE

- **Agenda:** make the City suffer (and maybe thus find a savior)
- **MO:** hurt powerful Rifts so that they hurt others
- **Feeling:** pain
- **Motifs:** fishing, crows, modern-day chalices (the Grail),
- **Frontliners:** his knights' minions
- **Stronghold:** the abandoned Corbin Tower construction site

PAYNE'S MODUS OPERANDI

Payne is taken by his own suffering so entirely that he is only vaguely aware of his own agenda. Most of the time, the excruciating legendary pain contained within his mortal body blurs his mind, giving way to alternating anger, self-pity, and deadened apathy, and driving him to hurt others out of sheer spite. He is able to maintain a noble composure for a brief while, but it is just a temporary, fragile facade.

Nevertheless, there is a part of Payne that hopes that if he hurts the City enough, at some point someone will find him and figure out a way to either put him out of his misery or cure him. This mixture of knee-jerk reflex and wishful thinking is the closest thing he ever had to a plan.

Payne gets his release, and hopes to find his savior, by creating a vicious circle of misery. Just like in the story of the Fisher King, he attracts noble-minded Rifts that hope to heal him or who seek the sacred force of the Grail which he possesses. When these invariably flawed heroes fail to do so, he wounds them so deeply that they become beacons of suffering in his image. They then return to society as his 'knights', spreading misery to others in the same way, branching out and reaching more and more people (one of whom may be the savior Payne longs for).

The more suffering is caused through his 'knights' (and perhaps even the more the City suffers in general), the more powerful the old tycoon becomes, because of his ability to control and manipulate pain. Right now his pain-mongering manifests as an old and forgotten festering wound, but there may come a day when he steps off his dinghy and out of the shadows to truly agonize the City.

PAYNE AND OTHER AVATARS

Payne was never a mastermind nor an inspiring leader, so other Avatars and the Gatekeepers could have easily taken him out by now, theoretically. Unfortunately for all, he embodies the most primordial force of all, that which everyone is afraid of. Fearing untold suffering and the possible reopening of their old human wounds (thus ending their Avatarhood), the City's Avatars either keep their distance or reluctantly do Payne's bidding on the rare occasion he expresses it. He is a secret observing member in the council of The Truth which strives to keep the status quo in the City (see Chapter 3: Don't Believe the Truth, in the *Shadows & Showdowns* expansion). He is using the council to perpetuate the City's state of misery, while keeping tabs on the secret pains of each Avatar in the pantheon, to be used if they ever turn on him.

During the events of *Nights of Payne Town*, the Avatars of the City and their operations are unusually absent, especially when it comes to interfering with Payne's knights. If this raises the suspicions of the lead characters, they could investigate, although getting the truth out of Avatars may prove virtually impossible.

PAYNE'S OPERATION

Over the years, Payne has hurt and corrupted more than a handful of heroic Rifts that attempted to destroy or cure him and failed. These 'knights' of his have returned to the City and carved out a place for themselves, continuing to spread misery insidiously or overtly. Some of the villains and NPCs encountered by the crew in the past or who are a part of the crew members' background could also be unwilling emissaries of the Fisher King, although today fewer and fewer Rifts are able to surmount the challenges of the quest to find him.

Each knight's operation effectively serves as a branch, or a vein, in the Fisher King's operation:

Dr. Krystal Knight (the Snow Queen) leads the personal vein, concerned with sowing Rift-hatred and self-loathing among Rifts in the City.

Armand Kai (Flegetanis) leads the mystical vein, searching for the Elixir of Life by awakening new Rifts and then robbing them of their powers.

Lance Beaumont (King Arthur) leads the criminal vein, seeking to take over the City in order to protect it from the Fisher King, but in doing so hurting all who stand in his path.

HEALING THE WOUNDED KING

Even if his messengers can be stopped, the Fisher King is beyond mortal help. His very presence unleashes people's own pain, turning them into his unwilling torment-spreading knights as they hurt others around them.

Corbin Payne hurts because the City hurts. They are one and the same. He is the mythical representation of the suffering caused by the clash of two opposing forces: Mythos and Logos, the fake and the real, true nature and mere appearances, or any other set of opposites you choose to put at the core of your campaign.

The Grail is the key to healing Corbin Payne and ending the cycle of misery. It brings opposites together in harmony. Dealing with Payne's 'knights' is not enough. Only true 'knights', individuals willing to go to great lengths and make great sacrifices for a higher calling, are able to unlock the powers of the Grail. The lead characters will have a chance to do just that, but tapping into the Grail will only happen when they heal themselves first. The paths to unlocking the power of the Grail are further explained in the final act of the concluding case, *Percival* (page XX).

HOW TO RUN THIS STORY ARC

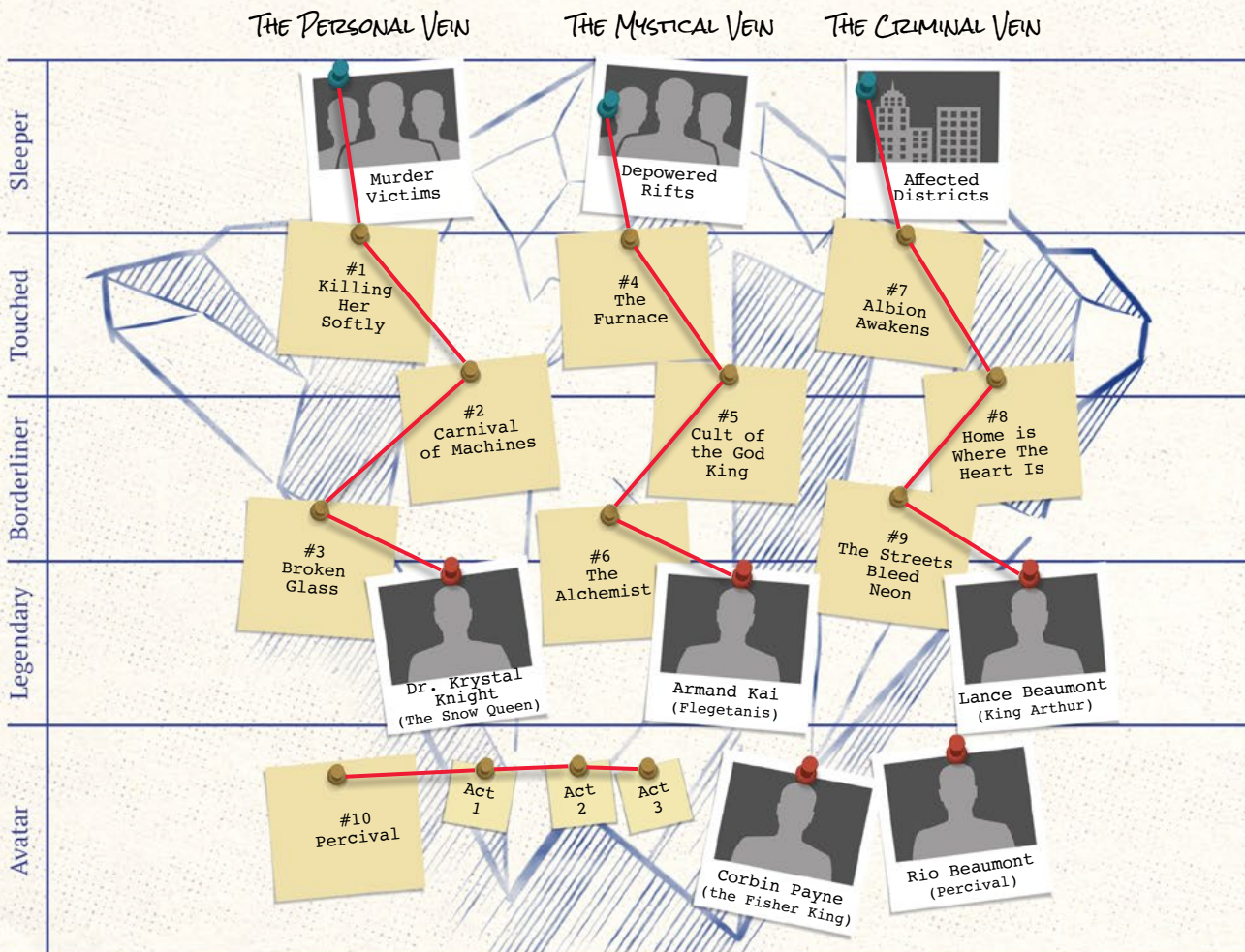
As explained above, you can run the story arc vein-by-vein, case-by-case, or as an open sandbox. Here is the full story arc iceberg.

Cases #3, #6, and #9 end with an encounter with one of Payne's knights, those who have a direct relationship with him and know the most about him. Each such encounter reveals information that unlocks the next **act** of the overarching case #10, *Percival*. The act is unlocked whether or not the crew has the upper hand at the end of the encounter; in the moment of truth, the villains share the information necessary even if they are winning.

The order in which the knights are encountered (and not the identity of the specific knight) determines what each knight can offer the crew to bring them closer to the Fisher King. In other words, Dr. Krystal Knight,

Armand Kai, and Lance Beaumont each take the role of the first, second, or third knight, depending on the order the crew reaches them, and share clues accordingly.

- **The first knight reveals the existence of Corbin Payne as an overarching villain** and warns the crew of him. However, the first knight is unable to tell the crew where to find Payne (whose hidden castle can't be visited twice) and does not have the means of finding him. This unlocks the **first act** of *Percival* where the crew may investigate the past but reveal very little about the present.
- **The second knight knows how to reach the Fisher King, but does not know how to cure him.** This unlocks the **second act** of *Percival*, in which the Fisher King emerges from his hiding and stages an attack on the City, upping the stakes.
- **The third knight has information about how to cure Corbin Payne**, about the Grail, and about Percival. Once the confrontation with the third knight is resolved, the third act of *Percival* is unlocked and the crew must find Percival and/or face the Fisher King.





THE PERSONAL VEIN

"Let your rage out, Martha. Don't you see? If you keep it inside, it will consume you. All your life people around you tried to silence you, to put out your fire. You have been wronged so many times. You need to allow yourself to heal, and your healing cannot begin while you still hold all this rage inside. So listen to me: it's time to let go. It's time to sing about your pain, so that everyone can hear you."

– Dr. Selma Perrin, Mending the Broken



OVERVIEW OF THIS VEIN

When **DR. KRYSTAL KNIGHT** left Corbin Payne, devastated and ruined at her failure to help him, he gave her a Relic, a broken mirror that reflected her self-loathing and contempt (the Devil's mirror in the tale of *The Snow Queen*, by Hans Christian Andersen). The spirit of the once-hopeful therapist, who believed in everyone's ability to reconcile their inner conflicts and transcend their pain, was now permanently shattered, like her mirror, and infused with more self-hatred than she could bear. Unable to strike back at her abuser, she turned this hatred towards herself and those most like her – the City's Rifts.

The former psychiatrist's operation aims to infect the City's Rifts with enmity and malintent toward one another and toward themselves. Its first line of interaction with the City's legendary citizens is the therapist association known as **MENDING THE BROKEN**, a group of Sleeper psychiatrists and psychologists Touched by Dr. Knight's powers. Mending the Broken therapists pose as aware and understanding mental healthcare providers who seek to help gifted individuals. In reality, they are equipped with the power to plant seeds of ever-growing hatred in the hearts of their patients, driving them to self-destructiveness or aggressiveness towards other Rifts.

Two of the most troubled victims of this organization have already started on their path of destruction. **MARTHA ELLIS**, a small-time jazz singer and the Rift of the Banshee, is using her supernatural laments to emotionally overwhelm her audience to the point of killing them with her songs. Another affected patient is **MAXIMILLIAN DRAKE**, a rejected genius and the Rift of Hephaestus. Since his scientific mind cannot explain the existence of legendary powers, he is bent on annihilating his fellow Rifts by figuring out which of their buttons to push and luring them into a deathtrap he has set up at an **ABANDONED FAIRGROUND**, gaining a twisted sense of control.

While this is happening, Dr. Knight is preparing her ultimate attack on the City from the **Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane**, simply known as **THE ASYLUM**. While officially registered as a patient there since her encounter with the Fisher King decades ago, the Snow Queen has since taken over the asylum and uses it as a base of operations, impersonating the head of the institute. Once she amasses enough hatred in her mirror, she plans to disseminate its magic through objects made of glass throughout the entire city and then shatter them, infusing the whole City with a feeling of enmity in one fell swoop and causing City-wide anarchy. This is made possible through another gift she received from the Fisher King, a subsidiary of Payne Construction Company titled **AURORA GLASSWORKS**, the company which has been producing most of the windows in the City for almost a century.

ADDRESSING MENTAL CRISIS AND ILLNESS

The personal vein touches directly on the subject of mental health. Dr. Krystal Knight is a victim of abuse who has become an abuser out of pain; her mental condition is a magical one, induced by Corbin Payne's Mythos as well as her own. Her minions and victims, who feature as villains in this vein, are under the same influence. The PCs themselves are likely to wrestle with intense emotions when facing these challenges.

The personal vein can be used as a platform for exploring emotions and themes of mental health, or it can be a cinematic foray – humorous or serious – into the dark side of the soul, or it can even be a combination of both. Whatever slant you intend to give it, **check with your group** what their boundaries are for incorporating these issues in your game and what language they are comfortable using when addressing mental health.

The language used in this vein attempts to strike a balance between the cinematic desire to convey the grit and brusqueness of the noir genre, and consideration towards the very real-world issue of mental illness.

THEMES AND MOTIFS

- **Private Investigation:** The personal vein focuses on individuals rather than the City as a whole. It highlights the everyday lives and hardships of City residents, and especially Rifts caught in the net of Mending the Broken. The cases in this vein are the closest to the classic noir style.
- **Emotional overload and mental health:** Dr. Krystal Knight herself and NPCs in this vein affected by Mending the Broken all deal with various forms of emotional hardship including despair, self-contempt, melancholy, and more. The PCs are also subjected to Mythos powers that can cause emotional overload.
- **Hatred and Self-Loathing:** In the tale of the Snow Queen, shards of the devil-glass cause people to see everything as ugly, and therefore hate one another. In this modern version, Dr. Knight's powers also make people hate themselves.
- **Broken Glass:** You can use broken glass as a recurring motif in this vein. Work into your narrative freak accidents regarding shards of glass to build up suspense. Whenever someone dies of a cause that is related to Krystal Knight's minions and the hate they spread, have it include the motif of broken glass: someone crashes through a high window and falls to their death in a shower of broken glass, a fire started by the sun focusing on a broken window causes a disaster, or someone gets violent with a broken glass bottle, etc.



CITY of MIST



KILLING HER SOFTLY

PERSONAL VEIN

A soulful jazz singer needs the crew's help with deciphering a series of mysterious killings that circle her in a vicious ghost dance. From Downtown to Suburbia, people drop dead unexpectedly clutching their broken hearts, with the mysterious killer still rampant. As the body count rises, will the crew be able to save the City's residents from this haunting angel of death?

Killing Her Softly is a classic neo-noir "whodunit" investigation in which the crew traces the footsteps of a mysterious serial killer. Against the backdrop of a dicey jazz club and dirty alleyways, the crew examines crime scenes, crosses paths with NPCs from different walks of life, and overcomes altercations with dubious underworld figures. The case sets the players to falsely accuse an innocent NPC or simply assume he is guilty, while the real criminal feigns innocence and even seeks the crew's protection, fooling them, at least for a while.

A DUET WITH SORROW

Martha Ellis is one of the best small-time blues and jazz singers in the City, with a heart-rending voice whose grandeur is matched only by her melancholy. Perhaps due to her penchant for blues lamenting, Martha has awakened as the Rift of **the Banshee**, the keening Irish woman of the fair folk who would warn of a death in the family. After her awakening, she discovered that her voice could stir more intense feelings in her audience than before. Where once she brought tears to the eyes of a few sensitive listeners, she could now induce utter emotional collapse in an entire hall full of people.

When it first happened, Martha's manager spun it to the newspapers, labeling Martha as "Downtown's most soulful voice". But Martha struggled to keep her powers in check; her control of her audience's emotions was intuitive, but her own complex emotional state often tempted her to use her powers in ways she shouldn't have. As fewer people returned to her shows, following harrowing experiences, Martha's career went downhill. She fell into depression and alcoholism, and faced financial hardship. Very few music halls and cabarets would have her on stage.

MENDING THE BROKEN

Seeking help, Martha approached **Dr. Selma Perrin**, a psychiatrist associated with **Mending the Broken**, an organization offering help to Rifts (see page XX). Reframing her powers in a positive way, Dr. Perrin convinced Martha that her songs can help people feel the sorrow and the pain they are trying to avoid. Martha's role, even duty, was to penetrate their resistance and open up their feelings so they could cope with their buried wounds.

This new understanding of herself helped Martha come out of the darkness she was enveloped in and gave her a new hope. She was able to focus herself better and her performances became more balanced and enjoyable. She managed to get a regular spot at the seedy but active "**the Washboard**" club. While on stage, she would search the audience for that special person, someone whose pain she could feel viscerally, someone who she thought needed her help. In actuality, her Mythos' ability of sensing an impending death drew her towards her victims; little did she know that she would be the one responsible for their demise.

MEANWHILE, A VISION OF DEATH

Not far from the Washboard, in the Industrial Zone, **John Nowak**, a deaf-mute factory worker, caught a flyer blowing in the wind. It was advertising a night at the Washboard, with Martha's picture in the center. As soon as his gaze fell on the flyer, Nowak awakened as the Rift of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come (*A Christmas Carol*). His Mythos showed him a vision of Martha Ellis's possible death, filling him with sorrow and grief for the brutality of her untimely end, the wrongs she has committed, and the hate she was regarded with. Nowak felt compelled to warn Martha. He dropped everything, left work, and made his way to the Washboard.

THE FIRST VICTIM

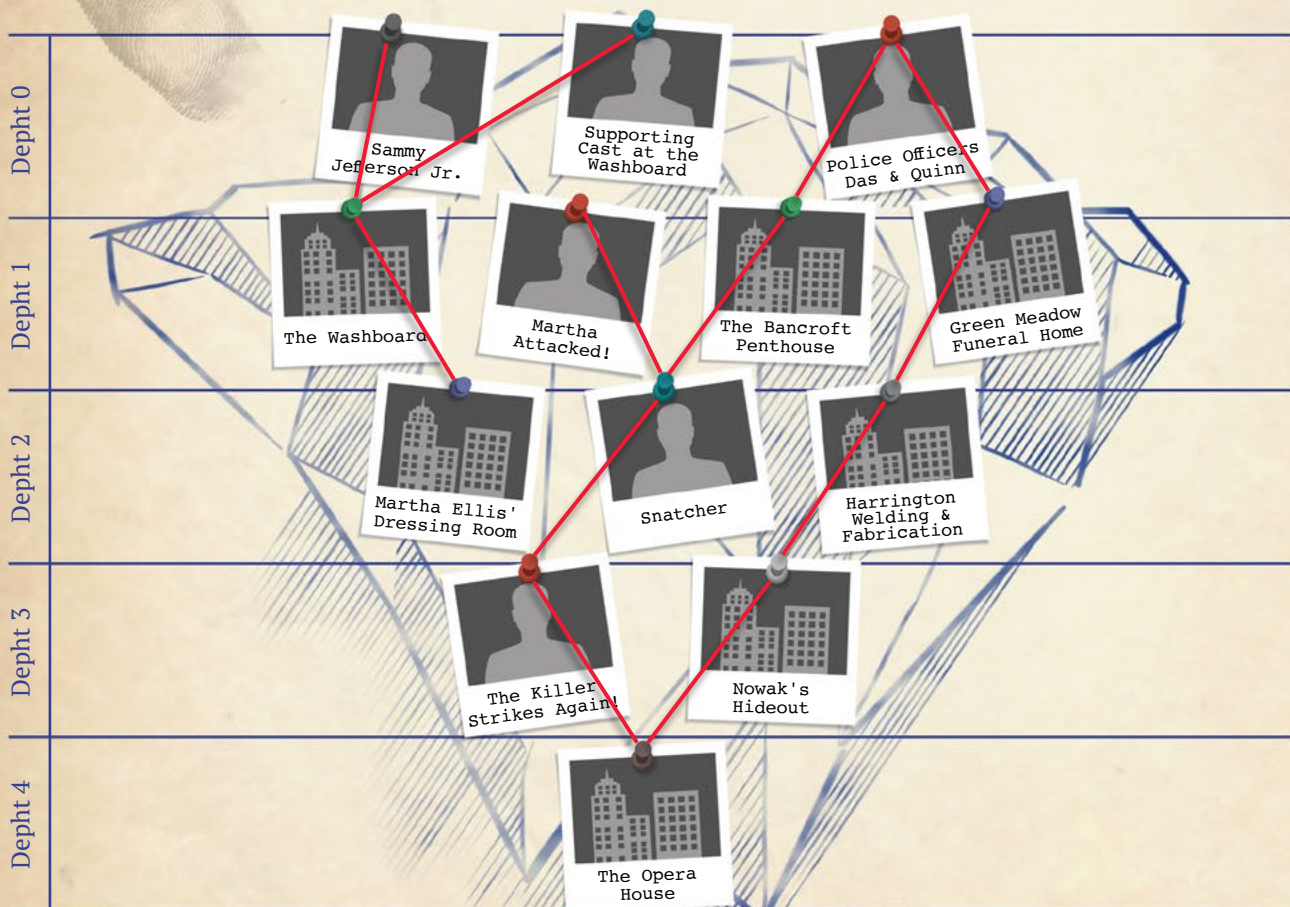
Darnell Fox was sitting in the front row that night at the Washboard along with two couples of his friends. Feeling himself a fifth wheel, Darnell seemed despondent and shy. All through the night, Martha felt her eyes drawn to the meek man. When his feelings of loneliness overwhelmed him and he left to get some fresh air, the singer took a break and followed him out. There, in the alley, she convinced him to stay for a private show – she would sing for him after hours, promising it would improve his mood. Darnell accepted out of politeness and the two later met alone on the Washboard stage.

There, in the solemn spotlight, Martha sang for him, voicing the Banshee's lament at its most sorrowful, singing about a boy who had no-one to call his own. Darnell collapsed, overwhelmed with loneliness, but the more Martha sang the more in pain he seemed. The cathartic moment Dr. Perrin promised did not come. But Martha Ellis could not stop. She was both foretelling his death and enacting it, until finally his heart gave in and he died of his intensified sorrow (an unexplained heart failure, a Sleeper coroner would later say). Just as this happened, Martha saw John Nowak, a tattooed skinhead in a hoodie, at the far end of the club's floor, witnessing it all. Nowak handwaved and mumbled to warn Martha of the future that awaited her if she continued down this path, but lacking words his warning fell on deaf ears. Martha tried to lament him to death and naturally failed as he is deaf, so thinking on her feet she started crying for help. The Washboard bouncer, Syrus, arrived to see a dead patron on the floor and a suspect hooded figure fleeing the scene.

FURTHER LAMENTATIONS

Shocked at what happened and the predicament she was now in, Martha Ellis didn't know what to do. She swore never to talk to Dr. Perrin again and never to sing the song of the Banshee. But the more she repressed it, the more it tried to emerge in her evening performances. To keep her career, she had to find a way to let the Banshee have its fill. So far, two more victims fell prey to the Banshee's lament: an unhappy trophy wife whom Ellis killed at her Downtown loft and a man mourning for his dead son, who dropped dead when the singer performed at the funeral. This last death happened only a day ago.

In both cases, John Nowak was there to witness the killing and try to dissuade Martha from her destructive path. In both cases, Martha was able to pin the death on him or at least disassociate herself from it, at his expense. The police now have three unexplained Downtown deaths connected with Nowak. **Officers Chaavi Das** (*Gramadevata*, a town's guardian spirit in Hinduism) and **Matt Quinn** (Sleeper) are working the case, searching after their main suspect, the skinhead in the hoodie.



Name: **ICEBERG**

MARTHA

Martha Ellis is a voluptuous woman in her mid 50s, usually enveloped in a flowing floral dress and head-dress during the day and a sparkling evening gown that shows her curves at night when on stage. Her mannerism and garb exude a sense of melancholy and drama, of someone whose time has passed, but is still holding on to the grandeur of the past. Her pitiful state is accentuated when she is inebriated (all too often these days). In the spotlight, however, her commiserating streak turns heartfelt, and she truly touches her audience with a deep and soulful mood.

PACING MARTHA

Martha appears throughout the case, across Depths. The PCs will likely have multiple interactions with Martha as they investigate the case and as their suspicion of her part in the deaths becomes more and more founded.

Try to use Martha's lies and deceptions to keep the PCs away from the truth long enough for the case to progress. At the same time, remember to **play to find out** and surrender the truth to them if they earned it fair and square. Remember, even if Martha is exposed early on, the crew still faces the challenge of incriminating her and apprehending her before she can do more damage.

PAIN BEHIND THE EYES

Martha is naturally attracted to lamentable emotions in the people she meets. When she senses someone's pain, she remembers it and can tap into it with a song later on.

When a PC **Investigates** and scores a 7-9, or as a hard move, you can choose to ask the player about their character's own sorrow and assume that Martha knows it (per her custom move **Pain Behind the Eyes**). This is a good chance to give the character's themes and backstory some airtime.

At first, Martha appears deeply sympathetic and understanding. However, revealing the PC's private pain also sets the PC up for Martha's keening hard move.

Martha's Danger profile appears on page XX.

To delay the revelation that Martha is the killer, give different types of clues when the PCs **Investigate** Martha:

- Provide only partial answers to their questions when they spend a Clue.

- If they roll 7-9, choose to give vague or part-true part-false answers in order to keep the truth hidden from them for a while longer. For example, if a PC is checking if Martha is lying you can let them know it is difficult to determine clearly due to her state or intoxication, or reply that she seems very much on edge, which may be due to lying but may also simply be a result of the stress of recent events.

