



Kittens

Dust everywhere.

Place is silent.

Windows boarded up, filthy bedsheets covering stained furniture, a tiny bundle of grey fur that turns out to be a dead kitten. Something wooden -- a rat trap. Looks like it crushed the little kittie's skull. Perverse irony, that.

Outside, it looks like an abandoned house in a bad part of town. Inside, you can feel it on your skin like electricity, a humming ugliness that coils into your skull like the smell of hot urine. This place stinks of hatred.

Gently, I draw the .357 and walk towards the stairs. I feel sweat trickling down my back, dampening my socks, pricking my brow. I try to ease my feet down with each step; old floorboards, don't want them to creak.

After what feels like a couple of days, I cross the room and reach the bottom of the staircase. It's too dark to see if there's anything at the top. I want to take out the walkie-talkie and ask Jason if he found anything outside, but I'm afraid. I don't want to make any noise. If I turn and walk out right now, I'll be okay. I'm sure of that. But I got a job to do. I can't just walk away from this. I don't want to die, though. I can't stop walking, and it's hard to breathe. My throat feels like I just swallowed a handful of chalk dust.

The gun's light, less than a pound. Kicks like a bastard, and it's surprisingly loud. I'm never ready for that. I try to concentrate on how I'm going to react if some gibbering skinless monstrosity swings down at me out of the shadows, screaming like a crucified castrati, perhaps laughing just before unzipping me here on the stairs. I try to keep my finger on the trigger, but my hands are sweaty, and I worry about firing the gun accidentally, maybe giving away my position, maybe blowing a hole in my foot.

I see it about ten steps up. Not the thing, although I am well aware that there is something in this house with me, something unbelievably bad. What I see, about ten steps up, is a small bowl. Small plastic cereal bowl, got Winnie the Pooh on it. I walk up the stairs, close to the wall. You climb up old stairs like this, don't do it up the middle. Wood flexes, creaks -- it's astonishingly loud in a silent house. No, you put your foot against the wall, where it can't bend much, and you do it slow. So I put one foot in front of the other, easing my weight up the stairs, wiping drops of sweat off my eyebrows.

When I'm almost at the bowl, I crane my neck to get a better look. Something in it. Looks like it could actually be cereal. Jesus. Wouldn't that be ridiculous. But I know I'm wrong. So I get my pen light out, set the Smith and Wesson on the steps, within reach, and shine a tiny beam of light on the cereal bowl.

Teeth. Little teeth, a kid's teeth. Maybe a dozen. Bloody roots, ropes of dark blood curled around the shiny white enamel, cuspids, molars, canines. I feel something hot and urgent writhe in my gut, and I have to stare in the darkness for several seconds, blinking and breathing softly and slowly through my nose. It works, and I feel the nausea subside. It's a Vouzire, no doubt. That's just perfect. I can feel hysterical laughter rattling around in my lungs, and I have to bite my tongue to suppress it. With trembling fingers, I pick up the .357. If it is a Vouzire, this gun isn't worth a god damn. A shotgun might do the trick, but really, I just wouldn't feel comfortable without a flamethrower. But all I have is this revolver. It will have to suffice. I look up the stairs, and take a slow, quiet breath.

Now I have to wonder. After all, it eats childrens' teeth. That's all a Vouzire eats. So it sets a bowl of them up here on the steps. Why? Wouldn't it want to keep them safe? You'd think so. But here they are, a handful of small white teeth. On the stairs. A delicacy, as far as the demon's concerned.

A rat trap.

I reach for the walkie-talkie just before I hear the growl, behind me, heavy and loud, like someone starting a lawnmower. From the corner of my eye, I see it blur across the room towards me, a roaring mass of shining spines and serrated teeth. Everything is so fast, but it takes me forever to turn and pull the trigger on the Smith and Wesson. It's wide, hits somewhere in the kitchen, far behind the demon. It's coming straight at me, not going to come up the stairs. Maybe it's going to jump--

The Vouzire splinters through a couch and a table before driving a fist through the wood of the staircase, smashing my ankle to powder. I choke on a scream and slide down two steps, cracking my skull hard on the way down. I blink, once, and it's dragging me off the stairs. The hardwood flies up and smashes my mouth. Suddenly, I'm on the floor, on my back, and it's above me, reaching down with long white talons.

Jason kicks in the door, just behind the Vouzire, yelling obscenities as he pumps round after round into its back, limned by blinding sunlight. A slug goes wild and strikes the ceiling above me. A chunk of plaster lands on my mouth and with some effort, I spit it out. I hate my god damn job.

Everything goes black.

About this Game

Dread is a game of modern horror. It's pretty violent, if played right.

This game is for mature audiences. The subject matter can be quite dark.

This demo version contains a great deal of material that will also be available in the final version. However, there will be considerable differences between the two. This document is about forty pages long, whereas the final version may well be five times that length. Also, there's a lot here that isn't explained fully. The final version of the game will include thorough explanations of demons, the spirit barrier, magic, the Rephaim, and so on.

The rules have been stripped down, and the backstory is all but non-existent. However, there should be enough conceptual material here to give you an idea of what Dread's all about.

If you have any questions, feel free to visit the site at <http://www.dread-rpg.com>, or email me at info@dread-rpg.com.

Thanks a hell of a lot for your interest in Dread, and I hope you get a kick out of this. Hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,
Rafael Chandler
President, Malignant Games

The Disciple

You are not an adventurer or hero or investigator. You are a Disciple. You are not part of team or party or group. You are part of a Cabal.

The Disciples in each Cabal were chosen by a Mentor. There are several Mentors, working across the globe, although the precise number is not known to you.

You were chosen for a specific reason: your failure.

You were chosen because you were incapable of moving forward with your life.

It struck without warning, or it snuck up on you. Perhaps you watched a loved one die, or you were sent to prison, to live years entire years of your life in a cage. Perhaps your occasional drink turned into the occasional bender, and then you woke up one morning and your wife was gone. Perhaps you loved someone who tried to hurt you badly, or your world fell apart when your parents died. One way or another, it happened, and the trauma made it impossible for you to go on, and you slowly began to lose track of things. Bills were not paid. Work performance degenerated. Friendships were neglected. Family members were ignored. Utilities were cut off. Perhaps you were fired. Eviction. Loneliness. Desperation. Sickness.

Just before things became completely intolerable, something horrific happened. It was in a dark place. An attic, a lonely street, a basement, a dark field, an alley, a cemetery. It was completely unexpected.

A thing, something indescribable, erupted from the darkness and struck you like a bullet from a gun. Even now, only impressions remain. Its eyes burned like embers, its breath was hot and reeked of excrement, it dug its claws in and shredded your flesh like paper. You recoiled, screaming, digging in the dirt, trying to claw your way to safety, but it was on your back, a monstrous weight, rending your garments and drooling caustic ichor that seared the back of your neck.

Just before the killing blow, your Mentor appeared. Weapon in hand, she broke the creature like wood, crushing bones with emotionless efficiency. A boot on its shattered skull, she extended a hand to you. You took it, gingerly, and she took you up.

With her attention, your wounds healed. Over time, you were restored. She taught you to use weapons, told you of the Spirit Barrier, introduced you to other members of the Cabal. You had a thousand questions. You still do. She rarely answered questions. Taciturn at best, she deflected your inquiries and told you to focus on the task at hand.

She trained you to control your fear, to shoot straight, to focus on getting the job done. She told you that you are now a Disciple, a soldier in a very old war.

There was nothing else for you to do. Bridges had been burned, and your future had been corroded by past horrors and sorrows. This mission, this war, seemed like your only hope. In a world where no one cared, where no concern had been shown as you spiraled into oblivion, your Mentor was there to stitch your wounds, to bring you hot food as you convalesced, to hold you as you shook and wept.

Now, you see her rarely. You and the other Disciples, who share your background, wage battle with the tools you are given. You struggle to do the right thing, because it is all you can do at this point.

When your Mentor visits you, the news is never good. She tells you that there is something amiss, something terribly wrong, and she tells you where. You go there, with your Cabal, and you try to fix things.

No one else can do this. You, and you alone, have the knowledge and discipline necessary. If you fail, innocents will die.

If you succeed, you might get back a little peace of mind.

A little.

Conduct

The Disciple has a single mission: protect people from the demons that prey upon them. In many cases, this will mean hunting and destroying creatures that feed on human misery. In other cases, this will mean saving people from themselves, thwarting the efforts of those who use magic and demons to gain wealth and power, and recovering magical artifacts before they fall into the wrong hands.