When the pressure rises and the PCs demand answers, Martha will candidly reveal false information to the crew in order to maintain their trust and to provide a valid explanation for her behavior. Here are some **part-true-part-false clues** you can use; Martha can also reveal this even without the PCs **Investigating**.

To excuse her presence at a crime scene, Martha may feign confiding with the crew and revealing her powers. She will claim she can feel impending death and that she is irresistibly drawn to where the killer will strike, trying to warn the victim.

She will ascribe her own methods to the killer (and technically, she wouldn't be lying), hinting that she thinks the killer somehow causes the victims to die of grief.

Martha could even allege that the killer is the same person who sabotaged her performance in the past (see below) and that it's someone with a grudge against her, creating a red herring for the crew to go after.

Asking around about Martha or researching her background can reveal some of her tumultuous history:

Martha is one of the best small-time blues and jazz singers in the City. She briefly gained fame as "Downtown's most soulful voice".

After a fiasco where the entire crowd at her concert had an emotional breakdown, and medical services had to be called in, the papers labeled her as too intense, and her career tanked. She was quoted saying the incident was an act of sabotage against her career and that the perpetrator used psychoactive drugs in the drinks that night.

She then took to drinking, became a depressed eccentric, and was only ever seen again publicly in the lowliest and most obscure of Downtown clubs.

DEPTH 0: THE HOOKS

The crew may become involved in the case in the following ways:

- **The police** could be reaching out to the crew for help with their mystery killer, especially if the crew previously worked with the police or runs an investigative agency. Officers Das and Quinn just began investigating the strange occurrence at the funeral house, and are stumped at this point in the investigation: they have three seemingly unrelated suspicious deaths where the skinhead in the hoodie was placed. Their boss seems to think it's a coincidence and has given them 72 hours to reach a breakthrough in the case, after which they will have to drop it. Both Das, who is a Rift, and Quinn, a Sleeper, believe they have a serial killer on their hands, but they don't have a clue about his motive or method yet. (They still haven't connected the last two deaths to the Washboard, so they don't suspect Martha Ellis in the slightest). To recruit the crew, Officer Das will make contact by phone or show up at the crew's hangout; she'll relate the details of the case and ask for help but stress that the killer should be brought to justice and that the matter must be resolved in accordance with the law.
- The owner of the Washboard, **Sammy Jefferson Jr.** (Sleeper), may contact the crew to bring the Darnell Fox death to rest. Not so much shaken by a death in his club as he is worried of interrupting his singer's lucky streak, old Sammy senses that his diva is on edge since the case and wants to make sure no harm comes to her. Likely connected to PCs who lean toward the wrong side of the law, Sammy could hire the crew to find the fellow in the hoodie and make sure he doesn't pull that kind of stunt again in his club. Sammy is a middle-aged man usually wearing a stained dress shirt, suspenders, and dress slacks, and adorning a typical jazz-club-owner panama hat. He's a shrewd businessman and plays a mean bluegrass tune if you put a banjo in his hands.
- **A member of the supporting cast could become a victim of Ellis.** Someone close to one of the PCs could invite the PCs to the Washboard for a performance of Martha Ellis. Choose a character that is carrying some distinct personal pain and could easily become Ellis's next mark. The supporting character could be found dead the next morning or, if you'd like to give the crew a chance to save her, be a part of the Killer Strikes Again! triggered scene on page XX.

DEPTH 1: LAMENTING OF THE PAST

In this depth, the crew studies the crime scenes of the strange deaths that occurred Downtown. At first, they seem unrelated, but as the crew starts putting together the clues, it becomes evident that the Washboard club and its foremost singer, Martha Ellis, are at the center of it all.

THE WASHBOARD

Tucked in the basement of a grimey brown-stone building overshadowed by Downtown's great skyscrapers, the Washboard couldn't be located any lower without dropping into the sewers. Faint cellwo and piano notes echo in the maze of alleyways and underpasses that leads to its front door, below street level. The place seems scrubbed, as if trying to rise up to the occasion of having a fleeting shot at glory. The front door is covered with posters heralding Martha Ellis' next gig.

The Washboard is a long-standing establishment, a jazz and blues venue from the days the City was young. But unlike its more respectable brethren who started out low and built their dignity and reputation with the years, the Washboard was always a spot vaguely associated with the wrong kind of crowd. While the truly big crime lords stuck to their own clubs, this was a place where hustlers and good-for-nothing lowlives often congregated. In its heyday, the Washboard also attracted a flux of middle-class Downtown professionals who craved some edge and came here to rub elbows with the rougher regular clientele, and so business was good for everyone, for a while. But trends moved on and the masses with them, forcing owner after owner to sell the joint to the next hopeful entrepreneur.

The current owner, **Sammy Jerfferson Jr.**, moved from the neighborhoods to the alleys of Downtown decades ago. He dabbled with pretty much everything one can on the streets, but he always had a love for music, and when the opportunity came, he purchased the club. Sammy knew all too well that to keep the place running he'd have to run other activities from the back room, yet his dream has always been to truly make it as a club owner.

The Washboard is a roomy club, capable of holding up to 200 patrons. The red-tinted lights set the mood but also give the place a dark and seedy vibe. There are two long bars lining the main room, and about 20 small circular tables scattered in front of a medium-sized stage. In the back there's a kitchen, a dressing room, and storage space, as well as an office for Sammy. A back door leads to a dirty back alley, even narrower than the one that leads to the front door.

INVESTIGATING THE DEATH OF DARNELL FOX

The coroner report says Darnell Fox died of unexplained heart failure.

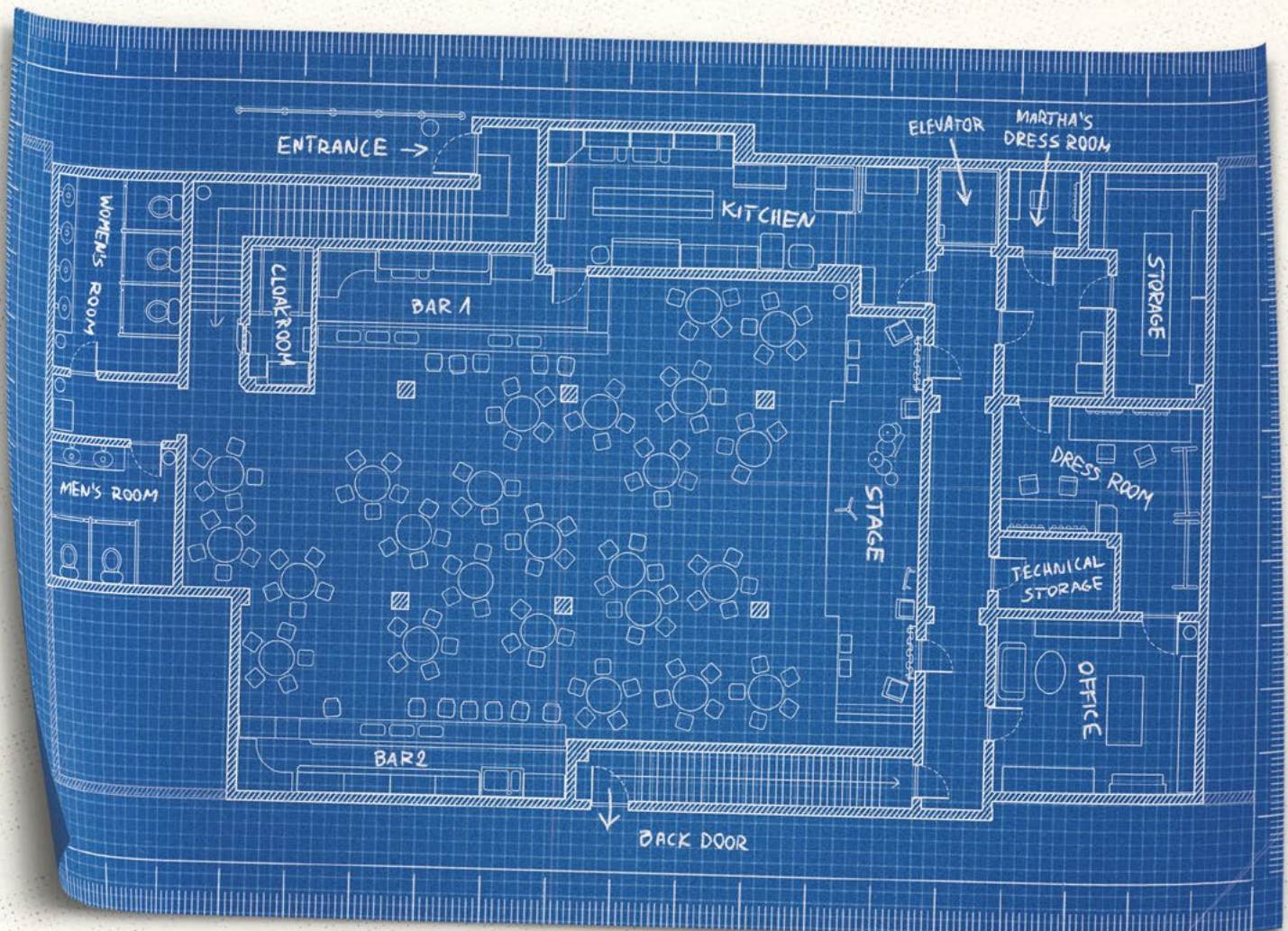
Everyone at the Washboard tells the same story: Martha and Syrus the bouncer walked in on Darnell and the killer having words, when they saw Darnell collapse and the killer fleeing. (This is a lie Sammy and Martha came up with, but all regular patrons accept their word as truth.)

The alleged killer must have broken the lock on the back door with a crowbar and slipped in while Syrus the bouncer was locking up the front.

Investigating Syrus could reveal Martha was already there when he arrived. Sammy gave him a bonus to say otherwise, to keep her out of it.

If confronted with the above fact, Martha would say Darnell asked to meet her after the show and then declared his love to her. It was normal for a lonely fan to get enamored with a performer, so she politely declined; but then the killer arrived and Darnell fell to the floor.

No one at the Washboard really knew Darnell or his friends. Asking around, Sammy and Syrus learned they were a group of young professionals looking for a place for a double date.



Darnell's friends are easy to find. They are still in shock, and ascribe his death to an undiagnosed cardiac condition. They tell of a shy and meek man who never mentioned being in any need of help, but if asked privately, some of the ladies would reveal he seemed extremely lonely. They all work for a local advertising firm.

Beyond the Mist, the place is a dreary bog of gloom and intense loneliness, both emotionally and symbolically, with muddy ground covered by low fog. An old sad tin whistle tune is playing far away. If a PC can contact Darnell's spirit, he is *overwhelmed-by-sorrow-4* and believes he died because he simply could no longer bear carrying on.

INVESTIGATING THE WASHBOARD

Sammy is using this place for more than just music. A little bootlegging, a little illegal gambling, sometimes even fencing low-risk stolen goods, but nothing more. He is willing to pay the crew to keep it under wraps, or pay Syrus to bully them into keeping quiet.

Sammy is betting all his chips on Martha Ellis' success in hopes of going legit and letting go of some of his dubious back room activities. He seems like he is willing to go to great lengths to keep the singer – or her singing – from harm.

Someone in the regular crowd at the Washboard heard of another patron who recently died of a heart attack, pointing the crew at the Bancroft Penthouse. Another person says the singer, Martha, was involved in a drama at the Green Meadow Funeral Home not two days ago.

SAMMY JEFFERSON JR. ★

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / BREAK SPIRIT 3

- **Shifty:** When you Investigate Sammy, he first takes *shifty-2*.
- **Weather the Storm:** When Sammy makes you an offer, the MC will put a reward on the table as a temporary story tag. If you accept his bribe, you get the tag.
- **Keeping Tabs:** When Sammy decides to turn on you, he gives you a status of *implicated* with one tier for every tag you accepted from him through **Weather the Storm**. You may **Face Danger**.
- **Defuse the Situation:** When Sammy grabs a banjo and starts playing, everyone who can hear him chills the hell out. As a soft move the MC can choose one for each listener: reduce an emotional status by one, burn an emotional tag, or give *chill-1*.
- Threaten someone with a holdout pistol or a crowbar (*back-to-the-wall-2*) or make good on his threats or (*flesh-wound-2* or *banged-up-2*)
- Help someone relax (reduce an emotional status by one, burn an emotional tag, or give *chill-1*)
- Welcome someone with a smile and open arms
- Suggest to step aside to talk business
- Tell the band to start playing, now

SYRUS, THE BOUNCER ★

Syrus has been a bouncer at the Washboard for the past few months. A typical muscleman, he towers over most patrons at 6'4" and has arms like logs and a torso like a barrel. A shining bald head, a tight black T-shirt, and a thin 'stache to keep him cool but threatening.

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / BRIBE 2

- **Not on My Shift:** When Syrus enters the scene, give him *alert-2*.
- **Boxer Moves:** When Syrus is attacked with mundane hand-to-hand physical blows or weapons, reduce the tier of the resulting status by 1.
- Thump someone (*disoriented-2*) or put them in a headlock (*restrained-3*)
- Throw a disoriented or restrained person outside (*humiliated-2*)
- Look down on someone over his huge folded arms

OFFICERS DAS & QUINN

Whether they requested the crew's help or they are just hovering around the crime scenes looking for answers, Downtown beat officers Chaavi Das and Matt Quinn will find a way to stick their nose into the crew's business.

This devoted dynamic duo make everything that's happening Downtown, and in the City, their business. Officer Das is a short, feisty, and direct policewoman who proves big punches come in small packages. As the Touched Rift of Gramadevata, a town's guardian spirit, she wields – alongside her taser and pistol – the protective powers of a tutelary deity. She can create magical shields that shelter people and property from harm, both physical and magical.

Officer Quinn – a tall, handsome, cornfed hunk – is actually a big teddy bear who prefers to avoid violence (until duty calls, at which point he proves a capable combatant). While he is a Sleeper, he is the kind who

believes all conspiracy theories but never really delves into them. He will follow Das through thick and thin, even when he can't see what she sees. While he often says he wishes he could see through her eyes, he really doesn't, a fact which keeps him firmly asleep.

The pair can serve as backup or support NPCs that help, tip off, and guide the crew throughout this case, vein, or story arc. They can also serve as a royal pain in the butt for PCs that run illegal activities, always showing up when it's least convenient. If they become temporary or permanent allies of the crew, they can be represented by an extra theme.

DAS & QUINN

Ally

IDENTITY

It's our job to keep the streets Downtown safe.

POWER TAGS

working the beat, police work, banish evil, devoted to their work, combine brawn and brains, create a magical shield, interview witnesses, access to police files, the usual suspects, heart of gold

WEAKNESS TAGS

must report ANY illegal activity, Das is a blunt force instrument, Quinn is a big softy, trouble with the boss

THEME IMPROVEMENT

○ **Sacrifice:** When you get a hit on Face Danger, you can always choose to extend the outcome to one person or object around you that you can protect, at the cost of exposing yourself. On a 10+, they take no status and you take the status with -1 tier. On 7-9, they take the status with -1 tier and you take the full status. If the move is *Dynamite!*, on a 12+, you can choose to fully protect both of you (instead of one of the other 12+ options).

DAS & QUINN ★★/★

While they are both beat officers, both Das and Quinn use the Detective Danger profile (MC Toolkit, page 148) to reflect their exemplary police skills. Officer Das also has the Mythos Power Set Messenger of the Light (MC Toolkit, page 154).

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / CORRUPT 5 / OVERRIDE AUTHORITY 3

- **Powers of Deduction:** When Das or Quinn survey the scene for the first time or as a hard move, the MC will ask you one question. You must reply with a straight answer or a solid lead. The officer knows your answer, even if your character didn't speak it.
- **On the Ball:** When Das or Quinn enter the scene, give them *alert-1*.
- **Protection from Evil (Das only):** When Officer Das takes a status from a source that is inherently evil or dark, reduce the tier of the status by 2.
- Put someone on the spot (tell the truth or take *pressured-2*)
- Shoot a suspect or a threat with a firearm (*gun-shot-wound-3*) or taser (*stunned-3*)
- Cuff a suspect or tighten the handcuffs (*hand-cuffed-2*)
- (Das only) Bless or enchant someone to protect them from harm (*protected-2*)
- (Das only) Banish the forces of evil or darkness (*banish-3*)
- Observe a scene and discuss it with each other
- Find a piece of evidence
- When alone, call for police backup



THE BANCROFT PENTHOUSE

Meticulously furnished with the best and trendiest interior design money can buy, every corner in the Bancroft penthouse is a demonstration of wealth and power. Stepping inside on the reflective marble floor, you realize it's all just a lead up to the grand finale: a panoramic view of the City rooftops surrounds the condo. Breath-taking, but boy, does it feel empty.

Tiffany Bancroft was Martha Ellis' second victim. A beautiful woman in her late 30s, Tiffany turned heads everywhere she went, and the Washboard was no exception. Martha noticed her walking in with her husband, **Ross Bancroft**, who she later learned was a high-flying executive in a Downtown-based hedge fund. While outwardly the couple looked glamorous, Martha sensed a sadness in Tiffany. She met her at the ladies' room and invited her for a smoke and a drink in her dressing room. When Tiffany opened up about her loveless marriage and her unfulfilled life, Martha realized the young lady was feeling trapped in her perfect existence. She wanted to help her, so they exchanged numbers and agreed to meet the following week.

Martha paid a visit to the Bancroft penthouse and when the opportunity came, after much talk and wine, sat by the Bancrofts' grand piano and sang her hostess to death. Nowak showed up just in time to witness her kill Tiffany but he was already being pursued by the building security. Realizing he was late, Nowak fled the scene. Hearing security nearby, Martha Ellis took the opportunity to leave via the service stairs, unseen. When security arrived, they split between Nowak, the alleged perp, and the victim, but no one thought to look for Ellis.

INVESTIGATING THE DEATH OF TIFFANY BANCROFT

The coroner report says Tiffany Bancroft died of unexplained heart failure.

According to the building's chief of security, a skinhead in a hoodie, about 25-30 years old, tricked the guards and made it to the elevators. From there he went on to the Bancrofts' penthouse and probably scared Tiffany Bancroft to death. He narrowly escaped the guards by crashing through a window and falling onto a dumpster, fleeing the scene before he could be apprehended.

If the search is expanded beyond the incident with the intruder, security cameras or a jolt to the concierge's memory would disclose that Martha Ellis paid a visit to the victim about three hours before the intruder showed up. She was not seen leaving.

The neighbors heard the piano playing before Tiffany died, but Ross Bancroft knows the piece was just for show and that neither him nor his wife could play.

There is one ticket to Martha Ellis' show at the Washboard next week on the piano.

Someone (Martha) called Snatcher's number from the loft, around Tiffany's time of death.

Beyond the Mist, the penthouse seems afflicted by the same swamp as the Washboard, albeit with gnarly dead trees giving off the feeling of long-dead hopes and dreams and a prevailing emptiness. If a PC can contact Tiffany's spirit, she is *bitter-and-angry-3* and doesn't really want to discuss what happened, believing she died because she finally realized it was her only way out.

INVESTIGATING ROSS BANCROFT

Ross Bancroft, husband of the late Tiffany Bancroft, is a cold-hearted hedge fund executive that was looking to get out of his suffocating marriage and keep his fortune by murdering his wife. He is a red herring, because he never got to enact his plans and he is not the killer in this case. Fearing that an investigation will reveal his former plan, he is *uncooperative-2* and wants the case dropped as soon as possible.

Ross Bancroft seems to be maintaining his normal routine, working late at the office of his hedge fund and drinking whiskey alone at the apartment at night. He doesn't seem as heartbroken as you'd expect.

If asked on the reason for his wife's death, he would curtly say that his late wife was so accustomed to her bubble of refined perfection, that she was scared to death by the sight of an intruder, and her heart betrayed her.

Ross Bancroft was planning to use an expensive poison that simulates a heart attack. He flushed the vial down the toilet when Tiffany died but it snagged somewhere in the building's pipe system. Simple bloodwork cannot detect the poison, or lack thereof, but Mythos powers or advanced lab work would show Tiffany didn't have it in her system. To access the body, the crew must hit the morgue.

If the crew snoops around Ross Bancroft too much, he may reveal his true colors and hire someone to get rid of them. Ross can afford anyone, especially old enemies and Nemeses of the crew who would work for money. Otherwise, his go-to crew for this kind of work are the paramilitary mercenaries the **Valhalla Boys** (Varangian Guard, an elite unit of Norse warriors who served as the personal bodyguard of the Byzantine Emperor). The Valhalla Boys are instructed to ensure the crew doesn't investigate Tiffany's death.

THE VALHALLA BOYS ★★★

The Valhalla Boys are run-of-the-mill mercenaries, usually dressed in a mixture of military and leather that perfectly marries functionality with intimidation. Tactically-trained and battle-hardened both in their Mythos and in their mundane training, they're capable of taking out most low- to mid-power Rift teams they face. The Valhalla boys wield shotguns, crossbows, throwing axes, and grenades.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / BRIBE 4 / THREATEN 5

- **Collective:** This collective has a few members and a size factor of 1.
 - **Trained Paramilitaries:** When the Valhalla Boys enter the scene, give them *body armor* and *alert-2*.
 - **Berserker:** When the Valhalla Boys take a status of physical harm or subdual, if *hurt-or-subdue* isn't maxed out, the MC may give them *berserk-2*. This status applies both to attacks targeting the berserkers (including mental attacks) and when **Facing Danger** against their attacks.
-
- Signal each other silently or with clicks and then execute a tactical routine (giving themselves *tactical-advantage-2* or removing up to two tiers of negative tactical statuses)
 - Overwhelm a target with suppression fire (*cornered-3*) or aggressive firepower (*gunshot-3* or *bleeding-gash-3*)
 - Give their defeated enemy a message from their employer (give an *intimidate* status with a tier equal to that of a physical harm or subdual status the target has)
 - Deploy in a star formation, back-to-back, showing their training



GREEN MEADOW FUNERAL HOME

There's a CLOSED sign hanging on the knob of the front door of this deathly-silent suburban funeral home, but the door is slightly ajar, and someone is heard working inside. The old house seems to creak and whisper when you enter. Inside, there is a portrait of yesterday's dearly departed on the floor of the foyer, a teenager. There was some kind of struggle here, it seems. The shattered glass from the broken picture frame has not yet been swept.

Adam Walsh was Martha Ellis' third and latest victim. A single dad of three who had recently lost his 15-year-old kid (Teddy) to an illness, Adam was drowning in despair. Martha, who was hired to sing at Teddy's funeral and felt the depth of his darkness, almost felt like his savior when she channeled the Banshee in her and sang about his endless sadness.

Nowak showed up uninvited to the funeral, barging through the doors and kicking up a ruckus just in time for everyone to see him exchange surprised looks with Adam Walsh. Adam Walsh, who didn't recognize this man, suddenly felt a sharp pain in his chest and rushed to the men's room, where he collapsed, hearing the last notes of the song that killed him echoing from the funeral hall.

This time Martha was caught face-to-face with her ghostlike pursuer and, knowing she couldn't outrun him, resorted to shouting "It's the killer!", driving the crowd to besiege Nowak and push him out the front door. Martha hurried to her car and drove away; Nowak fled by the skin of his teeth again, with bruises and cracked ribs.

INVESTIGATING

THE DEATH OF ADAM WALSH

The coroner report says Adam Walsh died of unexplained heart failure.

Adam Walsh was mourning the death of his son Teddy, who had died of an illness. The family lost the mother years ago. Adam had two girls who now live with relatives, at least until the end of the investigation.

All who knew him can tell that, understandably, Adam Walsh was crushed by the death of his son.

The attendants of the funeral saw him clutch his chest when he laid his eyes on the intruder in the hoodie. Then the singer shouted “It’s the killer!” and the people in the room pursued him out of the funeral home, some of them getting physical, but he got away. Adam Walsh was found dead in the bathroom moments later.

Observant attendants describe the intruder as smelling of machine grease and burnt chemicals. Studying the spot where he was wrestled to the ground, collecting chemical samples from a torn piece of his hoodie, and/or tracking him in other mundane or mythical means could lead to Harrington Welding & Fabrication.

The owner of Green Meadow Funeral Home, **Sylvia Martinez** (Sleeper), was the one who invited Martha Ellis to sing in the funeral. She did this as a favor to her friend Sammy Jefferson Jr, owner of the Washboard and Martha Ellis’ manager.

Beyond the Mist, the funeral home is a cacophony of *loud-and-angry-3* deceased spirits, and it’s hard if not impossible to find Adam Walsh’s ghost, who is still hugging his son’s ghost and weeping somewhere in a dark corner. Any of the spirits here would say they witnessed Death himself visiting the funeral home today (Nowak, Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come), and heard his herald (Ellis, the Banshee). There are traces of the same swamp as the Washboard and the Bancroft penthouse, but it is muddled with much afterlife activity.

MARTHA WAS ATTACKED!

You’re startled by the sudden ring of your phone. On the other side of the line, Officer Chaavi Das / Sammy Jefferson Jr. sounds infuriated. “The killer got to her. He jumped Martha Ellis. She made it somehow, but she’s roughed up. You better come down here.”

Sooner or later, Nowak finds his way to Martha Ellis and tries to warn her of her miserable future. This occurs off-screen, without the knowledge of the crew, most likely at the Washboard or at her apartment. Unfortunately, Nowak is not very planned; he tries to

communicate but can’t get his message across clearly (on top of being mute, he is borderline illiterate; he has basic reading skills, but can’t write very well). Knowing from their first encounter that she can’t sing him to death, Ellis pulls out a holdout gun; Nowak wrestles it out of her hands, and in the process, she gets bruised. When things get physical, Nowak hesitates, realizing he won’t get through to Ellis, and flees again. Optionally, he comes out with a gunshot flesh wound, leaving blood at the scene.

When the crew arrives, Ellis is sitting in the back of an ambulance covered in a blanket. She is both *shaken-2* and *inebriated-2*; failed attempts to remove these statuses may end with the paramedics taking her away abruptly (**Deny Them Something They Want**). As explained above under Martha (page xx), the singer will try to spin this incident to her advantage.

Martha will claim to have been attacked. Her recounting of the event would be accurate except for the assault she tries to pin on Nowak.

If asked how she survived and if she discerns that the crew are Rifts, she may reveal herself as a Rift and say she was able to resist the killer’s magic, which tried to drain her life away.

Martha asserts that the killer has a personal interest in her. If she’s revealed herself as a Rift, she’ll tie it to the legendary connection they share.

The scene of the fight shows signs of breaking and entry and of a struggle consistent with Martha Ellis’ statement.

Beyond the Mist, the place has the same swampy feeling as the other crime scenes. However, closer inspection shows the source is Martha and not Nowak.

Optionally, Nowak can be identified via a print he left at the scene and/or blood, if he was shot. His police record has a battery conviction over a bar fight, and his parole officer can point the crew to his workplace, Harrington Welding & Fabrication. His police file or parole officer could also reveal he is deaf (this would speed up the case).

DEPTH 2: FALL ON DEAF EARS

MARTHA ELLIS' DRESSING ROOM

Martha Ellis's so-called dressing room smells of dead flowers and alcohol. The small, cramped converted storage room at the back of the Washboard was probably all the owners could spare to satisfy the diva's demands. The walls are lined with newspaper cutouts and posters of her glorious past. The title "Downtown's Most Soulful Voice" seems to stick out. Under the vanity, there's a bin with dozens of small plastic liquor bottles. The poor soul was just starting to pull her threadbare life together, and now this.

Searching Martha's dressing room at the Washboard could provide some insight into the singer's past, but it's not easy to access. When she's not there, the room's door is *locked-2* and Sammy or Syrus are always *watchful-2*, mindful of anyone snooping around the back rooms.

Some of the newspaper clips on the walls have parts that were cut out or redacted with a black marker. Comparing to the originals (perhaps through microfilm research) will show these are the sections where Ellis is criticized for her over-emotional performance.

Beyond the Mist, the dressing room has a faint print of the Banshee Mythos, represented as a vision of a melancholic bog, with faint trills of a tin whistle in the distance.

In a locked drawer, among lots of memorabilia, there's the calling card of a therapist, Dr. Selma Perrin, of a therapist association called Mending The Broken. If the crew calls Dr. Perrin, she may reveal details of Ellis' troubled past to get rid of them. If she realizes they are Rifts, she may take an interest in them, inviting them to meet her. See a possible encounter with a Mending The Broken therapist in the case *Broken Glass* (page XX).

HARRINGTON WELDING & FABRICATION

Driving outside of the city center and down this part of the Industrial Zone always has a sobering effect. Over there, people dream of money and fame, while over here, the people labor day and night just to make ends meet. Harrington Welding & Fabrication is just this kind of place, a greasy workshop where the sounds of buzzsaws and machinery is loud enough to keep conversations private, but the local eyes follow you everywhere you go.

Harrington Welding & Fabrication is John Nowak's workplace, but he hasn't shown up to work for a week. The foreman, Miles McFarland, can answer some questions about Nowak, but he's *suspicious-3* of the crew and has a soft spot for Nowak, so he wants to make sure he isn't assisting anyone who wants to hurt Nowak. If the crew convinces him that Nowak was involved in the murders or if they threaten his business, he may open up (reduce the status accordingly).

John Nowak is deaf and mute. This is an important clue because it rules him out as the person who called *Snatcher* and it rules him out as someone who uses singing to kill.

Foreman Miles has not seen John Nowak or heard from him since that afternoon last week, when he saw Nowak pick up a jazz club flyer on the wind and strangely stare into the distance for a while, looking sad. Miles kept the flyer; it's the Washboard ad for Martha Ellis.

John Nowak is alone. His elderly parents died years ago, he has no known relatives.

John Nowak is a stand up guy and everyone at the factory will attest to that. His battery charges were a result of a misfortunate altercation where he tried to defend a friend in a bar fight, and ended up being sued.

John Nowak knows the Industrial Zone well and can survive on the streets. If he doesn't want to be found, he is probably squatting in some abandoned factory or rusted silo. (See *Nowak's Hideout* for details about finding him.)

SNATCHER

A harrowing face covered in oozing scabs and scars is the first thing that strikes you about Maurice, AKA Snatcher. Then you notice that he's wearing a thick, battered, and blood-stained plastic apron, and carries around an unusually large meat cleaver. You reassure yourself that it's normal for a butcher, but you also can't stop wondering exactly what sort of meat comes under his knife.

Maurice Alrawi (Ghoul), known in the criminal underworld as Snatcher, offers a no-questions-asked body removal service. He works out of an old butcher shop in the Industrial Zone, where he carves up and devours the bodies he is hired to hide. The body is most often the key component of his payment.

Snatcher is a dangerous witness, who has a small but vital clue that can turn the investigation around. He can be played as a **location**, where the crew seeks him out at his butcher shop to get answers about the call made to him from the Bancroft Penthouse; or he can be played as a **triggered scene**, where he shows up angry when the Killer Strikes Again! to claim the body he was promised. In both cases he is uncooperative, and the crew must strike a deal with him or force his hand in order to get the clue.

The person who called Snatcher to get rid of the body changed their voice to mask it, a common tactic in this business. (This indicates the killer can speak, ruling out John Nowak.)

Snatcher couldn't even tell if it was a man or a woman, which he admits is unusual (and may point that the caller had some skill or training in changing their voice).



SNATCHER ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / BEG FOR MERCY -

- **Monstrous:** When Snatcher takes a status that is countered by his wide frame or by his rotting flesh, reduce its tier by 1. When the MC makes a hard move with Snatcher, he can hit two targets or hit a single target for +1 tier.
 - **Hangry:** When Snatcher is denied a body promised to him, give him *hangry-3*.
 - **Gravediggers:** Snatcher can call for his assistants for help (Create a new Danger: Gravediggers, with *hurt-or-subdue-3*, a size factor of 1, and cleavers causing *nasty-cut-2*).
 - **Who's Your Daddy:** When Snatcher feeds on a body but does not consume it, the body turns into a ghoul with the same abilities as Snatcher's except the ghoul slashes with their claws, does not have the move **Gravediggers**, and has *exorcise-2*.
-
- Go for a limb with his cleaver (*slash-3*) or wrap a metal chain around someone and drag them along (*chained-3*)
 - Violently break free of restraints (remove up to 3 tiers or burn up to 3 tags)
 - Feed off flesh (*vicious-bite-3* and reduce one tier of harmful status or give himself one tier of positive status for each tier inflicted)
-
- Screech and growl, exposing sharp and bloody yellow teeth
 - Take the form of a body he devoured

DEPTH 3: TOLL THE DEATH KNELL



NOWAK'S HIDEOUT

The Industrial Zone looks like one big haystack. Everywhere you turn you see abandoned factories with grimey, broken glass windows; piles of concrete pipeline parts; endless lots with fleets of parked trucks. John Nowak could be anywhere. Your faraway gaze meets the smoke and steam rising above the district, as the foghorn in the docks nearby blows unnervingly like a funeral toll.

When he's not following Martha Ellis around, trying to warn her of her impending doom, John Nowak, Rift of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come, lays low somewhere in the Industrial Zone. He may be deaf and mute, and he may have very little to his name, but Nowak knows the streets here and he is a veteran urban survivalist. Currently, he has settled in a machine-operated section of a car factory that is only rarely visited by personnel.

FINDING THE HIDEOUT

Finding the hideout won't be easy. Nowak is *covering-his-tracks-3*, and any wrong turn the crew takes in the dark, empty streets and forsaken buildings of the Industrial Zone could have them facing local gangs, industrial-grade hazards, or stray Conjurings emerging out of the many thin places around. The Valhalla Boys, Snatcher, or any of the crew's Nemeses could take this opportunity to strike.

CAPTURING NOWAK

Once the hideout is located, seizing Nowak may prove harder than expected. If the PCs score 7-9 on their **Investigate** move to find Nowak, you can choose to have Nowak know they are coming, in which case he will flee, starting a chase. If Nowak escapes, he will show up again when *the Killer Strikes Again!* or during Martha's performance at *the Opera House*.

NOWAK'S HIDEOUT ★★

CAPTURE NOWAK 4 / NOWAK ESCAPES 3

- **Factory Hideout:** When you enter Nowak's Hideout, take *watched-2* and give Nowak's Hideout *deafening noise*.
 - **Strings and Tripwires:** When you **Sneak Around** Nowak's Hideout without first **Investigating** the scene, you trip his system of visual cues. On a 10+ or 7-9, Nowak knows you're coming, but he can't see you yet.
 - **Chase:** When *capture-Nowak-4* maxes out, Nowak is cornered. When *Nowak-escapes-3* maxes out, Nowak flees (**Deny Them Something They Want**).
-
- Provide Nowak with an escape path (give Nowak *escaping-1*)
 - Block pursuers with a dead end, a metal grate, or a collapsed pile of gears (remove one tier from *capture-Nowak* or give someone *stuck-2*).
-
- Churn and clank loudly

NOWAK ★★

John Nowak is a tall, lean, and wiry man in his late 20s. He has an intimidating air about him, whether because of his Mythos' atmosphere or because of his broken nose, shaved head, and many tattoos, ranging from cheesy Christmas-themed illustrations to creepy skulls, tombstones, and crows. He usually wears a dirty hoodie pulled over a tanktop, worn-out cargo pants, and work boots.

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / (BANISH OR BIND 4)

- **Ghostly Apparition:** When Nowak's *hurt-or-subdue* maxes out, he doesn't die or pass out. Instead, his body becomes incorporeal. *Hurt-or-subdue* becomes an immunity (*hurt-or-subdue:-*) and all statuses on it are removed. Nowak gains *banish-or-bind:4*. Until he learns to control this ability, he materializes after the next downtime.
- **Deathsense:** Nowak can sense an approaching death. As a side effect, he can instinctively dodge attacks that would kill him. When Nowak takes a status that would kill him and that can be dodged given his precognition, he ignores the status instead.
- **Silent Toll:** When Nowak's deafness first becomes apparent or relevant in a scene, give him *deaf*. He is immune to Martha Ellis's Banshee keen.
- **Flash Forward:** As a hard move, Nowak foresees the grim future of a person he can see and makes a rough sketch depicting it. Upon gazing on the sketch, the person whose future is depicted sees his predicted fate and becomes *emotional-3* or *terrified-3*.
- **Urban Survivalist:** When Nowak enters the scene give him *alert-2*. At the end of each downtime, if he lost his last hideout, he finds a new one (Create Danger: Nowak's Hideout).
- Throw a powerful punch at someone (*staggering-3*) or grapple them (*restrained-3*)
- Wave his hands and mumble in warning of what's to come
- Receive a vision about someone's death or grim future

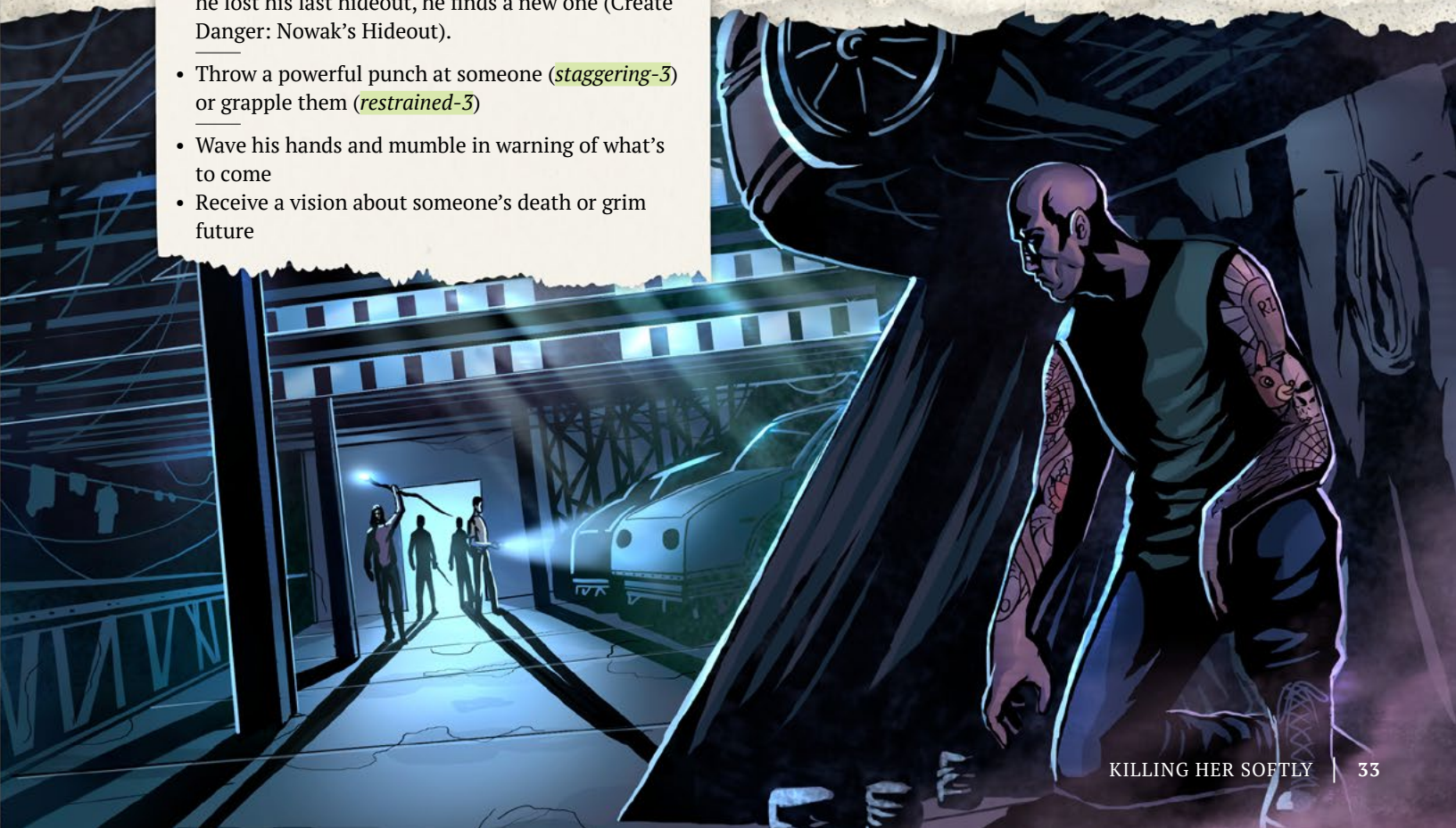
INTERACTING WITH NOWAK

Once cornered, Nowak will wait to see what the crew does next. If the crew is still suspecting Nowak at this point, they might attempt to subdue him or even take revenge for his alleged victims and hurt him.

Communicating with Nowak is difficult; being deaf, mute, and partly illiterate, John Nowak is an isolated man. Most conversational skills (and power tags) won't work here, and he must be assuaged before he can be approached. When someone tries to gain Nowak's trust, give him *apprehensive-2* if the crew has not acted violently against him, and *afraid-for-his-life-4* if they have. Once cooperative, Nowak can easily answer yes-or-no questions, point at people, objects, or pictures, etc.

When he saw Martha on the Washboard flyer, Nowak had a flash of her future. He's vague about the exact details of Martha's future, but if pushed he could sketch a newspaper page with Martha's picture titled MURDERER.

Sensing the impending deaths, Nowak tried to stop Martha at each of the crime scenes, but he was too far or arrived too late. He needed to be closer to Martha to be able to intervene in time, but the crew and/or the police forced him to lay low and keep his distance.



Nowak is immensely frustrated with his inability to communicate and doesn't understand why he was given this morbid gift of foresight if he cannot even help anyone. He is on the brink of despairing.

He is also genuinely sad and sympathetic for Martha, who is too caught up in her own pain to see the harm she's inflicting on others.

THE KILLER STRIKES AGAIN!

Left to her own devices, Martha Ellis will strike again, seeking an outlet for her complicated, tormented soul. Whether the crew suspects her or still believes she is the victim, it is time to throw a fat clue their way. This time around the crew will arrive in the nick of time to witness Ellis and Nowak battling it out.

The victim of Martha's next strike should be someone close to or liked by the PCs. Ideally, it should be one of the crew's supporting cast. Otherwise, Ellis may target a favorite NPC from the case such as Sammy Jefferson Jr. or police officers Das or Quinn, etc.

This triggered scene can play out in several ways:

- If Nowak is still on the loose, he arrives in time to interrupt the ending of Martha's song, but she locks him up in the bathroom, capturing him.

- If Nowak is locked up or worse, and the PCs already suspect Martha, they could be the ones looking for her, arriving in the middle of her song.
- If Nowak is locked up and the PCs don't suspect Martha, Officers Das or Quinn can walk in on Martha and the victim, and then call on the PCs to investigate, raising the possibility that they got the wrong man.

The attack occurs at the victim's home. When the crew arrives, Martha is *distraught-3* and of course *drunk-3* as last time. However, the victim isn't dead; the song was interrupted and they lost consciousness, conveniently falling into a coma.

Martha isn't aware that the victim isn't dead (not even her Deathsense can operate at her current level of intoxication). She relates to the victim as having passed away until someone notes that the victim is still alive, at which point she becomes very nervous.

Martha insists that 'the hooded killer' was the one who affected the victim (whether or not Nowak was at the scene). If she's told Nowak is locked up, she'll insist there's another killer.

Confronted about her song, she will claim that she was trying to help the victim.

MARTHA ★★★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 1 / BEG FOR MERCY - / EMOTIONALLY HEAL 5 / (BANISH OR BIND 4)

- **Apparition:** When Martha's *hurt-or-subdue* maxes out, her body becomes incorporeal. *Hurt-or-subdue* becomes an immunity (*hurt-or-subdue*:-) and all statuses on it are removed. She gains *banish-or-bind*:4. Until she learns to control this ability, she materializes after the next downtime.
- **Deathsense:** Martha can sense an approaching death. As a side effect, she can instinctively dodge attacks that would kill her. When Martha takes a status that would kill her and that can be dodged given her precognition, she ignores the status instead.
- **Keen of the Banshee:** When Martha is incorporeal, anyone hearing her sing is affected as if she is singing about his or her personal pain.
- **Alcoholic:** When Martha Ellis enters the scene, give her *drunk-2*. As a hard move, she can give herself *drunk-2*.
- **Broken:** When you first try to discover or affect how Martha Ellis feels, she takes *full-of-self-hate-4*.
- **Pain Behind the Eyes:** As a hard move, the MC will ask you about your character's greatest pain. Martha can sense your answer.
- **Opera House Showdown:** When Martha sings to everyone at the Opera House, give the Opera House audience a spectrum of *rend-hearts*:6. When *rend-hearts* is maxed out, everyone in the Opera House audience dies of grief.
- Sing about one's pain, if she knows it (*emotionally-overwhelmed-4*, if the target is a PC and the pain is attached to a theme, they can mark Crack or Fade to let go of the pain and avoid the status)
- Push someone back with drunken force (if she's not incorporeal, *prone-2* or *bruised-2*)
- Pull out a concealed holdout gun and shoot someone (*gunshot-3*)
- Grab the mic

If exposed and threatened with consequences (such as arrest), Martha will drop her act, revealing the restless soul behind the facade. She will pick out one of the lead characters present and start singing, hoping to bring her would-be-captors down one by one and unleashing all the hatred and anger she has built up for those who misunderstand her and stand in her way to glory and fame. Unless she is helped, she won't calm down until she has killed someone with her keening. She would then come to her senses and attempt to flee the scene.

DEPTH 4: A DEATHLY NIGHT AT THE OPERA



THE OPERA HOUSE

"Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the Opera House. Tonight we have a very special lineup of musicians and performers who will share with us the magic and mystery of jazz music. From the City's most beloved big band tunes to the most alluring and melancholic melodies, we have it all. Prepare yourselves for a long night of the soul... And now, to open up the performance, please welcome Downtown's most soulful voice, the enchanting - MARTHA ELLIS!"

This triggered scene offers a grandiose ending to the case in the event Martha Ellis has not yet been stopped, or if she was set free for lack of evidence. The crew catches wind of Martha's next performance: Martha Ellis will go on stage in a special jazz night at the City's Opera House, in a pivotal gig landed thanks to the relentless efforts of Sammy Jefferson Jr.

The PCs could arrive at this scene with different ideas in mind, depending on what they had discovered so far. They may wish to stop Ellis, to confront her, or, if she was able to fool them thus far, to listen to her music. They may also hear about this event as it unfolds and rush to the scene.

Martha Ellis, in any case, will reveal herself on stage as the Banshee she truly is. She's only partly aware of the feelings brewing in her, feelings of hatred and anger, guilt and extreme sadness – all circling around a deep sense of mourning for the past, her failing career, and the crimes she committed to save it. These feelings were always there, in every killing she carried out, and tonight they will push her to try and sing her ultimate performance, the quintessential swan song, and unlock the darkest emotions of not just one person but everyone

in the audience at once. If she is not stopped, the result would be a public disaster that will be etched forever as a painful memory in the history of the City.

Depending on their situation and what they know about Martha Ellis, the NPCs in the case may take different roles in the scene:

- As the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come, John Nowak still wants to warn Ellis from making the biggest mistake of her life and being forever hated by everyone around her. If he is free or able to break free, he will show up at the Opera House.
- Sammy Jefferson Jr., if he is still oblivious to the part his singer and client had in the killings, will be there, wearing his tackiest suit. For him, this night is about finally legitimizing his shady business and starting to make some real money. The bouncer Syrus may also be invited, serving as a personal bodyguard for the diva.
- Officer Das and Quinn could be doing traffic duty outside the Opera House on this busy night; they could be chasing an escaped Nowak on his way to the Opera House; or, if they suspect a crime, they might be there to "inspect the security arrangements" and keep watch.

MORE BROKEN GLASS

During this scene, when Martha's wailing hits a crescendo, every artifact of glass in the Opera House shatters – from stained-glass windows to lightbulbs – showering the audience with shards of glass. This is mostly for effect; the glass causes mostly panic and minor scratches but no substantial harm.



AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- What was the end of Martha Ellis? Was she healed, imprisoned, or killed? Even if someone found a way to banish or destroy the Banshee, Martha's emotion may have left a powerful print that continues to echo behind the veil of the Mist. If she was stopped in time, is she being helped to work through her issues? How are her powers contained? Perhaps she is admitted to the Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane, where she will be groomed directly by Dr. Krystal Knight and resurface as part of her doomsday plan in *Broken Glass* (page XX).
- What about Nowak? Was he able to help Martha and accomplish what he set out to do? If not, does he continue to stop villains from ruining their future as a ghostly messenger of death, or did he despair and turn to evil, or back into the sleep of the Mist? Did he get to keep his job or was he sent to prison?

- With the similarities in their Mythoi, and their rather opposite mundane personas, do Martha and Nowak become mortal enemies or do they develop an inexplicable love that crosses space, time, and prison bars?
- What kind of relationship formed between the crew and officers Das and Quinn: a cold rivalry or a friendly alliance? Somewhere in between?
- How did the legal aspect of the case close? Was someone formally charged with the deaths of Darnell Fox, Tiffany Bancroft, or Adam Walsh? Did anyone help their families reach closure, or is it better to leave them in peace? Do their souls rest in peace or are they restless, seeking revenge?
- What is the future of the Washboard? Did Sammy Jefferson Jr. finally go legit or did he return to his usual sources of income?

Finally, if you are playing through the story arc, be sure to go back to the red lead of **Dr. Selma Perrin** of Mending the Broken (page XX), and sow the seeds for the next installment in this vein.



CITY of MIST

**CARNIVAL OF
MACHINES**

PERSONAL VEIN

When a Rift love triangle ends in a tragic car crash at a Downtown junction, the crew must trace the chain of events back to its source. Was this just another sad story, so common in this City, or did a guiding hand have a part in this? The more they learn, the more the crew members sense that they are being led down a path from which they can't escape, towards the same end as the victims of the crime they are investigating.

Carnival of Machines starts out as a neo-noir murder investigation but pivots mid-case into a classic comic book "death trap" scheme. In its investigation-heavy, moody first half, the crew unfolds the personal misfortune of three Rifts whose Mythoi caused them to become involved with one another. In the second half of the case, the crew reveals the scheme behind the tragedies and must survive a creepy, forsaken, and boobytrapped funfare, designed solely to kill them and those like them. The case also features an NPC on a crash course, Goldie, whose fate is determined by the PCs actions.

MECHANISM n. The philosophical doctrine that all natural phenomena, including life and thought, allow mechanical explanation by physics and chemistry.

THE MECHANIST

Maximilian Drake used to think he had the capability to understand anything. For him, the universe, life, and people were nothing more than complicated machines who could be understood through analysis. He was a genius of applied sciences, making groundbreaking discoveries at Helix Labs, before he awakened as the Rift of **Hephaestus**, Greek God of blacksmiths, craftsmen, and volcanoes. Sight beyond the Mist exposed him to phenomena he could not explain, and he became more and more anxious. This was exasperated by the fact his awakening came in the wake of a lab accident which injured his spine, leaving him with a walking disability. His spirit and body broken, he left Helix Labs, sentencing himself to exile from his beloved sciences.

In his darkest hour, Drake sought the help of what he referred to as a "brain mechanic": the psychiatrist **Archibald Tennant**, a member of **Mending the Broken** (see page XX). The psychiatrist seized the opportunity and poisoned Drake's mind, stoking his obsession with understanding through logic and empowering him to regain control over his life "by *eliminating* the unpredictable variables in the equation". For Drake, those unpredictable variables are the wielders of legendary powers: Rifts, whose 'magic' he both mocks and detests. Drake sidelines his own Rifthood, convincing himself his powers are a form of intellectual evolution, capable of bringing order to a chaotic world.