There are many different kinds of Disciple: the cerebral investigator, the tough brawler, the fast-talking con artist, the violent avenger, the magical prodigy, the messianic, and the ex-con obsessed with redemption.

However, they have all been trained by the Mentor, and each possesses skills and abilities beyond those of ordinary humans. While these abilities can be used for selfish ends, the character will suffer for it, and his more noble colleagues will enjoy considerable success by comparison.

It is not necessary for all Disciples to react to danger in the same way; some will take cover, some will draw a sword or gun and leap into the fray, and some will unleash powerful magics. When presented with a riddle or mystery, some Disciples will use their skills and abilities to search for clues or keys, whereas others will stand guard and watch for trouble, or ready their weapons. It is important to have different Disciples with different abilities, dispositions, and styles.

But the Cabal exists to protect people, not to victimize them, and gameplay should reflect that. Bear in mind that there are repercussions in this game, from creating enemies to losing Power to attracting the attention of the authorities.

The system was created to reward heroic characters, and to penalize cowardice and disregard for human life.

However, also remember that there are no guarantees, and that your character might well die during combat. Be brave, but be cautious. Attacking two cultists armed with guns is not recommended if your character is wielding a baseball bat.

If your character does fall in battle, you may wish to consider using a Contact (one of your own, or someone else's) that has been featured in a game session.

If your character dies honorably, your new character will retain all your old character's Power (and will also receive the 6 points that all Disciples begin with).

The Cabal

Your character was rescued from oblivion by a mysterious figure known as the Mentor. Your Mentor has a name. That's pretty much all you know.

The Mentor taught you to fight, and to shoot, and to hunt. Your job is to hunt demons and kill them. It's that simple. You know that it's a risky business; each time you set out to bring one down, there's a chance your Cabal will come home without you.

Your Cabal consists of people just like yourself, human wreckage saved from the scrap heap. You're all struggling with inner demons, and you're also waging war against very real, very tangible demons. But just because you're all on the same team doesn't make you best friends.

Create your Disciples as a group, bearing in mind that you and the other players are working together. Try to complement one another; if you're all expert combatants, but no one has serious magical ability, your Cabal will suffer for it.

Character Creation

To create a Disciple, you must determine several different aspects: Attributes, Backgrounds, Contacts, Health, Drive, and Occult Lore.

Here's a brief overview:

- Attributes define a character.
- Background is what the character has done in the past (like College, or the Military).
- Contacts are people that the character may knows, as a result of any of these things.
- Health is a measure of how many times your character has been wounded.
- Drive defines what your character remembers most from his old life.
- Occult Lore has been learned recently, and is still something your character is striving to master.

Character Creation is not complicated, but will require some reflection, and a bit of preparation. There are some quick-generation rules that will be present in the final version (a few are listed here as well).

To create a character, you'll need a character sheet (there's one at the end of this document, feel free to copy it), and you'll need some twelve-sided dice (a group might need as many as eight or nine, though you can never have too many).

Dread is designed for a group of 2 to 6 players (the ideal group, we've found, is 3 or 4 players), and one Director. The Director is the game master. If you're reading this, you probably understand the idea. If you don't, write me at info@dread-rpg.com.

Attributes

There are four Attributes that you must determine. These Attributes help you define what your character is (as opposed to Skills, which are things that your character knows).

- Body: A measure of speed, strength, and endurance
- Mind: A measure of intelligence, education, and wit.
- Spirit: A measure of spiritual fortitude and will.
- The fourth Attribute, Power, is determined by the player.

These scores answer questions one might pose about your character. Is she smart? Is she strong? Is she confident? Is she fast? Is she tough?

To answer these questions, distribute 9 points between the first three scores. You may choose any combination you please, but one score must be a 4 or higher, and no score may exceed 6.

Example: Let's create a character named Agnes Day. She was a cop at one point, so Agnes is tough and willful; we'll assign a 4 to Body and 3 to Spirit. That leaves Mind, which gets the 2. She's not brilliant, but she's fast and tough.

Body: 4 Mind: 2 Spirit: 3

We'll return to Agnes later. Now, let's check out her partner.

Example:

Maximilian Devereaux is smart, but neither spiritual nor physically adept. Born into wealth, Maximilian was never terribly interested in physical exploits. A bookworm by nature, he studies constantly, and reads voraciously. He's not terribly strong or tough, but he relies on wits and his extensive knowledge of the supernatural to get him out of trouble.

Body: 1 Mind: 6 Spirit: 2

To create the fourth Attribute, choose a word that describes the primary aspect of your character's highest Attribute. If your character's highest Attribute is Body, choose a word that explains why the score is high, such as Strength, Endurance, or Speed. If the Attribute is Mind, choose a word like Intellect, Judgment, or Knowledge. If the Attribute is Spirit, choose a word like Anger, Compassion, or Willpower. Any word works, so long as it describes your character's strongest and most positive trait. This word is your Power Descriptor, and should help you decide how your character reacts to situations. Is she patient? Is she wise? Is she fast? Is she clinical? Is she compassionate?

Whatever the case, this score is your character's Power. Her Power score is used in a number of ways, which will be explained in full on page 29. The Power score begins at 6.

Using Attributes

Any time a character is challenged personally, she must perform an Attribute Roll. This is done by rolling a number of dice equal to the Attribute Score. If the highest die matches or beats the Target Difficulty, the roll is successful. If the highest die is lower than the Target Difficulty, the roll is a failure. The Target Difficulty will range from 2 (very easy) to 12 (quite difficult).

If the character's Body is tested in some way, such as having to kick a door down or climb a wall, the character must make a Body Roll. A Body Roll may also be used if a character is trying to lift a heavy object, outrun a pursuer, or remain absolutely motionless. Combat is resolved using the Body Score.

If the character's Mind is tested in some way, such as having to recognize a disguised suspect in a crowd, or having to decipher a message written in a code, the character must make a Mind Roll. A Mind Roll may also be used if a character is trying to remember a fragment of poetry, catch someone in a lie, or recognize a language that she doesn't actually speak. A character with a high Mind Score will have more points to assign to Backgrounds and Skills.

If the character's Spirit is tested in some way, such as having to withstand the hypnotic gaze of an Aspinaba Demon, the character must make a Spirit Roll. A Spirit Roll may also be used if the character is trying to withstand torture, cast a spell, or win an argument. Spell casting is resolved using the Spirit Score.

The question is, what precisely do these Attributes entail? What's the difference between a Body Score of 3 and a Body Score of 5? One's higher, sure, but other than that, what do the scores tell you about your character?

For answers, consult the Attribute Scores table, below.

Attribute Descriptions

Body

1. Feeble: frequently requires help
2. Weak: out of shape
3. Average: in reasonable shape
4. Well-built: strong and fast
5. Powerful: in perfect condition
6. Superhuman: beyond belief

Mind

1. Dense: confused easily
2. Slow-witted: slow on the uptake
3. Average: typical intelligence
4. Sharp: figures things out quickly
5. Brilliant: incredibly smart
6. Genius: unrivalled intellect

Spirit

1. Spineless: obeys everyone
2. Pushover: easy to persuade
3. Average: typical willpower
4. Tough: independent spirit
5. Strong-willed: a powerful soul
6. Indomitable: vast spiritual fortitude

Background

Before your character was a Disciple, she was something else. Choose an appropriate number of Backgrounds, and write them on your character sheet. Next to each, write a brief description.

To determine how many points to allocate, add your Mind Score to 6, and distribute the points among any number of Backgrounds, chosen from the list below.

Example: Let's get back to Agnes Day. She's tough, fast, and willful. A career in law-enforcement sounds about right. We'll go with Law and Entrepreneur. Her Mind Score is 2, and that means that she gets 8 points to distribute between her backgrounds ($2+6=8$). We'll split it evenly, meaning that she gets 4 points in Law and 4 in Entrepreneur.

Using Background

In any situation in which you feel that your Disciple's background is applicable, inform the Director that you're making a Background Roll. Roll a number of dice equal to your Background Score, and compare the result with the difficulty of the skill (on a scale from 2 to 12, with 2 being easy and 12 being very difficult). If at least one of your dice equals or beats the difficulty, you have succeeded.

Example: Agnes is approached by a police officer in a dark alley. On impulse, she makes a Law Roll. The Director indicates that the difficulty is 8. Agnes rolls 4 dice (because her Law Score is 4), and rolls 2, 3, 7, and 9. Since at least one of her dice exceeded the difficulty, she is successful. Scrutinizing the officer's uniform, she realizes that it's not genuine. This person isn't an actual officer of the law. She's been set up.