THE CARNIVAL

As an expert engineer, Drake applied his genius to studying and deconstructing Rifts. Researching folklore and comparative myths, he was able to discover the patterns that govern legends. He came to understand the logic in Rifts' powers, and most importantly, the driving force of their legend. Based on this knowledge, he surmised that **Rifts can't help but follow their Mythos**, and devised a plan based on this law: to build a fairytale fairground that will attract Rifts into customized death traps that will kill them when they take the mythic bait.

To that end, he teamed up with an impoverished traveling carnival set up just outside town, the **Lemnos Carnival**, and its members, who refer to themselves as "**Carnies**" (the Sintians, a folk of plunderers who tended to Hephaestus after his fall from Olympus). Touched by Drake's Mythos, the Lemnos Carnies accepted him as their messiah and worshipped him as a god, and he gifted them the uncanny science that would bring their funfair devices and mannequins to life.

To help him collect information on potential Rift targets, Drake hired **P.I. Chuck Holliday** (Sleeper) and equipped him with a camera with a lens that can see through the Mist. He sent the private investigator to find and profile Rifts for him. He then used his Carnies and their lifelike mannequins to lure hapless targets into the death trap fairground.

Drake's hypothesis turned out to be true. Fascinated with Rifts' nearly-mechanic, predictable behavior, Drake devised traps for each victim, deriving a twisted sense of control and pleasure out of the victory of science and logic over his legendary prey. He killed as many as a dozen Rifts before P.I. Holliday sent him three profiles of interconnected Rifts (and one Sleeper), who posed an interesting jigsaw for Drake's intellect to solve.

A DOWNTOWN LOVE TRIANGLE

Drake's new targets were the following.

- **Pauline Woodworth** (Paul Bunyan, a giant lumberjack in American folklore) was a private construction contractor who possessed immense strength as well as the power to grow bigger. She had her own business, **Woodworth Builders**, and a beautiful wife, **Ellie Woodworth** (Sleeper). Her Mythos urged her to settle the wilderness, so she was interested in construction projects outside town.
- **David Nguyen** (Rift of King David) was a high-flying executive in Orimaka Finance. His Mythos allowed him to slay giants (David and Goliath), but also pushed him to covet someone else's wife (as the Biblical king did).
- Samantha Goldstein, or **Goldie** (Rift of Goldilocks) was a master thief with the power to get into any home, bypassing locks, security systems, etc. and the drive to take what other people own.

Drake set in motion the machinations that would lead them to their deaths:

- He lured Pauline with a project of rebuilding the abandoned fairground at the edge of town (settle the wilderness).
- He arranged for David to have a bad date at the same diner where Pauline and Ellie dined, predicting that the adulterous king would set his heart on Ellie.

- During that date, he had P.I. Holliday tip Goldie off about a rich man in the Downtown diner who could be an interesting mark. Naturally, she showed up, and started casing David, planning to steal his money.

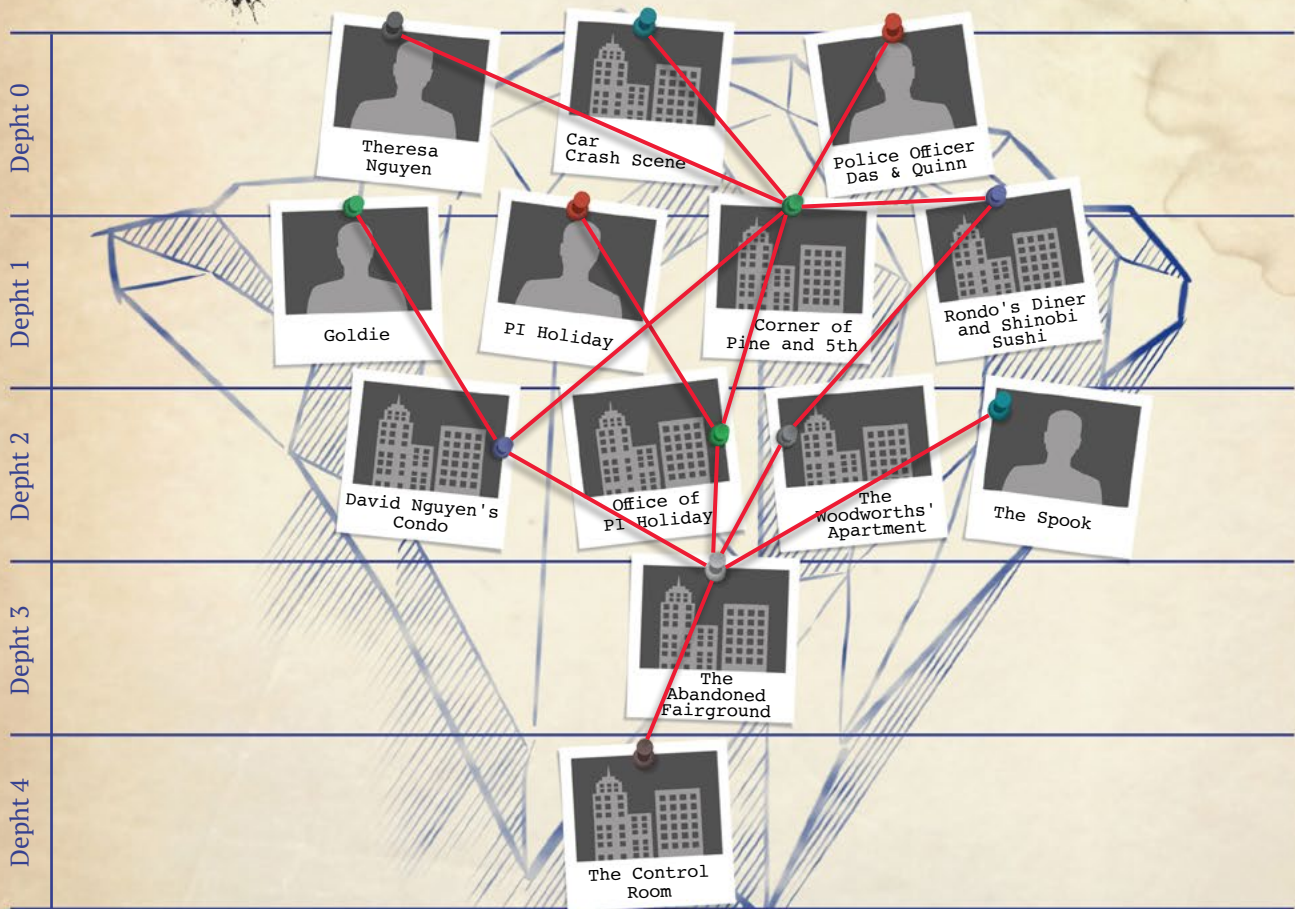
THIS FATEFUL NIGHT

A few weeks passed, with David harassing the Woodworths and Goldie sizing up David and trying to establish where he kept his fortune. Tonight, Drake's plan came to fruition.

- David followed Pauline to the fairground where they battled it out, David and Goliath style, and he killed her, shooting her with a revolver.
- Drake and his Carnies had a death trap waiting for David, a lifelike mannequin made to look like Ellie. When David kissed her, his lips started burning. The mannequin's lips were glazed with poison.
- Realizing he was deceived, David raced back to town to find the real Ellie and get medical help but it was too late. The poison killed him and he crashed his sports car close to the diner where they first met.
- Goldie was present at the car crash site, where she realized David was involved in something bigger and that in order to find out more, she must find out where he came from. A customized death trap already awaits her at the fairground.

The case begins with the car crash.





DEPTH 0: THE HOOKS

The most cinematic way to open the case is by having **crew members present at the corner of Pine and 5th** that night, when David Nguyen's sports car comes hurtling down 5th Street. As the crash takes place in a busy Downtown junction, some of the crew members may be there as part of their daily routines and start the scene as accidental bystanders. Precognitive Rifts could have had a vision of the impending crash, arriving at the scene in time to try and prevent it. Perhaps the crew sits down for a late dinner and conversation, in a diner close to the junction such as Rondo's Diner or Shinobi Sushi.

Those at the scene first hear the rumbling growl of a sports car engine, then spot the out-of-control vehicle running rampant on 5th street, about to crash. The driver seems to be unconscious, head against the steering wheel. **Even if the crew brings the car to a safe stop, David Nguyen is already dead**, killed by fake Ellie's poison kiss.

OUT-OF-CONTROL CAR ★/★★★

SAFELY BRING TO A STOP 5 / CRASH 2

- **Sports Car:** When Out-of-Control Car enters the scene, give it *speeding-4*.
- **Collision Course:** When *crash:2* maxes out, the Out-of-Control Car crashes into whatever hard barrier is in its path.
- Speed towards an impact point (*about-to-crash-1*)
- +★★: Hit someone who isn't being careful or who can't get out of the way in time (*hospitalized-5* or **Make Something Horrible Happen**)
- Speed down the street, engine growling
- Pass a bystander, creating a doppler effect sound

The crew may also become involved in the case in the following ways:

- If the crew has a reputation of working on the wrong side of the law, David Nguyen's grandmother, **Theresa Nguyen**, may contact them an hour after the accident. Icy cold on the phone, the elderly and extremely wealthy lady offers a substantial bounty to anyone who could bring her the head of whoever is responsible for her grandson's death on a literal silver platter. If the crew doesn't take her up on her offer, she'll move on to another crew, but she can still be convinced to pay for information about her grandson's killer.
- **Downtown beat officers Das and Quinn**, who feature in *Killing Her Softly* (page XX), will be called to handle the crashed car and the surrounding commotion. If the crew has established a working relationship with them, they may call upon the crew for help with investigating David Nguyen's death.

INTERESTED PARTIES

While the crew is investigating the scene of David Nguyen's car crash, they are watched from a distance by two persons who take great interest in the accident. Alert PCs (and players) who **Investigate** to check if anyone is watching them, may notice either or both individuals spying on them. You can also let the players know they are being watched if you want to introduce these characters. Goldie may approach the crew and introduce herself, as explained below.

GOLDIE

Samantha Goldstein (Goldilocks), known as Goldie, plays the role of the redeemable criminal, an NPC who is on the wrong path and whose fate will be determined by the actions of the PCs. She is a hustler and thief who excels at breaking and entering and robbing people of their wealth. Goldie has a distinct 80s streetwear style: she sports a mane of blow-dried bleached hair, a torn jeans jacket, and lots of iridescent plastic bangles. She is able to shape inanimate objects by declaring they are "too hot", "too cold", "too big", "too small", "too hard", or "too soft", which then becomes true.

GOLDIE ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / REDEEM 5 / CATCH 5

- **Other People's Things:** Once in the series, Goldie can stop holding back and transfer into her possession any single object, privilege, or power possessed by someone else, as long as she can see either the object or its owners. She then leaves town.
- **Too Hot, Too Cold:** Once per scene, Goldie can use her powers as an intrusion to defend herself, nullifying a single status of physical harm of tier-5 or lower by making it too hot, too cold, too hard, too soft, too big, or too small to be effective.
- Make her pursuers' clothing "too hard", "too big", or "too small" (*entangled-3* or *can't-breathe-3*), slow them down by making the floor "too soft" (*slowed-3*), or escape them altogether by making a passage "too small" for them to follow (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Steal something, or force someone to drop an object by making it "too hot" (burn up to two tags and give herself appropriate tags)
- Escape restraint, making an object "too big" to restrain or imprison her (remove up to 3 tiers of restraint statuses or burn up to 3 restraint tags)
- Expertly circumvent security measures, making locks "too small" and security systems circuitry "too hot" to function (give a security system *override-3* or burn 3 of its tags)
- Turn on a dime, shirking responsibility and abandoning all the progress she's made (remove 3 tiers from any statuses on her *redeem* spectrum or guilt and responsibility statuses)
- Smile ear to ear and flick her hair joyously as she escapes

Mythically attracted to other people's things, Goldie craves a chunk of David Nguyen's fortune and will do whatever it takes to discover where he hid something of value, be it cash, gold, diamonds, bonds, whatever. This legendary kleptomancy already has her ensnared in Maximilian Drake's trap, carefully designed to push all of her Mythos buttons. If she follows David's trail and reaches the abandoned fair-ground, as Drake expects she would do, there's a death trap waiting there just for her.

Goldie will try to use the crew. Once she sees them investigating the accident, her most obvious course of action is to team up with them. She will lie to, steal from, and eventually probably betray the crew, but only as long as no one gets badly hurt, since in

those cases her dormant conscience wakes up for a moment. For example, she may initially pretend to be Ellie Woodworth and try to get the crew to break into David Nguyen's Condo or to share what they discover about his recent whereabouts. Play her as a believable and friendly ally, who then shrugs sweetly when she screws the crew over, as if she can't help it and can't be expected to. Try to keep her betrayals taunting and humorous rather than grievous and play up her charm to get the crew to take interest in her fate.

Goldie has been casing David Nguyen and knows the clues listed under **Investigating David Nguyen** on corner of Pine and 5th. She also knows all the public details of his involvement with Pauline and Ellie Woodworth, given under Rondo's Diner and Shinobi Sushi, and can bring the PCs up to speed.

P.I. HOLLIDAY

The other individual watching is **Private Investigator Chuck Holliday** (Sleeper), the gumshoe working for Maximilian Drake who nonetheless never heard his employer's name or met him (see sidebar). Always in the classic rain coat and fedora hat, P.I. Holliday is well-equipped for Downtown's rainy alleys. A heavy smoker, he leaves a scattering of cigarette butts wherever he's staking out a target.

P.I. Holliday doesn't care who he's working for; in fact, he doesn't want to know. He only wants to get paid at the end of the day. He doesn't see himself responsible for other people's problems ("nobody is innocent"), and he has seen enough dead bodies of people whose problems caught up with them to care. He's a sleazeball, but he's not evil; confronting him with hard proof that his work is used to hurt people would make him think twice about taking on additional work from his mystery employer.

P.I. HOLLIDAY'S TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

P.I. Holliday is employed strictly via mail correspondence and has been offered double his normal fee for profiling Rifts. He received a special camera, with a Mist-penetrating lens through which he can see and take pictures of a Rift's true form and powers (the photos he takes with the camera only reveal legendary phenomena to its bearer and to Rifts). Since then he has been shadowing Rifts all over Downtown at the behest of his employer, sending the report dossiers to an obscure mailbox.

The mailbox is checked twice a day by one of the Carnies who drives into town. Assume that P.I. Holliday is immediately reporting all findings to his employer, perhaps even using an emergency telephone number if he feels what he found was very valuable or pertinent (the same Carnie also answers the phone). Once Maximilian Drake receives the first reports of a new set of Rift targets – the crew – he sets out to build custom death traps for them.

PROFILING THE CREW

Throughout the case, when the PCs score 7-9 on their **Investigate** score, use the counter question option to ask them about their Mythos and Mythos powers.

When a PC uses her powers and P.I. Holliday can see them, ask:

- What is the nature of your powers?
- What do you think could block your powers or contain them?
- Could your powers be turned against you?

When a PC displays a behavior related to their Mythos, ask:

- What does your Mythos really want from you?
- What does it wish for you to find out?
- Which character in your Mythos is most important to you?

Note down the answers and use them when you describe the death traps Drake prepared for the crew at the abandoned fairground. The character doesn't have to reveal the whole story for this to happen; you can assume that both P.I. Holliday and Drake do their research and extrapolate a great deal of information from just a few key details.

FOLLOWING P.I. HOLLIDAY

Giving P.I. Holliday the slip and then following him isn't easy. His custom move **Street Smarts** and his familiarity with the alleyways Downtown, reflected by

the hard move **Deny Them Something They Want**, make him hard to shadow. If the crew manages to follow the private eye, they will find him at his office (Office of P.I. Holliday), following Goldie or spending time with her, or dropping a package into the mail collection box on the street.

SHIPS IN THE NIGHT

To complicate things further, P.I. Holliday fell in love with Goldie while profiling her over the past weeks. He approached her, or rather, allowed himself to be seen by her, and the two now lead a no-strings-attached, on-and-off romantic affair. David Nguyen's car crash has P.I. Holliday worrying about what his employer plans for Goldie, and this concern for her may or may not be enough to drive him to cross his professional red lines and become involved.

Goldie can become a means for the crew to reach P.I. Holliday, but it works both ways: information about the crew, their powers, and their plans can leak through Goldie to P.I. Holliday, and from there to Drake himself.

PI. HOLLIDAY ★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / BRIBE 4 / THREATEN 4

- **Powers of Deduction:** When P.I. Holliday surveys the scene for the first time or as a hard move, the MC will ask you one question. You must reply with a straight answer or a solid lead. P.I. Holliday knows your answer, even if your character didn't speak it.
- **Street Smarts:** Whenever you try to follow or fool P.I. Holliday, first give him *alert-2*. This status cannot exceed tier 3.
- **Thinks On His Feet:** When P.I. Holliday takes a status he can avoid or soften with common sense or resourcefulness, reduce its tier by 1.
- **Professionalism:** The first time in a scene you try to get information from P.I. Holliday about his employer, if *bribe* or *threaten* have not maxed out, first give him *my-lips-are-sealed-3*.
- Draw out his revolver and threaten someone to back off, or he'll shoot (*wary-2* or *gunshot-wound-3*)
- Dash down a smokey alley and disappear or fool someone trying to shadow him (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Grease someone's palm when they're giving him a hard time (give them *wad of cash* if they get out of his way)
- Watch silently from a distant street corner, smoking

DEPTH 1: DOWNTOWN DISASTER

CORNER OF PINE AND 5TH

Steam rolls up from the engine of the crashed sports car and the acrid smell of burnt tires fills your breath. The car lights flash in tandem with a restaurant's neon sign on the side of the building, drowned in the cacophony of alarms from nearby cars. The streetlight above the signpost of Pine Street and 5th Street flickers and then dies. The windshield, smashed into a million glass pieces, still desperately holds onto its frame, hiding everything behind it except for a big, round, blood stain.

The corner of Pine and 5th street is a bustling Downtown junction with a few businesses, including some popular cheap eateries. This is both the scene of David Nguyen's car crash and the setting for his one-sided love triangle with Pauline and Ellie Woodworth, whom he first noticed at one of the local joints, Rondo's Diner. The Woodworths' Apartment is only a block away; this area used to be their go-to destination for a quick bite, and people here know them, at least by their looks.

Following the accident, an influx of curious bystanders swarms the crash site, soon followed by an ambulance and then the police (possibly officers Das and Quinn), who mark out the crime scene and push onlookers back. If the crew members are there first, they can **Investigate** the car and the driver before the police arrive, but they are seen doing so (unless they first **Sneak Around** or create an equally dramatic diversion).

DEATH BY GLASS

If the car crashed, David Nguyen's body is found in a gruesome state, with a large shard of windshield glass embedded in his skull. Modern windshields don't break like this, a fact which you can mention for added creep factor.

The driver is dead. It's hard to tell what exactly killed him, especially if the car crashed. Careful examination will show his lips have traces of lipstick on them, seemingly from a kiss.

According to the driver's license, this is David Nguyen. He is clearly a wealthy person, wearing an expensive suit, watch, and shoes and driving that fancy sports car.

There is gunshot residue on Davids' hands. He recently fired a firearm.

Considering tire tracks, the collision course, and additional dents on the car, Crime Scene Investigation analysis would show David lost control of the car a few moments before it crashed.

It's impossible to determine where exactly the car came from. Extensive and tedious CCTV cameras research or magical means of tracking may show that it drove in from out of town, but that's where the trail goes cold.

A careful investigator would notice David's shoes have mud on them. The same mud can be found in the car's tire grooves. Analyzing the mud can indicate it came from out of town, but sending it to a lab could take one to several dntimes to get results (if the Mist doesn't make the lab lose the samples).

If the deceased's memories or mind are accessible by magical means, the last image he recalls is the sight of Ellie Woodworth when he kissed her (not knowing it was her mannequin clone).

Beyond the Mist, David Nguyen's spirit is still in shock and is *transitioning-3* to the afterlife, or the void. When he comes to, if he's still around, he will become obsessed with Ellie Woodworth and seek her out, possibly going to the Woodworths' Apartment, but he won't willingly share any information about what he had done earlier that night, and, either way, he doesn't know. (Unless he is aided by a Rift, his spirit cannot affect Ellie in any way.)

Beyond the Mist, the Lemnos Carnies' poison which David breathed in gives off a vague Mythos footprint of Greek pirates and plunderers.

Further beyond the Mist, there is an almost impalpable trace of malice in the broken windshield. It's impossible to associate it with anything or anyone related to the case at hand, only with some faraway malintent.

INVESTIGATING DAVID NGUYEN

Once they put a name to the victim, the crew may try to gather more information about David.

Someone local would recognize David or his car, saying they have seen him hanging around recently at Rondo's Diner or Shinobi Sushi.

David Nguyen is a filthy rich high-flying executive in his 30s, an Associate Partner at Ori-maka Finance. His success seems to be ascribed as much to his family connections as it is to his talent and hard work.

He is single, and has been active on dating sites / speed dating cafes / newspaper personals. About two weeks ago this activity stopped after he had one last date with Emma Bailey, a flight attendant who also hangs out at Shinobi Sushi.

He owns a luxury condo in one of the fanciest apartment buildings Downtown (David Nguyen's Condo).

Later, if the crew has access to the morgue and/or the coroner report, they will learn David died from respiratory failure caused by a poison, most likely ingested or breathed.

RONDO'S DINER AND SHINOBI SUSHI

Standing in the rain on the corner of Pine Street and 5th, you notice two bustling eateries on opposite sides of the road. On one side, with red booths lined with pink neon, Rondo's Diner looks like the joint that will serve you a greasy meal or a pancake stack and watery coffee any hour of the night. On the other side, under a blue-lit sign, Shinobi Sushi looks like a place for people who are trying too hard to be seen. Both places seem packed, though, so you figure someone around here must have seen or heard something.

The two local eateries at Pine and 5th can help the crew unravel David's past and point at his connection to Pauline and Ellie. The Woodworths' were regulars in both the diner and the sushi place, so other regulars know who they are and what they've been through recently.

David Nguyen was first seen around these parts on a date at Rondo's Diner with Emma Bailey, a mousy flight attendant (who is eating tonight at Shinobi Sushi). The date night was ruined because he couldn't stop staring at Ellie Woodworth. Emma mentioned to him that Ellie was spoken for, that she's with Pauline, but David didn't seem to lose interest.

David Nguyen started stalking Pauline and Ellie and on some occasions tried to impose himself and join them at dinner. He made overt advances at Ellie in front of Pauline. They refused him politely at first, but at some point Pauline threatened to hurt him if he didn't leave them alone. He kept stalking them, hanging around this part of town more and more often.

It was Emma's request to have the date at Rondo's Diner, a curious choice because Emma doesn't usually frequent the diner. She didn't plan on staying in 'that cheesy place', preparing to be picked up there and move on to a nicer restaurant, but then David saw Ellie.

Questioning Emma reveals a mysterious third party wanted David and Ellie to meet. Someone (P.I. Holliday) who knew she had a date with David left her a note, promising to take care of next month's rent for her if they went to the diner first. She was tight for money so she agreed, thinking it was a publicity stunt, and then forgot about it. After the date, next month's rent was paid.

The Woodworths live just around the corner, less than a block away (the Woodworths' Apartment).



DEPTH 2: A WELL-OILED MECHANISM

THE WOODWORTHS' APARTMENT

Looking up the drab brick building facade, you spot her, the sweetest sight, waiting at the window, raindrops like dew on her figure. The look on her face tells you she's waiting for someone, someone who isn't coming. Is it the love of her life? The dead guy in the car? Someone else? You ring the doorbell and she bolts to buzz you in. You brace yourself for the disappointment in her eyes when she sees it's just you, and for some greater pain you feel you're about to bring into her life.

The Woodworths' live in a modest apartment in one of the few affordable residential buildings Downtown. Ellie Woodworth (Sleeper) is home waiting for Pauline, who did not come back from work today and is not answering any of the messages Ellie left. Ellie is a pretty and petite young woman, gentle and soft spoken, and wears a casual dress. When the crew introduce themselves or when she learns about what happened to David, Ellie's fear overwhelms her, and she starts pacing back and forth, wringing her hands.

Pauline has not returned from work today. Pauline has projects all over town so Ellie doesn't know where she was working today.

David Nguyen has been stalking them for two weeks, making inappropriate advances at Ellie. Pauline was furious and wanted to teach him a lesson, but **knowing how strong Pauline is** (even if not why), Ellie feared a disaster and begged her to stay out of trouble. They reported David once to the police but the case was dropped. They thought of seeking legal help, but realized their budget was no match to David's.

Pauline has been somewhat distant lately and vague about her work. Ellie thought it was something to do with David's harassment but she also thinks Pauline has been hiding something. Maybe a surprise new home in the suburbs?

Ellie's lipstick matches the shade and brand of lipstick found on David Nguyen's lips (except it's not poisoned).

SEARCHING THE APARTMENT

To search the apartment thoroughly, the crew will have to get Ellie's permission or sneak in when she's not there. Ellie will want to know who the crew members are and why they are interested in the case before she gives her permission.

Under the Woodworths' shoe rack, there's mud that matches the mud found on David Nguyen's shoes and tires. Analyzing the mud follows the same routine.

Hidden between two boards in the clothes cabinet (Pauline was hiding such a Mythic project from her wife), **there's a folder with construction plans**, describing a theme park to be built just outside town, where now there's the abandoned fairground.

OFFICE OF P.I. HOLLIDAY

Private Investigator Holliday could not have chosen a more typical Downtown P.I. office. Accessed through a narrow stair between two street-level businesses, the second-floor corner office has a nice view of the junction below. The block lettering on the milky glass door, the broad hardwood desk, and the green desk lamp all tell you he's one of those traditional detectives. The Murphy bed folded with the sheets still on and a bottle of whiskey stashed in the file cabinet do a double tap on that assessment.