Background List

Abroad
Art
Education
Entertainment
Entrepreneur
Food
Government
Journalist
Law
Military
Professional
Religion
Science
Service
Student
Technology

Background Descriptions

Abroad: Your character spent some time abroad, either while working or studying, or as a tourist.

Art: Involvement in the artistic community, either as an artist, an auctioneer, a curator, or an artist's assistant.

Education: Your character was involved in education. Perhaps she was a teacher, a student counselor, or a school administrator of some kind. Or, she might have been a college professor or military instructor.

Entertainment: A career in entertainment, either as a singer or performer, or as an agent or manager.

Entrepreneur: Your character started his own business. Perhaps it was a dot-com or a convenience store.

Food: Either a waiter, dishwasher, chef, restaurant owner, or food critic, your character was involved in the food industry.

Government: Your character worked in some government office, or ran for elected office, or managed a campaign. Alternately, your character may have been a news reporter in D.C., or an intern.

Journalist: Working for a newspaper, tabloid, or news site, your character was a journalist for some time. Or, perhaps, she was a managing editor for a publication.

Law: Either a judge, police officer, bailiff, or attorney, your character spent some time in court. Or he might have been a convict who learned about law during his incarceration.

Military: Your character was involved in the military, either as a member of the Guard, an enlisted soldier, or an officer.

Professional: A working professional, your character used a specialized set of skills. Either an architect, plumber, or firefighter, your character did something that required considerable study and knowledge.

Religion: Your character was involved in religion. Perhaps a rabbi or nun or pastor, or merely conductor of the church youth choir, your character became part of a religious community.

Science: Either a lab assistant or award-winning biochemist, your character has some experience in science, and knows her way around a laboratory.

Service: While working in a hotel or laundromat, your character was part of the service industry. Perhaps she owned a car wash, or worked in a day-care center.

Student: Your character was a college or university student, perhaps at a prestigious school like Yale, perhaps at a small community college, close to home.

Technology: While working for a dot-com, or a large pharmaceutical company, your character worked in a high-tech environment.

Skills

To determine Skills for your character, distribute a number of points equal to your Mind Score among different Skills, chosen from the list below. To choose skills, merely pick any number of skills from the list below, and distribute your points as you see fit. The range of scores is as follows:

- 1: Little experience
- 2: Some experience
- 3: Competence
- 4: Competence
- 5: Familiarity
- 6: Expertise

Example: For Agnes Day, we'll focus on skills that reflect her law-enforcement background. Her Mind Score is 2, so she gets 2 points to distribute:

Forensic Pathology:	1
Driving:	1

Maybe Agnes used to be a cop, or a bail bondswoman, or a private eye. Whatever the case, if you add up the scores, you see that the total is 2. If her Mind Score had been 3, she would have been able to distribute 3 points among her skills.

Using Skills

When there is a situation where you think that your character's skill could come in handy, merely indicate to the Director that you would like to use a certain skill. The Director will tell you the difficulty of the skill (on a scale from 2 to 12, with 2 being easy and 12 being very difficult), and you will perform a Skill Roll. If at least one of your dice equals or beats the difficulty, you have succeeded.

To determine the number of dice rolled, add the Skill Score to the applicable Background Score.

Example: Agnes comes across a murder scene. The blood is fresh, but the body is nowhere to be seen. She informs the Director that she wants to use her Forensic Pathology skill. He indicates that the difficulty is 7. It's average, because on the one hand, the body's been removed, which makes it harder to determine what transpired here, but then again, the scene is fresh, and the blood is still wet.

Agnes has a Forensic Pathology score of 1, and a Law Background of 4. Her total Skill Roll is 5. She rolls 1, 2, 2, 7, and 9. Since at least one of her dice matched the difficulty, she succeeds. The Director tells her that, judging from the blood spray on the walls, the victim was struck at least twice, and faint drag marks on the ground indicate that the body was moved into the next room. Wisely, Agnes draws her gun before moving into the next room...

Skill List

This is a list of the skills that are available to all characters.

Accounting
Anatomy
Appraisal
Architecture
Art History
Astronomy
Auto Mechanic
Biology
Breaking/Entering
Cartography
Chemistry
Climbing
Computer Hacking
Computer Programming
Computer Repair
Cryptography
Disguise
Driving
First Aid
Forensic Pathology
Geography
History
Interrogation
Journalism
Language
Law
Literature
Parapsychology
Political Science
Psychology
Religion
Riding
Stealth
Swimming
Tracking

Skill Descriptions

Accounting: This skill entails familiarity with principles of accounting and bookkeeping. A character with this skill may be able to detect embezzlement or incorrectly balanced ledgers.

Anatomy: Knowledge of the human body. A character with this skill has intimate knowledge of organs and their functions, and can determine anomalies or irregularities in bodies.

Appraisal: Estimation of the value of rare or antique items, including jewelry and paintings. A successful skill roll will enable a character to appraise objects of value.

Architecture: The character has studied architecture, and is familiar with its basic principles. A character with this skill may be able to tell certain things about a building, based on its architecture.

Art History: A character with this skill is familiar with various art movements and techniques through the ages. Successful use of this skill will allow a character to place objects of art in a historical context.

Astronomy: The scientific study of celestial objects, of space, and of the physical universe as a whole. A character with this skill can identify celestial bodies and constellations.

Auto Mechanic: This skill enables a character to diagnose and fix most automotive problems. A successful skill roll will enable a character to repair minor car problems, and with sufficient parts and time, even more complicated ones.

Biology: The study of life sciences. The character is familiar with evolution, reproduction, cells, anatomy, and genetics. A character with this skill may recognize lab equipment, and may be able to deduce its purpose; the character may also be able to infer meaning from other biologists' notes.

Breaking/Entering: The ability to enter secured areas without being heard or detected. A character with this skill has some experience with opening locked doors and windows. Successful use of this skill will enable a character to silently enter a home or to open a locked door or window.

Cartography: The science of mapmaking. A character with this skill is familiar with basic principles of mapmaking and navigation. Successful use of this skill will enable a character to read maps, even those made incorrectly, or in other languages. A character with this skill may be able to tell something about the map, such as when it was made, or where.

Chemistry: Knowledge of the composition, structure, and properties of substances and the transformations that they undergo. A character with this skill can identify and use pertinent laboratory equipment, and is also familiar with the properties of various compounds and chemicals.

Climbing: Experience with scaling vertical surfaces. A character with this skill may be able to climb ropes, cliffs, and walls.

Computer Hacking: The ability to retrieve information from other computers. A successful roll may allow a character to access data in other computers, provided that there is some way to access them.

Computer Programming: Experience with programming, possibly including experience with software development, web design, or information technology.

Computer Repair: A character with this skill has experience with computer hardware, and can diagnose and fix most computer problems, given time and materials. A character with this skill may be able to salvage parts from other computers, repair different kinds of hardware problems, and build new computers.

Cryptography: Knowledge of codes and codebreaking. A character with this skill may be able to decipher simple codes. More complicated codes, such as computer-generated encryption, will require access to decryption machinery.

Disguise: The art of concealing one's identity. This skill will enable a character to pass for someone else, given time and materials, and will also allow a character to detect a disguise on someone else.

Driving: The ability to drive under duress, while being pursued, or during inclement weather. While this skill is not useful when driving normally, a successful roll means that a character has successfully eluded pursuit, or managed to stay on the road during a hailstorm.

First Aid: Knowledge of immediate-response medical treatment. A character with this skill will be able to tend to the wounded, stopping bleeding and taking care of urgent medical concerns, such as broken limbs.

Forensic Pathology: The discipline of forensic pathology deals with the investigation of sudden and unexpected death. A character with this skill may be able to deduce cause of death, given enough time and proper equipment (microscope, sterile instruments, a well-lit laboratory).

Geography: Knowledge of the nations and cities of the world. A character with this skill may be able to determine location from photographs, or to recognize cities and geographical entities.

History: Study of the nations and cultures of the world. The character can, with a successful skill roll, place people or events in historical context, or determine the dates of various events or epochs.

Interrogation: The ability to extract information from an unwilling suspect. Through guile, intimidation, manipulation, or kindness, the character is able to persuade people to part with information they'd rather keep hidden.

Journalism: The character has experience with investigative reporting or some other aspect of journalism, and has numerous sources and contacts in the business.