P.I. Holliday's office is located a few blocks away from the corner of Pine and 5th. If P.I. Holliday is present when the crew arrives, he welcomes them and pretends to be helpful, but keeps his lips sealed regarding his current assignment (tracking the crew and Goldie) or past assignments (profiling other Rifts including Pauline Woodworth and David Nguyen) as per his **Professionalism** custom move. He will use the occasion to collect more information on the crew, trying to discover their Mythoi. If the crew gets information out of him, possibly by bribing or threatening him, he reveals what he knows, partially or wholly.



Searching the office proves difficult as any evidence has been **well-hidden** by the veteran P.I.; if the P.I. is present, searching under his nose triggers his **Street Smarts** custom move, giving him **alert-2**.

A phone number P.I. Holliday recently called or a mailbox address etched in his notepad could lead the crew to the Carnie that receives his communications. Following the Carnie successfully could lead them to the abandoned fairground.

P.I. Holliday keeps a copy of all his profiling dossiers. There are about twenty of them stashed in a cardboard box hidden in a hole in the wall, behind a bookcase. They include the profiles of David, Pauline, and Goldie, but not the files on the PCs, unless P.I. Holliday had a lot of downtime to put together an organized folder.

The profiles contain a host of interesting details and pictures, not an analysis. A good detective can surmise P.I. Holliday didn't really know what exactly his employer was looking for, and therefore just described the subjects' lives and special abilities. The profiles can also point the crew at the Woodworths' Apartment and David Nguyen's Condo.

David's profile contains a pictures of his lavish condo, with some antiques and archeological artifacts hanging on the walls, most notably an ancient shield with a Star of David on it. There is a picture of him playing a guitar in some Downtown dive with a note behind it: "When I woke up, he was gone, everyone in the room was asleep." (This alludes to King David's magical lyre playing.)

Pauline's profile has pictures of her working in a construction site as a giant, lifting a pallet of bricks from the ground to the third floor. There's a map of the City with the locations of her projects; all of them are on the outskirts of town. There's a scribble on the map: "urban expansion?". There are also photos of her and Ellie hiking and kayaking.

Goldie's profile is a fat bundle of police reports, describing unsolved burglary cases. There are photos of shrunk down doors fallen off their hinges and charred alarm devices. Some fetching portraits of her, taken clearly without her knowledge, betray the P.I.'s feelings towards her.

SOMEONE ELSE?

P.I. Holliday's box of profiles can contain a profile on another Rift – a supporting cast character that the crew cares about, a series regular (like officer Das), or perhaps even a Nemesis. The crew must warn this person in time, otherwise they may meet this character at the abandoned fairground, or worse, find her dead in one of Drake's traps.



DAVID NGUYEN'S CONDO

To get to David Nguyen's place, you cross over to the other side of Downtown, the side with the clean streets and endless promises. Amid shiny skyscrapers and lavish hotels, you find an expensive-looking apartment building with a valet waiting outside. In the lobby, a snooty concierge stands watch to fend off any unwanted visitors. He may have died like a dog on the street, but David Nguyen sure lived like a king.

The up-and-coming financial advisor David Nguyen owned and lived in a beautiful 30th floor apartment, overlooking the Financial District, a stone's throw away from his Associate Partner office at Orimaka Finance.

This location contains a few clues about David Nguyen's Mythos and his obsession with Ellie Woodworth. It also serves as a point of obsession for Goldie's wild goose hunt for any tangible assets David left behind.

GETTING INTO THE CONDO

If the crew was hired by Theresa Nguyen or have a warrant allowing them to investigate the circumstances of David Nguyen's death, getting into the condo shouldn't pose a problem.

If they have Goldie with them or if they are following her, getting in won't be a problem but it is illegal and while Goldie can take care of herself, the crew members still need to **Sneak Around** to avoid being caught.

If the crew is breaking-and-entering on their own, they have the condo's security measures to contend with. They may also find that Goldie already broke into the apartment, or perhaps she's still there, dealing with David's pet spider (she didn't break in there until she saw David was dead because she has a terrible tendency to hang around for too long and get caught red-handed by the owners). If the police are alerted, officers Das and Quinn are likely to show up.

HIGH-END SECURITY SYSTEM ★★

ALARM 2 / OVERRIDE 5

- **Red Alert:** When *alarm* is maxed out, create a new Danger: SWAT Team / Elite Security (MC Toolkit, page 150) and give *locked-in/out-5* to unauthorized personnel in the perimeter.
- Increase its internal threat level (give itself *threat-1* on the *alarm* spectrum)
- Make anyone trying to override it *nervous-2* or give them *sweaty-hands-2*
- Present another security countermeasure that must be overcome, such as a magnetic lock, a keypad, a window alarm, a motion detector, an unexpected safe mechanism, etc.

INSIDE THE CONDO

While there are certainly a couple of expensive items to steal in the condo, the secret hoard that Goldie assumes David is keeping somewhere is nowhere to be found. If she is present, Goldie will search the place from top to bottom, possibly helping to uncover some clues, and eventually conclude that David must have stashed his wealth somewhere else, probably wherever he was driving back from on the night he died.

Searching the apartment can yield the clues below, but also holds the risk of triggering the alarm, or more dangerously, attracting the attention of David's **giant pet spider**.

There are ancient artifacts hanging on the wall: a bronze shield, a sling, and a bloodied rock. The shield is etched with the Star of David (also known as the Shield of David). Looking Beyond The Mist will reveal a biblical battle scene where David Nguyen, hiding behind this shield, uses the sling and rock to slay a giant warrior.

David was obsessed with Ellie. There are photos of her on the glass-and-gold coffee table, seemingly taken by a P.I. (not Holliday). There is also a telescope in the window, pointed at the junction of Pine and 5th St. (revealing that the condo is on a street that continues Pine St.).

David was tracking Pauline. Hidden in his cabinet or on his computer, there are the results of a financial research he made into Woodworth Builders, revealing that Pauline was working on a big project in the abandoned fairground just outside town.

GIANT PET SPIDER ★★★

There's a story about King David being helped by a big spider when he flees the soldiers of his political rival, King Saul. The spider spins a web that covers the cave David hides in, making it look as if he couldn't have gone that way. This story is manifested in the City as a huge Familiar loyal to David Nguyen, who watches over his condo against intruders.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / SCARE OFF 5

- **Giant:** When the Giant Pet Spider takes a physical harm status, reduce its tier by 2, unless it affects all of the Giant Pet Spider.
- **Creepier:** When Giant Pet Spider enters the scene by surprise, the MC can make one hard move. Additionally, give everyone around *terrified-3*.
- Spit out a jet of sticky webbing (*glued-3*), setting up its prey for a bite
- Bite its prey, injecting venom (*poisoned-3* and the target takes the same status again at the beginning and at the end of each Downtime thereafter, until the MC rules they survived the poison. Poison-curing effects only need to remove the poison status once to stop it from repeating.)
- Hiss and poke at its prey with furry legs

THE SPOOK

Once Drake has received enough information from P.I. Holliday about the crew, he may attempt to lure them into his trap by sending one of his lifelike, animated mannequins. These creepy robotic clones are made in the image of someone the lead characters would take an interest in. Drake is not limited in the repertoire of characters and special effects he can create, but he's smart and knows how to elegantly arouse curiosity without giving too much away, so he will target only one crew member first, to make the encounter more believable.

The appearance of the spook is a cinematic moment, meant to fool the lead character as well as the player. The spook is most likely to show up in an alley, in the fog or rain, and at a good distance from the lead character, enough for the character to partially identify this figure, but far enough so it's *hard-to-see-3*. It will then disappear, leaving behind it a message that points to the abandoned fairground. The message would be left in a manner appropriate to the form it took: a mysterious agent will leave a sealed letter, a fiery being will burn its message on the alley wall, etc.

The spook could take the form of any person or character, as long as it's shaped after someone Drake knows about and that it makes sense this person would point the crew to the abandoned fairground. It could be:

- A major character from the PC's Mythos
- A character from the PC's personal life, dead or alive
- A member of an organization or group the PC is seeking
- Someone likely to have information the PC has been searching for

Try to trigger the PC's Mysteries and Identities, tempting them to pursue the spook or mark Fade/Crack.

Attempting to catch the spook can spark off a chase (*catch:5*), but the spook starts with *far-away-3* and will vanish the first time the MC makes a hard move (**Deny Them Something They Want**).

DEPTH 3: SUCH A FUN WAY TO DIE

THE ABANDONED FAIRGROUND

Wind blows over the open gray flats where the old funfair stands, a cluster of rickety booths and faded tents. Once-flashing signs now hang crooked with broken neon tubes and washed-out lettering. Torn and colorless tent tarps flap repetitively. A Ferris wheel looms above the countless crests of rides, games, and oddity shows. The big archway sign, one side of it collapsed, reads THE LEMNOS CARNIVAL. There isn't a soul in sight.

The abandoned fairground was once the home of a successful business operation, run by the Lemnos family, a family of distant Sinti (Romani) descent who over the years assimilated carnival folk from many different ethnicities. The carnival was one of the strangest and most popular shows in town, and it basked in its unregulated status outside City limits.

The more successful the Lemnos family became, the more others envied their unregulated status. Government officials started badgering the Lemnos family, gradually constricting their business activities until the carnival went bankrupt. Some of them left the fairground and emigrated to the city below the City to join the trash-digging Marginals (see *The Undertrash*), while others held out and survived by stealing food and stooping to petty crime. Their seer, **Masilda**, told them a god will eventually come to lead. The fairground spent years in a state of disrepair, rotting and fading. Until, one day, Maximilian Drake rolled up into the fairground on a wheelchair, an outcast-by-choice, mysteriously attracted to this bizarre place.



The clan, who called themselves the Lemnos Carnies (Carnival employees), embraced the Rift of Hephaestus as their newfound god and cared for him; in return for their kindness, he taught them his Mythos-powered sciences and made them weapons that enhanced their abilities and turned them into super-powered marauders. Touched by his Mythos, they awakened as Rifts of the Sintians, becoming his guard, his spies, and his family. Together, they started executing his plan to eliminate Rifts in the City, building the fairground into the fairyland death trap that it is today.

NAVIGATING THE FAIRGROUND

The fairground spreads over many acres of land, most of it densely covered with dilapidated pavilions and broken down game booths and rides. All Hephaestus-powered devices installed across the fairground serve one of three functions: **separate**, **lure**, or **kill**. All of the devices are operated remotely by Drake from the control room using a combination of mundane technology (according to the technological age in which you play) and mythic mechanomancy (which exceeds the technology of the age, giving it a magical twist, in this case, the mysterious magic of the Greek god of metallurgy and crafts).

PREPPING FOR THIS SCENE

Before you run this scene, take a moment to consider the lead characters' abilities, Mythoi, Mysteries, and Identities, and devise a lure and a death trap for each as described below.

1) SEPARATE GROUPS INTO INDIVIDUALS

When a group tries to advance through the fairground, Drake will remotely trigger:

- Props that collapse and block their path, like a huge hot dog from above a hot dog stand
- A tarp that drops between them, separating them among different parts of a pavillion
- Broken revolving doors and turnstiles that let one person in but shut immediately after
- Rides such as a carousel, a Ferris wheel, or bumper cars that come to life just as the PCs cross them, forcing them to wait a long time to reunite

None of these devices are truly dangerous or threatening, and any barrier formed between the PCs can be easily circumvented, if the PCs split up and try to go around. If the PCs insist on reuniting there and then they must **Take the Risk** to scale or cross the barrier. A miss could result in:

- Getting injured or stuck
- Getting lost, coming out a different way than expected
- Triggering a trapdoor that leads to another level of the fairground, such as an underground room, a service corridor behind the tents, etc.

Once an individual is visually separated from the crew, they are considered lost, and need to **Investigate** to locate the other crew members. Musical rides suddenly turn on if the crew tries to communicate by shouting. To keep his prey in the dark, Drake has also rigged the place to interfere with mundane communications and scanners (all tech takes *jammed-5*) and may devise a contraption ahead of time to tackle any Mythos divinatory powers he is aware of.

2) LURE INDIVIDUALS INTO THEIR PERSONAL DEATHTRAP

When an individual moves alone through the fairground, Drake will remotely trigger his mannequins to tease that individual's specific Mysteries, Identities, or other motivations (see under *The Spook*, above). Drake will also use extensive special effects such as fog, smoke, lighting, sound effects, etc. to make the experience seem realistic. The purpose of this show is to make the target follow the lure, away from their team and into a separate booth, pavillion, or section of the fairground.

Describe the lure to your players as you would describe a regular scene, e.g., as if the PC truly had a vision of their guardian spirit or as if an informant was really beckoning them to follow him into a pavillion. The only exception to this is that, as a side effect of Drake's mockery of creatures of magic, fantasy, and myth, they all look just a little over the top.

Here are some optional clues for suspicious or observant PCs who **Investigate** what they see:

Everything seems real. So why do you still feel like someone is mocking you?

Beyond the Mist, there is only legendary machinery and the din of a hammer striking the anvil.

Any beings that appear mythical to the naked eye do not have a Mythos print beyond the Mist.

If their suspicion is aroused, PCs can **Change the Game** to prepare for whatever is coming.

3) THE DEADLY FINALE

Drake is the master of machines, and he is out to prove human beings in general and Rifts in particular are just different kinds of machines. Once he figured out what makes an individual tick, he uses their deepest wish or fear to manipulate them into the trap.

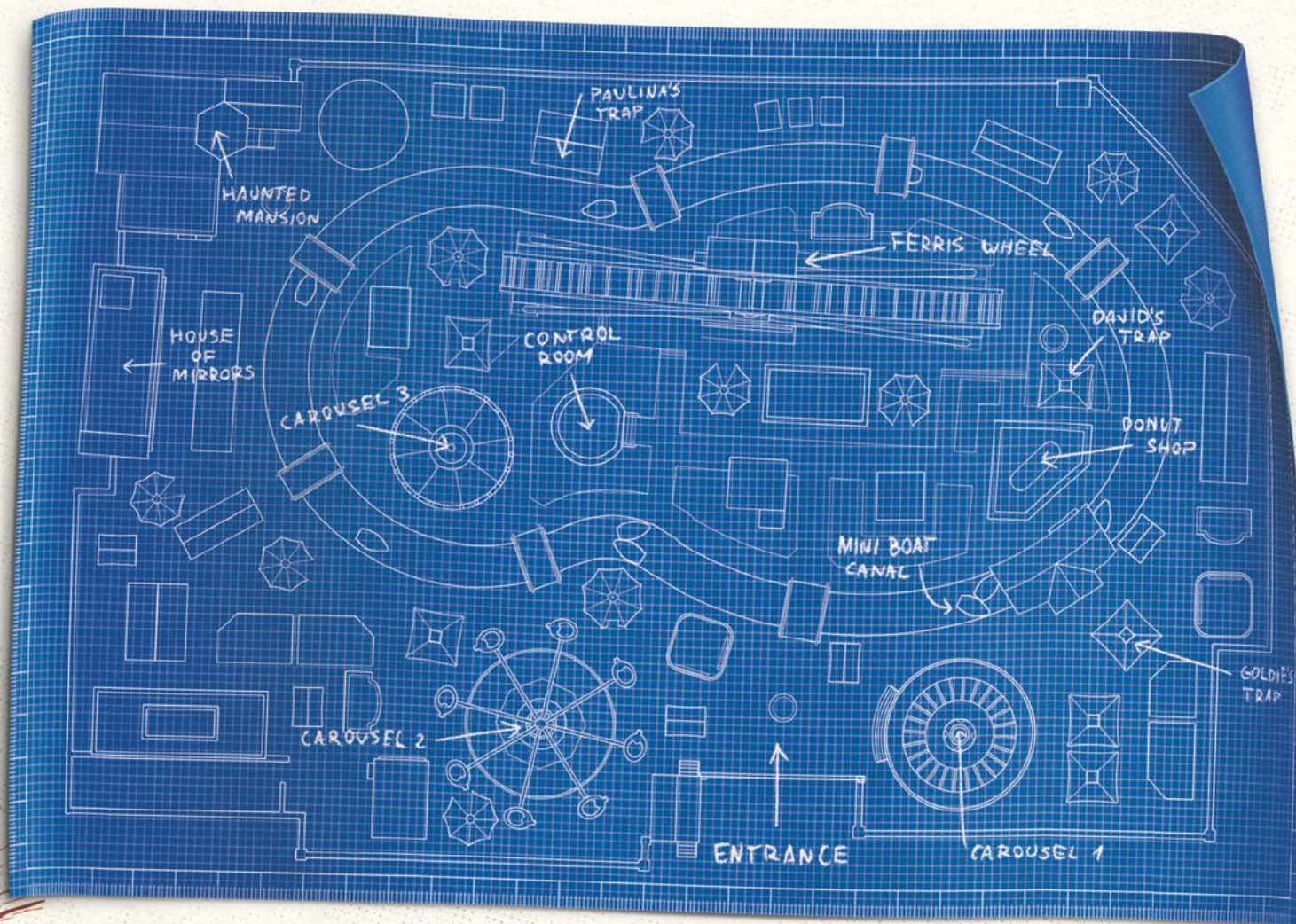
When an individual enters their personalized pavilion, booth, etc., she beholds a spectacle carefully designed to appeal to her deepest mythical questions, for example:

- If she comes from another realm, such as the Pits of Hell or the Enchanted Forest, the trap will be designed to look like that.
- If she was the product of a lab experiment, she could discover a secret lab, leading her to believe the origin of her powers might be inside.
- If she has been searching for someone or something, this person or object would be standing right there (an animated mannequin, of course).

The purpose of this spectacle is to draw the target to the focal point of the room, where a specialized trap awaits. The trap triggers as a soft move (by now, there have been plenty of fair warnings) and the character is hit by a tier-5 status chosen specifically to overcome her abilities:

- A speedster Rift would be beset by a chain of explosions, firing a thousand sharp javelins all around her, so that wherever she's running, she's running towards a shower of javelins (*impaled-from-every-direction-5*).
- A physically invincible Rift could be buried in a tank of molten armored steel, which is then instantly cooled off (*caught-in-a-solid-block-of-steel-5*).
- A Rift that can become incorporeal is shackled with magical bonds (*materialized-5*) before being crushed by an iron weight (*crushed-5*).

PCs get to **Face Danger** if their players can explain how they avoid the death trap; only tags relevant to that method of escape apply. Alternatively, PCs can **Stop.Holding.Back.** and make a no-return sacrifice to avoid getting caught, or to free or heal themselves.



GOLDIE'S TRAP

Goldie arrives at the fairground looking for David's tangible assets. In one of the pavilions, there's a lavish apartment not unlike David Nguyen's Downtown condo. Strangely, however, the apartment has three steaming bowls of porridge on a nice modern glass dining table; three mid-century modern chairs of different sizes around a faux white bearskin rug; and three king-sized beds of different firmness. Not knowing her own Mythos that well, Goldie is not sure what to make of it, but it piques her curiosity in ways she can't explain. After she samples the first eight stations, she finds in the most comfy bed a duffle bag full of money. Satisfied like never before in her life, and under the influence of the sleeping pills mixed into the third bowl of porridge, she goes to sleep hugging the duffle bag and never wakes up. The bed is also equipped to electrocute her to death if she skips the porridge, so her fate is sealed. That is, unless one of the lead characters does something to stop all this from happening.

AFTER THE TRAP TRIGGERS

So long as there are other Rifts navigating the fairgrounds (not including Drake and the Carnies), Drake will have the Carnies bring incapacitated Rifts to him at the control room. He simply wants to prove a point, and he's not getting any satisfaction from preaching to his choir of Carnies, so he is looking to keep incapacitated targets alive for a few more minutes just to show them how he kills the rest of the Rifts. At your option, and if your game group's social contract permits it, the final trap to trigger will deal a tier-6 status, following which Drake will proceed to kill or get rid of his incapacitated audience.

PCs who survive their personal trap are now aware of the situation and can ignore any lures they encounter and warn others (if they can find them or communicate with them). They can also proceed to investigate the fairground without further distractions. Drake won't waste more time trying to lure such a character. Instead, he sends the Carnies to finish the job.

INVESTIGATING THE ABANDONED FAIRGROUND

Once the PCs figure out that the lures are false and turn their attention elsewhere, there are many secrets they may uncover:

There's an area by the edge of the fairground styled to look like a biblical setting with fake stone buildings and palm trees. **The mud here matches the mud on Pauline's boots and David's shoes and car tires.**

There's a **high-caliber revolver** haphazardly stashed behind one of the fake stone houses. The cylinder has only five out of six rounds, having fired the bullet that killed Pauline Woodworth. It matches the gunshot residue on David Nguyen's hands.

There's a large patch of turned earth in the middle of the biblical land display, big enough for a giant to be buried in. Digging for a while reveals **the giant body of Pauline Woodworth**, shot between the eyes.

Beyond the Mist, an act of giant-slaying took place here, echoing with visions of a giant falling to the ground as the earth shakes.

The interior of one of the pavilions looks like a king's palace, where a life-sized mannequin that looks just like Ellie is standing motionless. The lipstick on its lips, identical to Ellie's, has peeled off, corroded by **the same poison that killed David Nguyen**.

Electrical wiring and radio transmissions all point toward an inconspicuous but tall scaffolding structure at the center of the fairground, covered by a patchwork of corrugated metal and endless lights, props, and signs. This is where the control room must be.

Beyond the Mist, seeking the maker of the mannequins or the fairground machinery also leads to the control room, which burns against the horizon as a rusty iron tower overflowing with molten metal.

THE LEMNOS “CARNIES”

The Lemnos Carnies have been living in the abandoned fairground for years, scavenging and stealing for survival after their funfair empire collapsed. Building upon their years of living on the margins of society, Drake's Mythos Touched them, casting them as the Sintians, a strange traveling folk of raiders, pirates, and plunderers who nursed Hephaestus back to life after he fell from Olympus, later becoming his followers. Today, they serve as the carnival's behind-the-scenes operators, builders, and guardians.

The Lemnos Carnies respect outcasts, social pariahs, and those who survive on their own. They have a chip on their shoulder when it comes to City slickers and conformist members of mainstream society (who have turned on them before), nor do they particularly like sociopaths and nihilists with no respect to others and no familial tradition or code. For now, they believe their master's rants that Rifts are abominations who defy the laws of nature, and willingly take part in his quest to eradicate the City's “devil spawn” as they see it. Carnies may, however, find themselves facing a dilemma if someone they see as a social outcast Rift asks them for help or if someone opens their eyes to the truth about Rifts.

The Carnies are often seen in work clothing: a grease-stained sweater, torn jeans, and wooly hat. Many of them embraced a rugged and disheveled exterior, and like to stick long menacing stares at any urbanite who stares at them too long. Their tools glow red like metal out of the furnace when they channel Hephaestus' magic with their **Mechanomancy**.

() Individuals among the Lemnos Carnies became independent Rifts of legendary versions of traditional carnival shows. Drake's strange science further enhanced their abilities. These four Carnies serve as Drake's personal guard and follow his commands unequivocally.

- **Yulanda, the Iron Jaw**, received a literal jaw implant made of smith-god steel.
- **Mariush, the Human Cannonball**, got special fiery boots and an unbreakable helmet that allow him to shoot himself at his foes.
- **Ismail, the Fire Eater**, was gifted an unknown number of flaming scimitars that he can store in his belly and cast at his foes. The swords then fly back to his hand (or mouth).
- **Bartley, the Trick Shooter**, received a pair of six-shooters that never run out of ammo.



LEMNOS CARNIE ★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 3 / THREATEN 3 / TURN 5

- **Rough Exterior:** When you first see a Lemnos Carnie this scene, if you're a City slicker or conformist, take *apprehensive-2*. When a Lemnos Carnie takes a social, emotional, or mental status, reduce its tier by 1.
- **Mechanomancy:** Once per scene, as a soft move (or any time as a hard move), a Lemnos Carnie can bring back to life a carnival ride, booth, death trap, or any other machinery that is broken or malfunctioned. Remove all negative statuses on that machine and restore its tags, if burnt.
- Start a mechanical carnival ride to distract the crew (*distracted-2*, temporary) or block their path while the Carnie gets away (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
- Touch a machine and get it to attack someone (*thumped-2* or *zapped-2*)
- Get violent and stab someone with a pocket knife, a screwdriver, or a broken bottle (*bleeding-2*)
- Stare intently, tapping a tool on her palm

YULANDA, THE IRON JAW ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / TURN 6

- **Impossible Acrobatics:** When Yulanda takes a physical or subdual status she can dodge, reduce its tier by 2.
- **Self-Disciplined:** When Yulanda takes a social, emotional, or mental status, reduce its tier by 1.
- When in a circus tent or close to high structures, perform an acrobatic trick, grabbing someone and throwing them in the air (*broken-bones-3*) or hanging them from a rope (*entangled-and-suspended-3*)
- Snap her iron jaw shut on someone (*shattered-limb-4*) or something (*shattered-4*)
- Chew off restraints (remove up to 3 tiers of restraints statuses, hers or others)
- Tumble and flip overhead

BARTLEY, THE TRICK SHOOTER ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4

- **Quick Draw:** When you attack Bartley, he first gives you *gunshot-3*.
- **Controlled Ricochet, Placed Shot:** When you **Face Danger** or **Change the Game** against Bartley's gunfire, you cannot use tags or Juice that describe cover or armor unless they provide complete protection.

MARIUSH, THE HUMAN CANNONBALL ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / TURN 6

- **Absorb Concussive Force:** When Mariush takes a physical impact status, his magical helmet absorbs it. He converts it to a temporary *velocity* status of the same tier.
- **Olympian Headgear:** When Mariush takes a mental status, reduce its tier by 2.
- Launch himself at someone or something (*broken-bones-3* or *broken-3*; if he has a *velocity* status, it either enhances the tier of the *broken* status or impedes attempts to **Face Danger**)
- Ignite his boots, levitating unsteadily a few inches in the air

ISMAIL, THE FIRE EATER ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / TURN 6

- **Flurry of Flaming Scimitars:** Ismail's magical scimitars can parry almost any melee strike or projectile including bullets, beams of energy, and magical bolts. When Ismail takes a status he can parry, reduce its tier by 2.
- **(Almost) Immune to Fire:** When Ismail takes a heat or fire status, reduce its tier by 4.
- **I Know This Trick:** When Ismail enters the scene, give him *alert-2*.
- Cast flaming scimitars at multiple targets and have them boomerang back and hit again (*scorching-cut-2* four times)
- Spit fire in a cone in front of him (*extensive-burns-3*)
- Hold someone's attention with incredible juggling of flaming swords (*entranced-3*)
- Cast a scimitar to hover around a teammate and parry incoming attacks (negate up to three tiers of incoming attacks on that teammate)
- Pull out yet another flaming scimitar from his throat

- **Sharpshooter:** When Bartley enters the scene, give him *aim-2*.

- Fire multiple shots at a single target or multiple targets (*flesh-wound-2* three times)
- Execute a trick shot so that something heavy breaks loose and falls on someone (*obstructed-2*, *prone-2*, or **Complicate Things, Bigtime**, usually forcing them to **Take the Risk**)
- Spin both of his revolvers on his trigger fingers

DEPTH 4: WHAT MAKES FOLKS TICK

THE CONTROL ROOM

Drake's control room lies at the heart of the fairground labyrinth, within a makeshift tower of scaffolding and corrugated steel, covered from top to bottom with signs advertising the various rides and attractions of the funfair. If they haven't been taken out of the equation, the four Carnies that constitute his guard will defend the control room to the end, as their brethren watch from all around the fairground.

Inside, the dark, rusty, and cramped space is filled wall-to-wall with monitoring equipment, such as screens and displays, that allows Drake to know of everything that is happening in the fairground. There sits the demented genius in his motorized wheelchair, monitoring the traps and timing them perfectly while at the same time sketching schematics for new traps.

Masilda, the Carnie elder and tarot reader who helps Drake interpret the information from P.I. Holliday and decypher what each Rift victim wants, is also here. She is watching the traps as they snap shut on the gullible Rifts with enjoyment; as long as they're treacherous City folk, she cares not. If things get messy, she'll try to creep out unnoticed.

THE SPEECH

Maximilian Drake has an axe to grind: he wants someone to understand and reaffirm the genius of his plan, of how he deconstructed the motivations of Rifts as he would little wind-up toy drummer monkeys. As described above, if he captures incapacitated Rifts and forces them to watch their friends fall prey to his traps, he will regale them with the details of his brilliant plan and Mechanist philosophy. This could be an opportunity for PCs that are perhaps physically incapacitated to use other abilities to escape or dissuade Drake from going forward with the killing.

SURRENDER?

Drake is more of a scheming mastermind than a stand-up-and-fight kind of villain. He's a powerful Rift, and has the upper body muscles of a divine blacksmith, but he lacks the guts and motivation required for a physical altercation. If the tides turn against him, and depending on how he gauges his chances, he may opt for different tactical approaches; in deciding how to end the case, factor in your cinematic considerations, e.g., is the story suffering from combat fatigue, etc.

- If he thinks the crew will spare him, Drake is not above surrendering. He figures no ordinary jail can hold him for long (metal has a way of bending to his will), so he could be back on the streets again soon.
- If he thinks the crew is out to avenge the Rifts he killed, he'll try to escape, ejecting himself through a vertical shaft into a converted getaway car (*catch:5*). The crew will have to take action to stop him from escaping.
- Finally, if the crew are on their last legs, Drake might don a suit of armor he created, dubbing himself **the Mechanist** (he's a nerd). This exoskeleton, shaped like a rusty-red metal armor, allows him to walk and take a beating, and so he'll make a final stand, trying to complete the job and kill the crew.

Even if he's caught and defeated, Drake will nonetheless give his speech, only it will be bitter and seething, explaining how concepts like 'magic' and 'gods' always put a wrench in the plans of 'true' logical thinkers. He has a full belly, and he won't miss the chance to unload his anger in the ears of anyone who would listen – even officers Das and Quinn as they escort him to prison.

If the crew interviews Drake about what drove him to turn to such drastic methods and to act upon his philosophy, he will relate his story, mentioning the name of the psychiatrist who helped him cope with his disability: **Dr. Archibald Tennant, of an association called Mending the Broken.**

Drake's personal phone has only ever made calls to one number: the Mending the Broken helpline. He always asked to be connected with Dr. Archibald Tennant.

Drake carries a pillbox with an anti-depressant psychiatric drug. The sticker indicates it was prescribed by Dr. Archibald Tennant. The pills have trace amounts of glass powder in them, possibly due to a faulty manufacturing environment.

THE MECHANIST ★★☆☆

DECOMMISSION 5 / CURE OF HATRED 6

- **Poisoned by Hate:** When the Mechanist enters the scene, give him *seething-with-hatred-2*. This applies to any attempts to convince him or cure him of his hatred to Rifts.
- **Olympian Exoskeleton:** When the Mechanist armor takes a physical or subdual status, reduce its tier by 2.
- Use mechanomancy to create a weapon that would counter a Rift's special abilities (giving an appropriate tier-3 status but giving himself *embarrassed-1* for using magic)
- Use mechanomancy to magically fix the exoskeleton (reduce any status on *decommission* by 2 tiers but giving himself *embarrassed-1* for using magic)
- Punch someone, pick them up and throw them around, or slam them with his oversized blacksmith hammer (*broken-limbs-4*)
- Use a flamethrower (everyone in range gets *on-fire-2* and again after each time they make a move, until the status is removed or the fire is put out)
- Preach aggressively about how Rifts are not legendary, they are just machines (everyone takes *self-doubt-1*)
- Take off, propelled by a jet of fire, and fly away (**Deny them something they want**)
- Ridicule Rifts
- Patronizingly explain to someone why their powers won't work on him

AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- Did everyone in the crew and in the supporting cast survive Drake's trap? If not, how are the surviving members dealing with losing a friend? What emotions do each of them experience? Do they vow to hurt Drake as revenge?
- What was the fate of Maximilian Drake, the Mechanist? Was he able to convince anyone with his self-important philosophical rants? Did he see the error of his ways or did he finally accept that there is more in heaven and earth than could be explained by natural science? Has he become more staunch in his opinions, if that's even possible? How does the crew plan to prevent him from killing more Rifts?
- What happens next with the carnival? If Drake is free, will he complete his vision and open the Rift-slaying theme park he dreamed up? If their god is gone, what will the Lemnos Carnies do? Will they wait for his return in the ruins of the carnival? Or will they rebuild, and if so, would it be to reopen the place as a legitimate funfair or to continue their master's legacy?
- How does the crew plan to approach the organization of Mending the Broken? If you played through *Killing Her Softly*, they now have met two villains connected with the therapist group.
- What ever happened to that street hustler, Goldie? Did she make it out alive of the death trap Drake set for her, or did her mythical and worldly urges seal her doom? If she survived, did she repent, or continue to steal from the rich and give to herself? Perhaps she becomes a series regular and continues to tail the crew, getting herself into dangerous situations.
- And P.I. Holliday – did he make it safely out? Or did he follow Goldie and got caught up in the fairground drama? Will the crew blame him for his part in the deaths of Pauline Woodworth and David Nguyen?
- What about Ellie Woodworth? Is anyone going to tell her that Pauline is gone? That it was David Nguyen who killed her? Would seeing the giant body cause Ellie to awaken and join the Rift underworld? Or would the crew decide to spare her the truth and let her hope she'll someday see Pauline again?
- If Theresa Nguyen hired the crew, she'll want to know what happened with Maximilian Drake, unless she gets his head on a silver platter as she asks. Such a brutal elimination is bound to gain the crew a nefarious reputation on the streets.
- Finally, what about Drake's technology, lying about in the mud just outside town? Someone could pick up a magical part and use it as a Relic, wittingly or unwittingly, sparking off a whole new origin story.



CITY of MIST

BROKEN GLASS

PERSONAL VEIN

There's a secret kind of hate blowing through the streets these days, bitter-cold and blood-curdling. People aren't even sure what they hate anymore, they just *do*: they hate each other, they hate their lives, and they hate themselves. Could Mending the Broken, a support network for those who see beyond the Mist, be the lifeline the City needs? As the crew struggles to curb this wave of dark emotions, they may find that same chilling hatred has taken root in their hearts.

Broken Glass is a psychological thriller that pits the crew against a supervillain who can evoke intense emotions, providing opportunities to explore the lead characters' own emotional hardships. The investigation takes the crew through the ranks of the villain's operation, a twisted mental health organization. Fleshing out the case are several optional side scenes that can be inserted as desired, to add drama and action. The case culminates in a confrontation with the villain and a rush to save the City from her ultimate scheme.

Depending on how you intend to run the case, you may wish to discuss with your group how best to handle intense PC emotions and themes of mental health at your table (see Addressing Mental Crisis And Illness on page XX).

As the finale of the personal vein, this case includes encounters with powerful adversaries suitable for a well-prepared crew of veterans (such as an optional clash with a team of elite Gatekeeper stormtroopers who could potentially turn Rifts back to Sleepers). Adjust the challenge level to suit your crew.

THE HISTORY OF DR. KRYSTAL KNIGHT

GOOD INTENTIONS

In the early years of the City, Krystal Knight (The Snow Queen) was a promising psychotherapist who aspired to heal society of its emotional wounds. Born to a family of aristocrats, Knight used her family fortune to gain access to the City's exclusive cliques of therapists, some of whom studied with the first proponents of psychology and psychiatry. Under their tutelage, she trained as a psychiatrist and specialized in criminal behavior, spending two decades perfecting her art.

Captivated by the power of words to heal the wounds of the past, but disillusioned by the system's corruption, she began focusing on offering therapy to the

City's white-collar criminals – its corrupt politicians and businessmen – helping them to become better people, hoping that with their power, they'll be able to cure the entire City. Her therapeutic services were in high demand among the rich and powerful of the City, but despite years of effort, social change did not come. A hidden force seemed to keep the City's people on track for alienation, isolation, and violence.

THE ROAD TO HELL

Dr. Knight continued to diligently practice her profession, overlooking her own mounting bitterness at the state of her life and her unfulfilled vision. When she heard Corbin Payne, "the man who was the City", fell ill and became depressed, she offered her services, seizing the opportunity to help the most powerful individual in the City. Not yet an Avatar, Payne thought he might still be cured and agreed.

The two spent years in intense daily psychoanalysis sessions. Like radioactive waste, the tycoon's legendary misery seeped into the doctor's soul and infected it, eroding her natural positivity and mental fortitude. Within their sessions, she still played the role of the optimistic healer, but outside of them her life was in shambles and she began hating everything and everyone around her.

Eventually, the king broke his so-called savior. To complete her transformation into his Grail Knight, he gave her a Relic, the Devil's Mirror (of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen*), which immediately took her as its bearer and awakened her as the Snow Queen. Every day, when she looked at herself in the mirror, the mirror showed her the worst qualities in her, that which was most loathsome and condemnable. Knowing the powers of the Mirror, Payne also left her one of his last remaining subsidiaries of his crumbling construction empire, **Aurora Glassworks**, who made windows, windshields, and display panes for the entire City (although, at the time, she didn't care about that). Then he left, shutting her out and leaving her with her failure, her self-loathing, and a hateful heart.

IN THE ASYLUM

Hanging in her bathroom, the Devil's Mirror drove Krystal Knight out of her mind until one day it shattered her spirit just as she shattered it with her fists. Tiny shards from the mirror lodged themselves in her eyes and heart; she had the rest sent to her glasswork factory to be melted down. The doctor then went into a self-destructive tantrum, was declared mentally unstable (in the jargon of the time), and was hospitalized in the **Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane** run by her rival **Esther Monahan**.

WHY DID THE THERAPY FAIL?

Both Knight and Payne had a long time to think about the past and make sense of it. Though she won't share it with anyone, the doctor knows her failure was a result of her childish obsession with healing everyone else, while ignoring the darkness she was harboring inside herself. This failure burrowed itself into her mind, feeding her self-hatred; she hates herself for having had a chance to do good and missing it.

Payne has a similar but slightly different take on the matter. For him, it was folly for a Sleeper, someone who is still asleep to their own true nature, to try and contend with forces beyond their comprehension such as the Mythos of the Fisher King. Some days, he thinks a part of him gave her the mirror so that she would awaken as a Rift, work through her issues, and come back with a real chance to heal him.

Knight was subjected to all manners of crude and ineffective forms of therapy, including untested medication, shock therapy, and even a lobotomy. She could have frozen any of her medical staff solid but she held back, using the therapy as a mythic form of self-mutilation, an outlet for the hatred she felt toward herself. Broken beyond repair, she spent the next few decades in the depths of the asylum in solitary confinement. Her frozen Mythos preserved her body, and she did not age.

CHANGING POLARITY

Due to the Mist, even the asylum eventually forgot about Krystal Knight. When the torturing therapy slowed down and then stopped, Knight's self-abusive outlet for her legendary hatefulness was gone, and so her thoughts turned outward, as did her hate. Krystal Knight began planning her revenge on the City that her abuser, Corbin Payne, built. She would destroy it in a blizzard of hatred, starting with Rifts, as they were most like the person she hated the most: Herself.

MENDING THE BROKEN

It wasn't hard for a Rift of Knight's magnitude, so supercharged with hate, to take over the asylum. She froze solid her confinement cell door, killed some guards and nurses, and tormented the now elderly Esther Monahan for days before disposing of her too. Then she forced everyone else in the asylum to accept her as Esther Monahan or die, taking her place as the head of the facility.

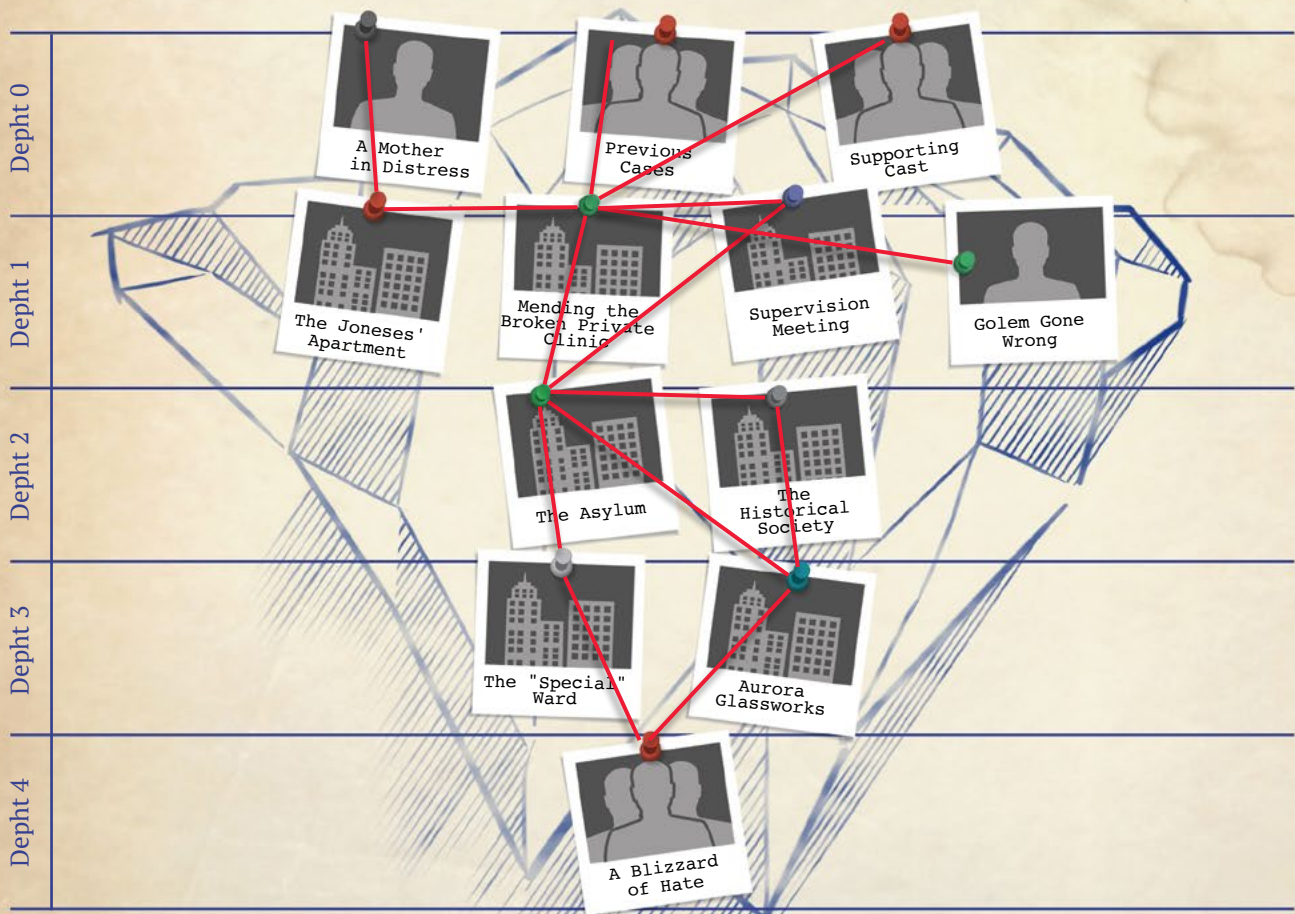
Next, she turned to the psychiatric staff. By locking them up in padded cells and forcing them to attend "therapy" sessions with her, Dr. Knight convinced the team of psychiatrists and psychologists that Rifthood was a perversion. Since "healing" or "converting" Rifthood was beyond their power, the therapists had to come up with a different kind of "cure". They devised a type of therapy where they would reflect the disastrous implications of being a Rift back to the patient, and let the patient decide what to do. Imbued with Dr. Knight's powers, this usually ended in Rifts developing intense feelings of hate, and eventually either seeking to hurt themselves or hurt other Rifts.

Reaching out to the mental health circles of the City, Dr. Knight and her team published Sleeper-awakening studies that Touched many of those who read them. The therapists trained by her and her students formed **Mending the Broken**, a professional organization of awakened therapists who sought to "help" Rifts – by influencing them to hurt themselves or others like them. Mending the Broken gradually made a name for themselves in the Rift underworld as a support program Rifts could turn to in a time of crisis, with a helpline, free sessions, and advertisements. They avoided being connected to the dire outcome of their "therapy" by subtly putting the blame on the victims and their circumstances.

A BLIZZARD IS COMING

The efforts of Mending the Broken were only partially successful; they were all too often thwarted by other Rifts (perhaps recently by the crew, in *Killing Her Softly* and *Carnival of Machines*). Fortunately for Krystal Knight, she only needed a certain amount of hatred to power her final attack on the City.

While its owner was hospitalized, Aurora Glassworks continued to be the City's main glass provider for construction. Almost every glass pane in the City had a fraction of her mirror's power, whose shards she had molten in the company's glass factories, and Krystal could feel it. All she needed was enough hatred to **shatter all of the City's windows at once**, and the magical icy shards would spread hatred everywhere, creating a frenzied riot. Mending the Broken has just about provided her with a sufficient emotional charge, so she is about to unleash upon the City the loveless winter she so craves.



DEPTH 0: THE HOOKS

The crew may become involved in the case in the following ways:

- **The crew may continue the investigation from previous cases**, *Killing Her Softly* and *Carnival of Machines*, where the villains are both out-of-control Rifts who came into contact with Mending the Broken therapists. Whether or not the crew believes their claims that their therapists drove them to do harm, they may wish to investigate this lead by locating Martha Ellis' therapist **Dr. Selma Perrin** or Maximillian Drake's therapist **Dr. Archibald Tennant**. Both therapists operate their own private clinics which would be easy to find. The crew may also investigate the Mending the Broken organization in general (see private clinic).

- **Down-and-out lead characters or supporting cast Rifts may seek the help of Mending the Broken.** A classic opening scene sets one or more lead character in a **Rift support group**, talking about her problems or listening to others with disdain. The support group is run at a local community center or private home basement by **Harry Yang**, a Sleeper starting to be Touched by Krystal Knight's new theories, who is nevertheless still on the good side and truly wants to help. Harry can refer a struggling lead or support character to a full-fledged therapist, who invites her to meet at their private clinic. Supporting cast characters who see a Mending the Broken therapist gradually become distraught or high strung, raising the crew members' concerns.

- **Officer Das** (see *Killing Her Softly*), if she becomes a series regular, may be the one seeking help from a therapist. Her particular powers may provide additional protection from Mending the Broken's insidious brainwashing techniques, so she can also serve as a whistleblower, alerting the crew to what the therapist organization is really up to.
- If you are playing this case as a one-shot, or if you want to add additional scenes, the crew can be called to help with a **domestic violence case** which will point them to Mending the Broken. **Felicia Pema Jones** (Palden Lhamo, wrathful protector goddess of Tibet and the Dalai Lamas) is a young Rift mother who has become depressed and violent after giving birth. Her husband, Jeff, either called social services or the police for assistance with his wife, or, thinking her possessed, asked around and reached the crew. Following this lead has the crew starting at the Joneses' apartment.

DEPTH 1: A CRY FOR HELP



THE JONESES' APARTMENT

You can't believe your bad luck when you get caught in a torrential downpour just outside the block-wide tenement where the Joneses live. By the time you're inside their cramped apartment, you're soaking wet. Jeff Jones welcomes you and walks you to the nursery, telling you about the outbursts of anger that his wife, Felicia, has had since the birth of their first child, Mira. He knocks on the door, but there's no answer. Through the keyhole you see a gloomy nursery room, exposed to the elements blowing through the open window, by billowing, tattered curtains. Someone in the corner is singing a hushed nursery rhyme.

Felicia Pema Jones is one of Mending the Broken's many victims. Mother to three-months-old Mira, she awakened shortly after childbirth as the Rift of Palden Lhamo, the Tibetan tutelary goddess, possibly because of her deep desire to protect her child and, for her, protect all that is good in the world. Unfortunately, Palden Lhamo can be a wrathful goddess who violently attacks threats to those under her protection, including her own daughter, and Felicia didn't know how to

handle that intensity of rage. When things got worse, she turned to Mending the Broken and was referred to Jungian therapist **Dr. Drew Langstone**.

Naturally, things just got worse from there. Langstone instilled destructive ideas in Felicia's head, playing on her Mythos' history with infanticide; his endgame was to get Felicia to kill her own daughter and commit suicide (for everyone's best interest, so he believes). When the crew arrives, Felicia is on the verge of doing just that – she has locked herself up in the nursery with Mira and keeps shouting at Jeff to stay away. The crew might be able to undo the damage done by Langstone and gain Felicia's help in chasing down the truth, but first they have to save both mother and child.

If Felicia does the unthinkable, she does so by throwing herself and/or her child through the nursery room window, falling to a glass-riddled death, by way of the **broken glass motif** (page xx).

Jeff can bring the crew up to speed on Felicia's mental health history. She was fine until she gave birth to Mira. When Felicia's rage outbursts started, the couple tried to seek help but Felicia didn't feel the (Sleeper) therapist she met with could help her. She later saw a poster for Mending the Broken, called their helpline, and was referred to Dr. Drew Langstone, who is still her therapist.

Jeff is frustrated that he can't help Felicia and worried sick for her and Mira's safety. He explains Felicia's appearance and incredible strength as side effects of the rage.

While still enraged, Felicia may mumble words that betray her inner conflict: she is worried that her daughter may be a Rift too, which is a 'dirty, ugly thing', and contemplating hurting both herself and her daughter to prevent it from happening.

If Felicia is stabilized, she reports feeling safe with Dr. Langstone, who can see and understand her abilities. She claims that she always feels better after their sessions. However, **asking her to calmly reevaluate what was actually communicated in those sessions** makes her realize it was he who poisoned her mind against herself and her daughter.

FELICIA ★★★

At first, Felicia appears to be a normal sleep-deprived mother, dressed in loose and comfortable clothing, with a mane of uncombed red hair. When she taps into the power of Palden Lhamo, she takes on a horrifying visage: her skin turns blue, her hair bursts into flames, and a third eye opens on her forehead.

HURT OR SUBDUED 5 / RESTORE HER MIND 4 / LOSE HER MIND 4

- **Wrathful Goddess:** When Felicia enters the scene, give her *raging-2*.
- **Demonic Protection:** When you advance towards Felicia or baby Mira or take aim at them, you are pushed back or out by an invisible force, forcing you to first **Take the Risk**.
- **About to Snap:** When *lose-her-mind* maxes out, Felicia hurts herself or baby Mira (**Make Something Horrible Happen**).
- Punch someone or push them with invisible force (*broken-arm-3* or *broken-leg-3*)
- Place a ward on someone so they can't approach her, baby Mira, or the room (*pushed-back-3*)
- Scare the hell out of someone with her demonic visage (*palpitating-2*)
- Freak out and get even more upset (giving herself *raging-2* or *despaired-2*)
- Scream at anyone who tries to enter the nursery, turning blue
- Seethingly threaten someone not to come near her daughter



MENDING THE BROKEN PRIVATE CLINIC

You shudder when you walk into the shrink's office. Two comfy armchairs facing one another make you visualize clients spilling their guts over a hot beverage. Trauma, betrayal, secrets, unspeakable fantasies – these walls have heard it all. What would you tell the therapist if it were you in that chair? Dark thoughts creep up in the back of your mind, reminding you how you fail, how you come short, all the time and in every way. You feel what all of the clients that came before must have felt: broken beyond repair. The difference is you don't talk about it. Maybe some things are better left buried.