Language: Knowledge of a specific language (to be named when this skill is chosen). The character may take this skill more than once (the skill may be selected once per language).

Law: The character is familiar with the intricacies of the Law. Furthermore, the character has some kind of legal experience, and has various contacts in court, law offices, and police stations.

Literature: Knowledge of the fiction and poetry of a culture. The character is familiar with the writing of a particular people, or with Literature in general.

Parapsychology: Study of the paranormal. A character with this skill is familiar with UFOs, Bigfoot, the Loch Ness Monster, and other, less well-known phenomena (such as the Chupacabras, the Wendigo, and the Jersey Devil).

Political Science: A character with this skill has studied Political Science, and is familiar with the intricacies of government. Furthermore, the character may have contacts in government, including elected officials.

Psychology: The systematic study of mental and psychological processes. A character with this skill may be able to recognize mental or psychological aberrations, given sufficient time and opportunity.

Religion: Knowledge of various belief systems. The character is familiar with a number of specific belief systems, and can recognize their rituals and significance. The character may also be familiar with the history of these belief systems.

Riding: The skill of riding horses (or other animals). The character is skilled at riding under various conditions, and has learned how to act around riding animals.

Stealth: The ability to move without making noise or attracting attention. A successful skill roll means that the character has moved silently and is undetected.

Swimming: The character is an experienced swimmer, and can stay afloat in adverse conditions. While swimming normally will not require a skill roll, a successful roll will be required if the character is trying to swim during a hurricane, for example.

Tracking: The ability to track a quarry through various types of terrain. Successful use of this skill may entail being able to follow a target through the city, as well.

Occult Lore

In addition to the skills detailed above, your character has also recently acquired knowledge of the Occult. Through training with her Mentor, and through hours of research, your character has obtained some understanding of one of the principles described below. Occult Lore is a very specialized Skill, but is treated like any other; dice are rolled against a target difficulty.

Choose one, and assign it a score of 1. Over time, this may improve. For now, the score is low, because your character is a novice, and knowledge is hard to come by.

Occult Lore List:

Apocrypha
Cathexis
Demonology
Hamartiology
Ritual
Secret Societies

Occult Lore Descriptions

Apocrypha: The Apocrypha constitute a loosely defined collection of early Christian texts which are similar in style and content to the books of the New Testament but which were not included in either the New Testament itself or the Apostolic Fathers. The Christian Apocrypha include a wide range of genres: gospels, apostolic acts, letters, apocalypses, martyrdoms, and saint's lives. The surviving texts date from the second century and later, but some contain much older traditions. They were written in a variety of ancient languages and often survive only in fragments or in translations into other languages. They include the book of Enoch and the Apocalypse of Baruch.

Cathexis: Literally, cathexis is focus of mental or psychic energy on a thing or idea. It is the study of transcendence through focus, practiced by fakirs and visionaries of all religions and eras. A character with this skill is familiar with methods by which Cathects channel energy (a process known to the layman as "Magic"), and can recognize Cathexis in action.

Demonology: The study of demons, the dark creatures from the other side of the Spirit Barrier. The character has learned some of their weaknesses and vulnerabilities, and may know of ways to banish them permanently. In addition, the character has learned their migratory patterns, preferred lairs, and feeding habits.

Hamartiology: The study of Sin and its consequences. The character has studied the doctrines of transgression and solitude, and has some idea how they apply in the real world, with regard to demonic parasites that feed on negative energies. This skill enables the character to recognize scenarios where a demon might be involved.

Ritual: The study of ritualistic magic, and knowledge of its various components and aspects. The character has some knowledge of cults and their activities, and is familiar with spell components, incantations, and their effects.

Secret Societies: Knowledge of secret societies throughout history, from early groups like the first Christians, to later organizations like the Templars, the Rosicrucians, and the Grailshades. The character has some idea of what secret societies have been like through the ages, and may have some understanding of their goals today.

Using Occult Lore

It is important that a Cabal include Disciples with Skills and Attributes that complement one another. It is equally important that characters possess different Occult Lore skills, as these can be extremely useful during gameplay.

Apocrypha: A character with this skill may recognize ancient texts, sacred artifacts, or passages from various Apocryphal texts. A successful roll might shed light on a mysterious scripture, or identify a golden cross.

Cathexis: This skill may allow a character to recognize the presence or use of magic. Attuned to the use of magic, and to the requisite channeling of mental energy that precedes it, the Disciple may be able to identify a spell when it is cast, or recognize someone as a spellcaster.

Demonology: Using this skill, a Disciple may be able to identify a demon from various clues or physical evidence. A character may also be able to recall specific information about a demon, such as weaknesses, habits, and patterns.

Hamartiology: A character with this skill, when presented with a gruesome scenario (a cheating wife torn apart by some kind of animal, an abusive priest who goes mad and murders an altar boy during a service), may be able to deduce the presence of demonic possession or magic. Conversely, presented with an instance of demonic possession or attack, the character may be able to figure out why the victim was targeted, and whether there will be more victims.

Ritual: Using this skill, a character may be able to ascertain the nature of a ritual that has been cast, or will be cast, based on evidence (such as altars or ceremonial weapons) or testimony (descriptions or eyewitness accounts). From such an understanding, the Disciple may be able to guess the kind of spell that was cast.

Secret Societies: This skill will enable a character to recognize possible references to, or evidence of, a secret society of old. The ancient societies, like the Rosicrucians, Grailshades, Sanguine Seven, and Magna Mater, all focused their considerable sorcerous (and financial) power on the acquisition of political and spiritual power and influence. A Disciple with this skill may be able to recall certain details or characteristics of a secret society.

Drive

Examining your character thus far, you must now bridge the gap between what your character was, and what he is now. Each Disciple was, at one point, a normal person. He had a job, a car, maybe a love life, or a group of friends. He had ambitions, dreams, ideals.

Whether they were smashed, or merely eroded, he lost them all. Something happened that pushed him to the edge, and over it. Perhaps he lost a loved one, or something went terribly wrong in his life. A traumatic attack, or an accident, or a mental breakdown – something slowly took over his life, robbing him of the will to go on.

Now, however, he has a reason to live again. He's now a Disciple, and has a mission to accomplish. But there is one thing from that past life that haunts him. Take your character's Background into account, or consider his Contacts or Skills. Write down a brief description of the one unresolved issue from his life before. This is his Drive, the thing that keeps him up late at night, and that he thinks about when things slow down.

If a player can explain how a specific conflict, crisis, or challenge is related to his Disciple's Drive, an extra die may be used for that particular Roll. As usual, no more than 6 dice can be rolled.

Example: Agnes Day was a successful forensic pathologist, respected by her peers, and known for her perspicacity. However, after three good years, she was present at the autopsy of a little girl who had been tortured and crucified. In time, Agnes became obsessed with solving the case, but leads were few, and evidence was sparse. Even with her keen eye, and her knowledge of the criminal mind, she could not break the case.

One drink after work became three. Then ten. When she showed up to work, she was late. Sometimes she didn't bother coming in. She walked the streets at night, thinking out loud, struggling to glean the tiniest bit of insight. It didn't come. She got fired.

After cashing in her retirement, she started her own business: a Private Investigation service. She focused on missing children, but the only one she really wanted to find was dead. She tried to let it go, but couldn't. Within a year, her business had failed, and she still hadn't caught the girl's killer. Her drinking got out of hand, and she spiraled rapidly through a series of low-income jobs before waking up behind the wheel of a wrecked volvo, her face a scarlet ruin.

Now, she still thinks of the girl, hands bloody from the iron nails, that she autopsied six years ago. But her focus is the mission at hand. She sublimates her fury into energy, and routinely puts in sixteen-hour days. But she has never forgotten. And she's been sober for 53 days.

In a situation in which Agnes is trying to rescue a child, or hunting a murderer of children, the player could cite Agnes' Drive, and roll an extra die for specific actions that involve resolving these issues (catching the child as he falls from a window, shooting the killer).

Contacts

Each character has contacts, people that she knew beforehand. The contacts may not have heard from the Disciple in some time, and may believe the character to be dead.

Each character gets to select up to six Contacts. Write down two to five names, and next to each, write a profession. Work with your Director to flesh out your contacts' histories, or do it on your own and submit it to the Director. It's very useful to thoroughly describe a number of Contacts before gameplay begins.

The remaining one to four Contacts, for which you have not indicated names, get Backgrounds instead. For these, write down only the Background for the Contact in question. Choose from the Background list on page 14.

To use a Contact for which you have created a name and a working history, you need merely role-play the scenario with your Director. To use a Contact for which you only have a Background, you must spend a point of Power. This can be done at any time.

Example: On page 13, Agnes realizes that the "officer" approaching her is an impostor. But just as she reaches for her gun, she may realize with a start that the impostor is actually Jimmy Reinhart, a con artist she met years ago, when she was on the force. In terms of game mechanic, this means that Agnes' player must spend a point of Power, and must inform the Director that the officer is a Contact.

However, to do this, the Disciple's Contact list must have an opening with the appropriate Background. For instance, if Agnes' unnamed Contacts included Science and Food, it really wouldn't make much sense for Jimmy Reinhart to fall under either category. A Background of Law makes more sense (Jimmy was a criminal, or an ex-con trying to go straight, or an informant).

If a player can make a convincing argument for activating a Contact when if the Background doesn't seem to fit at all, the other players and the Director may permit it. However, agreement must be unanimous, and the explanation must be thorough.

Your contacts may help you answer questions, get you out of sticky situations, or ask you for help. The more detail you give them, and the more history you share with them, the more useful your contacts will be.

Example: When she was a Private Investigator, Agnes briefly employed an assistant, Marjorie Chambers. Now, Marjorie has her own Private Investigation service, Eye Know. In addition, Agnes was close to a policewoman named Diane Weston. She has not seen Diane in years. In addition to these two, Agnes has four "unactivated" Contacts, with the following Backgrounds: Government, Law, Technology, and Religion.

A character can "buy" new Contact slots by expending Power, as explained on page 30.

Character Health

Each character begins the game in good health, which means a Health Score of 12. However, as game play progresses, the character may be injured, which will cause the Health score to diminish. When it reaches 0, the character will slip into a coma, and may die.

10–12: Normal Health

7–9: Bruised

5–6: Injured

3–4: Hurt Badly

2: Critical Condition

1: Near death

0: Comatose

When a character's Health slips below 3, all of the character's Skills perform no higher than 2.

Example: Agnes has been hurt badly. Her Health is now 2, and she is having trouble standing up. Even though her Forensic Pathology skill is 3, if she makes a Skill Check, she only gets to roll 2 dice.

When a character's Health reaches 0, she is comatose, and may die.

Each hour, beginning immediately, the character must roll a Body Check against an ever-increasing Target Difficulty. When the character's Health first reaches 0, she must roll her Body Check (penalties don't apply, so in Agne's case, this would entail rolling 6 dice) against a Target Difficulty of 3.

After one hour, she must roll the Body Check against a Target difficulty of 4. Then 5, and then 6, where it remains until the character receives medical attention, or fails a Body Check, at which point the character is dead.

Health regenerates at a rate of 1 point every three days.

Combat

Combat involves three rolls: Order, Attack, and Defense. For each round of combat (lasting about ten seconds), a character rolls Order once, Attack once, and Defense as many times as necessary. It is not possible for a human to Attack more than once per round, though there are other entities that may be able to.

When characters become involved in combat, each character (and each adversary) must roll for Combat Order. This is done by rolling Body for each character. High number goes first, followed by the next highest, and so on.

If a character chooses to Attack someone, he rolls dice equal to his Body Score. His opponent rolls a number of dice equal to his Body Score (this is the Defense roll). The highest die for each roll is considered. In event of a tie, look for the next two highest dice, and if necessary, keep going until one of the dice is higher. If one of the combatants runs out of dice, reroll all of the dice.

If the defender wins, no damage is taken, and combat continues. If the attacker wins, the damage inflicted on the defender is equal to the difference between the two dice.

Example: Lead pipe in hand, Agnes squares off against two grinning neo-Nazis in an alley. All three parties roll their Body Scores to determine Order. Agnes has a Body Score of 4, so she rolls 4 dice: 1, 2, 6, and 8. High roll for her is 8. High rolls for the thugs are 4 and 3. So Agnes goes first, followed by the two neo-Nazis.

Agnes attacks the first thug with her lead pipe. She rolls her Body Score again (4 dice). Her high roll is a 10, he rolls a 7. She cracks him over the head with the pipe, inflicting 3 points of damage ($10-7=3$).

The second thug lunges forward and swings a bat at Agnes' head. His Body Score is 2. He rolls 2 and 8. Agnes rolls 3, 6, 6, and 8. Since they both had the same high roll (an 8), they look to the next highest dice (in this case, the thug's 2 and Agnes' 6). Agnes has the higher roll, so she wins. Because she is the defender, this means that she dodges the blow.

Weapons inflict damage bonuses. The full version of the game will examine this in more detail, but to paint the picture with broad strokes:

Hand-held weapons:	+1
Pistol, Revolver:	+2
Rifle, Shotgun:	+3
Machinegun:	+4

Simply add the damage bonus to the normal damage inflicted (the difference between attacker's die and defender's die). In the above example, the damage inflicted would actually have been 4

points, not 3 (hand-held weapons like pipes and axes inflict an extra point of damage). And had she shot him with a shotgun, the damage done would have been 6 points (3+3).

Modifiers: In any situation where a character is suffering from a disadvantage of any kind, subtract a die from the Attack or Defense Roll. The effect is cumulative. If a character is blind, and is also trapped under a girder, then subtract 2 dice from any Combat Rolls (Attack or Defense).

Example: Chris is fighting in complete darkness. His enemy is wearing night-vision goggles. Chris would ordinarily roll 4 dice for his Defense Roll, but because he's effectively blind, he only gets 3 dice.

Power

Power is awarded to each Disciple during the course of gameplay, based on the character's actions. It is a measure of valor, integrity, and compassion. It also indicates the degree to which the character has behaved in accordance with his Power Descriptor (described on page 9).

Power Awards:

- 1: Acted in selfish or cowardly manner, such as leaving fellow Disciples behind while escaping.
- 1: Behaved in extraordinary fashion, such as risking injury or death to save an innocent.
- 2: Risked certain death or made an extreme personal sacrifice to help another.

Generally, Disciples receive 2–4 points of Power per game, unless they have strayed from the norm in some outstanding fashion (either by displaying repeated cruelty or selfishness, in which case they lose points, or by displaying remarkable heroism time and again, in which case they might receive 6 or more points for the session).

The Director is the final arbiter in this matter.

Using Power

Power is used by the player to shape the Disciple's growth. By using the Disciple's Power, a player can augment Skills, improve Attributes, or become very lucky. The points can be spent in the following manner (once spent, the points are gone, though more can be earned).

- If a player spends one point, she can roll an extra die for any roll (once). Only one point can be spent at a time in this fashion (it is not possible to spend five points to roll five extra dice).

Example: Christi's character has a Power Score of 3. She's trying to figure somethin out by making a Background Roll. She really wants to figure it out, so she spends a point of Power (leaving her with 2), and gets to roll an extra die for this particular task.

- If a player spends one point, she can activate a Contact that has not been fleshed out (in other words, one with a Background, but no name or history).
- If a player spends 20 points, she can roll an automatic 12 on any Attribute, Background, or Skill Roll. This means that there is no need to roll; victory is automatic. This does include Occult Lore Rolls.
- If a player spends 30 points, she can create a new Contact (but the Contact is Background-only, and the Background must be chosen immediately; to use the Contact will cost an additional point of Power).
- If a player spends 50 points, he can raise a Skill Score by one point, or add a new Skill (with a score of 1).
- If a player spends 50 points, she can raise a Background Score by one point, or add a new Background (with a score of 1). Maximum score of Backgrounds is 6.
- If a player spends 50 points, she can raise an Attribute Score by one point. Maximum for Attributes is 6.
- If a player spends 75 points, she can raise her Occult Lore score by one point. Maximum for Occult Lore is 6.

After one year of weekly games, an extraordinarily good character can earn 300 Power points, and accomplish one the following (or some permutation thereof):

- Raise Skills by 6 (or add 6 points' worth of new Skills)
- Raise Backgrounds by 6 (or add 6 points' worth of new Backgrounds)
- Raise attributes by a total of 6
- Add 10 new Contacts
- Raise Occult Lore by 4

Magic

To learn magic, a Disciple must first roll a successful Spirit Roll against difficulty 6. If this is successful, the spell has been learned. If not, the Disciple must spend a point of Power to try again (note that there is no extra die in this situation). The character gets a number of attempts equal to his Spirit Score. If the character has tried that number of times, and has failed, the spell is one that cannot be learned.