Mending the Broken has many member practitioners throughout the City. Each member runs their own private clinic and gets referrals from the organization's helplines. Here are a few names the crew may come across when looking for a Mending the Broken therapist.

- **Dr. Selma Perrin**, who worked with Martha Ellis (*Killing Her Softly*), is an expensive psychiatrist and psychoanalyst working in a luxurious private practice Downtown.
- **Dr. Archibald Tennant**, who counseled Maximillian Drake (*Carnival of Machines*), is a traditional psychiatrist with a clinic in the Old Quarter, who often mans the organization's helplines.



- **Dr. Drew Langstone**, Felicia Jones' Jungian therapist, has meetings in a clinic attached to his apartment in one of the Blue-Collar Residential neighborhoods.
- **Police Psychologist Dr. Tracy Wong** helps law enforcement personnel, meeting with them in their local precincts. She is the one most likely to work with Officer Das and has worked with security officer Ruben Stone (see [Golem Gone Wrong](#)).
- Life Coach and Nutritionist **Augusta Summers** started out in Suburbia, but is gaining a growing clientele in the City center.
- **Fr. Brian Kelly**, a priest taking confession in a local church.
- **Dr. Lauren White**, a social welfare psychologist in the slums.

LOOKING FOR ADVICE

If a PC seeks out a therapist as someone to talk to, play out a part of the therapy session. This should be an opportunity to give the PC a good deal of airtime and let her bear her inner world: her conflicts, her questions, her doubts, her pain. **This sets the scene for the upcoming conflicts with Dr. Krystal Knight (and potentially the Fisher King).**

Mending the Broken therapists are extremely intelligent and wise, so if the PC doesn't suspect the therapist or lets her guard down, **play the therapist as the ideal listener and confidant**, someone the PC feels they could really trust, someone who can see them through the Mist and not judge them for who they are. The therapist won't impose her ideas on the PC, but will instead listen for a while, humming, nodding, and asking questions to keep the PC talking.

When the PC asks for guidance, ask a deep open-ended question such as "Do you feel that whatever it is inside you is really a part of you?" or "Who do you think is responsible for what happens to you?" The therapist doesn't need to talk about her views openly to infect the PC with self-doubt and self-hatred – like the Devil's Mirror, it's the way she reflects things back to the PC that does the trick. After the PC leaves and has some time to think about the session, activate the therapist's custom move **Dark Thoughts**.

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

If the crew comes looking for answers, they will be met with resistance. First, the therapist will avoid them or her receptionist will try to block them from going into the therapy room. The local security guards or beat cops may be alerted (*MC Toolkit*, page 148).

If they do finally corner her, questioning the therapist directly proves tricky. Her custom move **Hmmm** allows her to deflect questions and avoid being **Investigated** in a conversation. The protection provided by the **Hmmm** technique goes deep into the therapist's psyche, and she can use this move even when being telepathically probed (her mind answers with a question). To unlock the secrets in her mind, the crew must somehow break it. If there are no mentalists, psychologists, or psychics in the crew, finding one could be the subject of another scene (see **Saints and Psychics**, page xx). Furthermore, unless her mind is broken, the therapist will not admit that Mending the Broken's mission is to hurt Rifts, and keeps excusing and explaining the organizations' positions; the truth can still be gleaned from between her words, or lack thereof.

The information below can also be obtained in other ways: staking out and following the therapist, breaking into her office, interviewing her past patients or clients (see The Prison Visit sidebar), researching Mending the Broken, etc.

ABOUT MENDING THE BROKEN

Mending the Broken is a therapist organization that seeks to influence Rifts. They claim they want to help Rifts deal with their Rifthood better.

Officially, Mending the Broken "therapy" is a form of "mirroring" that aims to show the patient their life situation so they can take responsibility over it. In actuality, this twisted version of the technique only shows the patient what is wrong, negative, or painful about themselves and their Rifthood, causing them to develop negative feelings towards their Rifthood and driving them to take destructive action towards themselves or other Rifts.

The proponent of this theory is Dr. Esther Monahan.

ABOUT DR. ESTHER MONAHAN

Dr. Monahan has been running the Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane (aka the Asylum) for decades, and should be well above ninety by now, but she never retired. She is single and childless by choice, having dedicated her life to her work.

Research may yield some of her published studies on the subject of Rifthood, a subject she became passionate about only in recent years. Treat a Rift who spends time reading these publications as someone who has been to a session with a Mending the Broken therapist, activating **Dark Thoughts**.

Due to her age, many of her records, such as a birth certificate, are not in the system. Further information may be available (physically or digitally) from the City's Historical Society.

ABOUT THE THERAPIST

The therapist keeps files on her former patients on a computer or in a file cabinet. The records are consistent with what the crew already knows about the victim(s), but studying them also divulges something about the therapist's disposition (see the clues below). This is also a great way to reveal that another NPC (or PC) is a victim of Mending the Broken, such as Ruben Stone (Golem Gone Wrong).

The therapist serves as a senior Mending the Broken member or reports to senior members at a weekly supervision meeting at the Old Quarter University (or, if you wish to skip this scene, directly at the Asylum).

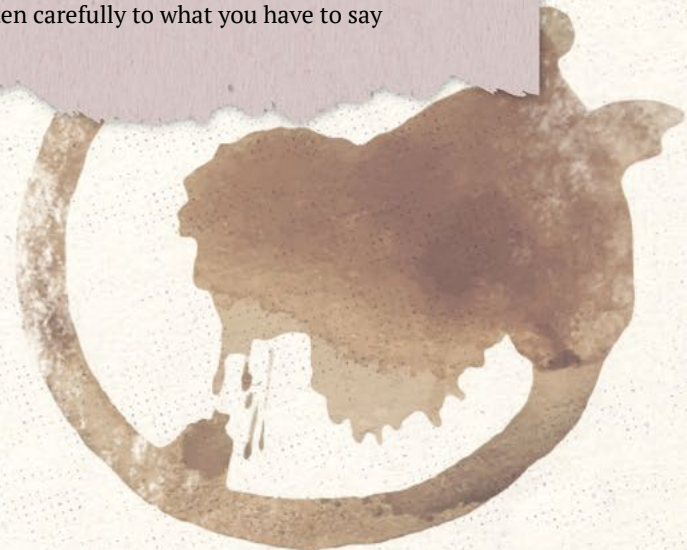
Probing the therapist's psyche with mythical means will reveal a deep-rooted hatred towards Rifthood itself and a firm belief that all Rifts without exception are a perversion.

Beyond the Mist, there is a symbolic glass shard in the therapist's frozen heart. It can be traced back to the supervision meeting or the Asylum.

MENDING THE BROKEN THERAPIST ★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 2 / BREAK MIND 4 / EXPOSE 4

- **Dark Thoughts:** When you've had the time to consider everything you've talked about with the Therapist, take *self-doubt-1* or *bad-feeling-1* (each time this move affects the same target, regardless of its source, increase the tier of its status by one for that target to *anxious-2*, *despaired-3*, *self-hating-4*, etc.).
 - **Hmmm:** When you **Investigate** a Therapist by asking her questions or when you get aggressive with her, she first gives you *self-doubt-2* by humming and asking a question, such as:
 - » Hmmm. Why do you feel aggression is needed here?
 - » Hmmm. Is this about me, or your father/mother?
 - » Hmmm. Where does this need to know comes from, do you think?
 - **Sublimation Techniques:** When the Therapist takes a mental or emotional status, reduce its tier by 1.
 - **Breathe Again:** When *exposed* is maxed out, the Therapist cannot use **Dark Thoughts** again on anyone to whom she was exposed. When *break mind* is maxed out, the Therapist cannot activate **Hmmm** or **Sublimation Techniques**.
-
- Raise poignant questions that make you doubt yourself or feel bad about yourself (*self-doubt* or *bad-feeling*, tier 1 or 2 as she sees fit)
 - Call security (Create a new Danger: Beat Cops / Security Guards, *MC Toolkit*, page 148) and later, her lawyer (Corporate Lawyer, *MC Toolkit*, page 142)
 - Analyze someone, accurately deducing their emotional situation (*vulnerable-1*)
 - Hypnotize someone, first holding their attention and then slipping them subconscious commands (*hypnotized-2*)
 - Escape through a back door (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
-
- Listen carefully to what you have to say



THE PRISON VISIT

While gathering information about Mending the Broken, the crew may need to compare notes with some of their former enemies and Mending the Broken victims, such as jazz singer Martha Ellis (the Banshee) or mad scientist Maximillian Drake (Hephaestus), or any other victim of the therapist organization. For example, one of their enemies or Nemeses could be found in one of the therapists' records, forcing them into an uneasy meeting.

Depending on how things ended in their previous encounters, the crew's enemy may be in a physical prison or in a spiritual one (such as Hell or the Otherworld), and likely still holds a grudge for the crew. Having had some time to think, away from the malign influence of Mending the Broken, the enemy could be softened or lonely, and ready to talk.

The crew's meeting with their old enemy could provide a chance for the PCs to scratch at old wounds, express their feelings, hash things out, and/or discover a new perspective about past events. This should be played as a roleplaying opportunity rather than a challenge, so the rules are not required.

Past enemies committed to the Asylum could pose a great opportunity for a visit that starts with roleplaying and ends with investigation or action, but such NPCs remain deeply under the influence of Mending the Broken.

The crew may wish to come here for more answers, if they didn't get enough out of the first therapist they encountered. They may also wish to execute a raid and capture all or most of Mending the Broken's therapists.

Facing a handful (size factor 1) or a dozen (size factor 2) of Touched psychologists and psychiatrists may sound easy, but it won't be. The therapists can gang up on one or two weak crew members and tear them to pieces, analyzing their every weakness and laying bare their secret pain (or close enough), even if the PCs don't speak it. Furthermore, the supervision group, who often interview emotionally-volatile subjects here, has a **team of psychiatric nurses** on standby in the next room that can be summoned as soon as things get out of hand (if you want to reduce the challenge for the crew, **Give Them A Fair Warning** and let them try to prevent the therapists from buzzing the nurses in).

The therapist group members know the same clues described under Mending the Broken Private Clinic, which ultimately point to Dr. Monahan and the Asylum. However, if the crew manages to overcome the group or secure one of the elders, you can reward them with additional clues. If the crew are overpowered by the therapists and nurses, they wake up as patients confined to a padded room in the basement of the Asylum (see there, under Solitary Confinement).

Some of the most experienced Mending the Broken therapists know Dr. Monahan personally and actually helped formulate her theory. The others have never met this genius, who works behind closed doors at the Asylum.

Breaking and then deeply probing the mind of a senior therapist could reveal a fact that the therapist is violently trying to repress: Dr. Esther Monahan has been dead for years.

SUPERVISION MEETING

The clickety-clack of fastidious shoes on the marble floors echoes throughout these grand halls, giving you a mild bout of anxiety. You climb a spacious marble staircase with a burgundy carpet to a landing where several hallways meet. Finally, opening a tall wooden double door, carved with decorative engravings, you interrupt a circle of distinguished, middle-aged individuals deep in conversation. They all hush at once, their eyes fixed on you. "Can we help you?"

Once a week, **Dr. Selma Perrin** and **Dr. Archibald Tennant** (or any other therapists you dub as the elders) host a Mending the Broken supervision meeting where therapists share their progress with their Rift cases and receive advice from more experienced practitioners. The meeting takes place at the Old Quarter University, in the never-ending ornate marble halls of the Department of the Psyche.

ASYLUM NURSES ★★★

Mending the Broken nurses are especially tall and muscular individuals, wearing the white uniforms of the Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane. They don't display any bedside manners or nursing training; it almost seems like they are hired thugs who recite prescribed nurses' lines.

Consider increasing the size factor of this Danger to 2 if the crew has more than four members or if many of its members are strong combatants.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / CONVINCE 5

- **Collective:** This collective has a few members and a size factor of 1.
 - **Mean:** When the Nurse takes a social or emotional status that doesn't make her meaner, reduce its tier by 1.
 - **Abnormally Strong:** When the Nurse takes a physical harm or subdual status that can be avoided with sheer strength or stamina, reduce its tier by 1.
 - **It's Nap Time:** Once per scene per size factor, as a hard move, one Nurse produces a single-shot tranquilizer gun and fires it at an unruly patient, giving them *sedated-4*.
-
- Restrain manually or with a straight jacket (*restrained-3*)
 - Inject a restrained patient with a powerful sedative (convert a *restrained* status to *sedated*, keeping the same tier)
 - Ignore a patient's pleas (remove 2 tiers from any convincing statuses)
-
- Warn a patient to behave themselves, or else
 - Stand next to a restrained patient and pull out a syringe, squirting some liquid out of it

GOLEM GONE WRONG

A panicked flux of bodies scuttles out of the front doors of the department store, screaming. Many of them, especially those in the back, are covered with a thick layer of grey-brown mud. As they clear the entrance, you spot a crawling puddle of mud flowing down the aisles inside, knocking over mannequins and clothing racks that sink into the floor like it was quicksand. Over the commotion, you hear the building screech and moan, and notice several cracks along the gable that are slowly expanding. You wonder what could cause such devastation, when another scream is heard from inside.

Another victim of Mending the Broken, **Ruben Stone** (The Golem of Prague), was overwhelmed by depression and despair while at a department store in a mall. His emotional state triggered his powers, and now he is slowly turning the foundations of the mall into the same material he's made of: mud. Ruben is only half-aware of the impending implications of his actions, and the half that is aware is so despaired, he's willing to go with the mall.

If you're running the game as a one-shot, this scene provides the crew with a second Mending the Broken victim. Otherwise, you can use it as an action scene to up the cinematic beat when things are getting slow.

The crew can be alerted to the scene by someone who knows their reputation, a member of the supporting cast caught in the mall, the police (possibly officers Das and Quinn), or someone who knows Ruben. Crew members could also coincidentally be in the mall when the mayhem ensues.

THE SITUATION AT HAND

- **Ruben Stone** is sitting in what was once the department store's changing booths, oozing copious amounts of magical gray-brown mud that slowly turns inanimate matter to similar non-magical mud (stone and sediments turn faster, followed by common ores like iron and copper; dead organic matter, like wood and clothing, takes a long time to decompose). The non-magical mud, however, facilitates the flow of the magical stuff. Sleepers think Ruben is the site of a burst sewer or cement pipe (the kind used by builders) and only alert Sleepers notice a person in the gush, who they think is trying to fix it.
- There are **many helpless bystanders** still in the mall, whether they are unaware of what's happening, were tangled or injured during the scurry out, or are looking for someone or something.
- The mud had eaten out the floors in places, creating **pools of sticky mud** that functions like quicksand. In other places, it has eaten at the foundations of the mall building, making them sink unevenly, which causes **the entire structure to crack and break**. If the mud does not remit, the mall will collapse on everyone still inside.

Ruben Stone is the mall's security guard. This can be revealed by finding a witness who saw Ruben entering the store, or by groping Ruben's clothes through the mud and finding his badge.

Ruben Stone is the mall's security guard. This can be revealed by finding a witness who saw Ruben entering the store, or by groping Ruben's clothes through the mud and finding his badge.

Ruben Stone was Dr. Tracy Wong's patient, as can be deduced from his phone calls log, the therapist's patient files, or his employee file in the security company he works for.

He is struggling with extreme depression and suicidal thoughts, which is making his powers act up, although he's too dead inside to care.

Beyond the Mist, the Golem of Prague has three glowing Hebrew letters on his forehead, **אמת** (*e'met*), meaning 'truth', but the rightmost letter is fading, ultimately leaving just **מת** (*met*), meaning 'dead'. Within the story of the Golem, when it died, it turned from its human form back to the mud it was made of.

Beyond the Mist, also within the story of the Golem, it was originally created by the Maharal of Prague to protect his community. This fact can be linked to Ruben's occupation and may serve as a motivation to help him emerge from his depression.

If he is saved and probed about his sessions with Dr. Tracy Wong, Ruben will recognize that she deepened his depression by highlighting everything that went wrong with his life.

MUDSLIDE MALL ★★★

COLLAPSE 4 / CLEAR 5 / HURT RUBEN 4 / HELP RUBEN 4

- **Regular Hero:** For every person you get to safety out of the Mudslide Mall, give the Mudslide Mall *cleared-1*. When *clear* maxes out, there are no more bystanders in the mall.
- **Collapse:** When the *collapse* spectrum is maxed out, the building collapses and everyone inside takes *buried-by-debris-5*.
- **Suicidal:** When you first speak to Ruben, give him *suicidal-4*.
- **Made of Mud:** When Ruben takes a physical harm or subdual status that wouldn't pulverize or contain mud, reduce its tier by 3.
- **Mud Bomb:** When *hurt-Ruben* maxes out, if he dies, he explodes and Mudslide Mall takes *collapse-3*.
- Cover someone in thick, heavy mud, or drag them down into the puddle (*stuck-in-mud-3*)
- Ruben strikes someone who is upsetting him, throwing them back (*winded-3*) or sprays them with mud (*stuck-in-mud-3*)
- Ruben gets angry, erupting and spraying mud everywhere (giving everyone around *stuck-in-mud-3* and the Mudslide Mall *collapse-1*)
- Cracks open on the supporting walls and ceiling (Mudslide Mall takes *collapse-2*)
- Reveal a new bystander who is stuck, injured, lost, panicked, stealing, curious, etc.
- Block the path with a new mudslide

SAINTS AND PSYCHICS

With so much mental and emotional energy going around, the crew may wish to enlist other Rifts or Sleeper professionals to help bear the psychic load. Here are a few options.

First, not all City therapists are evil Mending the Broken psychos. Geraldine Granger (Sleeper) is one of many kind-hearted mental health professionals who truly want to help their clients. Geraldine knows all about trauma and how to emerge from it, and she has taken this journey both personally and as a guide many times. If they can trust her, Rifts will feel she can relate to them even without seeing their powers because ultimately their problems are human problems.

The challenge lies in convincing Geraldine that Mending the Broken are villainous; Geraldine is more likely to want to evaluate what's wrong with the PCs lives that makes them dream up imaginary psycho-villains.

GERALDINE GRANGER

Ally

IDENTITY

I'm listening.

POWER TAGS

great listener, trained psychologist, social worker, caring for others, assertive words, positive affirmation, City hospital patient database, private clinic, medical services in the City, motivated by love

WEAKNESS TAGS

interrupt aggression, client confidentiality, cannot see the supernatural, violent clients

THEME IMPROVEMENT

○ **Confidant:** When you spend downtime working out your issues with Geraldine, if you are preparing for your next activity, you get 5 Juice instead of 3; if you are recovering from past activity, remove all non-permanent psychological statuses.

If the crew is looking for a Rift psychic powerhouse, their best bet is with Rifts who work for the benign Avatar Ganesha and her Thousand Helping Hands (see *Shadows & Showdowns*). However, due to the nature of this story arc, explained under **Payne and Other Avatars** (page XX), Ganesha and her Rifts may be prevented from helping. That said, Ganesha and most of her Rifts are helpful renegades by nature, and refusing to give help would put them in a precarious position with their Mythos. They will most likely try to wriggle out of helping, but give in and play along if the crew is persistent.

Another alternative is the mystic-Rift-for-hire known as **the Thaumaturge** (Gregori Rasputin, personal healer and mystic of the last tsar family of Russia), easily reachable by streetwise Rifts who frequent the Industrial Zone. The Thaumaturge boasts impressive psychic powers; he manipulates minds as deftly as he does knives, and can heal, protect, deep probe, shut down, and even wipe out multiple minds around him.

The oddball mystic-in-a-trenchcoat doesn't work for free. He will ask for a hefty sum, or a peculiar Relic, for his services. Another issue is his questionable allegiance; he's not below saving his own skin and leaving the crew to die if things get too dangerous.

THE THAUMATURGE

Ally

IDENTITY

Keep the money coming, and I'll keep the bad dreams away.

POWER TAGS

a powerful psychic, knife juggling, heal psychic trauma, always gets paid, crush one's mind, protective psychic barrier, read thoughts and memories, trench coat, underworld privateer, hypnotic gaze

WEAKNESS TAGS

turns his powers against me, this is above my pay-grade, disputable loyalties, displeased past clients

THEME IMPROVEMENT

○ **Pay Up:** Spend 2 points of Juice representing payment to the Thaumaturge to recover all burnt tags in this theme. Every time you activate this improvement, increase the cost by 1.

○ **Psychic Powerhouse:** When you **Change the Game** with tags from this theme, your effect is automatically scaled up once.

DEPTH 2: COOL RECEPTION

THE ASYLUM

As you ascend up the hill, the weather takes a turn for the worse. Clouds huddle together like black sheep, and it gets cold. Soon, the rain turns to slush, and then to snowflakes, softly piling on your car. Up above, between the ever-greens, you see a menacing old manor, buried under the snow. As you approach the Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane, lightning crackles behind it, lighting it up like a fairytale ice castle.

The Municipal Institute for the Criminally Insane, also simply known as the Asylum, is a three-story red brick building set on an isolated, wooded hill on the outskirts of town, overlooking a peaceful suburb. As fitting for her ‘palace’, the Asylum and everyone in it serve the Snow Queen, Dr. Krystal Knight. Furthermore, those who approach the Asylum find it’s snowing there, although it may not look so from afar.

The Asylum can be the setting for many different types of scenes: the crew may come here to investigate, apprehend Mending the Broken practitioners, mount a heist to extract someone or find evidence, wake up as locked-up patients, and so on.

ARRIVING AT THE ASYLUM

As a cinematic device, you can establish an atmosphere of dread by causing the crew to crash or almost crash their vehicle (or another mode of transportation) on the way to the Asylum. Describe the car skidding on **black ice** or a **slippery road** towards a tall and hardy fir tree. The driver or other PCs can **Take the Risk** to avoid an accident. If the car does crash, broken ice shards and blood on the snow make for great visual motifs. Either way, the PCs’ arrival at the Asylum starts with an air of danger.

THE PERIMETER

The Asylum, designed to hold the “criminally insane”, is effectively a prison. It is surrounded by a tall brick wall topped with **barbed wire** with a single wrought-iron gate at the front and a small locked door in the back by the woods. There are security cameras on the perimeter wall. Behind it stretches a barren yard of brown, wilted grass, covered in frost and snow.

All entrances have **sally ports** (double door airlocks) with cameras; anyone crossing must be buzzed in or out remotely from the guard room. Forcing the doors open raises the alarm but otherwise security systems are outdated. PCs can cross these obstacles with a series of **Investigate**, **Sneak Around**, and **Take the Risk** moves. There are no security guards patrolling out in the yard, but they do patrol inside (use the Asylum Nurse Danger on page XX for both nurses and guards).

THE FLOORPLAN

The asylum building is U-shaped, with a smaller main building at the center and two wings stretching inwards along the sides of the perimeter.

The main building holds the reception, administrative offices, guard barracks, and the **guard room**. The security guards monitor the perimeter of the asylum, and only deal with the patients in case one of them tries to escape.

The South Wing holds most of the miserable patients who call this place a home, many of whom are far from criminally-minded and suffering from mental health conditions far worse than they had when they first arrived. Patients are kept in rooms that were once white, clean, and pretty, designed not to look like the prison cells they essentially are; the lock to each room’s door is electrically controlled via the wing’s **nurses room**. Otherwise, movement within this ward is less restricted than elsewhere, but there are **watchful-1** nurses everywhere.

The North Wing holds the hospital ward where therapeutic experimentation is conducted, and where the most problematic cases are held in solitary confinement in the basement. This is also where the session rooms are located, where Mending the Broken activity takes place. The third, middle floor of this wing is dedicated to the “Special” Ward, where the head of the facility, Dr. Esther Monahan (aka Dr. Krystal Knight), usually works.

THE PATIENTS, THE STAFF, AND DR. MONAHAN

The Asylum is manned by a receptionist, guards, nurses, and the Mending the Broken psychiatrists and psychologists. Everyone who works or is hospitalized at the asylum knows **Dr. Esther Monahan** is the head of the institute and chief psychiatrist here and, if **Investigated**, are first revealed to be **scared-to-death-3** of her (limiting what the PCs can glean from them). When asked to identify the head of the institute, they will give conflicting reports:



- Some have never seen her.
- Some newly-hired staff or new patients who have seen Dr. Knight are sure she is Dr. Monahan. They don't know her age, but estimate she's in her late 40s.
- Others, who worked or lived there longer, but have never seen Dr. Knight, think Dr. Monahan must look like an elderly woman close to a hundred years old (how the real Dr. Monahan would look like today), who nevertheless keeps working vigorously.
- Those who know the full story (mostly Mending the Broken elders) refer to Krystal Knight as Dr. Monahan, but lie about her identity to help cover it up and cover their hinds.
- An old patient suffering from a delusion-inducing condition may be telling the truth, but embellishes the story to the point of losing credibility (*I think she's a time traveller!*).

Dr. Monahan spends most of her time in the Special Ward, on the third floor of the North Wing. In fact, no one in the Asylum ever sees her coming or going.

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

Dr. Knight doesn't usually enjoy just killing her enemies; she prefers to infect them with self- or Rift-hatred and see how much damage they can do. If any PCs and/or NPCs are hospitalized, they wake up in the basement of the North Wing in separate but adjacent padded solitary confinement cells, where the temperature is slightly below freezing (giving them *freezing-1* every hour they spend there from the moment they awaken). Particularly difficult patients find themselves in a straitjacket (*restrained-3*), while those who were sedated feel *woozy-1* or have a *headache-1*. Furthermore, all patients have *no-legal-rights-5*. They cannot see or hear one another through the walls, except when the shutter on the door is open from outside the cell. The cells have *armored doors* that are covered with *strange, reflective ice* that can cause magic and energy to rebound.

The door to the last cell in the block is completely frozen, encased in a block of ice. If it can be opened, the frozen and mutilated body of the real Dr. Monahan can be found inside. Forensic analysis will show she died years ago.