Example: Maximilian has a Spirit Score of 5. He's trying to learn a new spell, so he rolls 5 dice, and hopes for a 6. He doesn't get it. He can try to learn this spell a total of 5 times, because his Spirit Score is 5. So he'll try again. However, it will cost him a point of Power, and he won't get the extra die. He spends a point of Power, rolls 5 dice, and fails again. He can try 3 more times, and it will cost him 3 more points of Power. If none of those attempts is successful, he will never learn this spell.

Spells typically require elaborate rituals. Deviating from the ritual can have horrific consequences.

For the most part, spells are few and far between, and most Disciples will never learn more than two or three. They are hard to find, few know of their existence, and those who have access to magic tend to use it (or destroy it).

Each player begins the game with one spell, but may not be aware of all aspects of the spell, or of the risks involved. Be warned that a failed roll can cause great harm.

Each day, a character may cast a number of spells equal to his Spirit Score. Casting more spells will cause the character 4 points of damage each time, and the Disciple will suffer great pain during the casting.

Using Magic

Each character begins with one spell, chosen from the list below. In addition, each Disciple must roll a number of dice equal to her Spirit Score. For every 12 that is rolled, the character knows an additional spell (it is conceivable, though unlikely, that a character with a Spirit Score of 6 could roll all 12s -- in this case, the character knows all seven of the spells on this list). It is not possible to spend Power to roll an extra die. Rerolls are not permitted.

- Casting a spell is just like taking an action in combat. A character cannot cast a spell, then take an action or attack an enemy.
- If a spell includes a duration, do not count the round in which the spell was cast.
- Each spell features dire consequences for failure. Be warned that casual use of spells can be extremely dangerous, even for Disciples with high Spirit Scores.
- Additional spells can only be learned through the expenditure of Power.
- Upon casting a spell, the player must describe its effects meticulously. In addition, if the spell requires the player to explain or narrate, the player must actually do the narrating or describing. It is not sufficient to indicate that the character is thinking of something.

Astarte: This spell enables the caster to convince people of an idea or notion. The caster rolls a number of dice equal to his Spirit score, and compares the results against the Spirit score of the victim. A successful roll indicates that the victim is convinced. Before casting the spell, the Disciple must recall, with great clarity, a person of great charisma and confidence. The player must relate an incident from her past, involving this person, before the spell can take effect.

Castigate: This spell will enable a Disciple to imprison a demon in a cage of invisible energy. After performing the incantation, and covering her left hand with ash, the Disciple can restrain a demon, preventing it from moving or attacking. However, in order to do so, the Disciple must physically touch the demon, a dangerous proposition. This requires an Attack Roll, but if the Disciple succeeds, there is no damage. If successful, the Disciple must perform a Spirit Check against difficulty 8 to imprison the demon. A successful roll means that the spell was successful, and the demon is paralyzed. The spell lasts until the Disciple releases the demon. During this time, the demon cannot move, but it can be picked up, injured, or covered. It is incapable of speech or motion, and cannot use spells.

Chelicerae: This spell causes the Disciple's torso to contort and harden, becoming a monstrous pair of mandibles, like that of a gigantic insect. The character's combat score is raised by 2 for a duration of one minute (six rounds). The jaws, which protrude from the midsection, cause the Disciple considerable pain, but they are capable of inflicting serious wounds on enemies (each attack has a damage bonus of +2). When casting the spell, the player must perform a Spirit Roll. A roll of 9 or higher indicates success.

Dresden: This spell causes the distilled horror of the firestorm of Dresden to sweep through a radius of 30 feet around the caster. It will not affect the caster, but everyone else will feel the spell's effects. The caster makes a Spirit Roll, as do each of the potential victims. If a victim fails the Spirit Roll, she is overcome with the horror of the Dresden firestorm. Charred bodies, screaming children, smoke, and columns of raging flame surround the victim, and the only sound is the thunderous rumble of conflagration. Bombers roar overhead, and broken glass erupts from crushed buildings. The victim takes damage equal to the difference between his Spirit Roll and the caster's Spirit Roll. When casting the spell, the player must narrate the most horrifying experience her character ever witnessed.

Energumen: This spell energizes the Disciple, or the per, augmenting his speed and reflexes. His movements are a blur, and his body seems to vibrate. Conversation is difficult, as the Disciple appears manic and unfocused, and speaks at a rapid pace. During the two hours following the ritual, the Disciple's Body Score will be raised by 1. However, the Mind and Spirit Scores will both drop by 1. All scores will return to normal after 6 minutes. Before the spell is cast, the character must make a Spirit Roll. A 7 or higher indicates success.

Halt: This spell, if successful, strikes the victim with an invisible force that paralyzes him, preventing any motion for several seconds. The caster rolls a number of Dice equal to the Spirit Score, against which the victim rolls a Body Score. If the caster is successful, the victim is unable to move for 2 rounds. During this time, no Body or Combat Rolls are possible. However, Mind and Spirit Checks are allowed, as are any Skill rolls that do not require motion.

Inferno: This spell causes great walls of flame to converge on the victim. The caster rolls a number of dice equal to his Spirit Score, and the victim must roll a Body Roll against it. If the caster is successful, fire erupts all around the victim, burning flesh, clothing, and possessions. The damage inflicted is equal to the difference between the attacker's score and the victim's score.



Director Section

- Dread:

Ostensibly, Dread is a game in which heroes fight and kill demons. However, the game is not combat-oriented. Players who try to tackle enemies head-on will surely perish quickly. And yet, they can't just walk away: they've done that too many times. The game should involve research, and use of skills, and problem-solving. Hopefully, the rules, as well as the enclosed adventure, should illustrate this adequately. Characters should have normal access to weapons (shotguns at department stores and pawn shops).

- Demons:

Demons crave sin. There is something about the moral paradox inherent in the idea of doing something that one knows is wrong, and this paradox feeds something in a demon's spirit. This is not exactly news to those who study the cautionary tale. In mythology, in legend, in fairy tales, even in teen slasher movies, the pure of heart are spared. The sinners are punished, often grotesquely. This is a cultural norm -- perhaps because, since the days of primitive man, those from the dark side have preyed upon victims who were, in some way, contaminated by their misdeeds.

A person with a corrupt soul is like a beacon in the darkness. Demons can pick him out of a crowd of thousands; to them, it is as though he glows. They are invariably drawn to such persons, and each demon has a way of extracting satisfaction from the victim. Some involve physical harm, though there are other, more subtle methods. There are those who speculate that the demons are part of our natural ecology, and that the barrier has actually plunged the world into darkness. After all, if the demons only prey upon those who sin, rectitude is a form of safety.

Demons may cast spells without limit (as opposed to humans, who can cast a number of spells per day equal to their Spirit Scores).

- Backstory:

The Backstory was not included in this version of the game, due to length restrictions. In brief, Christos erected a Barrier two thousand years ago, with the help of his dearest friend, Judas. The two mages took up where the Druids left off, millennia ago. However, the Barrier is eroding, and the demons have found the weak spots. Hungry for misery, they have skulked through the gaps in the Barrier, and have begun to prey upon an unsuspecting humankind. Lamentably, it does not appear that there are mages in this day and age with the puissance of Christos or Judas. In time, the Barrier will come down completely, and Earth may well be overrun. The characters will learn precious little from the Mentor, who only appears when she wants them to investigate a strange report or incident. At best, the Mentor is taciturn, and rarely has the time or inclination for casual chatter. A trained warrior, the Mentor will occasionally appear to rescue Disciples from difficult situations, but this will not happen more than a few times.

- Realism:

Confer with your players before gameplay, and settle on a level of realism that is appropriate for your group. Ask the following questions: Will police respond immediately to shots fired? Will the Fire Department respond immediately to an outburst of flame? It's important to make sure that your reaction to the players' decisions doesn't create an unsatisfactory ending (spending the night in jail, as opposed to spending the night hunting mutated blood-pigs in the sewer system).

- Mature themes:

Talk to your players about topic boundaries before you play the game. It's important that you all agree on what can be introduced as a topic in the game, and what should never be included. This is, after all, supposed to be fun, and bringing up disturbing themes that will upset your players isn't going to make the experience enjoyable for them.

- Cabal:

During character creation, keep an eye on the players, and make sure they understand all the options available to them. Be sure that each Disciple has a reason for being part of the team, and make sure that the Mentor, though vague and frequently absent, is enough of a presence in the game that the characters feel protected and "mentored" (at least initially). With time, the Mentor will become less of a participant in the game.

- Gameplay:

Always structure scenarios around the characters. In the introductory adventure on page 51, no less than three antagonists have very real reasons for pursuing (and destroying) members of the Cabal. Consider the Disciples' Backgrounds, Skills, Drives, Contacts, and Powers when creating new adventures, and always consider player input. If a player reacts strongly to a storyline or NPC, accentuate that particular aspect of the game, and work with the player.

- Power:

Award Power judiciously, and refer to it by the name chosen by the player (like "Honor," "Fury," or "Wits"). During play, a character may perform a number of actions; reward only those which are extraordinary. A fight in which three Disciples batter a hitman senseless is hardly worth anything. A scenario in which an innocent is saved, or a demon is destroyed, would be worth more, particularly if there is significant danger to the Cabal.

- Notes:

1. No more than six dice can be rolled at one time. Even if a character has a total of seven or eight dice to throw at a particular problem, only six may be rolled..

2. If things get slow, have someone petition a Disciple for help, threaten a Disciple, or burst into flame.

Spells

NOTE: This list is the same as that on page 32. However, these descriptions also include consequences for failure.

Astare: This spell enables the caster to convince people of an idea or notion. The caster rolls a number of dice equal to his Spirit score, and compares the results against the Spirit score of the victim. A successful roll indicates that the victim is convinced. Before casting the spell, the Disciple must recall, with great clarity, a person of great charisma and confidence. The player must relate an incident from her past, involving this person, before the spell can take effect.

If the caster rolls a 1 on any of its dice, regardless of whether the spell works or not, the caster loses a point of Health immediately, and suffers sudden chest pain. The pain will linger for 10 minutes to two hours (1d12 times 10 minutes), during which time all rolls (combat, skill, attribute) are minus one die (with a minimum of 1 -- if a character has a Combat Score of 2, then she only rolls 1 die, but if she has a score of 1, she still gets to roll that 1 die).

Castigate: This spell will enable a Disciple to imprison a demon in a cage of invisible energy. After performing the incantation, and covering her left hand with ash, the Disciple can restrain a demon, preventing it from moving or attacking. However, in order to do so, the Disciple must physically touch the demon, a dangerous proposition. This requires an Attack Roll, but if the Disciple succeeds, there is no damage. If successful, the Disciple must perform a Spirit Check against difficulty 8 to imprison the demon. A successful roll means that the spell was successful, and the demon is paralyzed. The spell lasts until the Disciple releases the demon. During this time, the demon cannot move, but it can be picked up, injured, or covered. It is incapable of speech or motion, and cannot use spells.

If the character can't touch the demon, nothing happens. If the character fails the Spirit Roll, though, the consequences are serious. Failure results in agony; the Disciple loses 4 points of Health and one point of Mind. The Mind Score will return to normal after 1 day of rest. Each additional failure results in another 2 points of Health lost (but the Mind Score will not be affected after the first failure).

Chelicerae: This spell causes the Disciple's torso to contort and harden. A monstrous pair of mandibles, like that of a gigantic insect, erupt from the character's midsection. The character's Body Score is raised by 2 for a duration of one minute (six rounds). The jaws, which protrude from the midsection, cause the Disciple considerable pain, but they are capable of inflicting serious wounds on enemies (each attack has a damage bonus of +2). When casting the spell, the player must perform a Spirit Roll. A roll of 9 or higher indicates success.

Each time the spell is cast, there is a chance that it will backfire. Failure means that the mandibles do not appear, and great wounds appear across the Disciple's abdomen, causing 3 points of damage.

Dresden: This spell causes the distilled horror of the firestorm of Dresden to sweep through a radius of 30 feet around the caster. It will not affect the caster, but everyone else will feel the spell's effects. The caster makes a Spirit Roll, as do each of the potential victims. If a victim fails the Spirit Roll, she is overcome with the horror of the Dresden firestorm. Charred bodies, screaming children, smoke, and columns of raging flame surround the victim, and the only sound is the thunderous rumble of conflagration. Bombers roar overhead, and broken glass erupts from crushed buildings. The victim takes damage equal to the difference between his Spirit Roll and the caster's Spirit Roll. When casting the spell, the player must narrate the most horrifying experience her character ever witnessed.

If a victim's Spirit Roll is higher than that of the caster, the caster takes damage equal to the difference between the two, and the spell has no effect. No one takes damage or sees anything except the caster.

Energumen: This spell energizes the Disciple, or the per, augmenting his speed and reflexes. His movements are a blur, and his body seems to vibrate. Conversation is difficult, as the Disciple appears manic and unfocused, and speaks at a rapid pace. During the two hours following the ritual, the Disciple's Body Score will be raised by 1. However, the Mind and Spirit Scores will both drop by 1. All scores will return to normal after 6 minutes. Before the spell is cast, the character must make a Spirit Roll. A 7 or higher indicates success.

Failure means that the Body Score drops by 1 for 6 minutes, and the character's joints become stiff and sore.

Guise: By changing the shape and appearance of the caster, this spell allows him to appear as someone else. Voice, height, weight, shape, and physical structure can be altered by the spell. The caster must roll a Spirit Roll against difficulty 6. If the caster's roll is higher, the spell is successful. If not, the caster is recognizable, and the disguise is a failure.

If someone is studying the caster, for any reason, the caster must make a Spirit Roll against the Spirit Roll of the observer. If the caster fails, the watcher sees through the deception, no one else can (unless they make successful Spirit Rolls against the caster). If the caster uses Guise again, then the observer will have to roll a new Spirit Roll against the caster.

Halt: This spell, if successful, strikes the victim with an invisible force that paralyzes him, preventing any motion for several seconds. The caster rolls a number of Dice equal to the Spirit Score, against which the victim rolls a Body Score. If the caster is successful, the victim is unable to move for 2 rounds. During this time, no Body or Combat Rolls are possible. However, Mind and Spirit Checks are allowed, as are any Skill rolls that do not require motion.

If the spell fails, the caster must roll a Body Score against his own Spirit Roll. Failure means that the spell has affected the caster instead, for a duration of 2 rounds.

Inferno: This spell causes great walls of flame to converge on the victim. The caster rolls a number of dice equal to his Spirit Score, and the victim must roll a Body Roll against it. If the caster is successful, fire erupts all around the victim, burning flesh, clothing, and possessions. The damage inflicted is equal to the difference between the attacker's score and the victim's score.

If the spell is a failure, the caster must roll a 12-sided die. If the score is equal to or lower than his Spirit Score, nothing happens. If the roll is higher than the Spirit Score, the caster takes damage equal to the difference between the roll and his Spirit Score. Example: A caster with a Spirit Score of 2 fails while casting Inferno. He rolls a 12-sided die, and gets a 6. Therefore, he takes 4 points of damage.

Sway: Using this spell, the caster can lift or move small objects (weighing less than five pounds) with a thought. To pick up the item, the caster must make a Spirit Roll against a difficulty of 8. Success means that the caster can pick up the item and move it about the room. The item can be wielded as a weapon, in which case the caster rolls a Spirit Roll instead of a Body Roll during combat. The item can also be thrown (in which case, again, the Spirit Roll is used instead of the Body Roll).

Failure when making the initial Spirit Roll results in a point of damage and temporary blindness (lasting roughly ten seconds, or one round).

Demons

PELOGRIS

Described in the Compendium Vilificarum of Brother Ignatio Maculata as a "weaver of lies," the Pelogris Demon is actually drawn to the deceptions of others. Concealing its cruelty beneath a veneer of piety, the demon transforms itself into the guise of a religious figure of some kind (priest, nun, rabbi, imam). It becomes involved in the deceit, insinuating itself into the conflict, augmenting its natural charisma with magic when necessary.

Typically, the Pelogris Demon follows a pattern: in a small, remote town, it conceals itself in a dark place (an old barn, an abandoned silo) and waits. For days, it studies the inhabitants of the town, creeping from its hiding place at night to eavesdrop outside windows. When the demon has found a suitable deceit, it assumes the guise of a holy man or woman, and explains itself to the townsfolk as a wandering pilgrim. Through ostensible good will and charitable acts, the demon ingratiates itself to the community, and soon becomes vital to its spiritual well-being.