THE OLD “PRISONER IN THE NEXT CELL” PLOY

Krystal Knight may try to deceive the crew by pretending to be an abused patient (it shouldn't be hard; she was one for many many years). She locks herself up in a solitary confinement cell next to them, leaving the shutter open so they can hear her weep. As they escape, she begs them to set her free; if they do, she pretends to be their ally or guide. She presents herself by her real name. As a part of her cover story, she may also inadvertently reveal some accurate information about her past.

Krystal Knight will try to get the crew to open up and expose their hurts, gripes, and anger to her so she can later fan them. As the crew spends more and more time with her, she insidiously penetrates their minds; for every scene or downtime in her presence, choose one PC present and activate the **Dark Thoughts** custom move against them (see *Mending the Broken Therapist*, page XX).

THE PATIENT FILES

Accessing the Asylum file system, whether it is a cabinet or a hard drive, reveals the patient files.

Every victim (“patient”) of Mending the Broken is recorded here, including Martha Ellis (*Killing Her Softly*), Maximillian Drake (*Carnival of Machines*), Felicia Pema Jones, Ruben Stone, and any other character, PC or NPC, who came in contact with the organization. The files contain an analysis of the Rift's life, Mythos, and abilities.

Dr. Krystal Knight's file is here, but it's buried deep. It contains a picture of the woman who many know today as Dr. Esther Monahan. According to the file, Dr. Knight was admitted by Dr. Monahan almost a century ago (about 80 years) after she had a “nervous breakdown”. The file is overflowing with reports of the long list of forced treatments she's been through, including experimental psychoactive drugs, shock therapy, and a failed lobotomy.

Dr. Krystal Knight's file also contains a single document indicating **she was and remains the majority shareholder of Aurora Glassworks**, a glass manufacturer.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Graham, a “fellow” in a three-piece suit and a monocle, peers at you from over his heavy, lacquered oak receptionist podium and welcomes you to the City’s Historical Society. You take a quick glance around: the place looks like a labyrinthian library, all decked out in traditional dark wood furniture and red velvet upholstery. The air here reeks of old books and mothballs. The strange thing is there’s really no one around but Graham.

The City’s Historical Society naturally resides in a fine antique building in one of the Old Quarter’s lesser-known cobbled side streets. With its many books, microfilms, newspaper archives, and more, it holds vast information about the last century in the history of the City; anything before that slides into the realm of Mythos and while this library holds texts from that era, they get fuzzier and stranger the further back they go. The crew may arrive here at different stages of the investigation, looking for clues about Dr. Monahan, Dr. Knight, or someone else.

The Historical Society is a Gatekeeper honeytrap for curious Rifts. Sleepers don’t care about the factual past; they go with the version that works for them. Even Sleeper historians fiddle around with made-up accounts concocted by the Mist. Someone who truly wants to dig up the truth can only be a Rift, and a dangerous one at that. Ideally, the Gatekeepers would prefer to erase all of the information here permanently. However, their directive is to catch Rifts first, destroy information about the true past second, and to catch Rifts they need a bank of *true* knowledge to lure them with (they tried a trap with fake knowledge and it didn’t work; Rifts’ destinies and divinatory powers simply didn’t point them there).

The person posing as Graham (not his real name), the representative and receptionist in the dress coat, is in fact the Gatekeeper Sentry stationed here. His job is to gauge whether visitors are stray Sleepers or Rifts and, in the case of the latter, call in a squad to seal them. Once a PC enters the building, it’s a question of who identifies who first. As soon as a crew member spends a Clue on a question too deep, it’s shrouding time.

Whether or not the crew has a fight with the Gatekeepers, if they get away with any information on this occasion, Gatekeeper Command will have quadrupled the resources guarding the Historical Society, eliminating any chance of any further information leaks, unless the crew mounts a truly epic heist.

GRAHAM, THE HELP BOT

If you’re playing in the *Neon Noir* (80s) or *Dreary Present*, your crew may be accessing the Historical Society’s database virtually. In this case, Graham is a bot or a virtual assistant which activates when a PC logs into the database. Any abilities he has apply online and he can also crash any masking software a hacker is using as a hard move (*exposed-3*). The Gatekeeper Seal Squad he calls shows up at the hacker’s physical location(s).

PERTINENT HISTORICAL INFORMATION

According to records, Dr. Monahan is 102 years old. There is only one other person related to the Asylum who is as old as Dr. Monahan: a patient named **Krystal Knight**. There is no death certificate for either of the ladies. There is no evidence suggestive of tampering.

Newspaper clippings from the early roaring years of the City show that, before being hospitalized, **Dr. Krystal Knight was a successful psychiatrist for the rich-and-famous**, who aspired to use therapy as a way to heal the City’s social troubles.

Krystal Knight’s career ended when she had a “nervous breakdown” and was committed to the Asylum. That’s the last the world has heard of her. There’s a newspaper picture of her lavish bathroom on the day she was committed, showing a **shattered mirror on the floor**.

Krystal Knight was and remains the majority shareholder of Aurora Glassworks, a glass manufacturer. Financial papers show she received her shares as “payment for services rendered” to **Corbin Payne**, the City’s legendary construction tycoon.

If you are running *Percival* as an overarching case and the crew started the case, they may find information here that corresponds to the clues in whatever act they are in at the moment, especially newspaper clips about Corbin Payne.

GATEKEEPER SEALS ★★★★★

Gatekeeper Seals are near enough the scariest threat a Rift could face. Armed head to toe with anti-Mythos gear and trained by the best, this superb tactical team eats Rifts for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

The Seals' trench coats, jackets, or vests protect them from most Mythos powers. Only the most powerful Mythos attacks can overwhelm the intense Mist field this armor generates and even then only momentarily (unless a PC can somehow generate a permanent *overload* status). Instead of worrying about shrouding individuals, each team usually carries at least one portable shrouding beacon to continuously wipe out the memories of all around. They also carry powerful sealing wards that can keep a defeated target out of trouble in the future. At your option, a squad can also combine their forces to seal Rifts permanently, turning them to Sleepers.

HURT OR SUBDUE 4 / OVERLOAD 6

- **Collective:** This collective has a few members and a size factor of 1.
- **Deploy:** When Gatekeeper Seals enter the scene, give them *tactical-cover-2*.
- **Mythosproof Garment:**
 - » **Passive:** When the Gatekeeper Seal takes a status imposed by a Mythos power, replace its tag with *overload*.
 - » **Active:** As an intrusion, the Gatekeeper Seal can take an *overload* status of any tier to give someone activating Mythos powers against her a temporary *depowered* status of the same tier.
 - » **Recharge:** As a soft move (after a player move), the Gatekeeper Seal removes all non-permanent *overload* statuses.

» **Overloaded:** When *overload:6* is maxed out, the coat's **Passive** and **Active** defenses fail and can't be used momentarily. After the next player move, remove all non-permanent *overload* statuses.

- **Expert Hand-to-Hand Combatant:** When you engage in close quarters combat with a Gatekeeper Seal, she first hits you with one of her hard moves.
 - **Portable Shrouding Beacon:** As a soft move, all Rifts around the Gatekeeper Seal take *forgetting-1* and all Sleepers and Rifts with no Mythos powers left take *oblivious-5*.
 - **Military Discipline:** When a Gatekeeper Seal takes a social or emotional status, reduce its tier by 2.
-
- Fire a hail of anti-Mythos rounds or wards (*zapped-3*; after **Facing Danger**, burn one Mythos tag for each remaining tier of *zapped* and remove the status)
 - Switch to standard ammo, aiming to injure or kill (*gun-shot-wound-3*)
 - Use combat training to physically restrain or hurt a target (*broken-arm-3* or *restrained-3*) or slap a shrouding ward on them (*vague-memories-3*)
 - Slap a Mist-seal on a defeated Rift (give *sealed-5* to a Rift who has a tier-5 combat status or no remaining unburnt Mythos tags)
 - Regroup (remove up to 3 tiers of negative tactical statuses or give themselves a tier-2 tactical advantage status) or call backup (increase its size factor by 1)
 - Retreat into the Mist (**Deny Them Something They Want**)
-
- Storm their targets out of a billowing wisp of Mist
 - Draw a glowing magical ward with their fingers
 - Take aim with a rune-inscribed assault rifle or shotgun

GRAHAM (GATEKEEPER SENTRY) ★★★★★

HURT OR SUBDUE 4

- **Sentry:** Once per scene, when you first try to **Convince** or **Sneak Around** Graham, give him *alert-2*.
- **Wards of Revelation:** When you try to use illusory, deceptive, or mind-altering Mythos powers around Graham, they fizzle out. You cannot invoke such tags and all existing effects are stripped away.
- **Creepy Feeling:** Whenever you try to **Investigate** to learn more about Graham, you get a strange feeling that he is impenetrable. Graham takes *mysterious-2*. This status cannot exceed tier 4.
- **Explosive Shrouding Ward:** Once per scene, as an intrusion, everyone around Graham takes *oblivious-5*. At his option, he may flee the scene.

• **Defensive Shrouding:** Once per scene, when you attempt to influence Graham with Mythos powers, the MC first burns two power tags you used in your attack.

-
- Regain his alertness (giving himself *alert-2*)
 - Call in a Gatekeeper Seals squad (create a new Danger)
 - Shroud someone (*vague-memories-3* or burn two Mythos tags)
 - Fire a standard-issue pistol (*gunshot-wound-3*) or use basic martial arts (*hold-down-2* or *bruise-2*)
-
- Smile wryly when someone tries to deceive him using Mythos powers and fails
 - Calmly unbutton his cuffs and roll up his sleeves, revealing Gatekeeper tattoos

DEPTH 3: THROWING STONES AT A GLASS HOUSE

AURORA GLASSWORKS

Aurora Glassworks is the missing link between the Asylum and Dr. Krystal Knight's greater plot: to use the dark magic she instilled in windows all over the City in order to cover it in an emotional winter. The company can be investigated in multiple locations: online, at the City's company registry, at their offices, employees' homes, etc.

Aurora Glassworks is the only manufacturer of construction glass in the City – it makes all the window panes in the City.

The company's official stance on its major shareholder, Dr. Krystal Knight, is that they assume she died decades ago in the Asylum. They blame the Asylum's staff's incompetency and messy paperwork, possibly even corruption, for the City not having her declared officially dead. The company has been in a long legal battle over this, but since most of its executives have a clear conflict of interest, it seems futile.

If someone investigates the company's factories beyond the Mist, they can find a dormant trace of the Devil's Mirror in every window pane they produce. Further investigation can reveal the same dormant trace in every glass pane in the City.

An elderly retired company executive can vaguely recount the day the shards of Krystal Knight's mirror were brought to the factory for melting. He recalls the air was tense, everyone was nervous, and employees started fights for no reason, breaking glass in the process (he still has a scar). The incident was followed by a wave of employees quitting, divorcing their spouses, getting involved in violence, or taking their own lives.

Based on the above, it can be deduced that **Dr. Knight has some kind of dormant magic in the glass distributed all over town and that she intends to activate it.** An engineer could theorize she could do so by means of a massive shockwave or precise sound waves.

The retired executive or old papertrail could point to the company's original factory, which today stands abandoned. If the PCs investigate the location, they notice shady dealings around it, but inside the place is empty, except for an old, out-of-use furnace. See Aurora Glassworks under *The Furnace*.

THE "SPECIAL" WARD

The deserted third floor is a bluish vision of winter everlasting. All the windows here are broken, the shards of their shattered panes piled beneath them. Snow drifts inside, mounting in small banks against the frozen walls of the corridors and halls. There is a strange hush all around, but then you hear the crackle of glass breaking underfoot. A ghastly barefoot patient in nothing but a gown wanders by, mumbling secretly, ignoring you. You catch a glimpse of yourself on a piece of broken glass jutting dangerously from the window frame, and you hate what you see.

The "Special" Ward is Dr. Krystal Knight's villain lair and a potential location for a showdown, whether with Knight or between the PCs. It is a place of hate, especially self-hate that finds an outlet in hurting oneself or others like oneself.

The ward's main line of defense are the Snow Queen's Snowflakes, a host of emotionally-explosive patients scattered around the ward who function as human landmines. Snowflakes are patients who started out as hopeful, happy-go-lucky individuals but were betrayed by their loved ones or the circumstances to the ruination of their dreams, and ended up here (reflecting Knight's own journey). Adjust the Snowflakes' size factor to account for the crew's firepower as well as how many Snowflakes are in the scene: a hallway could have just a scattering of them (size factor 1) or be full of them (size factor 2), while taking on the entire ward could mean fighting off a blizzard of Snowflakes (size factor 3).

Unless the crew intentionally cuts through to avoid the effect, spending time in the ward activates the custom move **Dark Thoughts** (see Mending the Broken Therapist Danger profile, page XX). As they walk through the snowscape, PCs and their allies see themselves and those close to them reflected in ice and glass, but the images show them as despicable, pathetic, or malintending; only that which arouses hate is seen. Secret gripes, hidden rivalries, and old grudges surface in their minds. **Ask each player to describe what his character sees and how it affects her.**

As a cinematic instrument, when the crew approaches her treatment room, Dr. Krystal Knight's voice can be heard all around laughing hysterically or speaking maliciously to the PCs (even if she is with them, still pretending to be their ally).

Beyond the Mist, this place is perfusing hatred. The Devil's Mirror symbolism is all around, originating from where Krystal Knight stands, but also showing frozen shards in the hearts of those affected by her hate. Vague images from her life echo here: receiving the mirror, succumbing to self-loathing, smashing the mirror, and her tormenting treatments at the hands of Dr. Monahan.

SNOWFLAKES ★+

Snowflakes are Dr. Krystal Knight's human mines. They just stand there or pace like zombies, captives of their own minds and ignoring each other, but when an intruder invades their space they blow up.

RESTRAIN, KNOCK OUT, OR KILL 2 / DEFUSE 3

- **Collective:** This Danger can have a size factor ranging from 0 (one Snowflake) to 3 (an entire floor swarming with Snowflakes). Every size factor increment increases the Snowflakes' Danger Rating by ★.
- **High-strung:** When a Snowflake enters the scene, give her *high-strung-3*. This status cannot exceed tier 4.
- Scream (*deafened-2*), causing a chain reaction and setting off a group of Snowflakes one size factor larger (**Complicate Things, Bigtime**)
- Experience a fit of rage and attack someone (*knocked-back-2, pinned-2*), freeze someone with her gaze (*frozen-2*), or go through an emotional meltdown (*sad-2, guilty-2*)
- Notice an intruder, eyes widening

KRYSTAL KNIGHT'S TREATMENT ROOM

At the center of the third floor lies the room where Krystal Knight was "treated" for decades. This is where she relived her failure with Corbin Payne and her failure in life in general, as she saw it, over and over and over again, her pain developing into self-hatred the likes of which only the Devil's Mirror can engender.

Unless otherwise established, Dr. Krystal Knight is here, either curled up in a corner and mumbling or surveying the messy room authoritatively, pretending to be Dr. Monahan. The room is a converted surgery theater, tiled top to bottom and containing various outdated "therapeutic" devices, such as an electric shock rig and a bed with restraining straps; however, the machinery and the bed are overturned, the tiles are cracked or missing, and the place looks like someone had a fit of rage here, many years ago. There are blood stains here and there, and icicles cover the ceiling. On one wall, a wide spectator window stands shattered, providing plenty of glass and reflective surfaces for visual motifs.

If the subject is broached wisely, Dr. Knight may reveal her entire history. Criminal profiling or Mythos abilities that reveal the past can glean most of the important details from Krystal, the treatment room, her attachment to it, etc.

If you are running *Percival* as an overarching case, Krystal will reveal information corresponding to her role as the first, second, or third Grail Knight to be encountered.

CLUES ABOUT THE DOCTOR'S SCHEME

If Dr. Knight is present, she is stalling the crew. She obviously wants to hold them up to prevent them from interfering with another, more important plan she has.

A closer look at the room shows **this isn't just the site of past trauma – it's a lab.** Dr. Krystal Knight was building something here, but whatever it is, it's gone.

The shattered wall tiles, the overturned equipment, and the broken spectator window are all evidence that **a high-power, spherical, sonic blast was emitted in the room.**

KRYSTAL KNIGHT ★★★★★

Krystal Knight looks like a woman in her late 40s. Depending on the circumstances of her meeting with the crew, she may appear as a patient in a straitjacket, dishevelled and maniacal, or she could be in the role of the therapist, in a dignified suit (although in the case of the latter, this facade may quickly crack to reveal the former). Sometimes her gaze is empty and numb, as if she had taken all the pain she could have; other times, it is a squall of arctic hate for everyone and everything.

Maximum Danger Rating: As a Grail Knight, Krystal is a formidable foe. Consider providing the players with enough warnings about her nature before they face her or, alternatively, reducing her challenge level. If they haven't done so yet, the crew may recruit psychologists and psychics to help confront her. Multiple encounters may be required to defeat this villain, some of which may end badly for the crew.

Compelling to Hate: Knight's hate statuses are compelling effects. When a PC takes such a status, ask the player what it makes his character want to do (presumably hurt herself or others). Any action to the contrary treats the hate status as a negative status. At tier-5 the character is compelled to take such actions, and at tier-6 the character is permanently consumed by hatred, transforming into a villain or taking immediate action to kill herself (player's choice).

Healing Krystal Knight: As with all the failed Grail Knights, Krystal Knight bears a deep emotional wound inflicted by the Fisher King, called **the Dolorous Stroke**, represented by a tier-6 status. Only a **Stop.Holding.Back** move may affect this status: releasing Dr. Knight from the effects of the Dolorous Stroke for one scene requires a no-return sacrifice, while curing such a wound altogether requires the ultimate sacrifice. Optionally, you may allow a *Dynamite!* **Change the Game** move to reduce the tier-6 status for the duration of a scene.

Ultimately, the solution to the Krystal Knight problem should be narrative. If you're playing the story arc, it should point to Corbin Payne – if he gave the wound, maybe he can cure it; if he is cured, maybe Krystal Knight will be cured too; etc. If the crew cannot heal her or destroy her yet, they may wish to contain her in her shattered state somehow.

SHATTER 6 / SEDATE - / HEAL -

- **The Dolorous Stroke:** When anyone tries to heal or comfort Krystal Knight for the first time in the series, give her *the-Dolorous-Stroke-6*.
 - **Awaken the Demons:** When you make a move around Krystal Knight, she first makes you remember everything you loathe about yourself (*self-hatred-4*).
 - **Mentally Impenetrable:** When Krystal Knight takes a social or emotional status, reduce its tier by 3.
 - **Pick up the Pieces:** When Krystal Knight's *shatter:6* maxes out, she shatters into a million glass pieces. Give her *reform:4*. She can take *reforming-1* as a soft move. When *reform:4* maxes out, remove all statuses from *reform* and *shatter*.
-
- Touch someone where it hurts the most with just a stare, a word, or a sound (*self-hatred-4*)
 - Urge someone to hurt another (give a PC 3 Hurt points against a fellow PC or *hateful-3*)
 - Make a poignant psychological observation that disarms someone of their mental defenses or overload psychic defenses until they shatter (burn up to two relevant tags or reduce the tier of a relevant status by two)
 - If she's done with someone or is threatened by them, freeze their blood in their veins (*frozen-5*) or use glass manipulation to cut them up (*fatal-cut-5*)
-
- Switch between weeping, laughing hysterically, and delivering a furious diatribe

DEPTH 4: SHOVELING THE HEART'S SNOW

A BLIZZARD OF HATE

The ambulance gallops down the main street, its sirens blaring to warn drivers to get out of its way. You follow in hot pursuit, watching anxiously as the vehicle in front of you makes a sharp turn on its two left wheels, back doors flapping and flailing to reveal a nurse bracing another siren-like contraption. You floor it, racing to cut the ambulance off. Whatever this thing in the back does, you need to stop it from reaching the City.

Whether they realize it during Dr. Knight's final dramatic speech or through piecing the evidence together, sooner or later the PCs learn that Knight's plans are much greater than Mending the Broken. Using the magical shards of the Devil's Mirror, the doctor has planted the seeds of hatred all over town, in the window panes manufactured by Aurora Glassworks over the years. Next, she intends to set off a sonic "bomb"

that will shatter all of those windows, activating their dormant component and covering the City with a snow that freezes not just the bones, but also the heart.

THE BOMB

Recently perfected by the doctor, the sonic bomb is a device that emits a high-pitched scream loaded with so much hatred, that it can shatter all the windows in town, assuming it is set off close enough to the City center. The contraption is the size and shape of an outdated manual siren, and, by the time the crew finds out, it is already being loaded to the back of the Asylum's "mental health services" **ambulance** by a couple of nurses. The ambulance then races towards the City; if it is not stopped, the bomb will go off by itself when it arrives within earshot of a major plaza Downtown.

A SECOND BOMB?

Depending on the tone of your campaign and the crew's success and failure so far, you may want to have Krystal Knight plant a second bomb (or dozens more bombs) elsewhere in the City. Even if the crew disables one bomb, they have to go to greater lengths if they are to save the entire City.



SCREAM BOMB AMBULANCE ★★★

DECOMMISSION 5 / CATCH 5 / GET IN POSITION 3

- **Vehicle:** When the nurses driving the Scream Bomb Ambulance disembark, create a new Danger: Asylum Nurses. This happens automatically when *decommission* is maxed out, but the Nurses take *hurt-1*.
- **Scream Bomb:** When *get-in-position* maxes out, the scream bomb goes off.
- Draw nearer and nearer to its target (*getting-closer-1*)
- Take sharp turns and on the sidewalk to shake off pursuers (remove 2 tiers from statuses on the *catch* spectrum)
- Clear a path for itself in traffic (remove up to three traffic related tags or tiers)
- Once per scene, fire a rocket launcher at vehicles in pursuit (*blown-up-4*, vehicles nearby take *dented-and-bent-2*)
- Accelerate, racing toward the City center

IF THE BOMB GOES OFF

When the sonic device goes off, a painful and shrill scream fills the air all over the City. Everyone in the immediate vicinity of the ambulance takes *deafened-5*. More importantly, all the glass on the street or on building exteriors in the City shatters into microscopic snowflake-shaped shards, showering the City with a blizzard of glass-made snow. Amplified by the Devil's Mirror magic, this snow quickly covers the City; this Devil snow is freezing cold, but being made of glass it doesn't melt (unless exposed to the extreme heat required to melt glass). Furthermore, coming in contact with the snow or even feeling the cold it causes distorts people's perception so that they see only what is negative and ugly around them. This affects everyone in the City, not just Rifts.

How this affects the City is up to you. Two options are:

- **Harsh Winter of the Heart:** The blizzard has an ongoing effect over the City that continues through the next cases you play. City folk become increasingly hateful, distrustful, and negative, making it hard to conduct business and have relationships. Murder and suicide rates go through the roof. The City itself takes *a-blizzard-of-hate-1* which affects actions related to human interactions and mobility in the City. At the end of every downtime, increase the tier by 1.
- **All-Out Dog-Eat-Dog Mayhem:** The blizzard is a one-shot event that threatens to destroy the City. Anyone who comes in contact with the snow instantly becomes a hate-filled maniac (*hateful-4*). Untreated extended exposure makes this hate all-consuming (tier 5) and then permanent (tier 6). Some may take to the streets to kill their fellow citizens before they are killed, while others will seek shelter only to find they have their own self-hatred to contend with. Within days, perhaps even hours, the City's social structures collapse.

The PCs can reduce or remove the status in certain areas of the City with a *Dynamite! Change The Game* move with the large-scale effect option, but removing it from the entire City requires a narrative solution, such as convincing Krystal Knight to end the storm, recruiting a small army of like-minded Rifts to work in tandem and melt the mirror shards, or a *Stop.Holding.Back* move with a no-return or ultimate sacrifice (MC's call).

AFTERMATH

Here are a few questions to consider and points to revisit when you wrap up this case:

- Did the bomb go off or was the blizzard of hate planned by Krystal Knight averted? If it did go off, the City will have to cope with this traumatic event in the weeks, months, or even years to come. If the crisis was averted, does the crew gain reputation among Sleepers or in the Rift underworld? Did they discover that the Devil's Mirror magic is infused into glass all over town, and if so, how do they plan to defuse it?
- What was the end of Dr. Krystal Knight, the Grail Knight? Was she killed, imprisoned, or shattered and contained? Was she healed and now must honorably face all the destruction and pain she has caused? Did she escape or even win the battle, and now plans her next move on the City from her lair? What will be her part in the greater fight against Corbin Payne?
- How did the crew and their supporting cast come out of this intensely emotional episode (and sub-arc)? Were relationships irreversibly damaged? Was this an opportunity for crew members to work through their issues? Did some of them embrace or reject their Rifthood more than before?

- What happened to the Mending the Broken victims Felicia Pema Jones and Ruben Stone (as well as Martha Ellis and Maximillian Drake)? Did they bounce back and find their place as Rifts? Were they able to cleanse their minds of the toxic thoughts instilled in them by their hate-mongering therapists? Did some of them try to confront their abuser or even seek revenge?
- How did the organization of Mending the Broken come out of this? Is it still operating and deceiving Rifts or did the crew make a point of shutting it down? If they lost their boss, did Mending the Broken practitioners disperse and revert back to Sleepers or did they awaken independently? Did they find a new Rift to keep them awake? What is their relation to Rifts after all this?
- And the Asylum – does it continue to operate? Is it time to shut down this atrocious institute or modernize it and turn it into an actual place of healing? Or does the crew decide they need a new prison for their unhinged villains?

If you are playing through the story arc, this case concludes the personal vein. With the red clues they received in this case, the crew can advance to the next act of *Percival*, the overarching case, and investigate more of Corbin Payne (page XX). If you haven't gone through all the cases in the mystical or criminal veins, move on to those.