The demon uses its influence to gain the attention of those engaged in the deceit, and slowly begins to aggravate the condition. For the abused daughter who conceals her shame and hatred, the demon feigns concern, and serves as her confessor, prodding her with questions until she admits her terrible secret. Carefully sculpting her anger into a weapon, the demon then cautiously approaches the father, serving him in a similar fashion, guiding and warping his progress until his shame and guilt are hammered into a vengeful fury at the young temptress who drove him to sin. By forcing the truth from the lips of those who are afraid to speak it, and by shaping their confusion and pain into rage, the demon forces a conflict that can only end in blood and tears.

Eventually, these situations end in death, and the Pelogris Demon is there to speak holy words and bow its head, but the waves of grief, agony, and sorrow have energized the creature, which then moves on to another town. It survives on these complex tragedies, craving the emotional web created when a person harms someone that once felt love instead of fear; the sensation is amplified when the tormentor still has feelings for the victim.

There are countless scenarios: an embezzling banker and his paranoid partner, the cheating wife and suspicious husband, the duplicitous bank robbers hiding out in a remote county, the murderer and his intimidated witness. In each of these, the demon lurks behind a collar or habit, dispensing platitudes and sympathy, relishing every moment.

If confronted, the Pelogris sloughs off its guise, revealing itself as a monstrous arachnid. Nearly eight feet tall, and insanely strong, the Pelogris Demon is capable of brutal mischief. In combat, it tends to focus on weaker opponents, picking them off as viciously as possible, with the intent of demoralizing its other adversaries.

VITAL STATISTICS: Body: 4, Mind: 2, Spirit: 5, Combat: 3, Health: 15

Weapon: Claws (+2)

Magic: Guise, Halt, Astarte



Artist: Mark Pfahlert

GATTERAG

A shimmering demon with nacreous skin and glowing white eyes, the pyrokinetic Gatterag seems happiest in the throes of an inferno. The entity is attracted to desperation and conflict, and can wait patiently for weeks just to see how the conflagration will erupt.

Typically found lurking in low-income neighborhoods, amidst refuse and garbage, or in the sewers below, the iridescent demon is drawn to people who have become so frustrated by circumstance and poverty that they turn upon one another. When a drunken husband raises his hand against his wife, or a bitter mother brutalizes her children, the Gatterag crouches nearby, absorbing the misery. When a poker game loss becomes a catalyst for violence, or a barroom brawl is taken to the next level by the advent of a switchblade or pistol, the Gatterag listens closely for droplets of blood on the floor.

The demon feeds primarily on the grief and stress caused by financial woe, and by the darkly satisfying relief that violence provides. However, it must also consume flesh, and only that flesh which has been charred black. Consequently, when the release of sudden violence has been furnished, the sated Gatterag unleashes its pyrokinetic energy, causing a fire to break out. Guiding the flame from a distance, the Gatterag does its best to trap the instigators of the violence in the fire. When there is blackened meat to be had, but before the rescue teams and firefighters can arrive, the Gatterag will descend upon the burned victims (alive or dead, it doesn't matter) and feed on their flesh. It will eat only the skin, unless the innards have been cooked as well.

If the fiend is discovered while feeding in the fire, it will be hard to spot, given its mother-of-pearl skin, which tends to reflect the flames around it. However, it can be heard, as it sings while it eats, in a voice like that of a child.

A brutal nemesis when provoked, the Gatterag rarely thinks before it acts, engulfing the surrounding area in a raging firestorm in seconds.

VITAL STATISTICS: Body: 3, Mind: 1, Spirit: 5, Health: 12

Weapon: Claws (+2)

Magic: Inferno, Dresden



Artist: Rafael Chandler

VOUZIRE

A skeletal fiend that feeds on the teeth of abused children, the Vouzire Demon was initially bred to find and destroy child abusers. However, at some point, the breed developed a taste for those they'd been engineered to protect.

The short-lived demon has a single goal, and pursues it with terrifying ferocity. The moment it erupts through the Spirit Barrier, it begins searching for children who are being abused by those they trust.

If a child is being abused, in any way, by a parent or other adult (such as a teacher or minister), the Vouzire will begin to stalk the child. Due to its extreme vulnerability to sunlight, though, the creature only moves at night.

Not intelligent, but possessing an animal cunning, the Vouzire will kidnap or kill the child, and carry the body to a quiet place where it can feed uninterrupted. One by one, it will tear the teeth out of the child's mouth, carefully placing them in a small pile. After assembling this pile, it will greedily devour the teeth, crushing them in its skinless jaws (oblivious to the fact that the crushed enamel falls immediately to the ground).

The Vouzire will use the Guise spell to alter its appearance, disguising itself as a large dog. If discovered or confronted, it will attack without hesitation or forethought. In combat, the Vouzire inflicts massive amounts of damage with its bite, and attacks anything within reach.

However, the demon is vulnerable to direct sunlight, and takes 2 points of damage for every round of combat it spends in the light (a round of combat is six seconds). It takes the same amount of damage from exposure to ultraviolet light, such as that emitted by UV lamps.

VITAL STATISTICS: Body: 6, Mind: 2, Spirit: 2

Weapon: Bite (+4)

Magic: Guise



Artist: Mark Pfahlert

ASPINABA

The Aspinaba Demon is extremely vulnerable until it has found a host; after it has entered a body, however, it becomes a formidable opponent, and can only be overcome by killing the host (unless it is expelled through some form of Exorcism). Snakelike, the Aspinaba Demon is approximately 7 inches long, with a thin aperture at each end. In this form, it can easily be crushed underfoot, and poses no real threat. Its only ability in this form is the spell Guise, which it uses to render itself invisible to anyone who might stumble across it.

Hiding from daylight, the demon conceals itself until darkness has fallen, then begins to slither from home to home, searching for the negative energy it craves. The Aspinaba feeds on the misery caused by domestic abuse; when someone strikes his spouse, or a child is savagely beaten, the Aspinaba gains power, and grows stronger. Typically, it will enter a home where such abuse is routine, and the Demon will find a place where it can safely gestate, absorbing the pain and hatred. Lurking in a basement or attic, the demon will coil about itself and wait until it has gathered enough energy to attack.

The Aspinaba typically spends several days, even weeks, searching for a new host. During this time, its chances of survival are quite slim, given that it has no combat ability whatsoever. If it does survive long enough to find a host, however, the demon can accomplish terrible things.

At night, it will find the perpetrator of the domestic violence, be he intoxicated husband or sleeping father, and it will crawl quickly and quietly into his mouth, slithering into his stomach, where it lays several eggs and sending long filaments through the lining of its host's stomach. The filaments attach themselves to the nervous system, and the Aspinaba Demon takes control of the host body as though it were a marionette.

Rising from its bed, the Aspinaba's host body staggers to the room where the victim of abuse lies asleep. Using any heavy object, the host body will bludgeon the victim to death, and will kill anyone else in the room, regardless of whom it happens to be. After this, the host body will lurch from room to room, killing anyone else in the house. If it can, it will find and kill any relatives or in-laws, but will not be able to use the host body after 24 hours, so it will not travel far.

When the killing spree is over, the Aspinaba will die, and the eggs will hatch. Two to four new Aspinaba Demons will emerge from the eggs, and will bite the inside of the victim's stomach until he vomits them up. Slithering away, they will pursue other victims, continuing the cycle.

VITAL STATISTICS: ALONE:

Body: 1, Mind: 1, Spirit: 1, Health: 1

Weapon: None

Magic: Guise

VITAL STATISTICS: IN HUMAN HOST

Body: 6, Mind: 2, Spirit: 2, Health: 12

Weapon: Any

Magic: None



Artist: Mark Pfahlert

Enemies

During the course of the game, the characters will clash with human enemies, including crooked cops, cultists, serial killers, and so on. Creating these enemies is fairly straightforward.

- Assign 7 points to the three Attributes.
- Select 2 Backgrounds, and assign 5 points between them.
- Choose 1 Skill, at 1 point.
- Issue a weapon of some kind.

If the enemy is a mage, furnish (or create) a few spells, and create a bodyguard of some kind.

Example: Regina Kuhlen. Sorceress. Body: 2, Mind: 2, Spirit: 3. Religion: 4, Government: 1. Interrogation: 1. Sword: +1. Spells: Astarte, Halt. Bent on using the demons as weapons against her adversaries. An expert manipulator of weak-willed people.

Example: Travis Laskin. Bodyguard. Body: 4, Mind: 2, Spirit: 1. Military: 3, Technology: 2. Breaking/Entering: 1. Revolver: +1. A devoted follower, Laskin would die for Kuhlen if necessary.